[**THE WHITE DOE OF RYLSTONE**](http://www.bartleby.com/145/ww3410.html)

**OR, THE FATE OF THE NORTONS**

 DEDICATION

 IN trellised shed with clustering roses gay,

 And, MARY! oft beside our blazing fire,

 When yeas of wedded life were as a day

 Whose current answers to the heart's desire,

 Did we together read in Spenser's Lay

 How Una, sad of soul--in sad attire,

 The gentle Una, of celestial birth,

 To seek her Knight went wandering o'er the earth.

 Ah, then, Beloved! pleasing was the smart,

 And the tear precious in compassion shed 10

 For Her, who, pierced by sorrow's thrilling dart,

 Did meekly bear the pang unmerited;

 Meek as that emblem of her lowly heart

 The milk-white Lamb which in a line she led,--

 And faithful, loyal in her innocence,

 Like the brave Lion slain in her defence.

 Notes could we hear as of a faery shell

 Attuned to words with sacred wisdom fraught;

 Free Fancy prized each specious miracle,

 And all its finer inspiration caught; 20

 Till in the bosom of our rustic Cell,

 We by a lamentable change were taught

 That "bliss with mortal Man may not abide:"

 How nearly joy and sorrow are allied!

 For us the stream of fiction ceased to flow,

 For us the voice of melody was mute.

 --But, as soft gales dissolve the dreary snow,

 And give the timid herbage leave to shoot,

 Heaven's breathing influence failed not to bestow

 A timely promise of unlooked-for fruit, 30

 Fair fruit of pleasure and serene content

 From blossoms wild of fancies innocent.

 It soothed us--it beguiled us--then, to hear

 Once more of troubles wrought by magic spell;

 And griefs whose aery motion comes not near

 The pangs that tempt the Spirit to rebel:

 Then, with mild Una in her sober cheer,

 High over hill and low adown the dell

 Again we wandered, willing to partake

 All that she suffered for her dear Lord's sake. 40

 Then, too, this Song 'of mine' once more could please,

 Where anguish, strange as dreams of restless sleep,

 Is tempered and allayed by sympathies

 Aloft ascending, and descending deep,

 Even to the inferior Kinds; whom forest-trees

 Protect from beating sunbeams, and the sweep

 Of the sharp winds;--fair Creatures!--to whom Heaven

 A calm and sinless life, with love, hath given.

 This tragic Story cheered us; for it speaks

 Of female patience winning firm repose; 50

 And, of the recompense that conscience seeks,

 A bright, encouraging, example shows;

 Needful when o'er wide realms the tempest breaks,

 Needful amid life's ordinary woes;--

 Hence, not for them unfitted who would bless

 A happy hour with holier happiness.

 He serves the Muses erringly and ill,

 Whose aim is pleasure light and fugitive:

 Oh, that my mind were equal to fulfil

 The comprehensive mandate which they give-- 60

 Vain aspiration of an earnest will!

 Yet in this moral Strain a power may live,

 Beloved Wife! such solace to impart

 As it hath yielded to thy tender heart.

 RYDAL MOUNT, WESTMORELAND,

 April 20, 1815.

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 "[Action is transitory](http://www.bartleby.com/145/ww3411.html)--a step, a blow,

 The motion of a muscle--this way or that--

 'Tis done; and in the after-vacancy

 We wonder at ourselves like men betrayed:

 Suffering is permanent, obscure and dark,

 And has the nature of infinity.

 Yet through that darkness (infinite though it seem

 And irremoveable) gracious openings lie,

 By which the soul--with patient steps of thought

 Now toiling, waked now on wings of prayer-- 10

 May pass in hope, and, though from mortal bonds

 Yet undelivered, rise with sure ascent

 Even to the fountain-head of peace divine."

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 "They that deny a God, destroy Man's nobility: for certainly Man

 is of kinn to the Beast by his Body; and if he be not of kinn to

 God by his Spirit, he is a base, ignoble Creature. It destroys

 likewise Magnanimity, and the raising of humane Nature: for take

 an example of a Dogg, and mark what a generosity and courage he

 will put on, when he finds himself maintained by a Man, who to him

 is instead of a God, or Melior Natura. Which courage is manifestly

 such, as that Creature without that confidence of a better Nature

 than his own could never attain. So Man, when he resteth and

 assureth himself upon Divine protection and favour, gathereth a

 force and faith which human Nature in itself could not obtain."

 LORD BACON.

 CANTO FIRST

 [FROM Bolton's old monastic tower](http://www.bartleby.com/145/ww3412.html)

 The bells ring loud with gladsome power;

 The sun shines bright; the fields are gay

 With people in their best array

 Of stole and doublet, hood and scarf,

 Along the banks of crystal Wharf,

 Through the Vale retired and lowly,

 Trooping to that summons holy.

 And, up among the moorlands, see

 What sprinklings of blithe company! 10

 Of lasses and of shepherd grooms,

 That down the steep hills force their way,

 Like cattle through the budded brooms;

 Path, or no path, what care they?

 And thus in joyous mood they hie

 To Bolton's mouldering Priory.

 What would they there?--Full fifty years

 That sumptuous Pile, with all its peers,

 Too harshly hath been doomed to taste

 The bitterness of wrong and waste: 20

 Its courts are ravaged; but the tower

 Is standing with a voice of power,

 That ancient voice which wont to call

 To mass or some high festival;

 And in the shattered fabric's heart

 Remaineth one protected part;

 [A Chapel, like a wild-bird's nest](http://www.bartleby.com/145/ww3413.html),

 Closely embowered and trimly drest;

 And thither young and old repair,

 This Sabbath-day, for praise and prayer. 30

 Fast the churchyard fills;--anon

 Look again, and they all are gone;

 The cluster round the porch, and the folk

 [Who sate in the shade of the Prior's Oak](http://www.bartleby.com/145/ww3414.html)!

 And scarcely have they disappeared

 Ere the prelusive hymn is heard:--

 With one consent the people rejoice,

 Filling the church with a lofty voice!

 They sing a service which they feel:

 For 'tis the sunrise now of zeal; 40

 Of a pure faith the vernal prime--

 In great Eliza's golden time.

 A moment ends the fervent din,

 And all is hushed, without and within;

 For though the priest, more tranquilly,

 Recites the holy liturgy,

 The only voice which you can hear

 Is the river murmuring near.

 --When soft!--the dusky trees between,

 And down the path through the open green, 50

 Where is no living thing to be seen;

 And through yon gateway, where is found,

 Beneath the arch with ivy bound,

 Free entrance to the churchyard ground--

 Comes gliding in with lovely gleam,

 Comes gliding in serene and slow,

 Soft and silent as a dream,

 A solitary Doe!

 White she is as lily of June,

 And beauteous as the silver moon 60

 When out of sight the clouds are driven

 And she is left alone in heaven;

 Or like a ship some gentle day

 In sunshine sailing far away,

 A glittering ship, that hath the plain

 Of ocean for her own domain.

 Lie silent in your graves, ye dead!

 Lie quiet in your churchyard bed!

 Ye living, tend your holy cares;

 Ye multitude, pursue your prayers; 70

 And blame not me if my heart and sight

 Are occupied with one delight!

 'Tis a work for sabbath hours

 If I with this bright Creature go:

 Whether she be of forest bowers,

 From the bowers of earth below;

 Or a Spirit for one day given,

 A pledge of grace from purest heaven.

 What harmonious pensive changes

 Wait upon her as she ranges 80

 Round and through this Pile of state

 Overthrown and desolate!

 Now a step or two her way

 Leads through space of open day,

 Where the enamoured sunny light

 Brightens her that was so bright;

 Now doth a delicate shadow fall,

 Falls upon her like a breath,

 From some lofty arch or wall,

 As she passes underneath: 90

 Now some gloomy nook partakes

 Of the glory that she makes,--

 High-ribbed vault of stone, or cell,

 With perfect cunning framed as well

 Of stone, and ivy, and the spread

 Of the elder's bushy head;

 Some jealous and forbidding cell,

 That doth the living stars repel,

 And where no flower hath leave to dwell.

 The presence of this wandering Doe 100

 Fills many a damp obscure recess

 With lustre of a saintly show;

 And, reappearing, she no less

 Sheds on the flowers that round her blow

 A more than sunny liveliness.

 But say, among these holy places,

 Which thus assiduously she paces,

 Comes she with a votary's task,

 Rite to perform, or boon to ask?

 Fair Pilgrim! harbours she a sense 110

 Of sorrow, or of reverence?

 Can she be grieved for quire or shrine,

 Crushed as if by wrath divine?

 For what survives of house where God

 Was worshipped, or where Man abode;

 For old magnificence undone;

 Or for the gentler work begun

 By Nature, softening and concealing,

 And busy with a hand of healing?

 Mourns she for lordly chamber's hearth 120

 That to the sapling ash gives birth;

 For dormitory's length laid bare

 Where the wild rose blossoms fair;

 Or altar, whence the cross was rent,

 Now rich with mossy ornament?

 --She sees a warrior carved in stone,

 Among the thick weeds, stretched alone;

 A warrior, with his shield of pride

 Cleaving humbly to his side,

 And hands in resignation prest, 130

 Palm to palm, on his tranquil breast;

 As little she regards the sight

 As a common creature might:

 If she be doomed to inward care,

 Or service, it must lie elsewhere.

 --But hers are eyes serenely bright,

 And on she moves--with pace how light!

