UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY
OU_212334
UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

OUP 391- 29-1-72—10,000.

OSMANIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Call No. 531.8 Accession No. 16917722.

Author [illegible]

Title

This book should be returned on or before the date last marked below.

THE POETICAL WORKS OF ROBERT BROWNING

Complete from 1833 to 1868
and the shorter poems thereafter

Oxford University Press, Amen House, London E.C.4

GLASGOW NEW YORK TORONTO MELBOURNE WELLINGTON
BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS KARACHI LAHORE DACCA
CAPR TOWN SALISBURY NAIROBI IBADAN ACCRA
KUALA LUMPUR HONG KONG

THE POETICAL WORKS OF ROBERT BROWNING

, Complete from 1833 to 1868
and the shorter poems thereafter

LONDON
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
NEW YORK TORONTO

ROBERT BROWNING

Born, London . . . 7 May 1812
Died, Venice . . 12 December 1889

This edition of Robert Browning's Poems was first published in 7905, *and reprinted in 1907, 1909, 1910, 1911, 1912, i1913, 1916 1917,* 7979, 7920, 1922 *'1925 1928, 1932, 1936; reset, with ad and reprinted in I944. 1946, I949 1953 and*

9722

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

O.S.A

PUBLISHER'S NOTE, 1940

THE edition includes the contents of Robert Browning's own latest revised edition, with the following exceptions: *The Ring and the Book* (already included in the series of Oxford Standard Authors as a separate volume), *Balaustion"s Adventure, Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau, Fifine at the Fair, Red Cotton Night-Cap Country, Aristophanes[9] Apology, The Inn Album, The Agamemnon of Aeschylus,* and *Parley ings with certain People of Importance.*

[Dedication to the three volumes of 1863]

I DEDICATE THESE VOLUMES TO MY OLD FRIEND JOHN FORSTER, GLAD AND GRATEFUL THAT HE WHO, FROM THE FIRST PUBLICATION OF THE VARIOUS POEMS THEY INCLUDE, HAS BEEN THEIR PROMPTEST AND STAUNCHEST HELPER, SHOULD SEEM EVEN NEARER TO ME NOW THAN ALMOST THIRTY YEARS AGO.

R.B.

LONDON : *April* 21, *1863.*

AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO EDITION OF 1868

THE poems that follow are printed in the order of their publication. The first piece in the series I acknowledge and retain with extreme repugnance, indeed purely of necessity; for not long ago I inspected one, and am certified of the existence of other transcripts, intended sooner or later to be published abroad: by forestalling these, I can at least correct some misprints (no syllable is changed) and introduce a boyish work by an exculpatory word. The thing was my earliest attempt at ' poetry always dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine,' which I have since written according to a scheme less extravagant and scale less impracticable than were ventured upon in this crude preliminary sketch—a sketch that, on reviewal, appears not altogether wide of some hint of the characteristic features of that particular *dramatis persona* it would fain have reproduced: good draughtsmanship, however, and right handling were far beyond the artist at that time.

R.B.

LONDON: *December* 25, 1867.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO EDITION OF 1888

I PRESERVE, in order to supplement it, the foregoing preface. I had thought, when compelled to include in my collected works the poem to which it refers, that the honest course would be to reprint, and leave mere literary errors unaltered. Twenty years' endurance of an eyesore seems more than sufficient: my faults remain duly recorded against me, and I claim permission to somewhat diminish these, so far as style is concerned, in the present and final edition where 'Pauline' must needs, first of my performances, confront the reader. I have simply removed solecisms, mended the metre a little, and endeavoured to strengthen the phraseology—experience helping, in some degree, the helplessness of juvenile haste and heat in their untried adventure long ago.

The poems that follow are again, as before, printed in chronological order; but only so far as proves compatible with the prescribed size of each volume, which necessitates an occasional change in the distribution of its contents. Every date is subjoined as before.

R. B.

LONDON: *February* 27, 1888.

CONTENTS

PAULINE: A FRAGMENT OF A CONFESSION. 1

PARACELSUS—
I. PARACELSUS ASPIRES 14
II. PARACELSUS ATTAINS 23
III. PARACELSUS . 31
IV. PARACELSUS ASPIRES 44
V. PARACELSUS ATTAINS 52
NOTE 63

STRAFFORD: A TRAGEDY—
ACT I.
SCENE I. A HOUSE NEAR WHITEHALL 66
„ II. WHITEHALL . 70
ACT II.
SCENE I. A HOUSE NEAR WHITEHALL 74
„ II. WHITEHALL . 75
ACT III.
SCENE I. OPPOSITE WESTMINSTER HALL 80
„ II. WHITEHALL . 80
„ III. THE ANTECHAMBER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS . 84
ACT IV.
SCENE I. WHITEHALL . 85
„ II. A PASSAGE ADJOINING WESTMINSTER HALL . 87
„ III. WHITEHALL . 90
ACTV.
SCENE I. WHITEHALL . 92
„ II. THE TOWER . 92

SORDELLO—
DEDICATION 97
BOOK THE FIRST 97
BOOK THE SECOND 108
BOOK THE THIRD 120
BOOK THE FOURTH 132
BOOK THE FIFTH 143
BOOK THE SIXTH 155

PIPPA PASSES: A DRAMA—
INTRODUCTION . 165
I. MORNING . 168
II. NOON 173

PIPPA PASSES—*Contd.*
III. EVENING 178
IV. NIGHT 182

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES: A TRAGEDY—
FIRST YEAR, 1730.—
KING VICTOR. PART I 185
KING VICTOR. PART II 189
SECOND YEAR, 1731.—
KING CHARLES. PART I 197
KING CHARLES. PART II 202

DRAMATIC LYRICS-
CAVALIER TUNES—
I. MARCHING ALONG . 207
II. GIVE A ROUSE 207
III. BOOT AND SADDLE . 207
THE LOST LEADLR. 208
'How THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX' 208
THROUGH THE MLTIDIA TO ABD-EL-KADR 209
NATIONALITY IN DRINKS 210
GARDEN FANCIES—
I. THE FLOWER'S NAME 210
II. SIBRANDUS SCHAFNABURGENSIS 211
SOLILOQUY OF THE SPANISH CLOISTER 212
THE LABORATORY 212
THE CONFESSIONAL 213
CRISTINA 214
THE LOST MISTRESS 215
EARTH'S IMMORTALITIES . 215
MEETING AT NIGHT 215
PARTING AT MORNING . 215
SONG 215
A WOMAN'S LAST WORD 216
EVELYN HOPE 216
LOVE AMONG THE RUINS. 217
A LOVER'S QUARREL 218
UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY 219
A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S 220
OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE . 221
'DEGUSTIBU_____' 225
HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD 226
HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA 226

CONTENTS

DRAMATIC LYRICS—*Contd.*

SAUL 226
MY STAR 232
BY THE FIRE-SIDE . 232
ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND . 235
Two IN THE CAMPAGNA . 237
MISCONCEPTIONS . 238
A SERENADE AT THE VILLA 238
ONE WAY OF LOVE 239
ANOTHER WAY OF LOVE . 239
A PRETTY WOMAN 239
RESPECTABILITY . 240
LOVE IN A LIFE 241
LIFE IN A LOVE 241
IN THREE DAYS 241
IN A YEAR 242
WOMEN AND ROSES 242
BEFORE 243
AFTER 244
THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL . 244
MEMORABILIA . 245
POPULARITY 245
MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE-GOTHA . 246

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES: A TRAGEDY-

ACT I. 248
„ II. 253
„ III. 258
„ IV. 262
„ V. 267

A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON: A TRAGEDY-

ACT I.
SCENE I. THE INTERIOR OF A LODGE IN LORD TRESHAM'S PARK 272
„ II. A SALOON IN THE MANSION. 274
„ III. MILDRED'S CHAMBER . 276
ACT II.
SCENE. THE LIBRARY . 280
ACT III.
SCENE I. THE END OF THE YEW-TREE AVENUE UNDER MILDRED'S WINDOW . 285
„ II. MILDRED'S CHAMBER . 289

COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY: A PLAY-

ACT I. MORNING.
SCENE. A CORRIDOR LEADING TO THE AUDIENCE-CHAMBER . 291
ACT II. NOON.
SCENE. THE PRESENCE-CHAMBER . 296
ACT III. AFTERNOON.
SCENE. THE VESTIBULE 301
ACT IV. EVENING.
SCENE. AN ANTECHAMBER . 306
ACT V. NIGHT.
SCENE. THE HALL 312

