—Tho’ Liberty shall soon, indignant, raise Red on his hills his beacon’s comet blaze; Bid from on high his lonely cannon sound, And on ten thousand hearths his shout rebound; His larum-bell from village-tow’r to tow’r Swing on th’ astounded ear its dull undying roar: Yet, yet rejoice, tho’ Pride’s perverted ire Rouze Hell’s own aid, and wrap thy hills in fire. Lo! from th’ innocuous flames, a lovely birth! With its own Virtues springs another earth; Nature, as in her prime, her virgin reign
Begins, and Love and Truth compose her train; With pulseless hand, and fix’d unwearied gaze, Unbreathing Justice her still beam surveys; No more, along thy vales and viny groves, Whole hamlets disappearing as he moves, With cheeks o’erspread by smiles of baleful glow, On his pale horse shall fell Consumption go. Oh give, great God, to Freedom’s waves to ride Sublime o’er Conquest, Avarice, and Pride, To break, the vales where Death with Famine scow’rs, And dark Oppression builds her thick-ribb’d tow’rs; Where Machination her fell soul resigns, Fled panting to the center of her mines; Where Persecution decks with ghastly smiles Her bed, his mountains mad Ambition piles; Where Discord stalks dilating, every hour, And crouching fearful at the feet of Pow’r, Like Lightnings eager for th’ almighty word, Look up for sign of havoc, Fire, and Sword; —Give them, beneath their breast while Gladness springs, To brood the nations o’er with Nile-like wings; And grant that every sceptred child of clay, Who cries, presumptuous, “here their tides shall stay,” Swept in their anger from th’ affrighted shore, With all his creatures sink—to rise no more.

1793
“From that abstraction I was roused,—and how?
Even as a thoughtful shepherd by a flash
Of lightning startled in a gloomy cave
Of these wild hills. For, lo! the dread Bastille,

With all the chambers in its horrid towers,
Fell to the ground:—by violence overthrown
Of indignation; and with shouts that drowned
The crash it made in falling! From the wreck
A golden palace rose, or seemed to rise,

The appointed seat of equitable law
And mild paternal sway. The potent shock
I felt: the transformation I perceived,
As marvellously seized as in that moment
When, from the blind mist issuing, I beheld

Glory—beyond all glory ever seen,
Confusion infinite of heaven and earth,
Dazzling the soul. Meanwhile, prophetic harps
In every grove were ringing, ‘War shall cease;
Did ye not hear that conquest is abjured?

Bring garlands, bring forth choicest flowers, to deck
The tree of Liberty. —My heart rebounded;
My melancholy voice the chorus joined;
—‘Be joyful all ye nations; in all lands,
Ye that are capable of joy be glad!

Henceforth, whate’er is wanting to yourselves
In others ye shall promptly find;—and all,
Enriched by mutual and reflected wealth,
Shall with one heart honour their common kind.’

“Thus was I reconverted to the world;

Society became my glittering bride,
And airy hopes my children,—From the depths
Of natural passion, seemingly escaped,
My soul diffused herself in wide embrace
Of institutions, and the forms of things;

As they exist, in mutable array,
Upon life’s surface. What, though in my veins
There flowed no Gallic blood, nor had I breathed
The air of France, not less than Gallic zeal
Kindled and burned among the sapless twigs
Of my exhausted heart. If busy men

In sober conclave met, to weave a web
Of amity, whose living threads should stretch
Beyond the seas, and to the farthest pole,
There did I sit, assisting. If, with noise

And acclamation, crowds in open air
Expressed the tumult of their minds, my voice
There mingled, heard or not. The powers of song
I left not uninvoked; and, in still groves,
Where mild enthusiasts tuned a pensive lay
Of thanks and expectation, in accord
With their belief, I sang Saturnian rule
Returned,—a progeny of golden years
Permitted to descend, and bless mankind.
—With promises the Hebrew Scriptures teem:
I felt their invitation; and resumed
A long-suspended office in the House
Of public worship, where, the glowing phrase
Of ancient inspiration serving me,
I promised also,—with undaunted trust
Foretold, and added prayer to prophecy;
The admiration winning of the crowd;
The help desiring of the pure devout.

"Scorn and contempt forbid me to proceed!
But History, time's slavish scribe, will tell
How rapidly the zealots of the cause
Disbanded—or in hostile ranks appeared;
Some, tired of honest service; these, outdone,
Disgusted therefore, or appalled, by aims
Of fiercer zealots—so confusion reigned,
And the more faithful were compelled to exclaim,
As Brutus did to Virtue, 'Liberty,
I worshipped thee, and find thee but a Shade!'

"Such recantation had for me no charm,
Nor would I bend to it; who should have grieved
At aught, however fair, that bore the mien
Of a conclusion, or catastrophe.
Why then conceal, that, when the simply good
In timid selfishness withdrew, I sought
Other support, not scrupulous whence it came;
And, by what compromise it stood, not nice?
Enough if notions seemed to be high-pitched,
And qualities determined.—Among men
So characted did I maintain a strife
Hopeless, and still more hopeless every hour;
But, in the process, I began to feel
That, if the emancipation of the world
Were missed, I should at least secure my own,
And be in part compensated. For rights,
Widely—inverteately usurped upon,
I spake with vehemence; and promptly seized
All that Abstraction furnished for my needs
Or purposes; nor scrupled to proclaim,
And propagate, by liberty of life,
Those new persuasions."

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