 Nor spares to stoop her head, and taste

 The dewy turf with flowers bestrown;

 And thus she fares, until at last 140

 Beside the ridge of a grassy grave

 In quietness she lays her down;

 Gentle as a weary wave

 Sinks, when the summer breeze hath died,

 Against an anchored vessel's side;

 Even so, without distress, doth she

 Lie down in peace, and lovingly.

 The day is placid in its going,

 To a lingering motion bound,

 Like the crystal stream now flowing 150

 With its softest summer sound:

 So the balmy minutes pass,

 While this radiant Creature lies

 Couched upon the dewy grass,

 Pensively with downcast eyes.

 --But now again the people raise

 With awful cheer a voice of praise;

 It is the last, the parting song;

 And from the temple forth they throng,

 And quickly spread themselves abroad, 160

 While each pursues his several road.

 But some--a variegated band

 Of middle-aged, and old, and young,

 And little children by the hand

 Upon their leading mothers hung--

 With mute obeisance gladly paid

 Turn towards the spot, where, full in view,

 The white Doe, to her service true,

 Her sabbath couch has made.

 It was a solitary mound; 170

 Which two spears' length of level ground

 Did from all other graves divide:

 As if in some respect of pride;

 Or melancholy's sickly mood,

 Still shy of human neighbourhood;

 Or guilt, that humbly would express

 A penitential loneliness.

 "Look, there she is, my Child! draw near;

 She fears not, wherefore should we fear?

 She means no harm;"--but still the Boy, 180

 To whom the words were softly said,

 Hung back, and smiled, and blushed for joy,

 A shame-faced blush of glowing red!

 Again the Mother whispered low,

 "Now you have seen the famous Doe;

 From Rylstone she hath found her way

 Over the hills this sabbath day

 Her work, whate'er it be, is done,

 And she will depart when we are gone;

 Thus doth she keep, from year to year, 190

 Her sabbath morning, foul or fair."

 Bright was the Creature, as in dreams

 The Boy had seen her, yea, more bright;

 But is she truly what she seems?

 He asks with insecure delight,

 Asks of himself, and doubts,--and still

 The doubt returns against his will:

 Though he, and all the standers-by,

 Could tell a tragic history

 Of facts divulged, wherein appear 200

 Substantial motive, reason clear,

 Why thus the milk-white Doe is found

 Couchant beside that lonely mound;

 And why she duly loves to pace

 The circuit of this hallowed place.

 Nor to the Child's inquiring mind

 Is such perplexity confined:

 For, spite of sober Truth that sees

 A world of fixed remembrances

 Which to this mystery belong, 210

 If, undeceived, my skill can trace

 The characters of every face,

 There lack not strange delusion here,

 Conjecture vague, and idle fear,

 And superstitious fancies strong,

 Which do the gentle Creature wrong.

 That bearded, staff-supported Sire--

 Who in his boyhood often fed

 Full cheerily on convent-bread

 And heard old tales by the convent-fire, 220

 And to his grave will go with scars,

 Relics of long and distant wars--

 That Old Man, studious to expound

 The spectacle, is mounting high

 To days of dim antiquity;

 [When Lady Aaliza mourned](http://www.bartleby.com/145/ww3415.html)

 Her Son, and felt in her despair

 The pang of unavailing prayer;

 Her Son in Wharf's abysses drowned,

 The noble Boy of Egremound. 230

 From which affliction--when the grace

 Of God had in her heart found place--

 A pious structure, fair to see

 Rose up, this stately Priory!

 The Lady's work;--but now laid low;

 To the grief of her soul that doth come and go,

 In the beautiful form of this innocent Doe:

 Which, though seemingly doomed in its breast to sustain

 A softened remembrance of sorrow and pain,

 Is spotless, and holy, and gentle, and bright; 240

 And glides o'er the earth like an angel of light.

 [Pass, pass who will, yon chantry door](http://www.bartleby.com/145/ww3416.html);

 And, through the chink in the fractured floor

 Look down, and see a griesly sight;

 A vault where the bodies are buried upright!

 There, face by face, and hand by hand,

 The Claphams and Mauleverers stand;

 And, in his place, among son and sire,

 Is John de Clapham, that fierce Esquire,

 A valiant man, and a name of dread 250

 In the ruthless wars of the White and Red;

 Who dragged Earl Pembroke from Banbury church

 And smote off his head on the stones of the porch!

 Look down among them, if you dare;

 Oft does the White Doe loiter there,

 Prying into the darksome rent;

 Nor can it be with good intent:

 So thinks that Dame of haughty air,

 Who hath a Page her book to hold,

 And wears a frontlet edged with gold. 260

 Harsh thoughts with her high mood agree--

 Who counts among her ancestry

 Earl Pembroke, slain so impiously!

 That slender Youth, a scholar pale,

 From Oxford come to his native vale,

 He also hath his own conceit:

 It is, thinks he, the gracious Fairy,

 [Who loved the Shepherd-lord to meet](http://www.bartleby.com/145/ww3417.html)

 In his wanderings solitary:

 Wild notes she in his hearing sang, 270

 A song of Nature's hidden powers;

 That whistled like the wind, and rang

 Among the rocks and holly bowers.

 'Twas said that She all shapes could wear;

 And oftentimes before him stood,

 Amid the trees of some thick wood,

 In semblance of a lady fair;

 And taught him signs, and showed him sights,

 In Craven's dens, on Cumbrian heights;

 When under cloud of fear he lay, 280

 A shepherd clad in homely grey;

 Nor left him at his later day.

 And hence, when he, with spear and shield,

 Rode full of years to Flodden-field,

 His eye could see the hidden spring,

 And how the current was to flow;

 The fatal end of Scotland's King,

 And all that hopeless overthrow.

 But not in wars did he delight,

 'This' Clifford wished for worthier might; 290

 Nor in broad pomp, or courtly state;

 Him his own thoughts did elevate,--

 Most happy in the shy recess

 Of Barden's lowly quietness.

 And choice of studious friends had he

 Of Bolton's dear fraternity;

 Who, standing on this old church tower,

 In many a calm propitious hour,

 Perused, with him, the starry sky;

 Or, in their cells, with him did pry 300

 For other lore,--by keen desire

 Urged to close toil with chemic fire;

 In quest belike of transmutations

 Rich as the mine's most bright creations.

 But they and their good works are fled,

 And all is now disquieted--

 And peace is none, for living or dead!

 Ah, pensive Scholar, think not so,

 But look again at the radiant Doe!

 What quiet watch she seems to keep, 310

 Alone, beside that grassy heap!

 Why mention other thoughts unmeet

 For vision so composed and sweet?

 While stand the people in a ring,

 Gazing, doubting, questioning;

 Yea, many overcome in spite

 Of recollections clear and bright;

 Which yet do unto some impart

 An undisturbed repose of heart.

 And all the assembly own a law 320

 Of orderly respect and awe;

 But see--they vanish one by one,

 And last, the Doe herself is gone.

 Harp! we have been full long beguiled

 By vague thoughts, lured by fancies wild;

 To which, with no reluctant strings,

 Thou hast attuned thy murmurings;

 And now before this Pile we stand

 In solitude, and utter peace:

 But, Harp! thy murmurs may not cease-- 330

 A Spirit, with his angelic wings,

 In soft and breeze-like visitings,

 Has touched thee--and a Spirit's hand:

 A voice is with us--a command

 To chant, in strains of heavenly glory,

 A tale of tears, a mortal story!

 CANTO SECOND

 THE Harp in lowliness obeyed;

 And first we sang of the greenwood shade

 And a solitary Maid;

 Beginning, where the song must end, 340

 With her, and with her sylvan Friend;

 The Friend who stood before her sight,

 Her only unextinguished light;

 Her last companion in a dearth

 Of love, upon a hopeless earth.

 For She it was--this Maid, who wrought

 Meekly, with foreboding thought,

 In vermeil colours and in gold

 An unblest work; which, standing by,

 Her Father did with joy behold,-- 350

 Exulting in its imagery;

 A Banner, fashioned to fulfil

 Too perfectly his headstrong will:

 For on this Banner had her hand

 Embroidered (such her Sire's command)

 The sacred Cross; and figured there

 The five dear wounds our Lord did bear;

 Full soon to be uplifted high,

 And float in rueful company!

 It was the time when England's Queen 360

 Twelve years had reigned, a Sovereign dread;

 Nor yet the restless crown had been

 Disturbed upon her virgin head;

 But now the inly-working North

 Was ripe to send its thousands forth,

 A potent vassalage, to fight

 In Percy's and in Neville's right,

 Two Earls fast leagued in discontent,

 Who gave their wishes open vent;

 And boldly urged a general plea, 370

 The rites of ancient piety

 To be triumphantly restored,

 By the stern justice of the sword!

 And that same Banner, on whose breast

 The blameless Lady had exprest

 Memorials chosen to give life

 And sunshine to a dangerous strife;

 That Banner, waiting for the Call,

 Stood quietly in Rylstone-hall.

 It came; and Francis Norton said, 380

 "O Father! rise not in this fray--

 The hairs are white upon your head;

 Dear Father, hear me when I say

 It is for you too late a day!

 Bethink you of your own good name:

 A just and gracious Queen have we,

 A pure religion, and the claim

 Of peace on our humanity.--

 'Tis meet that I endure your scorn;

 I am your son, your eldest born; 390

 But not for lordship or for land,

 My Father, do I clasp your knees;

 The Banner touch not, stay your hand,

 This multitude of men disband,

 And live at home in blameless ease;

 For these my brethren's sake, for me;

 And, most of all, for Emily!"