DRAMATIC ROMANCES-

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP 317
THE PATRIOT 317
MY LAST DUCHESS 318
COUNT GISMOND 318
THE BOY AND THE ANGEL 320
INSTANS TYRANNUS 321
MESMERISM 321
THE GLOVE 323
TIME'S REVENGES 325
THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND 325
THE ENGLISHMAN IN ITALY 327
IN A GONDOLA 330
WARING 332
THE TWINS 334
A LIGHT WOMAN 335
THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER 335
THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN: A CHILD'S STORY 337
THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS . 340
A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL . 350
THE HERETIC'S TRAGEDY 351
HOLY-CROSS DAY 353
PROTUS 355
THE STATUE AND THE BUST 355
PORPHYRIA'S LOVER 358
'CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK TOWER CAME' 359

LURIA: A TRAGEDY—

ACT I. MORNING 362
„ II. NOON 367
„ III. AFTERNOON 371
„ IV. EVENING 376
„ V. NIGHT 380

A SOUL'S TRAGEDY-
ACT I.
SCENE. INSIDE LUITOLFO'S HOUSE . 384
ACT II.
SCENE. THE MARKET-PLACE. 390

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY—
CHRISTMAS-EVE . 396
EASTER-DAY . 409

MEN AND WOMEN—
TRANSCENDENTALISM: A POEM IN TWELVE BOOKS'. 419
How IT STRIKES A CONTEMPORARY . 419
'ARTEMIS PROLOGIZES. ... 421
AN EPISTLE CONTAINING THE STRANGE MEDICAL EXPERIENCE OF KARSHISH, THE ARAB PHYSICIAN 422
JOHANNES AGRICOLA IN MEDITATION 426
PICTOR IGNOTUS . 426
FRA LIPPO LIPPI . 427
ANDREA DEL SARTO ;(CALLED, 'THE FAULTLESS PAINTER ') . 432
THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB AT SAINT PRAXED'S CHURCH
'BISHOP BLOUGRAM'S APOLOGY
CLEON. . . . 448
RUDEL TO THE LADY OF TRIPOLI 452
ONE WORD MORE . 453

IN A BALCONY . 456

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ-
JAMES LEE'S WIFE—
I. JAMES LEE'S WIFE SPEAKS AT THE WINDOW . 467
II. BY THE FIRESIDE . 467
III. IN THE DOORWAY 468
IV. ALONG THE BEACH 468
V. ON THE CLIFF 469
VI. READING A BOOK, UNDER THE CLIFF . 469
VII. AMONG THE ROCKS 470
VIII. BESIDE THE DRAWING BOARD 471
IX. ON DECK . 471
GOLD HAIR: A STORY OF PORNIC , 472
THE WORST OF IT . 474
Dis ALITER VISUM; OR, LE BYRON DE NOS JOURS . 475

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ— *Contd,*
Too LATE 477
ABT VOGLER 479
RABBI BEN EZRA '. 481
A DEATH IN THE DESERT 483
CALIBAN UPON SETEBOS; OR, NATURAL THEOLOGY IN THE ISLAND 492
CONFESSIONS 495
MAY AND DEATH 496
DEAF AND DUMB: A GROUP BY • WOOLNER 496
PROSPICE 496
EURYDICE TO ORPHEUS: A PICTURE B Y LEIGHTON 497
YOUTH AND ART 497
A FACE 498
A LIKENESS 498
MR. SLUDGE, 'THE MEDIUM . 499
APPARENT FAILURE 518
EPILOGUE 519

FROM 'FIFINE AT THE FAIR'
PROLOGUE 520
EPILOGUE 521

PACCHIAROTTO, AND HOW HE WORKED IN DISTEMPER, ET CETERA—
PROLOGUE 522
OF PACCHIAROTTO, AND HOW HE WORKED IN DISTEMPER 522
AT THE'MERMAID' 528
HOUSE 529
SHOP 530
PISGAH-SIGHTS. I . 531
II. 531
FEARS AND SCRUPLES . 532
NATURAL MAGIC 533
MAGICAL NATURE 533
BIFURCATION 533
NUMPHOLEPTOS 534
APPEARANCES 535
ST. MARTIN'S SUMMER . 536
HERVE RIEL 537
A FORGIVENESS 538
CENCIAJA 543
FILIPPO BALDINUCCI ON THE PRIVILEGE OF BURIAL 546
EPILOGUE 551

CONTENTS

LA SAISIAZ 554
THE TWO POETS OF CROISIC . 565

DRAMATIC IDYLS: FIRST SERIES-

MARTIN RELPH 584
PHEIDIPPIDES 586
HALBERT AND HOB 588
IVAN IVANOVITCH 590
TRAY 596
NED BRATTS 597

DRAMATIC IDYLS: SECOND SERIES-

ECHETLOS 603
CLIVE 603
MULEYKEH 607
PIETRO OF ABANO 609
DOCTOR———— . 617
PAN AND LUNA 620

JOCOSERIA—

'WANTING IS—WHAT?' . 622
DONALD 622
SOLOMON AND BALKIS . 625
CRISTINA AND MONALDESCHI . 626
MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT AND FUSELI 627
ADAM, LILITH, AND EVE . 627
IXION 628
JOCHANAN HAKKADOSH . 630
NEVER THE TIME AND THE PLACE 641
PAMBO 641

FERISHTAH'S FANCIES-

PROLOGUE 642
THE EAGLE 643
THE MELON-SELLER 643
SHAH ABBAS 644
THE FAMILY 646
THE SUN 647
MIHRAB SHAH 649

FERISHTAH'S FANCIES—*Contd.*

A CAMEL-DRIVER 651
Two CAMELS 653
CHERRIES 654
PLOT-CULTURE 655
A PILLAR AT SEBZEVAR . 656
A BEAN-STRIPE: ALSO, APPLE-EATING 658
EPILOGUE 664

ASOLANDO: FANCIES AND FACTS-

PROLOGUE 665
ROSNY 666
DUBIETY 666
Now 666
HUMILITY 667
POETICS 667
SUMMUM BONUM 667
A PEARL, A GIRL 667
SPECULATIVE 667
WHITE WITCHCRAFT 667
BAD DREAMS. I . 667
II 668
III . . . 668
IV 669
INAPPREHENSIVENESS 669
WHICH?. 670
THE CARDINAL AND THE DOG . 670
THE POPE AND THE NET . 670
THE BEAN-FEAST 671
MUCKLE-MOUTH MEG . 672
ARCADES AMBO 672
THE LADY AND THE PAINTER . 672
PONTE DELL' ANGELO, VENICE . 673
BEATRICE SIGNORINI 675
FLUTE-MUSIC, WITH AN ACCOMPANIMENT 679
'IMPERANTE AUGUSTO NATUS EST———' 681
DEVELOPMENT 683
REPHAN 685
REVERIE 686
EPILOGUE 688

A CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF ROBERT BROWNING'S POEMS AND PLAYS 689

INDEX OF TITLES 693

INDEX TO FIRST LINES OF SHORTER POEMS AND SONGS . 696

PAULINE

A FRAGMENT OF A CONFESSION

1833

Plus ne suis ce que j'ai ete,
Et ne le scaurois jamais etre.—*Marot.*

NON dubito, quin titulus libri nostri ruritate sua quamplurimos alliciat ad legendum: inter quos nonnulli obliquce opinionis, mente languid!, multi etiam mahgni, et in ingenium nostrum ingrati accedent, qui temeraria sua ignorantia, vix conspecto titulo clamabunt Nos vetita docere, haresium semma jaccre: pils auribus offendiculo, præclaris ingemis scandalo esse: . . . . adeo conscientiæ suæ consuientes, ut nec Apollo, nec Musae omncs, neque Angelus de cælo me ab illorum execratione vindicare queant: quibus et ego nunc consulo, ne scripta nostra legant, nec. intelligant, nec meminerint: nam noxia sunt, venenosa sunt: Acherontis ostium est in hoc libro, lapides loquitur, caveant, ne cerebrum illis cxcutiat. Vos autem, qui æqua mente ad legendum venitis, si tantam prudentiæ discretionem adhibueritis, quantam in melle legendo apes, jam securi legite. Puto namque vos et utilitatis haud parum et voluptatis plurimum accepturos. Quod si qua repereritis, quæ vobis non placeant, mittite ilia, nec utimini. NAM ET EGO VOBIS ILLA NON PRODO, SED NARRO. Castera tamen propterea non respuite. . . . Ideo, si quid liberius dictum sit, ignoscite adolescentia; nostræ;, qui minor quam adolescens hoc opus composui.—*Hen. Corn. Agrippa, De Occult. Philosoph. in Prafat.*

LONDON: *January* 1833.
V.A. XX.

[This introduction would appear less absurdly pretentious did it apply, as was intended, to a completed structure of which the poem was meant for only a beginning and remains a fragment.]

