

As was Mount Sinai, when God spake the law,—
 In these believed he not. To all the grand
 Preludes of immortality that fill
 The universe and heart of humbler men,
 Basil was blind and deaf—insensible,
 Though touch divine did touch him in the eye
 And ear, without response; for he had framed
 A labyrinth of vain imaginings,
 Axioms of cold negations, winding stairs
 That led to nothing and from nothing sprung—
 As true to seeming as geometry;
 As empty too of substance, being but
 A shape without a body—nothing more!
 Or body of mere dust without the breath
 God breathes in it to make a living soul.

A quaint old manor-house upon the wolds
 That overlooked the Northern Sea, his home,
 And home of a long line of ancestors,
 Inherited by him, an orphan left,
 Without a mother's lips to teach him prayer,
 Or father's lessons, mightier to mould
 The plastic mind than all in after years
 Can do or undo. For the primal truths
 Of home and its affections in the heart,
 Set like the stones of Jordan in the ford,
 Remain for ever; although covered oft
 In after life with floods, they still emerge
 At the subsidence, firm, and broad, and safe,
 For life's departing footsteps, as they cross
 The darksome river to the shores beyond,
 Where stand the beckoning angels, crying "Come!"
 At thousand paths, to lead us up to dwell
 With those that we love best, for evermore.

With heedless guardians, who gave little care
 What wrong or rank opinions he imbibed,
 Young Basil, with a soul susceptible
 As crystal to the lights and hues of truth,
 Absorbing darkness too, when light was gone,
 Plunged in a sea of books. A fearless lad,
 Breasting the breakers like a dolphin, glad
 To sport on sunny waves, or diving down
 In reckless venture of youth's hardihood,
 Into the depths and darknesses profound,
 Where dwell the old leviathans of doubt:
 Lucretius, Hobbes, Voltaire, and Bolingbroke,
 With others still more earthy of our times,
 Who rake amid the dust of mundane things,