 Tumultuous noises filled the hall;

 And scarcely could the Father hear

 That name--pronounced with a dying fall-- 400

 The name of his only Daughter dear,

 As on the banner which stood near

 He glanced a look of holy pride,

 And his moist eyes were glorified;

 Then did he seize the staff, and say:

 "Thou, Richard, bear'st thy father's name,

 Keep thou this ensign till the day

 When I of thee require the same:

 Thy place be on my better hand;--

 And seven as true as thou, I see, 410

 Will cleave to this good cause and me."

 He spake, and eight brave sons straightway

 All followed him, a gallant band!

 Thus, with his sons, when forth he came

 The sight was hailed with loud acclaim

 And din of arms and minstrelsy,

 From all his warlike tenantry,

 All horsed and harnessed with him to ride,--

 A voice to which the hills replied!

 But Francis, in the vacant hall, 420

 Stood silent under dreary weight,--

 A phantasm, in which roof and wall

 Shook, tottered, swam before his sight;

 A phantasm like a dream of night!

 Thus overwhelmed, and desolate,

 He found his way to a postern-gate;

 And, when he waked, his languid eye

 Was on the calm and silent sky;

 With air about him breathing sweet,

 And earth's green grass beneath his feet; 430

 Nor did he fail ere long to hear

 A sound of military cheer,

 Faint--but it reached that sheltered spot;

 He heard, and it disturbed him not.

 There stood he, leaning on a lance

 Which he had grasped unknowingly,

 Had blindly grasped in that strong trance,

 That dimness of heart-agony;

 There stood he, cleansed from the despair

 And sorrow of his fruitless prayer. 440

 The past he calmly hath reviewed:

 But where will be the fortitude

 Of this brave man, when he shall see

 That Form beneath the spreading tree,

 And know that it is Emily?

 He saw her where in open view

 She sate beneath the spreading yew--

 Her head upon her lap, concealing

 In solitude her bitter feeling:

 "Might ever son 'command' a sire, 450

 The act were justified to-day."

 This to himself--and to the Maid,

 Whom now he had approached, he said--

 "Gone are they,--they have their desire;

 And I with thee one hour will stay,

 To give thee comfort if I may."

 She heard, but looked not up, nor spake;

 And sorrow moved him to partake

 Her silence; then his thoughts turned round,

 And fervent words a passage found. 460

 "Gone are they, bravely, though misled;

 With a dear Father at their head!

 The Sons obey a natural lord;

 The Father had given solemn word

 To noble Percy; and a force

 Still stronger, bends him to his course.

 This said, our tears to-day may fall

 As at an innocent funeral.

 In deep and awful channel runs

 This sympathy of Sire and Sons; 470

 Untried our Brothers have been loved

 With heart by simple nature moved;

 And now their faithfulness is proved:

 For faithful we must call them, bearing

 That soul of conscientious daring.

 --There were they all in circle--there

 Stood Richard, Ambrose, Christopher,

 John with a sword that will not fail,

 And Marmaduke in fearless mail,

 And those bright Twins were side by side; 480

 And there, by fresh hopes beautified,

 Stood He, whose arm yet lacks the power

 Of man, our youngest, fairest flower!

 I, by the right of eldest born,

 And in a second father's place,

 Presumed to grapple with their scorn,

 And meet their pity face to face;

 Yea, trusting in God's holy aid,

 I to my Father knelt and prayed;

 And one, the pensive Marmaduke, 490

 Methought, was yielding inwardly,

 And would have laid his purpose by,

 But for a glance of his Father's eye,

 Which I myself could scarcely brook.

 Then be we, each and all, forgiven!

 Thou, chiefly thou, my Sister dear,

 Whose pangs are registered in heaven--

 The stifled sigh, the hidden tear,

 And smiles, that dared to take their place,

 Meek filial smiles, upon thy face, 500

 As that unhallowed Banner grew

 Beneath a loving old Man's view.

 Thy part is done--thy painful part;

 Be thou then satisfied in heart!

 A further, though far easier, task

 Than thine hath been, my duties ask;

 With theirs my efforts cannot blend,

 I cannot for such cause contend;

 Their aims I utterly forswear;

 But I in body will be there. 510

 Unarmed and naked will I go,

 Be at their side, come weal or woe:

 On kind occasions I may wait,

 See, hear, obstruct, or mitigate.

 [Bare breast I take and an empty hand](http://www.bartleby.com/145/ww3418.html)."--

 Therewith he threw away the lance,

 Which he had grasped in that strong trance,

 Spurned it, like something that would stand

 Between him and the pure intent

 Of love on which his soul was bent. 520

 "For thee, for thee, is left the sense

 Of trial past without offence

 To God or man; such innocence,

 Such consolation, and the excess

 Of an unmerited distress;

 In that thy very strength must lie.

 --O Sister, I could prophesy!

 The time is come that rings the knell

 Of all we loved, and loved so well:

 Hope nothing, if I thus may speak 530

 To thee, a woman, and thence weak:

 Hope nothing, I repeat; for we

 Are doomed to perish utterly:

 'Tis meet that thou with me divide

 The thought while I am by thy side,

 Acknowledging a grace in this,

 A comfort in the dark abyss.

 But look not for me when I am gone,

 And be no farther wrought upon:

 Farewell all wishes, all debate, 540

 All prayers for this cause, or for that!

 Weep, if that aid thee; but depend

 Upon no help of outward friend;

 Espouse thy doom at once, and cleave

 To fortitude without reprieve.

 For we must fall, both we and ours--

 This Mansion and these pleasant bowers,

 Walks, pools, and arbours, homestead, hall--

 Our fate is theirs, will reach them all;

 The young horse must forsake his manger, 550

 And learn to glory in a Stranger;

 The hawk forget his perch; the hound

 Be parted from his ancient ground:

 The blast will sweep us all away--

 One desolation, one decay!

 And even this Creature!" which words saying,

 He pointed to a lovely Doe,

 A few steps distant, feeding, straying;

 Fair creature, and more white than snow!

 "Even she will to her peaceful woods 560

 Return, and to her murmuring floods,

 And be in heart and soul the same

 She was before she hither came;

 Ere she had learned to love us all,

 Herself beloved in Rylstone-hall.

 --But thou, my Sister, doomed to be

 The last leaf on a blasted tree;

 If not in vain we breathed the breath

 Together of a purer faith;

 If hand in hand we have been led, 570

 And thou, (O happy thought this day:)

 Not seldom foremost in the way;

 If on one thought our minds have fed,

 And we have in one meaning read;

 If, when at home our private weal

 Hath suffered from the shock of zeal,

 Together we have learned to prize

 Forbearance and self-sacrifice;

 If we like combatants have fared,

 And for this issue been prepared; 580

 If thou art beautiful, and youth

 And thought endue thee with all truth--

 Be strong;--be worthy of the grace

 Of God, and fill thy destined place:

 A Soul, by force of sorrows high,

 Uplifted to the purest sky

 Of undisturbed humanity!"

 He ended,--or she heard no more;

 He led her from the yew-tree shade,

 And at the mansion's silent door, 590

 He kissed the consecrated Maid;

 And down the valley then pursued,

 Alone, the armed Multitude.

 CANTO THIRD

 [NOW joy for you who from the towers](http://www.bartleby.com/145/ww3419.html)

 Of Brancepeth look in doubt and fear,

 Telling melancholy hours!

 Proclaim it, let your Masters hear

 That Norton with his band is near!

 The watchmen from their station high

 Pronounced the word,--and the Earls descry, 600

 Well-pleased, the armed Company

 Marching down the banks of Were.

 Said fearless Norton to the pair

 Gone forth to greet him on the plain--

 "This meeting, noble Lords! looks fair,

 I bring with me a goodly train;

 Their hearts are with you: hill and dale

 Have helped us: Ure we crossed, and Swale,

 And horse and harness followed--see

 The best part of their Yeomanry! 610

 --Stand forth, my Sons!--these eight are mine,

 Whom to this service I commend;

 Which way soe'er our fate incline,

 These will be faithful to the end;

 They are my all"--voice failed him here--

 "My all save one, a Daughter dear!

 Whom I have left, Love's mildest birth,

 The meekest Child on this blessed earth.

 I had--but these are by my side,

 These Eight, and this is a day of pride! 620

 The time is ripe. With festive din

 Lo! how the people are flocking in,--

 Like hungry fowl to the feeder's hand

 When snow lies heavy upon the land."

 He spake bare truth; for far and near

 From every side came noisy swarms

 Of Peasants in their homely gear;

 And, mixed with these, to Brancepeth came

 Grave Gentry of estate and name,

 And Captains known for worth in arms 630

 And prayed the Earls in self-defence

 To rise, and prove their innocence.--

 "Rise, noble Earls, put forth your might

 For holy Church, and the People's right!"

 The Norton fixed, at this demand,

 His eye upon Northumberland,

 And said; "The Minds of Men will own

 No loyal rest while England's Crown

 Remains without an Heir, the bait

 Of strife and factions desperate; 640

 Who, paying deadly hate in kind

 Through all things else, in this can find

 A mutual hope, a common mind;

 And plot, and pant to overwhelm

 All ancient honour in the realm.

 --Brave Earls! to whose heroic veins

 Our noblest blood is given in trust,

 To you a suffering State complains,

 And ye must raise her from the dust.