PAULINE, mine own, bend o'er me—thy soft breast
Shall pant to mine—bend o'er me—thy sweet eyes,
And loosened hair and breathing lips, and arms
Drawing me to thee—these build up a screen
To shut me in with thee, and from all fear;
So that I might unlock the sleepless brood
Of fancies from my soul, their lurking-place,
Nor doubt that each would pass, ne'er to return
To one so watched, so loved and so secured.
But what can guard thee but thy naked love?
Ah dearest, whoso sucks a poisoned wound
Envenoms his own veins! Thou art so good,
So calm—if thou shouldst wear a brow light
For some wild thought which but for me, were kept
From out thy soul as from a sacred star!
Yet till I have unlocked them it were vain
To hope to sing; some woe would light on me;
Nature would point at one whose quivering lip
Was bathed in her enchantments, whose brow burned
Beneath the crown to which her secrets knelt,
Who learned the spell which can call up the dead,
And then departed smiling like a fiend
Who has deceived God,—if such one should seek
Again her altars and stand robed and crowned
Amid the faithful! Sad confession first,
Remorse and pardon and old claims renewed,
Ere I can be—as I shall be no more.

I had been spared this shame if I had sat
By thee for ever from the first, in place
Of my wild dreams of beauty and of good,
Or with them, as an earnest of their truth:
No thought nor hope having been shut from thee,
No vague wish unexplained, no wandering aim
Sent back to bind on fancy's wings and seek
Some strange fair world where it might be a law;
But, doubting nothing, had been led by less thee,
Thro* youth, and saved, as one at length awaked
Who has slept through a peril. Ah vain, vain I

Thou lovest me; the past is in its grave
Tho' its ghost haunts us; still this much is
To cast away restraint, lest a worse thing
Wait for us in the dark. Thou lovest me;
And thou art to receive not love but faith.
For which thou wilt be mine, and smile and take
All shapes and shames, and veil without a fear

That form which music follows like a slave:
And I look to thee arid I trust in thee,
As in a Northern night one looks alway
Unto the East for morn and spring and joy.
Thou seest then my aimless, hopeless state,
And, resting on some few old feelings won
Back by thy beauty, wouldst that I essay
The task which was to me what now thou art:
And why should I conceal one weakness more?

Thou wilt remember one warm morn when winter
Crept aged from the earth, and spring's first breath
Blew soft from the moist hills; the black-thorn boughs,
So dark in *the* bare wood, when glistening
In the sunshine were white with coming buds.
Like the bright side of a sorrow, and the banks
Had violets opening from sleep like eyes.
I walked with thee who knew'st not a deep shame
Lurked beneath smiles and careless words which sought
To hide it till they wandered and were mute,
As we stood listening on a sunny mound
To the wind murmuring in the damp copse,
Like heavy breathings of some hidden thing
Betrayed by sleep; until the feeling rushed
That I was low indeed, yet not so low
As to endure the calmness of thine eyes.
And so I told thee all, while the cool breast
I leaned on altered not its quiet beating:
And long ere words like a hurt bird's complaint
Bade me look up and be what I had been,
I felt despair could never live by thee:
Thou wilt remember. Thou art not more dear
Than song was once to me; and I ne'er sung
But as one entering bright halls where all
Will rise and shout for him: sure I must own
That I am fallen, having chosen gifts
Distinct from theirs—that I am sad and fain
Would give up all to be but where I was,
Not high as I had been if faithful found,
But low and weak yet full of hope, and sure
Of goodness as of life—that I would lose
All this gay mastery of mind, to sit
Once more with them, trusting in truth and love
And with an aim—not being what I am.

Oh Pauline. I am ruined who believed
That though my soul had floated from its sphere
Of wild dominion into the dim orb
Of self—that it was strong and free as ever
It has conformed itself to that dim orb,
Reflecting all its shades and shapes, and now
Must stay where it alone can be adored.
I have felt this in dreams—in dreams in which
I seemed the fate from which I fled; I felt
A strange delight in causing my decay.
I was a fiend in darkness chained for ever
Within some ocean cave; and ages rolled,
Till through the cleft rock, like a moon-beam, came
A white swan to remain with me; and ages
Rolled, yet I tired not of my first free joy
In gazing on the peace of its pure wings:
And then I said 'It is most fair to me,
* Yet its soft wings must sure have suffered change
'From the thick darkness, sure its eyes are dim,
'Its silver pinions must be cramped and numbed
'With sleeping ages here; it cannot leave me,
'For it would seem, in light beside its kind.
* Withered, tho' here to me most beautiful.
And then I was a young witch whose blue eyes,
As she stood naked by the river springs,
Drew down a god: I watched his radiant form
Growing less radiant, and it gladdened me;
Till one morn, as he sat in the sunshine.
Upon my knees, singing to me of heaven,
He turned to look at me, ere I could lose
The grin with which I viewed his perishing:
And he shrieked and departed and sat long
By his deserted throne, but sunk at last
Murmuring, as I kissed his lips and curled
Around him, 'I am still a god—to thee.'

Still I can lay my soul bare in its fall,
Since all the wandering and all the weakness
Will be a saddest comment on the song:
And if, that done, I can be young again,
I will give up all gained, as willingly
As one gives up a charm which shuts him out
From hope or part or care in human kind.
As life wanes, all its care and strife and toil
Seem strangely valueless, while the old trees
Which grew by our youth's home, the waving mass
Of climbing plants heavy with bloom and dew,
The morning swallows with their songs like words,
All these seem clear and only worth our thoughts:
So, aught connected with my early life,

My rude songs or my wild imaginings,
How I look on them—most distinct amid
The fever and the stir of after years!
I ne'er had ventured e'en to hope for this,
Had not the glow I felt at His award,
Assured me all was not extinct within:
His whom all honour, whose renown springs up
Like sunlight which will visit all the world,
So that e'en they who sneered at him at first,
Come out to it, as some dark spider crawls
From his foul nets which some lit torch invades,
Yet spinning still new films for his retreat.
Thou didst smile, poet, but can we forgive ?

Sun-treader,[1] life and light be thine for ever!
Thou art gone from us; years go by and spring
Gladdens and the young earth is beautiful,
Yet thy songs come not, other bards arise,
But none like thee: they stand, thy majesties,
Like mighty works which tell some spirit there
Hath sat regardless of neglect and scorn,
Till, its long task completed, it hath risen
And left us, never to return, and all
Rush in to peer and praise when all in vain.
The air seems bright with thy past presence yet,
But thou art still for me as thou hast been
When I have stood with thee as on a throne
With all thy dim creations gathered round
Like mountains, and I felt of mould like them,
And with them creatures of my own were mixed,
Like things half-lived, catching and giving life.
But thou art still for me who have adored
Tho' single, panting but to hear thy name
Which I believed a spell to me alone,
Scarce deeming thou wast as a star to men!
As one should worship long a sacred spring
Scarce worth a moth's flitting, which long grasses cross,
And one small tree embowers droopingly—
Joying to see some wandering insect won
To live in its few rushes, or some locust
To pasture on its boughs, or some wild bird
Stoop for its freshness from the trackless air:
And then should find it but the fountain-head,
Long lost, of some great river washing towns
And towers, and seeing old woods which will live
But by its banks untrod of human foot,
Which, when the great sun sinks, lie quivering
In light as some thing lieth half of life
Before God's foot, waiting a wondrous change;
Then girt with rocks which seek to turn or stay
Its course in vain, for it does ever spread
Like a sea's arm as it goes rolling on,
Being the pulse of some great country—so
Wast thou to me, and art thou to the world!
And I, perchance, half feel a strange regret
That I am not what I have been to thee:
Like a girl one has silently loved long
In her first loneliness in some retreat,
When, late emerged, all gaze and glow to view
Her fresh eyes and soft hair and lips which bloom
Like a mountain berry: doubtless it is sweet
To see her thus adored, but there have been
Moments when all the world was in our praise,
Sweeter than any pride of after hours.
Yet, sun-treader, all hail! From my heart's heart
I bid thee hail! E'en in my wildest dreams,
I proudly feel I would have thrown to dust
The wreaths of fame which seemed o'erhanging me,
To see thee for a moment as thou art.

And if thou livest, if thou lovest, spirit!
Remember me who set this final seal
To wandering thought—that one so pure as thou
Could never die. Remember me who flung
All honour from my soul, yet paused and said
There is one spark of love remaining yet,
'For I have nought in common with him, shapes
' Which followed him avoid me, and foul forms
' Seek me, which ne'er could fasten on his mind;
'And though I feel how low I am to him,
* Yet I aim not even to catch a tone
' Of harmonies he called profusely up;
'So, one gleam still remains, although the last.'
Remember me who praise thee e'en with tears,
For never more shall I walk calm with thee;
Thy sweet imaginings are as an air,
A melody some wondrous singer sings,
Which, though it haunt men oft in the still eve,
They dream not to essay; yet it no less

[1] Shelley.

But more is honoured. I was thine in shame,
And now when aH thy proud renown is out,
I am a watcher whose eyes have grown dim
With looking for some star which breaks on him
Altered and worn and weak and full of tears.

