[**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