 With wishes of still bolder scope 650

 On you we look, with dearest hope;

 Even for our Altars--for the prize,

 In Heaven, of life that never dies;

 For the old and holy Church we mourn,

 And must in joy to her return.

 Behold!"--and from his Son whose stand

 Was on his right, from that guardian hand

 He took the Banner, and unfurled

 The precious folds--"behold," said he,

 "The ransom of a sinful world; 660

 Let this your preservation be;

 The wounds of hands and feet and side,

 And the sacred Cross on which Jesus died.

 --This bring I from an ancient hearth,

 These Records wrought in pledge of love

 By hands of no ignoble birth,

 A Maid o'er whom the blessed Dove

 Vouchsafed in gentleness to brood

 While she the holy work pursued."

 "Uplift the Standard!" was the cry 670

 From all the listeners that stood round,

 "Plant it,--by this we live or die."

 The Norton ceased not for that sound,

 But said; "The prayer which ye have heard,

 Much-injured Earls! by these preferred,

 Is offered to the Saints, the sigh

 Of tens of thousands, secretly."

 "Uplift it!" cried once more the Band,

 And then a thoughtful pause ensued:

 "Uplift it!" said Northumberland-- 680

 Whereat, from all the multitude

 Who saw the Banner reared on high

 In all its dread emblazonry,

 A voice of uttermost joy brake out:

 The transport was rolled down the river of Were,

 And Durham, the time-honoured Durham, did hear,

 And the towers of Saint Cuthbert were stirred by the shout!

 Now was the North in arms:--they shine

 In warlike trim from Tweed to Tyne,

 At Percy's voice: and Neville sees 690

 His Followers gathering in from Tees,

 From Were, and all the little rills

 Concealed among the forked hills--

 Seven hundred Knights, Retainers all

 Of Neville, at their Master's call

 Had sate together in Raby Hall!

 Such strength that Earldom held of yore;

 Nor wanted at this time rich store

 Of well-appointed chivalry.

 --Not loth the sleepy lance to wield, 700

 And greet the old paternal shield,

 They heard the summons;--and, furthermore,

 Horsemen and Foot of each degree,

 Unbound by pledge of fealty,

 Appeared, with free and open hate

 Of novelties in Church and State;

 Knight, burgher, yeoman, and esquire;

 And Romish priest, in priest's attire.

 And thus, in arms, a zealous Band

 Proceeding under joint command, 710

 To Durham first their course they bear;

 And in Saint Cuthbert's ancient seat

 Sang mass,--and tore the book of prayer,--

 And trod the bible beneath their feet.

 Thence marching southward smooth and free

 "[They mustered their host at Wetherby](http://www.bartleby.com/145/ww34110.html),

 Full sixteen thousand fair to see,"

 The Choicest Warriors of the North!

 But none for beauty and for worth

 Like those eight Sons--who, in a ring, 720

 (Ripe men, or blooming in life's spring)

 Each with a lance, erect and tall,

 A falchion, and a buckler small,

 Stood by their Sire, on Clifford-moor,

 To guard the Standard which he bore.

 On foot they girt their Father round;

 And so will keep the appointed ground

 Where'er their march: no steed will he

 Henceforth bestride;--triumphantly,

 He stands upon the grassy sod, 730

 Trusting himself to the earth, and God.

 Rare sight to embolden and inspire!

 Proud was the field of Sons and Sire;

 Of him the most; and, sooth to say,

 No shape of man in all the array

 So graced the sunshine of that day.

 The monumental pomp of age

 Was with this goodly Personage;

 A stature undepressed in size,

 Unbent, which rather seemed to rise, 740

 In open victory o'er the weight

 Of seventy years, to loftier height;

 Magnific limbs of withered state;

 A face to fear and venerate;

 Eyes dark and strong; and on his head

 Bright locks of silver hair, thick spread,

 Which a brown morion half-concealed,

 Light as a hunter's of the field;

 And thus, with girdle round his waist,

 Whereon the Banner-staff might rest 750

 At need, he stood, advancing high

 The glittering, floating Pageantry.

 Who sees him?--thousands see, and One

 With unparticipated gaze;

 Who, 'mong those thousands, friend hath none,

 And treads in solitary ways.

 He, following wheresoe'er he might,

 Hath watched the Banner from afar,

 As shepherds watch a lonely star,

 Or mariners the distant light 760

 That guides them through a stormy night.

 And now, upon a chosen plot

 Of rising ground, yon heathy spot!

 He takes alone his far-off stand,

 With breast unmailed, unweaponed hand.

 Bold is his aspect; but his eye

 Is pregnant with anxiety,

 While, like a tutelary Power,

 He there stands fixed from hour to hour:

 Yet sometimes in more humble guise, 770

 Upon the turf-clad height he lies

 Stretched, herdsman-like, as if to bask

 In sunshine were his only task,

 Or by his mantle's help to find

 A shelter from the nipping wind:

 And thus, with short oblivion blest,

 His weary spirits gather rest.

 Again he lifts his eyes; and lo!

 The pageant glancing to and fro;

 And hope is wakened by the sight, 780

 He thence may learn, ere fall of night,

 Which way the tide is doomed to flow.

 To London were the Chieftains bent;

 But what avails the bold intent?

 A Royal army is gone forth

 To quell the RISING OF THE NORTH;

 They march with Dudley at their head,

 And, in seven days' space, will to York be led!--

 Can such a mighty Host be raised

 Thus suddenly, and brought so near? 790

 The Earls upon each other gazed,

 And Neville's cheek grew pale with fear;

 For, with a high and valiant name,

 He bore a heart of timid frame;

 And bold if both had been, yet they

 "[Against so many may not stay](http://www.bartleby.com/145/ww34110.html)."

 Back therefore will they hie to seize

 A strong Hold on the banks of Tees

 There wait a favourable hour,

 Until Lord Dacre with his power 800

 From Naworth come; and Howard's aid

 Be with them openly displayed.

 While through the Host, from man to man,

 A rumour of this purpose ran,

 The Standard trusting to the care

 Of him who heretofore did bear

 That charge, impatient Norton sought

 The Chieftains to unfold his thought,

 And thus abruptly spake;--"We yield

 (And can it be?) an unfought field!-- 810

 How oft has strength, the strength of heaven,

 To few triumphantly been given!

 Still do our very children boast

 [Of mitred Thurston--what a Host](http://www.bartleby.com/145/ww34111.html)

 He conquered!--Saw we not the Plain

 (And flying shall behold again)

 Where faith was proved?--while to battle moved

 The Standard, on the Sacred Wain

 That bore it, compassed round by a bold

 Fraternity of Barons old; 820

 And with those grey-haired champions stood,

 Under the saintly ensigns three,

 The infant Heir of Mowbray's blood--

 All confident of victory!--

 Shall Percy blush, then, for his name?

 Must Westmoreland be asked with shame

 Whose were the numbers, where the loss,

 [In that other day of Neville's Cross](http://www.bartleby.com/145/ww34112.html)?

 When the Prior of Durham with holy hand

 Raised, as the Vision gave command, 830

 Saint Cuthbert's Relic--far and near

 Kenned on the point of a lofty spear;

 While the Monks prayed in Maiden's Bower

 To God descending in his power.

 Less would not at our need be due

 To us, who war against the Untrue;--

 The delegates of Heaven we rise,

 Convoked the impious to chastise:

 We, we, the sanctities of old

 Would re-establish and uphold: 840

 Be warned"--His zeal the Chiefs confounded,

 But word was given, and the trumpet sounded:

 Back through the melancholy Host

 Went Norton, and resumed his post.

 Alas! thought he, and have I borne

 This Banner raised with joyful pride,

 This hope of all posterity,

 By those dread symbols sanctified;

 Thus to become at once the scorn

 Of babbling winds as they go by, 850

 A spot of shame to the sun's bright eye,

 To the light clouds a mockery!

 --"Even these poor eight of mine would stem--"

 Half to himself, and half to them

 He spake--"would stem, or quell, a force

 Ten times their number, man and horse:

 This by their own unaided might,

 Without their father in their sight,

 Without the Cause for which they fight;

 A Cause, which on a needful day 860

 Would breed us thousands brave as they."

 --So speaking, he his reverend head

 Raised towards that Imagery once more:

 But the familiar prospect shed

 Despondency unfelt before:

 A shock of intimations vain,

 Dismay, and superstitious pain,

 Fell on him, with the sudden thought

 Of her by whom the work was wrought:--

 Oh wherefore was her countenance bright 870

 With love divine and gentle light?

 She would not, could not, disobey,

 But her Faith leaned another way.

 Ill tears she wept; I saw them fall,

 I overheard her as she spake

 Sad words to that mute Animal,

 The White Doe, in the hawthorn brake;

 She steeped, but not for Jesu's sake,

 This Cross in tears: by her, and One

 Unworthier far we are undone-- 880

 Her recreant Brother--he prevailed

 Over that tender Spirit--assailed

 Too oft, alas! by her whose head

 In the cold grave hath long been laid:

 She first, in reason's dawn beguiled

 Her docile, unsuspecting Child:

 Far back--far back my mind must go

 To reach the well-spring of this woe!

 While thus he brooded, music sweet

 Of border tunes was played to cheer 890

 The footsteps of a quick retreat;

 But Norton lingered in the rear,

 Stung with sharp thoughts; and ere the last

 From his distracted brain was cast,

 Before his Father, Francis stood,

 And spake in firm and earnest mood.