Autumn has come like spring returned to us.
Won from her girlishness; like one returned
A friend that was a lover, nor forgets
The first warm love, but full of sober thoughts
Of fading years; whose soft mouth quivers yet
With the old smile, but yet so changed and still!
And here am I the scoffer, who have probed
Life's vanity, won by a word again
Into my own life—by one little word
Of this sweet friend who lives in loving me,
Lives strangely on my thoughts and looks and words,
As fathoms down some nameless ocean thing
Its silent course of quietness and joy.
0 dearest, if indeed I tell the past,
May'st thou forget it as a sad sick dream!
Or if it linger—my lost soul too soon
Sinks to itself and whispers we shall be
But closer linked, two creatures whom the earth
Bears singly, with strange feelings unrevealed
Save to each other; or two lonely things
Created by some power whose reign is done,
Having no part in God or his bright world.
I am to sing whilst ebbing day dies soft,
As a lean scholar dies worn o'er his book,
And in the heaven stars steal out one by one
As hunted men steal to their mountain watch.
I must not think, lest this new impulse die
In which I trust; I have no confidence:
So, I will sing on fast as fancies come;
Rudely, the verse being as the mood it paints.

I strip my mind bare, whose first elements
I shall unveil—not as they struggled forth
In infancy, nor as they now exist,
When I am grown above them and can rule—
But in that middle stage when they were full
Yet ere I had disposed them to my will;
And then I shall show how these elements
Produced my present state, and what it is.
I am made up of an intensest life,
Of a most clear idea of consciousness
Of self, distinct from all its qualities,
From all affections, passions, feelings, powers;
And thus far it exists, if tracked, in all:
But linked, in me, to self-supremacy,
Existing as a centre to all things,
Most potent to create and rule and call
Upon all things to minister to it;
And to a principle of restlessness
Which would be all, have, see, know, taste, feel, ail—
This is myself: and I should thus have been
Though gifted lower than the meanest soul.
And of my powers, one springs up to save
From utter death a soul with such desire
Confined to clay—of powers the only one
Which marks me—an imagination which
Has been a very angel, coming not
In fitful visions but beside me ever
And never failing me; so, though my mind
Forgets not, not a shred of life forgets,
Yet I can take a secret pride in calling
The dark past up to quell it regally.

A mind like this must dissipate itself,
But I have always had one lode-star; now,
As I look back, I see that I have halted
Or hastened as I looked towards that star—
A need, a trust, a yearning after God:
A feeling I have analysed but late,
But it existed, and was reconciled
With a neglect of all I deemed his laws,
Which yet, when seen in others, I abhorred'
I felt as one beloved, and so shut in
From fear: and thence I date my trust in signs
And omens, for I saw God everywhere;
And I can only lay it to the fruit
Of a sad after-time that I could doubt
Even his being—e'en the while I felt
His presence, never acted from myself,
Still trusted in a hand to lead me through
All danger; and this feeling ever fought
Against my weakest reason and resolve.

And I can love nothing—and this dull truth
Has come the last: but sense supplies a love
Encircling me and mingling with my life.

These make myself: I have long sought in vain
To trace how they were formed by circumstance,
Yet ever found them mould my wildest youth
Where they alone displayed themselves, converted
All objects to their use: now see their course!

They came to me in my first dawn of life
Which passed alone with wisest ancient books

All halo-girt with fancies of my own;
And I myself went with the tale—a god
Wandering after beauty, or a giant
Standing vast in the sunset—an old hunter
Talking with gods, or a high-crested chief
Sailing with troops of friends to Tenedos.
I tell you, nought has ever been so clear
As the place, the time, the fashion of those lives:
I had not seen a work of lofty art,
Nor woman's beauty nor sweet nature's face,
Yet, I say, never morn broke clear as those
On the dim clustered isles in the blue sea,
The deep groves and white temples and wet caves:
And nothing ever will surprise me now—
Who stood beside the naked Swift-footed,
Who bound my forehead with Proserpine's hair.

And strange it is that I who could so dream
Should e'er have stooped to aim at aught beneath—
Aught low or painful; but I never doubted:
So, as I grew, I rudely shaped my life
To my immediate wants; yet strong beneath
Was a vague sense of power though folded up—
A sense that, though those shades and times were past,
Their spirit dwelt in me, with them should rule.

Then came a pause, and long restraint chained down
My soul till it was changed. I lost myself,
And were it not that I so loathe that loss,
I could recall how first I learned to turn
My mind against itself; and the effects
In deeds for which remorse were vain as for
The wanderings of delirious dream; yet thence
Came cunning, envy, falsehood, all world's wrong
That spotted me: at length I cleansed my soul.
Yet long world's influence remained; and nought
But the still life I led, apart once more,
Which left me free to seek soul's old delights,
Could e'er have brought me thus far back to peace.

As peace returned, I sought out some pursuit;
And song rose, no new impulse but the one
With which all others best could be combined.
My life has not been that of those whose heaven
Was lampless save where poesy shone out;
But as a clime where glittering mountain-tops
And glancing sea and forests steeped in light
Give back reflected the far-flashing sun;
For music (which is earnest of a heaven,
Seeing we know emotions strange by it,
Not else to be revealed,) is like a voice,
A low voice calling fancy, as a friend,
To the green woods in the gay summer time:
And she fills all the way with dancing shapes
Which have made painters pale, and they go on
Till stars look at them and winds call to them
As they leave life's path for the twilight world
Where the dead gather. This was not at first,
For I scarce knew what I would do. I had
An impulse but no yearning—only sang.

And first I sang as I in dream have seen
Music wait on a lyrist for some thought,
Yet singing to herself until it came.
I turned to those old times and scenes where all
That's beautiful had birth for me, and made
Rude verses on them all; and then I paused—
I had done nothing, so I sought to know
What other minds achieved. No fear outbroke
As on the works of mighty bards I gazed,
In the first joy at finding my own thoughts
Recorded, my own fancies justified,
And their aspirings but my very own.
With them I first explored passion and mind,—
All to begin afresh! I rather sought
To rival what I wondered at than form
Creations of my own; if much was light
Lent by the others, much was yet my own.

I paused again: a change was coming—came:
I was no more a boy, the past was breaking
Before the future and like fever worked.
I thought on my new self, and all my powers
Burst out. I dreamed not of restraint, but gazed
On all things: schemes and systems went and came,
And I was proud (being vainest of the weak)
In wandering o'er thought's world to seek some one
To be my prize, as if you wandered o'er
The White Way for a star.

And my choice fell
Not so much on a system as a man-
On one, whom praise of mine shall not offend,
Who was as calm as beauty, being such
Unto mankind as thou to me, Pauline,—
Believing in them and devoting all
His soul's strength to their winning back to peace;
Who sent forth hopes and longings for their sake,
Clothed in all passion's melodies: such first
Caught me and set me, slave of a sweet task,
To disentangle, gather sense from song:
Since, song-inwoven, lurked there words which seemed
A key to a new world, the muttering
Of angels, sometlung yet unguessed by man.
How my heart leapt as still I sought and found
Much there, I felt my own soul had conceived.
But there living and burning! Soon the orb
Of his conceptions dawned on me; its praise
Lives in the tongues of men, men's brows are high
When his name means a triumph and a pride,
So, my weak voice may well forbear to shame
What seemed decreed my fate: I threw myself
To meet it, I was vowed to liberty,
Men were to be as gods and earth as heaven,
And I—ah, what a life was mine to prove!
My whole soul rose to meet it. Now, Pauline,
I shall go mad, if I recall that time!

Oh let me look back ere I leave for ever
The time which was an hour one fondly waits
For a fair girl that comes a withered hag!
And I was lonely, far from woods and fields.
And amid dullest sights, who should be loose
As a stag; yet I was full of bliss, who lived
With Plato and who had the key to life;
And I had dimly shaped my first attempt,
And many a thought did I build up on thought,
As the wild bee hangs cell to cell: in vain,
For I must still advance, no rest for mind.

Twas in my plan to look on real life,
The life all new to me; my theories
Were firm, so them I left, to look and learn
Mankind, its cares, hopes, fears, its woes and joys;
And, as I pondered on their ways, I sought
How best life's end might be attained—an end
Comprising every joy. I deeply mused.

And suddenly without heart-wreck I awoke
As from a dream: I said "Twas beautiful,
'Yet but a dream, and so adieu to it!'
As some world-wanderer sees in a far meadow
Strange towers and high-walled gardens thick with trees,
Where song takes shelter and delicious mirth
From laughing fairy creatures peeping over,
And on the morrow when he comes to lie
For ever 'neath those garden-trees fruit-flushed
Sung round by fairies, all his search is vain.
First went my hopes of perfecting mankind.
Next—faith in them, and then in freedom's self
And virtue's self, then my own motives, ends
And aims and loves, and human love went last.
I felt this no decay, because new powers
Rose as old feelings left—wit, mockery,
Light-heartedness; for I had oft been sad,
Mistrusting my resolves, but now I cast
Hope joyously away: I laughed and said
'No more of this!' I must not think: at length
I looked again to see if all went well.

My powers were greater: as some temple seemed
My soul, where nought is changed and incense rolls
Around the altar, only God is gone
And some dark spirit sitteth in his seat.
So, I passed through the temple and to me
Knelt troops of shadows, and they cried 'Hail, king!
'We serve thee now and thou shalt serve no more!
' Call on us, prove us, let us worship thee!'
And I said' Are ye strong ? Let fancy bear me
'Far from the past!' And I was borne away,
As Arab birds float sleeping in the wind,
O'er deserts, towers and forests, I being calm.
And I said 'I have nursed up energies,
'They will prey on me.' And a band knelt low

And cried 'Lord, we are here and we will make
'Safe way for thee in thine appointed life!
'But look on us!' And I said 'Ye will worship
'Me: should my heart not worship too?'
They shouted
'Thyself, thou art our king!' So, I stood there
Smiling—oh, vanity of vanities!
For buoyant and rejoicing was the spirit
With which I looked out how to end my course;
I felt once more myself, my powers—all mine;
I knew while youth and health so lifted me
That, spite of all life's nothingness, no grief
Came nigh me, I must ever be light-hearted;
And that this knowledge was the only veil
Betwixt joy and despair: so, if age came,
I should be left—a wreck linked to a soul
Yet fluttering, or mind-broken and aware
Of my decay. So a long summer morn
Found me; and ere noon came, I had resolved
No age should come on me ere youth was spent,
For I would wear myself out, like that morn
Which wasted not a sunbeam; every hour
I would make mine, and die.

And thus I sought
To chain my spirit down which erst I freed
For flights to fame: I said 'The troubled life
'Of genius, seen so gay when working forth
'Some trusted end, grows sad when all proves vain—
'How sad when men have parted with truth's peace
'For falsest fancy's sake, which waited first
*As an obedient spirit when delighc
'Came without fancy's call: but alters soon,
'Comes darkened, seldom, hastens to depart,
'Leaving a heavy darkness and warm tears.
'But I shall never lose her; she will live
'Dearer for such seclusion. I but catch
'A hue, a glance of what I sing: so, pain
'Is linked with pleasure, for I ne'er may tell
'Half the bright sights which dazzle me; but now
'Mine shall be all the radiance: let them fade
'Untold—others shall rise as fair, as fast!
'And when all's done, the few dim gleams transferred,'—
(For a new thought sprang up how well it were,
Discarding shadowy hope, to weave such lays
As straight encircle men with praise and love,
So, I should not die utterly,—should bring
One branch from the gold forest, like the knight
Of old tales, witnessing I had been there)—
'And when all's done, how vain seems e'en success—
'The vaunted influence poets have o'er men!
"Tis a fine thing that one weak as mysel
'Should sit in his lone room, knowing the words
'He utters in his solitude shall move
'Men like a swift wind—that tho' dead and gone,
'New eyes shall glisten when his beauteous dreams
'Of love come true in happier frames than his.
'Ay, the still night brings thoughts like these, but morn
'Comes and the mockery again laughs out
'At hollow praises, smiles allied to sneers;
'And my soul's idol ever whispers me
'To dwell with him and his unhonoured song:
And I foreknow my spirit, that would press
'First in the struggle, fail again to make
'All bow enslaved, and I again should sink.
'And then know that this curse will come on us,
'To see our idols perish; we may wither,
'No marvel, we are clay, but our low fate
'Should not extend to those whom trustingly
'We sent before into time's yawning gulf
'To face what dread may lurk in darkness there.
'To find the painter's glory pass, and feel
'Music can move us not as once, or, worst,
'To weep decaying wits ere the frail body
'Decays! Nought makes me trust some love is true,
'But the delight of the contented lowness
'With which I gaze on him I keep for ever
'Above me; I to rise and rival him?
'Feed his fame rather from my heart's best blood,
'Wither unseen that he may flourish still.'

Pauline, my soul's friend, thou dost pity yet
How this mood swayed me when that soul found thine,
When I had set myself to live this life,
Defying all past glory. Ere thou earnest
I seemed defiant, sweet, for old delights
Had flocked like birds again; music, my life,

Nourished me more than ever; then the lore
Loved for itself and all it shows—that king
Treading the purple calmly to his death,[1]
While round him, like the clouds of eve, all dusk,
The giant shades of fate, silently flitting,
Pile the dim outline of the coming doom;
And him sitting alone in blood while friends
Are hunting far in the sunshine; and the boy
With his white breast and brow and clustering curls
Streaked with his mother's blood, but striving hard
To tell his story ere his reason goes.
And when I loved thee as love seemed so oft,
Thou lovedst me indeed: I wondering searched
My heart to find some feeling like such love,
Believing I was still much I had been.
Too soon I found all faith had gone from me,
And the late glow of life, like change on clouds,
Proved not the morn-blush widening into day,
But eve faint-coloured by the dying sun
While darkness hastens quickly. I will tell
My state as though 'twere none of mine—despair
Cannot come near us—this it is, my state.

Souls alter not, and mine must still advance;
Strange that I knew not, when I flung away
My youth's chief aims, their loss might lead to loss
Of what few I retained, and no resource
Be left me: for behold how changed is all!
I cannot chain my soul: it will not rest
In its clay prison, this most narrow sphere:
It has strange impulse, tendency, desire,
Which nowise I account for nor explain,
But cannot stifle, being bound to trust
All feelings equally, to hear all sides:
How can my life indulge them? yet they live,
Referring to some state of life unknown.

My selfishness is satiated not,
It wears me like a flame; my hunger for
All pleasure, howsoe'er minute, grows pain;
I envy—how I envy him whose soul
Turns its whole energies to some one end,
To elevate an aim, pursue success
However mean! So, my still baffled hope
Seeks out abstractions; I would have one joy,

[1] Agamemnon.

But one in life, so it were wholly mine,
One rapture all my soul could fill: and this
Wild feeling places me in dream afar
In some vast country where the eye can see
No end to the far hills and dales bestrewn
With shining towers and towns, till I grow mad
Wellnigh, to know not one abode but holds
Some pleasure, while my soul could grasp the world,
But must remain this vile form's slave. I look
With hope to age at last, which quenching much,
May let me concentrate what sparks it spares.

This restlessness of passion meets in me
A craving after knowledge: the sole proof
Of yet commanding will is in that power
Repressed; for I beheld it in its dawn,
The sleepless harpy with just-budding wings,
And I considered whether to forego
All happy ignorant hopes and fears, to live,
Finding a recompense in its wild eyes.
And when I found that I should perish so,
I bade its wild eyes close from me for ever,
And I am left alone with old delights;
See! it lies in me a chained thing, still prompt
To serve me if I loose its slightest bond:
I cannot but be proud of my bright slave.

How should this earth's life prove my only sphere?
Can I so narrow sense but that in life
Soul still exceeds it? In their elements
My love outsoars my reason; but since love
Perforce receives its object from this earth
While reason wanders chainless, the few truths
Caught from its wanderings have sufficed to quell
Love chained below; then what were love, set free,
Which, with the object it demands, would pass
Reason companioning the seraphim?
No, what I feel may pass all human love
Yet fall far short of what my love should be.
And yet I seem more warped in this than aught,
Myself stands out more hideously: of old
I could forget myself in friendship, fame,
Liberty, nay, in love of mightier souls;
But I begin to know what thing hate is—
To sicken and to quiver and grow white—
And I myself have furnished its first prey.
Hate of the weak and ever-wavering will,
The selfishness, the still-decaying frame…

But I must never grieve whom wing can waft
Far from such thoughts—as now. Andromeda!
And she is with me: years roll, I shall change,
But change can touch her not—so beautiful
With her fixed eyes, earnest and still, and hair
Lifted and spread by the salt-sweeping breeze,
And one red beam, all the storm leaves in heaven,
Resting upon her eyes and hair, such hair,
As she awaits the snake on the wet beach
By the dark rock and the white wave just breaking
At her feet; quite naked and alone; a thing
I doubt not, nor fear for, secure some god
To save will come in thunder from the stars.
Let it pass! Soul requires another change.
I will be gifted with a wondrous mind,
Yet sunk by error to men's sympathy,
And in the wane of life, yet only so
As to call up their fears; and there shall come
A time requiring youth's best energies;
And lo, I fling age, sorrow, sickness off,
And rise triumphant, triumph through decay.

And thus it is that I supply the chasm
'Twixt what I am and all I fain would be:
But then to know nothing, to hope for nothing.
To seize on life's dull joys from a strange fear
Lest, losing them, all's lost and nought remains!

There's some vile juggle with my reason here;
I feel I but explain to my own loss
These impulses: they live no less the same.
Liberty! what though I despair? my blood
Rose never at a slave's name proud as now.
Oh sympathies, obscured by sophistries!—
Why else have I sought refuge in myself,
But from the woes I saw and could not stay?
Love! is not this to love thee, my Pauline?
I cherish prejudice, lest I be left
Utterly loveless? witness my belief
In poets, though sad change has come there too;
No more I leave myself to follow them—
Unconsciously I measure me by them—
Let me forget it: and I cherish most
My love of England—how her name, a word
Ofhers in a strange tongue makes my heart beat!