 "Though here I bend a suppliant knee

 In reverence, and unarmed, I bear

 In your indignant thoughts my share;

 Am grieved this backward march to see 900

 So careless and disorderly.

 I scorn your Chiefs--men who would lead,

 And yet want courage at their need:

 Then look at them with open eyes!

 Deserve they further sacrifice?--

 If--when they shrink, nor dare oppose

 In open field their gathering foes,

 (And fast, from this decisive day,

 Yon multitude must melt away;)

 If now I ask a grace not claimed 910

 While ground was left for hope; unblamed

 Be an endeavour that can do

 No injury to them or you.

 My Father! I would help to find

 A place of shelter, till the rage

 Of cruel men do like the wind

 Exhaust itself and sink to rest;

 Be Brother now to Brother joined!

 Admit me in the equipage

 Of your misfortunes, that at least, 920

 Whatever fate remain behind,

 I may bear witness in my breast

 To your nobility of mind!"

 "Thou Enemy, my bane and blight!

 Oh! bold to fight the Coward's fight

 Against all good"--but why declare,

 At length, the issue of a prayer

 Which love had prompted, yielding scope

 Too free to one bright moment's hope?

 Suffice it that the Son, who strove 930

 With fruitless effort to allay

 That passion, prudently gave way;

 Nor did he turn aside to prove

 His Brothers' wisdom or their love--

 But calmly from the spot withdrew;

 His best endeavours to renew,

 Should e'er a kindlier time ensue.

 CANTO FOURTH

 'Tis night: in silence looking down,

 The Moon, from cloudless ether, sees

 A Camp, and a beleaguered Town, 940

 And Castle, like a stately crown

 On the steep rocks of winding Tees;--

 And southward far, with moor between,

 Hill-top, and flood, and forest green,

 The bright Moon sees that valley small

 Where Rylstone's old sequestered Hall

 A venerable image yields

 Of quiet to the neighbouring fields;

 While from one pillared chimney breathes

 The smoke, and mounts in silver wreaths. 950

 --The courts are hushed;--for timely sleep

 The greyhounds to their kennel creep;

 The peacock in the broad ash tree

 Aloft is roosted for the night,

 He who in proud prosperity

 Of colours manifold and bright

 Walked round, affronting the daylight;

 And higher still, above the bower

 Where he is perched, from yon lone Tower

 The hall-clock in the clear moonshine 960

 With glittering finger points at nine.

 Ah! who could think that sadness here

 Hath any sway? or pain, or fear?

 A soft and lulling sound is heard

 Of streams inaudible by day;

 The garden pool's dark surface, stirred

 By the night insects in their play,

 Breaks into dimples small and bright;

 A thousand, thousand rings of light

 That shape themselves and disappear 970

 Almost as soon as seen:--and lo!

 Not distant far, the milk-white Doe--

 The same who quietly was feeding

 On the green herb, and nothing heeding,

 When Francis, uttering to the Maid

 His last words in the yew-tree shade,

 Involved whate'er by love was brought

 Out of his heart, or crossed his thought,

 Or chance presented to his eye,

 In one sad sweep of destiny-- 980

 The same fair Creature, who hath found

 Her way into forbidden ground;

 Where now--within this spacious plot

 For pleasure made, a goodly spot,

 With lawns and beds of flowers, and shades

 Of trellis-work in long arcades,

 And cirque and crescent framed by wall

 Of close-clipt foliage green and tall,

 Converging walks, and fountains gay,

 And terraces in trim array-- 990

 Beneath yon cypress spiring high,

 With pine and cedar spreading wide

 Their darksome boughs on either side,

 In open moonlight doth she lie;

 Happy as others of her kind,

 That, far from human neighbourhood,

 Range unrestricted as the wind,

 Through park, or chase, or savage wood.

 But see the consecrated Maid

 Emerging from a cedar shade 1000

 To open moonshine, where the Doe

 Beneath the cypress-spire is laid;

 Like a patch of April snow--

 Upon a bed of herbage green,

 Lingering in a woody glade

 Or behind a rocky screen--

 Lonely relic! which, if seen

 By the shepherd, is passed by

 With an inattentive eye.

 Nor more regard doth She bestow 1010

 Upon the uncomplaining Doe

 Now couched at ease, though oft this day

 Not unperplexed nor free from pain,

 When she had tried, and tried in vain,

 Approaching in her gentle way,

 To win some look of love, or gain

 Encouragement to sport or play

 Attempts which still the heart-sick Maid

 Rejected, or with slight repaid.

 Yet Emily is soothed;--the breeze 1020

 Came fraught with kindly sympathies.

 As she approached yon rustic Shed

 Hung with late-flowering woodbine, spread

 Along the walls and overhead,

 The fragrance of the breathing flowers

 Revived a memory of those hours

 When here, in this remote alcove,

 (While from the pendent woodbine came

 Like odours, sweet as if the same)

 A fondly-anxious Mother strove 1030

 To teach her salutary fears

 And mysteries above her years.

 Yes, she is soothed: an Image faint,

 And yet not faint--a presence bright

 Returns to her--that blessed Saint

 Who with mild looks and language mild

 Instructed here her darling Child,

 While yet a prattler on the knee,

 To worship in simplicity

 The invisible God, and take for guide 1040

 The faith reformed and purified.

 'Tis flown--the Vision, and the sense

 Of that beguiling influence,

 "But oh! thou Angel from above,

 Mute Spirit of maternal love,

 That stood'st before my eyes, more clear

 Than ghosts are fabled to appear

 Sent upon embassies of fear;

 As thou thy presence hast to me

 Vouchsafed, in radiant ministry 1050

 Descend on Francis; nor forbear

 To greet him with a voice, and say;--

 'If hope be a rejected stay,

 'Do thou, my christian Son, beware

 'Of that most lamentable snare,

 'The self-reliance of despair!'"

 Then from within the embowered retreat

 Where she had found a grateful seat

 Perturbed she issues. She will go!

 Herself will follow to the war, 1060

 And clasp her Father's knees;--ah, no!

 She meets the insuperable bar,

 The injunction by her Brother laid;

 His parting charge--but ill obeyed--

 That interdicted all debate,

 All prayer for this cause or for that;

 All efforts that would turn aside

 The headstrong current of their fate:

 'Her duty is to stand and wait;'

 In resignation to abide 1070

 The shock, AND FINALLY SECURE

 O'ER PAIN AND GRIEF A TRIUMPH PURE.

 --She feels it, and her pangs are checked.

 But now, as silently she paced

 The turf, and thought by thought was chased,

 Came One who, with sedate respect,

 Approached, and, greeting her, thus spake;

 "An old man's privilege I take:

 Dark is the time--a woeful day!

 Dear daughter of affliction, say 1080

 How can I serve you? point the way."

 "Rights have you, and may well be bold;

 You with my Father have grown old

 In friendship--strive--for his sake go--

 Turn from us all the coming woe:

 This would I beg; but on my mind

 A passive stillness is enjoined.

 On you, if room for mortal aid

 Be left, is no restriction laid;

 You not forbidden to recline 1090

 With hope upon the Will divine."

 "Hope," said the old Man, "must abide

 With all of us, whate'er betide.

 In Craven's Wilds is many a den,

 To shelter persecuted men:

 Far under ground is many a cave,

 Where they might lie as in the grave,

 Until this storm hath ceased to rave:

 Or let them cross the River Tweed,

 And be at once from peril freed!" 1100

 "Ah tempt me not!" she faintly sighed;

 "I will not counsel nor exhort,

 With my condition satisfied;

 But you, at least, may make report

 Of what befalls;--be this your task--

 This may be done;--'tis all I ask!"

 She spake--and from the Lady's sight

 The Sire, unconscious of his age,

 Departed promptly as a Page

 Bound on some errand of delight. 1110

 --The noble Francis--wise as brave,

 Thought he, may want not skill to save.

 With hopes in tenderness concealed,

 Unarmed he followed to the field;

 Him will I seek: the insurgent Powers

 Are now besieging Barnard's Towers,--

 "Grant that the Moon which shines this night

 May guide them in a prudent flight!"

 But quick the turns of chance and change,

 And knowledge has a narrow range; 1120

 Whence idle fears, and needless pain,

 And wishes blind, and efforts vain.--

 The Moon may shine, but cannot be

 Their guide in flight--already she

 Hath witnessed their captivity.

 She saw the desperate assault

 Upon that hostile castle made;--

 But dark and dismal is the vault

 Where Norton and his sons are laid!

 Disastrous issue!--he had said 1130

 "This night yon faithless Towers must yield,

 Or we for ever quit the field.

 --Neville is utterly dismayed,

 For promise fails of Howard's aid;

 And Dacre to our call replies

 That 'he' is unprepared to rise.

 My heart is sick;--this weary pause

 Must needs be fatal to our cause.

 The breach is open--on the wall,

 This night, the Banner shall be planted!" 1140

 --'Twas done: his Sons were with him--all;

 They belt him round with hearts undaunted

 And others follow;--Sire and Son

 Leap down into the court;--"'Tis won"--

 They shout aloud--but Heaven decreed

 That with their joyful shout should close

 The triumph of a desperate deed

 Which struck with terror friends and foes!

 The friend shrinks back--the foe recoils

 From Norton and his filial band; 1150

 But they, now caught within the toils,

 Against a thousand cannot stand;--

 The foe from numbers courage drew,

 And overpowered that gallant few.