Pauline, could I but break the spell! Not now—
All's fever—but when calm shall come again,
I am prepared: I have made life my own.
I would not be content with all the change
One frame should feel, but I have gone in thought
Thro' all conjuncture, I have lived all life
When it is most alive, where strangest fate
New-shapes it past surmise—the throes of men
Bit by some curse or in the grasps of doom
Half-visible and still-increasing round,
Or crowning their wide being's general aim.

These are wild fancies, but I feel, sweet friend,
As one breathing his weakness to the ear
Of pitying angel—dear as a winter flower,
A slight flower growing alone, and offering
Its frail cup of three leaves to the cold sun,
Yet joyous and confiding like the triumph
Of a child: and why am I not worthy thee?
I can live all the life of plants, and gaze
Drowsily on the bees that flit and play,
Or bare my breast for sunbeams which will kill,
Or open in the night of sounds, to look
For the dim stars; I can mount with the bird
Leaping airily his pyramid of leaves
And twisted boughs of some tall mountain tree,
Or rise cheerfully springing to the heavens;
Or like a fish breathe deep the morning air
In the misty sun-warm water; or with flower
And tree can smile in light at the sinking sun
Just as the storm comes, as a girl would look
On a departing lover—most serene.

Pauline, come with me, see how I could build
A home for us, out of the world, in thought!
I am uplifted: fly with me, Pauline!

Night, and one single ridge of narrow path
Between the sullen river and the woods
Waving and muttering, for the moonless night
Has shaped them into images of life,
Like the uprising of the giant-ghosts,
Looking on earth to know how their sons fare:
Thou art so close by me, the roughest swell
Of wind in the tree-tops hides not the panting
Of thy soft breasts. No, we will pass to morning—
Morning, the rocks and valleys and old woods.

How the sun brightens in the mist, and here, Woods
Half in the air, like creatures of the place,
Trusting the element, living on high boughs
That swing in the wind—look at the silver spray
Flung from the foam-sheet of the cataract
Amid the broken rocks! Shall we stay here
With the wild hawks? No, ere the hot noon come,
Dive we down—safe! See this our new retreat
Walled in with a sloped mound of matted shrubs,
Dark, tangled, old and green, still sloping down
To a small pool whose waters lie asleep
Amid the trailing boughs turned water-plants:
And tall trees overarch to keep us in,
Breaking the sunbeams into emerald shafts
And in the dreamy water one small group
Of two or three strange trees are got together
Wondering at all around, as strange beasts herd
Together far from their own land: all wild- ness,
No turf nor moss, for boughs and plants pave all, see,
And tongues of bank go shelving in the lymph,
Where the pale-throated snake reclines his head, to
And old grey stones lie making eddies mere,
The wild-mice cross them dry-shod.
Shut thy soft eyes-now look-still deeper

Up for the glowing day, leave the old I
See, they part like a ruined arch: the shy I
Nothing but sky appears, so close the roots
And grass of the hill-top level with the air—
Blue sunny air, where a great cloud floats laden
With light, like a dead whale that white birds pick,
Floating away in the sun in some north sea.
Air, air, fresh life-blood, thin and searching air,
The clear, dear breath of God that loveth us,
Where small birds reel and winds take their delight!
Water is beautiful, but not like air:
See, where the solid azure waters lie
Made as of thickened air, and down below,
The fern-ranks like a forest spread themselves
As though each pore could feel the element;
Where the quick glancing serpent winds his way,
Float with me there, Pauline!—but not like air.
Down the hill! Stop—a clump of trees, set
On a heap of rock, which look o'er the far plain.
So, envious climbing shrubs would mount rest
And peer from their spread boughs; wide they wave looking
At the muleteere who whistle on their way,
To the merry chime of morning bells past

This is the everyheartofthewoodsallround the little smoking cost mind field and[nd]
Mountain-like heaped above us; yet even And copses bright in the in the sun my sprit wanders *

HEDGEROWS FOR ME -THOSE LIVING HEDGE -ROWS WHERE

One thin clear sheet has overleaped and wound The bushes close and clasp above and keep
thin overleaped and thought in - I am concentrated-I feel;
Into this silent depth whichgained it lies still as But my soul saddens when it looks beyond:
too this silent.depth, which gained, it lies I cannot be immortal taste all joy.
Still, as but let by sufferance; the trees bend
O'er it as wild men watch a sleeping girl, O God where see they tend,
And through their roots long creeping plants out-stretch
Their twined hair, steeped and sparkling; farther on
Tall rushes and thick flag-knots have combined
To narrow it; so, at length, a silver thread,
It winds all noiselessly through the deep
Till 'slone? cleft way thro' the moss and
It joins its parent-river with a shout.

O God, where do they tend—these struggling aims?[1]
What wound I have what is this 'sleep' which seems
To bound all? can there bea 'waking' point
Of crowning life? The soul would never
It rule *first in all in* thing it wound
It wound Its utmost
Commanding,forcoinmanding sickensit

• See note at the end of the poem.

The last point I can trace is—rest beneath
Some better essence than itself, in weakness;
This is' myself,' not what I think should be:
And what is that I hunger for but God?

My God, my God, let me for once look on thee
As though nought else existed, we alone!
And as creation crumbles, my soul's spark
Expands till I can say,—Even from myself
I need thee and I feel thee and I love thee.
I do not plead my rapture in thy works
For love of thee, nor that I feel as one
Who cannot die: but there is that in me
Which turns to thee, which loves or which should love.

Why have I girt myself with this hell-dress ? me bliss,
Why have I laboured to put out my life?
Is it not in my nature to adore,
And e'en for all my reason do I not
Feel him, and thank him, and pray to him—now?
Can I forego the trust that he loves me ?
Do I not feel a love which only ONE . . .
0 thou pale form, so dimly seen, deep-eyed!
I have denied thee calmly—do I not
Pant when I read of thy consummate power,
And burn to see thy calm pure truths outflash
The brightest gleams of earth's philosophy?
Do I not shake to hear aught question thee?
If I am erring save me, madden me,
Take from me powers and pleasures, let me die
Ages, so I see thee! I am knit round
As with a charm by sin and lust and pride,
Yet though my wandering dreams have seen all shapes
Of strange delight, oft have I stood by thee—
Have I been keeping lonely watch with thee
In the damp night by weeping Olivet,
Or leaning on thy bosom, proudly less,
Or dying with thee on the lonely cross,
Or witnessing thine outburst from the tomb.

A mortal, sin's familiar friend, doth here
Avow that he will give all earth's reward,
But to believe and humbly teach the faith,
In suffering and poverty and shame,
Only believing he is not unloved.

And now, my Pauline, I am thine for ever!
I feel the spirit which has buoyed me up
Desert me, and old shades are gathering fast;

Yet while the last light waits, I would say much,
This chiefly, it is gain that I have said
Somewhat of love I ever felt for thee
But seldom told; our hearts so beat together
That speech seemed mockery; but when dark hours come,
And joy departs, and thou, sweet, deem'st it strange
A sorrow moves me, thou canst not remove,
Look on this lay I dedicate to thee,
Which through thee I began, which thus I end,
Collecting the last gleams to strive to tell
How I am thine, and more than ever now
That I sink fast: yet though I deeplier sink,
No less song proves one word has brought
Another still may win bliss surely back.
Thou knowest, dear, I could not think all calm,
For fancies followed thought and bore me off,
And left all indistinct; ere one was caught
Another glanced; so, dazzled by my wealth,
I knew not which to leave nor which to choose,
For all so floated, nought was fixed and firm.
And then thou said'st a perfect bard was one
Who chronicled the stages of all life,
And so thou bad'st me shadow this first stage.
Tis done, and even now I recognize
The shift, the change from last to past—discern
Faintly how life is truth and truth is good.
And why thou must be mine is, that e'en now
In the dim hush of night, that I have done,
Despite the sad forebodings, love looks through—
Whispers,—E'en at the last I have her still,
With her delicious eyes as clear as heaven
When rain in a quick shower has beat down mist,
And clouds float white above like broods of swans.
How the blood lies upon her cheek, outspread
As thinned by kisses! only in her lips
It wells and pulses like a living thing,
And her neck looks like marble misted o'er
With love-breath,—a Pauline from heights above,
Stooping beneath me, looking up—one look
As I might kill her and be loved the more,

So, love me—me, Pauline, and nought but me,

Never leave loving! Words are wild and weak,
Believe them not,Pauline ! Istained myself
But to behold thee purer by my side,
To show thou art my breath, my life, a last
Resource, an extreme want: never believe
Aught better could so look on thee; nor seek
Again the world of good thoughts left for mine!
There were bright troops of undiscovered suns,
Each equal in their radiant course; there were
Clusters of far fair isles which ocean kept
For his own joy, and his waves broke on them
Without a choice; and there was a dim crowd
Of visions, each a part of some grand whole:
And one star left his peers and came with peace
Upon a storm, and all eyes pined for him;
And one isle harboured a sea-beaten ship.
And the crew wandered in its bowers and plucked
Its fruits and gave up all their hopes of home;
And one dream came to a pale poet's sleep,
And he said, 'I am singled out by God,
'No sin must touch me.' Words are wild and weak,
But what they would express is,—Leave me not,
Still sit by me with beating breast and hair
Loosened, be watching earnest by my side,
Turning my books or kissing me when I
Lookup—like summer wind! Be still tome
A help to music's mystery which mind fails
To fathom, its solution, no mere clue!
0 reason's pedantry, life's rule prescribed!
I hopeless, I the loveless, hope and love.
Wiser and better, know me now, not when
You loved me as I was. Smile not! I have
Much yet to dawn on you, to gladden you.

No more of the past! I'll look within no more.
I have too trusted my own lawless wants,
Too trusted my vain self, vague intuition—
Draining soul's wine alone in the still night,
And seeing how, as gathering films arose,
As by an inspiration life seemed bare
And grinning in its vanity, while ends
Foul to be dreamed of, smiled at me as fixed
And fair, while others changed from fair to foul
As a young witch turns an old hag at night.
No more of this! We will go hand in hand,
I with thee, even as a child—love's slave,
Looking no farther than his liege commands.
And thou hast chosen where this life shall be:
The land which gave me thee shall be our home,
Where nature lies all wild amid her lakes
And snow-swathed mountains and vast pines begirt
With ropes of snow—where nature lies all bare,
Suffering none to view her but a race
Or stinted or deformed, like the mute dwarfs
Which wait upon a naked Indian queen.
And there (the time being when the heavens are thick
With storm) I'll sit with thee while thou dost sing
Thy native songs, gay as a desert bird
Which crieth as it flies for perfect joy,
Or telling me old stories of dead knights;
Or I will read great lays to thee—how she,
The fair pale sister, went to her chill grave[1]
With power to love and to be loved and live:
Or we will go together, like twin gods
Of the infernal world, with scented lamp
Over the dead, to call and to awake,
Over the unshaped images which lie
Within my mind's cave: only leaving all,
That tells of the past doubt. So, when spring comes
With sunshine back again like an old smile,
And the fresh waters and awakened birds
And budding woods await us, I shall be
Prepared, and we will question life once more,
Till its old sense shall come renewed by change,
Like some clear thought which harsh words veiled before;
Feeling God loves us, and that all which errs
Is but a dream which death will dissipate.
And then what need of longer exile ? Seek
My England, and, again there, calm approach
All I once fled from, calmly look on those
The works of my past weakness, as one views
Some scene where danger met him long before.
Ah that such pleasant life should be but dreamed!

But whate'er come of it, and though it fade,
And though ere the cold morning all be gone,
As it may be;—tho' music wait to wile,
And strange eyes and bright wine lure, laugh like sin
Which steals back softly on a soul half saved,
And I the first deny, decry, despise,

[1] Antigone.

With this avowal, these intents so fair,—
Still be it all my own, this moment's pride!
No less I make an end in perfect joy.
E'en in my brightest time, a lurking fear
Possessed me: I well knew my weak resolves,
I felt the witchery that makes mind sleep
Over its treasure, as one half afraid
To make his riches definite: but now
These feelings shall not utterly be lost,
I shall not know again that nameless care
Lest, leaving all undone in youth, some new
And undreamed end reveal itself too late:
For this song shall remain to tell for ever
That when I lost all hope of such a change,
Suddenly beauty rose on me again.
No less I make an end in perfect joy,
For I, who thus again was visited,
Shall doubt not many another bliss awaits,
And, though this weak soul sink and darkness whelm,
Some little word shall light it, raise aloft,
To where I clearlier see and better love,
As I again go o'er the tracts of thought
Like one who has a right, and I shall live
With poets, calmer, purer still each time,
And beauteous shapes will come for me to seize,
And unknown secrets will be trusted me
Which were denied the waverer once; but now
I shall be priest and prophet as of old.

Sun-treader, I believe in God and truth
And love; and as one just escaped from death
Would bind himself in bands of friends to feel
He lives indeed, so, I would lean on thee!
Thou must be ever with me, most in gloom
If such must come, but chiefly when I die,
For I seem, dying, as one going in the dark
To fight a giant: but five thou for ever,
And be to all what thou hast been to me!
All in whom this wakes pleasant thoughts of me
Know my last state is happy, free from doubt
Or touch of fear. Love me and wish me well.

RICHMOND :
October 22, 1832.

NOTE

Je crains bien que mon pauvre ami ne soit pas toujours parfaitement compris dans ce qui reste a lire de cet etrange fragment, mais il est moins propre que tout autre a eclaircir ce qui de sa nature ne peut jamais etre que songe et confusion. D'ailleurs je ne sais trop si en cherchant a mieux co-ordonner certaines parties I'on ne courrait pas le risque de nuire au seul merite auquel une production si singuliere peut pretendre, celui de donner une idee assez precise du genre qu'elle n'a fait qu'ebaucher. Ce debut sans pretention, ce remuement des passions qui va d'abord en accroissant et puis s'apaise par degres, ces elans de Pame retour soudain sur soi-meme, et par-dessus tout, la tournure d'esprit tout particuliere de mon ami, rendent les changemens presque impossibles. Les raisons qu'il fait valoir ailleurs, et d'autres encore plus puissantes, ont fait trouver grace a mes yeux pour cet ecrit qu'autrement je lui eusse conseille de jeter au feu. Je n'en crois pas moins au grand principc de toute composition—a ce principe de Shakespeare, de Rafaelle, de Beethoven, d'ou il suit que la concentration des idees est due bien plus a leur conception qu'a leur mise en execution: j'ai tout lieu de craindre que la premiere de ces qualites ne soit encore etrangere a mon ami, et je doute fort qu'un redoublement de travail lui fasse acqu6rir la seconde. Le mieux serait de bruler ceci; mais que faire?

Je crois que dans ce qui suit il fait allusion a un certain examen qu'il fit autrefois de I'ame, ou plutot de son ame, pour decouvrir la suite des objets auxquels il lui serait possible d'atteindre, et dont chacun une fois obtenu devait former une espece de plateau d'ou Ton pouvait apercevoir d'autres buts, d'autres projets, d'autres jouissances qui, a leur tour, devaient etre surmontes. II en r6sultait que Poubli et le sommeil devaient tout terminer. .Cette idee, que je ne saisis pas parfaitement, lui est peut-etre aussi inintelligible qu'a moi.

PAULINE.

PARACELSUS

1835

INSCRIBED TO

AMEDEE DE RIPERT-MONCLAR

BY HIS AFFECTIONATE FRIEND

LONDON: *March* 15, 1835 **R. B.**

PERSONS

AURLOLUS PARACELSUS, *a student.* FESTUS *and* MICHAL, *his friends.*
APRILE, *an Italian poet.*

1.—PARACELSUS ASPIRES

SCENE.— ***Wiirzburg; a garden in the environs,*** **1512.**

FESTUS, PARACELSUS, MICHAL

Par. **Come close to me, dear friends; still closer; thus!**
Close to the heart which, though long time roll by
Ere it again beat quicker, pressed to yours,
As now *it* beats—perchance a long, long time—
At least henceforth your memories shall make
Quiet and fragrant as befits their home.
Nor shall my memory want a home in yours—
Alas, that it requires too well such free
Forgiving love as shall embalm it there!
For if you would remember me aright,
As I was born to be, you must forget
All fitful strange and moody waywardness
Which e'er confused my better spirit, to dwell
Only on moments such as these, dear friends!
—My heart no truer, but my words and ways
More true to it: as Michal, some months hence,
Will say,' this autumn was a pleasant time,'
For some few sunny days; and overlook
Its bleak wind, hankering after pining leaves.
Autumn would fain be sunny; I would look
Liker my nature's truth: and both are frail,
And both beloved, for all our frailty.
Mich. **Aureole!**
Par. **Drop by drop! she is weeping like a child!**
Not so! I am content—more than content;
Nay, autumn wins you best by this its mute
Appeal to sympathy for its decay:
Look up, sweet Michal, nor esteem the less
Your stained and drooping vines their grapes bow down,
Nor blame those creaking trees bent with their fruit.
That apple-tree with a rare after-birth
Of peeping blooms sprinkled its wealth among!
Then for the winds—what wind that ever raved
Shall vex that ash which overlooks you both,
So proud it wears its berries? Ah, at length,
The old smile meet for her, the lady of this
Sequestered nest!—this kingdom, limited
Alone by one old populous green wall
Tenanted by the ever-busy Hies,
Grey crickets and shy lizards and quick spiders,
Each family of the silver-threaded moss—
Which, look through near, this way, and it appears
A stubble-field or a cane-brake, a marsh
Of bulrush whitening in the sun: laugh now!
Fancy the crickets, each one in his house,
Looking out, wondering at the world—or best,
Yon painted snail with his gay shell of dew,
Travelling to see the glossy balls high up
Hung by the caterpillar, like gold lamps.
Mich. **In truth we have lived carelessly and well.**
Par. **And shall, my perfect pair!—each, trust me, born**
For the other; nay, your very hair, when mixed,
Is of one hue. For where save in this nook
Shall you two walk, when I am far away,
And wish me prosperous fortune? Stay: that plant
Shall never wave its tangles lightly and softly,
As a queen's languid and imperial arm
Which scatters crowns among her lovers, but you
Shall be reminded to predict to me
Some great success! Ah see, the sun sinks broad
Behind Saint Saviour's: wholly gone, at last!
Fest. **How, Aureole, stay those wandering eyes awhile!**