 "A rescue for the Standard!" cried

 The Father from within the walls;

 But, see, the sacred Standard falls!--

 Confusion through the Camp spread wide:

 Some fled; and some their fears detained:

 But ere the Moon had sunk to rest 1160

 In her pale chambers of the west,

 Of that rash levy nought remained.

 CANTO FIFTH

 HIGH on a point of rugged ground

 Among the wastes of Rylstone Fell

 Above the loftiest ridge or mound

 Where foresters or shepherds dwell,

 [An edifice of warlike frame](http://www.bartleby.com/145/ww34113.html)

 Stands single--Norton Tower its name--

 It fronts all quarters, and looks round

 O'er path and road, and plain and dell, 1170

 Dark moor, and gleam of pool and stream,

 Upon a prospect without bound.

 The summit of this bold ascent--

 Though bleak and bare, and seldom free

 As Pendle-hill or Pennygent

 From wind, or frost, or vapours wet--

 Had often heard the sound of glee

 When there the youthful Nortons met,

 To practise games and archery:

 How proud and happy they! the crowd 1180

 Of Lookers-on how pleased and proud!

 And from the scorching noon-tide sun,

 From showers, or when the prize was won,

 They to the Tower withdrew, and there

 Would mirth run round, with generous fare;

 And the stern old Lord of Rylstone-hall

 Was happiest, proudest, of them all!

 But now, his Child, with anguish pale,

 Upon the height walks to and fro;

 'Tis well that she hath heard the tale, 1190

 Received the bitterness of woe:

 For she 'had' hoped, had hoped and feared,

 Such rights did feeble nature claim;

 And oft her steps had hither steered,

 Though not unconscious of self-blame;

 For she her brother's charge revered,

 His farewell words; and by the same,

 Yea by her brother's very name,

 Had, in her solitude, been cheered.

 Beside the lonely watch-tower stood 1200

 That grey-haired Man of gentle blood,

 Who with her Father had grown old

 In friendship; rival hunters they,

 And fellow warriors in their day;

 To Rylstone he the tidings brought;

 Then on this height the Maid had sought,

 And, gently as he could, had told

 The end of that dire Tragedy,

 Which it had been his lot to see.

 To him the Lady turned; "You said 1210

 That Francis lives, 'he' is not dead?"

 "Your noble brother hath been spared;

 To take his life they have not dared;

 On him and on his high endeavour

 The light of praise shall shine for ever!

 Nor did he (such Heaven's will) in vain

 His solitary course maintain;

 Not vainly struggled in the might

 Of duty, seeing with clear sight;

 He was their comfort to the last, 1220

 Their joy till every pang was past.

 I witnessed when to York they came--

 What, Lady, if their feet were tied;

 They might deserve a good Man's blame;

 But marks of infamy and shame--

 These were their triumph, these their pride;

 Nor wanted 'mid the pressing crowd

 Deep feeling, that found utterance loud,

 'Lo, Francis comes,' there were who cried,

 'A Prisoner once, but now set free! 1230

 'Tis well, for he the worst defied

 Through force of natural piety;

 He rose not in this quarrel; he,

 For concord's sake and England's good,

 Suit to his Brothers often made

 With tears, and of his Father prayed--

 And when he had in vain withstood

 Their purpose--then did he divide,

 He parted from them; but at their side

 Now walks in unanimity. 1240

 Then peace to cruelty and scorn,

 While to the prison they are borne,

 Peace, peace to all indignity!'

 And so in Prison were they laid--

 Oh hear me, hear me, gentle Maid,

 For I am come with power to bless,

 By scattering gleams, through your distress,

 Of a redeeming happiness.

 Me did a reverent pity move

 And privilege of ancient love; 1250

 And, in your service, making bold,

 Entrance I gained to that stronghold.

 Your Father gave me cordial greeting;

 But to his purposes, that burned

 Within him, instantly returned:

 He was commanding and entreating,

 And said--'We need not stop, my Son!

 Thoughts press, and time is hurrying on'--

 And so to Francis he renewed

 His words, more calmly thus pursued. 1260

 'Might this our enterprise have sped,

 Change wide and deep the Land had seen,

 A renovation from the dead,

 A spring-tide of immortal green:

 The darksome altars would have blazed

 Like stars when clouds are rolled away;

 Salvation to all eyes that gazed,

 Once more the Rood had been upraised

 To spread its arms, and stand for aye.

 Then, then--had I survived to see 1270

 New life in Bolton Priory;

 The voice restored, the eye of Truth

 Re-opened that inspired my youth;

 To see her in her pomp arrayed--

 This Banner (for such vow I made)

 Should on the consecrated breast

 Of that same Temple have found rest:

 I would myself have hung it high,

 Fit offering of glad victory!

 A shadow of such thought remains 1280

 To cheer this sad and pensive time;

 A solemn fancy yet sustains

 One feeble Being--bids me climb

 Even to the last--one effort more

 To attest my Faith, if not restore.

 Hear then,' said he, 'while I impart,

 My Son, the last wish of my heart.

 The Banner strive thou to regain;

 And, if the endeavour prove not vain,

 Bear it--to whom if not to thee 1290

 Shall I this lonely thought consign?--

 Bear it to Bolton Priory,

 And lay it on Saint Mary's shrine;

 To wither in the sun and breeze

 'Mid those decaying sanctities.

 There let at least the gift be laid,

 The testimony there displayed;

 Bold proof that with no selfish aim,

 But for lost Faith and Christ's dear name,

 I helmeted a brow though white, 1300

 And took a place in all men's sight;

 Yea offered up this noble Brood,

 This fair unrivalled Brotherhood,

 And turned away from thee, my Son!

 And left--but be the rest unsaid,

 The name untouched, the tear unshed;--

 My wish is known, and I have done:

 Now promise, grant this one request,

 This dying prayer, and be thou blest!'

 Then Francis answered--'Trust thy Son, 1310

 For, with God's will, it shall be done!'--

 The pledge obtained, the solemn word

 Thus scarcely given, a noise was heard,

 And Officers appeared in state

 To lead the prisoners to their fate.

 They rose, oh! wherefore should I fear

 To tell, or, Lady, you to hear?

 They rose--embraces none were given--

 They stood like trees when earth and heaven

 Are calm; they knew each other's worth, 1320

 And reverently the Band went forth.

 They met, when they had reached the door,

 One with profane and harsh intent

 Placed there--that he might go before

 And, with that rueful Banner borne

 Aloft in sign of taunting scorn,

 Conduct them to their punishment:

 So cruel Sussex, unrestrained

 By human feeling, had ordained.

 The unhappy Banner Francis saw, 1330

 And, with a look of calm command

 Inspiring universal awe,

 He took it from the soldier's hand;

 And all the people that stood round

 Confirmed the deed in peace profound.

 --High transport did the Father shed

 Upon his Son--and they were led,

 Led on, and yielded up their breath;

 Together died, a happy death!--

 But Francis, soon as he had braved 1340

 That insult, and the Banner saved,

 Athwart the unresisting tide

 Of the spectators occupied

 In admiration or dismay,

 Bore instantly his Charge away."

 These things, which thus had in the sight

 And hearing passed of Him who stood

 With Emily, on the Watch-tower height,

 In Rylstone's woeful neighbourhood,

 He told; and oftentimes with voice 1350

 Of power to comfort or rejoice;

 For deepest sorrows that aspire,

 Go high, no transport ever higher.

 "Yes--God is rich in mercy," said

 The old Man to the silent Maid,

 "Yet, Lady! shines, through this black night,

 One star of aspect heavenly bright;

 Your Brother lives--he lives--is come

 Perhaps already to his home;

 Then let us leave this dreary place." 1360

 She yielded, and with gentle pace,

 Though without one uplifted look,

 To Rylstone-hall her way she took.

 CANTO SIXTH

 WHY comes not Francis?--From the doleful City

 He fled,--and, in his flight, could hear

 The death-sounds of the Minster-bell:

 That sullen stroke pronounced farewell

 To Marmaduke, cut off from pity!

 To Ambrose that! and then a knell

 For him, the sweet half-opened Flower! 1370

 For all--all dying in one hour!

 --Why comes not Francis? Thoughts of love

 Should bear him to his Sister dear

 With the fleet motion of a dove;

 Yea, like a heavenly messenger

 Of speediest wing, should he appear.

 Why comes he not?--for westward fast

 Along the plain of York he past;

 Reckless of what impels or leads,

 Unchecked he hurries on;--nor heeds 1380

 The sorrow, through the Villages,

 Spread by triumphant cruelties

 Of vengeful military force,

 And punishment without remorse.

 He marked not, heard not, as he fled

 All but the suffering heart was dead

 For him abandoned to blank awe,

 To vacancy, and horror strong:

 And the first object which he saw,

 With conscious sight, as he swept along-- 1390

 It was the Banner in his hand!

 He felt--and made a sudden stand.

 He looked about like one betrayed:

 What hath he done? what promise made?

 Oh weak, weak moment! to what end

 Can such a vain oblation tend,

 And he the Bearer?--Can he go

 Carrying this instrument of woe,

 And find, find anywhere, a right

 To excuse him in his Country's sight? 1400

 No; will not all men deem the change

 A downward course, perverse and strange?

 Here is it;--but how? when? must she,

 The unoffending Emily,

 Again this piteous object see?

 Such conflict long did he maintain,

 Nor liberty nor rest could gain:

 His own life into danger brought

 By this sad burden--even that thought,

 Exciting self-suspicion strong 1410

 Swayed the brave man to his wrong.

 And how--unless it were the sense

 Of all-disposing Providence,

 Its will unquestionably shown--

 How has the Banner clung so fast

 To a palsied, and unconscious hand;

 Clung to the hand to which it passed

 Without impediment? And why,

 But that Heaven's purpose might be known,

 Doth now no hindrance meet his eye, 1420

 No intervention, to withstand

 Fulfilment of a Father's prayer

 Breathed to a Son forgiven, and blest

 When all resentments were at rest,

 And life in death laid the heart bare?--

 Then, like a spectre sweeping by,

 Rushed through his mind the prophecy

 Of utter desolation made

 To Emily in the yew-tree shade:

 He sighed, submitting will and power 1430

 To the stern embrace of that grasping hour.

 "No choice is left, the deed is mine--

 Dead are they, dead!--and I will go,

 And, for their sakes, come weal or woe,

 Will lay the Relic on the shrine."

 So forward with a steady will

 He went, and traversed plain and hill;

 And up the vale of Wharf his way

 Pursued;--and, at the dawn of day,

 Attained a summit whence his eyes 1440

 Could see the Tower of Bolton rise.

 There Francis for a moment's space

 Made halt--but hark! a noise behind

 Of horsemen at an eager pace!

 He heard, and with misgiving mind.

 --'Tis Sir George Bowes who leads the Band:

 They come, by cruel Sussex sent;

 Who, when the Nortons from the hand

 Of death had drunk their punishment,

 Bethought him, angry and ashamed, 1450

 How Francis, with the Banner claimed

 As his own charge, had disappeared,

 By all the standers-by revered.

 His whole bold carriage (which had quelled

 Thus far the Opposer, and repelled

 All censure, enterprise so bright

 That even bad men had vainly striven

 Against that overcoming light)

 Was then reviewed, and prompt word given,

 That to what place soever fled 1460

 He should be seized, alive or dead.

 The troop of horse have gained the height

 Where Francis stood in open sight.

 They hem him round--"Behold the proof,"

 They cried, "the Ensign in his hand!

 'He' did not arm, he walked aloof!

 For why?--to save his Father's land;--

 Worst Traitor of them all is he,

 A Traitor dark and cowardly!"

 "I am no Traitor," Francis said, 1470

 "Though this unhappy freight I bear;

 And must not part with. But beware;--

 Err not by hasty zeal misled,

 Nor do a suffering Spirit wrong,

 Whose self-reproaches are too strong!"

 At this he from the beaten road

 Retreated towards a brake of thorn,

 That like a place of vantage showed;

 And there stood bravely, though forlorn.

 In self-defence with warlike brow 1480

 He stood,--nor weaponless was now;

 He from a Soldier's hand had snatched

 A spear,--and, so protected, watched

 The Assailants, turning round and round;

 But from behind with treacherous wound

 A Spearman brought him to the ground.

 The guardian lance, as Francis fell,

 Dropped from him; but his other hand

 The Banner clenched; till, from out the Band,

 One, the most eager for the prize, 1490

 Rushed in; and--while, O grief to tell!

 A glimmering sense still left, with eyes

 Unclosed the noble Francis lay--

 Seized it, as hunters seize their prey;

 But not before the warm life-blood

 Had tinged more deeply, as it flowed,

 The wounds the broidered Banner showed,

 Thy fatal work, O Maiden, innocent as good!

 Proudly the Horsemen bore away

 The Standard; and where Francis lay 1500

 There was he left alone, unwept,

 And for two days unnoticed slept.

 For at that time bewildering fear

 Possessed the country, far and near;

 But, on the third day, passing by

 One of the Norton Tenantry

 Espied the uncovered Corse; the Man

 Shrunk as he recognised the face,

 And to the nearest homesteads ran

 And called the people to the place. 1510

 --How desolate is Rylstone-hall!

 This was the instant thought of all;

 And if the lonely Lady there

 Should be; to her they cannot bear

 This weight of anguish and despair.

 So, when upon sad thoughts had prest

 Thoughts sadder still, they deemed it best

 That, if the Priest should yield assent

 And no one hinder their intent,

 Then, they, for Christian pity's sake, 1520

 In holy ground a grave would make;

 And straightway buried he should be

 In the Churchyard of the Priory.

 Apart, some little space, was made

 The grave where Francis must be laid.

 In no confusion or neglect

 This did they,--but in pure respect

 That he was born of gentle blood;

 And that there was no neighbourhood

 Of kindred for him in that ground: 1530

 So to the Churchyard they are bound,

 Bearing the body on a bier;

 And psalms they sing--a holy sound

 That hill and vale with sadness hear.

 But Emily hath raised her head,

 And is again disquieted;

 She must behold!--so many gone,

 Where is the solitary One?

 And forth from Rylstone-hall stepped she,--

 To seek her Brother forth she went, 1540

 And tremblingly her course she bent

 Toward Bolton's ruined Priory.

 She comes, and in the vale hath heard

 The funeral dirge;--she sees the knot

 Of people, sees them in one spot--

 And darting like a wounded bird

 She reached the grave, and with her breast

 Upon the ground received the rest,--

 The consummation, the whole ruth

 And sorrow of this final truth! 1550

 CANTO SEVENTH

 "Powers there are

 That touch each other to the quick--in modes

 Which the gross world no sense hath to perceive,

 No soul to dream of."

 THOU Spirit, whose angelic hand

 Was to the harp a strong command,

 Called the submissive strings to wake

 In glory for this Maiden's sake,

 Say, Spirit! whither hath she fled

 To hide her poor afflicted head?

 What mighty forest in its gloom

 Enfolds her?--is a rifted tomb

 Within the wilderness her seat?

 Some island which the wild waves beat-- 1560

 Is that the Sufferer's last retreat?

 Or some aspiring rock, that shrouds

 Its perilous front in mists and clouds?

 High-climbing rock, low sunless dale,

 Sea, desert, what do these avail?

 Oh take her anguish and her fears

 Into a deep recess of years!

 'Tis done;--[despoil and desolation](http://www.bartleby.com/145/ww34114.html)

 O'er Rylstone's fair domain have blown;

 Pools, terraces, and walks are sown 1570

 With weeds; the bowers are overthrown,

 Or have given way to slow mutation,

 While, in their ancient habitation

 The Norton name hath been unknown.

 The lordly Mansion of its pride

 Is stripped; the ravage hath spread wide

 Through park and field, a perishing

 That mocks the gladness of the Spring!

 And, with this silent gloom agreeing,

 Appears a joyless human Being, 1580

 Of aspect such as if the waste

 Were under her dominion placed.

 Upon a primrose bank, her throne

 Of quietness, she sits alone;

 Among the ruins of a wood,

 Erewhile a covert bright and green,

 And where full many a brave tree stood,

 That used to spread its boughs, and ring

 With the sweet bird's carolling.

 Behold her, like a virgin Queen, 1590

 Neglecting in imperial state

 These outward images of fate,

 And carrying inward a serene

 And perfect sway, through many a thought

 Of chance and change, that hath been brought

 To the subjection of a holy,

 Though stern and rigorous, melancholy!

 The like authority, with grace

 Of awfulness, is in her face,--

 There hath she fixed it; yet it seems 1600

 To o'ershadow by no native right

 That face, which cannot lose the gleams,

 Lose utterly the tender gleams,

 Of gentleness and meek delight,

 And loving-kindness ever bright:

 Such is her sovereign mien:--her dress

 (A vest with woollen cincture tied,

 A hood of mountain-wool undyed)

 Is homely,--fashioned to express

 A wandering Pilgrim's humbleness. 1610

 And she 'hath' wandered, long and far,

 Beneath the light of sun and star;

 Hath roamed in trouble and in grief,

 Driven forward like a withered leaf,

 Yea like a ship at random blown

 To distant places and unknown.

 But now she dares to seek a haven

 Among her native wilds of Craven;

 Hath seen again her Father's roof,

 And put her fortitude to proof; 1620

 The mighty sorrow hath been borne,

 And she is thoroughly forlorn:

 Her soul doth in itself stand fast,

 Sustained by memory of the past

 And strength of Reason; held above

 The infirmities of mortal love;

 Undaunted, lofty, calm, and stable,

 And awfully impenetrable.

 And so--beneath a mouldered tree,

 A self-surviving leafless oak 1630

 By unregarded age from stroke

 Of ravage saved--sate Emily.

 There did she rest, with head reclined,

 Herself most like a stately flower,

 (Such have I seen) whom chance of birth

 Hath separated from its kind,

 To live and die in a shady bower,

 Single on the gladsome earth.

 When, with a noise like distant thunder,

 A troop of deer came sweeping by; 1640

 And, suddenly, behold a wonder!

 For One, among those rushing deer,

 A single One, in mid career

 Hath stopped, and fixed her large full eye

 Upon the Lady Emily;

 A Doe most beautiful, clear-white,

 A radiant creature, silver-bright!

 Thus checked, a little while it stayed;

 A little thoughtful pause it made;

 And then advanced with stealth-like pace, 1650

 Drew softly near her, and more near--

 Looked round--but saw no cause for fear;

 So to her feet the Creature came,

 And laid its head upon her knee,

 And looked into the Lady's face,

 A look of pure benignity,

 And fond unclouded memory.

 It is, thought Emily, the same,

 The very Doe of other years!--

 The pleading look the Lady viewed, 1660

 And, by her gushing thoughts subdued,

 She melted into tears--

 A flood of tears, that flowed apace,

 Upon the happy Creature's face.

 Oh, moment ever blest! O Pair

 Beloved of Heaven, Heaven's chosen care,

 This was for you a precious greeting;

 And may it prove a fruitful meeting!

 Joined are they, and the sylvan Doe

 Can she depart? can she forego 1670

 The Lady, once her playful peer,

 And now her sainted Mistress dear?

 And will not Emily receive

 This lovely chronicler of things

 Long past, delights and sorrowings?

 Lone Sufferer! will not she believe

 The promise in that speaking face;

 And welcome, as a gift of grace,

 The saddest thought the Creature brings?

 That day, the first of a re-union 1680

 Which was to teem with high communion,

 That day of balmy April weather,

 They tarried in the wood together.

 And when, ere fall of evening dew,

 She from her sylvan haunt withdrew,

 The White Doe tracked with faithful pace

 The Lady to her dwelling-place;

 That nook where, on paternal ground,

 A habitation she had found,

 The Master of whose humble board 1690

 Once owned her Father for his Lord;

 A hut, by tufted trees defended,

 Where Rylstone brook with Wharf is blended.

 When Emily by morning light

 Went forth, the Doe stood there in sight.

 She shrunk:--with one frail shock of pain

 Received and followed by a prayer,

 She saw the Creature once again;

 Shun will she not, she feels, will bear;--

 But, wheresoever she looked round, 1700

 All now was trouble-haunted ground;

 And therefore now she deems it good

 Once more this restless neighbourhood

 To leave.--Unwooed, yet unforbidden,

 The White Doe followed up the vale,

 Up to another cottage, hidden

 [In the deep fork of Amerdale](http://www.bartleby.com/145/ww34115.html);

 And there may Emily restore

 Herself, in spots unseen before.

 --Why tell of mossy rock, or tree, 1710

 By lurking Dernbrook's pathless side,

 Haunts of a strengthening amity

 That calmed her, cheered, and fortified?

 For she hath ventured now to read

 Of time, and place, and thought, and deed--

 Endless history that lies

 In her silent Follower's eyes;

 Who with a power like human reason

 Discerns the favourable season,

 Skilled to approach or to retire,-- 1720

 From looks conceiving her desire;

 From look, deportment, voice, or mien,

 That vary to the heart within.

 If she too passionately wreathed

 Her arms, or over-deeply breathed,

 Walked quick or slowly, every mood

 In its degree was understood;

 Then well may their accord be true,

 And kindliest intercourse ensue.

 --Oh! surely 'twas a gentle rousing 1730

 When she by sudden glimpse espied

 The White Doe on the mountain browsing,

 Or in the meadow wandered wide!

 How pleased, when down the Straggler sank

 Beside her, on some sunny bank!

 How soothed, when in thick bower enclosed,

 They, like a nested pair, reposed!

 Fair Vision! when it crossed the Maid

 Within some rocky cavern laid,

 The dark cave's portal gliding by, 1740

 White as whitest cloud on high

 Floating through the azure sky.

 --What now is left for pain or fear?

 That Presence, dearer and more dear,

 While they, side by side, were straying,

 And the shepherd's pipe was playing,

 Did now a very gladness yield

 At morning to the dewy field,

 And with a deeper peace endued

 The hour of moonlight solitude. 1750

 With her Companion, in such frame

 Of mind, to Rylstone back she came;

 And, ranging through the wasted groves,

 Received the memory of old loves,

 Undisturbed and undistrest,

 Into a soul which now was blest

 With a soft spring-day of holy,

 Mild, and grateful, melancholy:

 Not sunless gloom or unenlightened,

 But by tender fancies brightened. 1760

 [When the bells of Rylstone played](http://www.bartleby.com/145/ww34116.html)

 Their sabbath music--"God us ayde!"

 That was the sound they seemed to speak;

 Inscriptive legend which I ween

 May on those holy bells be seen,

 That legend and her Grandsire's name;

 And oftentimes the Lady meek

 Had in her childhood read the same;

 Words which she slighted at that day;

 But now, when such sad change was wrought, 1770

 And of that lonely name she thought--

 The bells of Rylstone seemed to say,

 While she sate listening in the shade,

 With vocal music, "God us ayde;"

 And all the hills were glad to bear

 Their part in this effectual prayer.

 Nor lacked she Reason's firmest power;

 But with the White Doe at her side

 Up would she climb to Norton Tower,

 And thence look round her far and wide, 1780

 Her fate there measuring;--all is stilled,--

 The weak One hath subdued her heart;

 Behold the prophecy fulfilled,

 Fulfilled, and she sustains her part!

 But here her Brother's words have failed;

 Here hath a milder doom prevailed;

 That she, of him and all bereft,

 Hath yet this faithful Partner left;

 This one Associate, that disproves

 His words, remains for her, and loves. 1790

 If tears are shed, they do not fall

 For loss of him--for one, or all;

 Yet, sometimes, sometimes doth she weep

 Moved gently in her soul's soft sleep;

 A few tears down her cheek descend

 For this her last and living Friend.

 Bless, tender Hearts, their mutual lot,

 And bless for both this savage spot;

 Which Emily doth sacred hold

 For reasons dear and manifold-- 1800

 Here hath she, here before her sight,

 Close to the summit of this height,

 [The grassy rock-encircled Pound](http://www.bartleby.com/145/ww34117.html)

 In which the Creature first was found.

 So beautiful the timid Thrall

 (A spotless Youngling white as foam)

 Her youngest Brother brought it home;

 The youngest, then a lusty boy,

 Bore it, or led, to Rylstone-hall

 With heart brimful of pride and joy! 1810

 But most to Bolton's sacred Pile,

 On favouring nights, she loved to go;

 There ranged through cloister, court, and aisle,

 Attended by the soft-paced Doe;

 Nor feared she in the still moonshine

 To look upon Saint Mary's shrine;

 Nor on the lonely turf that showed

 Where Francis slept in his last abode.

 For that she came; there oft she sate

 Forlorn, but not disconsolate: 1820

 And, when she from the abyss returned

 Of thought, she neither shrunk nor mourned;

 Was happy that she lived to greet

 Her mute Companion as it lay

 In love and pity at her feet;

 How happy in its turn to meet

 The recognition! the mild glance

 Beamed from that gracious countenance;

 Communication, like the ray

 Of a new morning, to the nature 1830

 And prospects of the inferior Creature!

 A mortal Song we sing, by dower

 Encouraged of celestial power;

 Power which the viewless Spirit shed

 By whom we were first visited;

 Whose voice we heard, whose hand and wings

 Swept like a breeze the conscious strings,

 When, left in solitude, erewhile

 We stood before this ruined Pile,

 And, quitting unsubstantial dreams, 1840

 Sang in this Presence kindred themes;

 Distress and desolation spread

 Through human hearts, and pleasure dead,--

 Dead--but to live again on earth,

 A second and yet nobler birth;

 Dire overthrow, and yet how high

 The re-ascent in sanctity!

 From fair to fairer; day by day

 A more divine and loftier way!

 Even such this blessed Pilgrim trod, 1850

 By sorrow lifted towards her God;

 Uplifted to the purest sky

 Of undisturbed mortality.

 Her own thoughts loved she; and could bend

 A dear look to her lowly Friend;

 There stopped; her thirst was satisfied

 With what this innocent spring supplied:

 Her sanction inwardly she bore,

 And stood apart from human cares:

 But to the world returned no more, 1860

 Although with no unwilling mind

 Help did she give at need, and joined

 The Wharfdale peasants in their prayers.

 At length, thus faintly, faintly tied

 To earth, she was set free, and died.

 Thy soul, exalted Emily,

 Maid of the blasted family,

 Rose to the God from whom it came!

 --In Rylstone Church her mortal frame

 Was buried by her Mother's side. 1870

 Most glorious sunset! and a ray

 Survives--the twilight of this day--

 In that fair Creature whom the fields

 Support, and whom the forest shields;

 Who, having filled a holy place,

 Partakes, in her degree, Heaven's grace;

 And bears a memory and a mind

 Raised far above the law of kind;

 Haunting the spots with lonely cheer

 Which her dear Mistress once held dear: 1880

 Loves most what Emily loved most--

 The enclosure of this churchyard ground;

 Here wanders like a gliding ghost,

 And every sabbath here is found;

 Comes with the people when the bells

 Are heard among the moorland dells,

 Finds entrance through yon arch, where way

 Lies open on the sabbath-day;

 Here walks amid the mournful waste

 Of prostrate altars, shrines defaced, 1890

 And floors encumbered with rich show

 Of fret-work imagery laid low;

 Paces softly, or makes halt,

 By fractured cell, or tomb, or vault;

 By plate of monumental brass

 Dim-gleaming among weeds and grass,

 And sculptured Forms of Warriors brave:

 But chiefly by that single grave,

 That one sequestered hillock green,

 The pensive visitant is seen. 1900

 There doth the gentle Creature lie

 With those adversities unmoved;

 Calm spectacle, by earth and sky

 In their benignity approved!

 And aye, methinks, this hoary Pile,

 Subdued by outrage and decay,

 Looks down upon her with a smile,

 A gracious smile, that seems to say--

 "Thou, thou art not a Child of Time,

 But Daughter of the Eternal Prime!" 1910