You are ours to-night, at least; and while you spoke
Of Michal and her tears, I thought that none
Could willing leave what he so seemed to love:
But that last look destroys my dream—that look
As if, where'er you gazed, there stood a star!
How far was Wiirzburg with its church and spire
And garden-walls and all things they contain,
From that look's far alighting?
Par. I but spoke
And looked alike from simple joy to see
The beings I love best, shut in so well
From all rude chances like to be my lot,
That, when afar, my weary spirit,—disposed
To lose awhile its care in soothing thoughts
Of them, their pleasant features, looks and words,—
Needs never hesitate, nor apprehend
Encroaching trouble may have reached them too,
Nor have recourse to fancy's busy aid
And fashion even a wish in their behalf
Beyond what they possess already here;
But. unobstructed, may at once forget
Itself in them, assured how well they fare.
Beside, this Festus knows he holds me one
Whom quiet and its charms arrest in vain,
One scarce aware of all the joys I quit,
Too filled with airy hopes to make account
Of soft delights his own heart garners up:
Whereas beholds how much our sense of all
That's beauteous proves alike! When Festus learns
That every common pleasure of the world
Affects me as himself; that I have just
As varied appetite for joy derived
From common things; a stake in life, in short,
Like his; a stake which rash pursuit of aims
That life affords not, would as soon destroy;—
He may convince himself that, this in view,
I shall act well advised. And last, because,
Though heaven and earth and all things were at stake,
Sweet Michal must not weep, our parting eve.
Fest. True: and the eve is deepening, and we sit
As little anxious to begin our talk
As though to-morrow I could hint of it
As we paced arm-in-arm the cheerful town
At sun-dawn; or could whisper it by fits
(Trithemius busied with his class the while)
In that dim chamber where the noon-streaks peer
Half-frightened by the awful tomes around;
Or in some grassy lane unbosom all
From even-blush to midnight: but, to-morrow!
Have I full leave to tell my inmost mind?
We have been brothers, and henceforth the world
Will rise between us:—all my freest mind ?
'Tis the last night, dear Aureole!
Par. Oh, say on!
Devise some test of love, some arduous feat
To be performed for you: say on! If night
Be spent the while, the better! Recall how oft
My wondrous plans and dreams and hopes and fears
Have—never wearied you, oh no!—as I
Recall, and never vividly as now,
Your true affection, born when Einsiedeln
And its green hills were all the world to us;
And still increasing to this night which ends
My further stay at Wurzburg. Oh, one day
You shall be very proud! Say on, dear friends!
Fest. Intruth? 'Tisformyproperpeace, indeed,
Rather than yours; for vain all projects seem
To stay your course: I said my latest hope
Is fading even now. A story tells
Of some far embassy despatched to win
The favour of an eastern king, and how
The gifts they offered proved but dazzling dust
Shed from the ore-beds native to his clime.
Just so, the value of repose and love,
I meant should tempt you, better far than I
You seem to comprehend; and yet desist
No whit from projects where repose nor love
Has part.
Par. Once more? Alas! As I foretold.
Fest. A solitary brier the bank puts forth
To save our swan's nest floating out to sea.
Par. Dear Festus, hear me. What is it you wish ?
That I should lay aside my heart's pursuit,
Abandon the sole ends for which I live,
Reject God's great commission, and so die!
You bid me listen for your true love's sake:
Yet how has grown that love? Even in a long
And patient cherishing of the self-same spirit
It now would quell; as though a mother hoped
To stay the lusty manhood of the child
Once weak upon her knees. I was not born
Informed and fearless from the first, but shrank

From aught which marked me out apart from men:
I would have lived their life, and died their death,
Lost in their ranks, eluding destiny:
But you first guided me through doubt and fear,
Taught me to know mankind and know myself;
And now that I am strong and full of hope,
That, from my soul, I can reject all aims
Save those your earnest words made plain to me.
Now that I touch the brink of my design,
When I would have a triumph in their eyes,
A glad cheer in their voices—Michal weeps,
And Festus ponders gravely!
Fest. When you deign
To hear my purpose .. .
Par. Hear it? I can say
Beforehand all this evening's conference!
'Tis this way, Michal, that he uses: first,
Or he declares, or I, the leading points
Of our best scheme of life, what is man's end
And what God's will; no two faiths e'er agreed
As his with mine. Next, each of us allows
Faith should be acted on as best we may;
Accordingly, I venture to submit
My plan, in lack of better, for pursuing
The path which God's will seems to authorize.
Well, he discerns much good in *it,* avows
This motive worthy, that hope plausible,
A danger here to be avoided, there
An oversight to be repaired: in fine
Our two minds go together—all the good
Approved by him, I gladly recognize,
All he counts bad, I thankfully discard,
And nought forbids my looking up at last
For some stray comfort in his cautious brow.
When, lo! I learn that, spite of all, there lurks
Some innate and inexplicable germ
Of failure in my scheme; so that at last
It all amounts to this—the sovereign proof
That we devote ourselves to God, is seen
In living just as though no God there were:
A life which, prompted by the sad and blind
Folly of man, Festus abhors the most;
But which these tenets sanctify at once,
Though to less subtle wits it seems the same,
Consider it how they may.
Mich. Is it so, Festus?
He speaks so calmly and kindly: is it so?
Par. Reject those glorious visions of God's love
And man's design; laugh loud that God should send
Vast longings to direct us; say how soon
Power satiates these, or lust, or gold; I know
The world's cry well, and how to answer it.
But this ambiguous warfare . . .
Fest. .. .Wearies so
That you will grant no last leave to your friend
To urge it ?—for his sake, not yours ? 1 wish
To send my soul in good hopes after you;
Never to sorrow that uncertain words
Erringly apprehended, a new creed
111 understood, begot rash trust in you,
Had share in your undoing.
Par. Choose your side,
Hold or renounce: but meanwhile blame me not
Because I dare to act on your own views,
Nor shrink when they point onward, nor espy
A peril where they most ensure success.
Fest. Prove that to me—but that! Prove you abide
Within their warrant, nor presumptuous boast
God's labour laid on you; prove, all you covet
A mortal may expect; and, most of all,
Prove the strange course you now affect, will lead
To its attainment—and I bid you speed,
Nay, count the minutes till you venture forth!
You smile: but I had gathered from slow thought—
Much musing on the fortunes of my friend—
Matter I deemed could not be urged in vain;
But it all leaves me at my need: in shreds
And fragments I must venture what remains.
Mich. Ask at once, Festus, wherefore he should scorn .. .
Fest. Stay, Michal: Aureole, I speak guardedly
And gravely, knowing well, whate'er your error,
This is no ill-considered choice of yours,
No sudden fancy of an ardent boy.
Not from your own confiding words alone
Am I aware your passionate heart long since
Gave birth to, nourished and at length matures
This scheme. I will not speak of Einsiedeln,
Where I was born your elder by some years
Only to watch you fully from the first:
In all beside, our mutual tasks were fixed
Even then—twas mine to have you in my view
As you had your own soul and those intents

Which filled it when, to crown your dearest wish,
With a tumultuous heart, you left with me
Our childhood's home to join the favoured few
Whom, here, Trithemius condescends to teach
A portion of his lore: and not one youth
Of those so favoured, whom you now despise,
Came earnest as you came, resolved, like you,
To grasp all, and retain all, and deserve
By patient toil a wide renown like his.
Now, this new ardour which supplants the old
I watched, too; 'twas significant and strange,
In one matched to his soul's content at length
With rivals in the search for wisdom's prize,
To see the sudden pause, the total change;
From contest, the transition to repose—
From pressing onward as his fellows pressed.
To a blank idleness, yet most unlike
The dull stagnation of a soul, content,
Once foiled, to leave betimes a thriveless quest.
That careless bearing, free from all pretence
Even of contempt for what it ceased to seek—
Smiling humility, praising much, yet waiving
What it professed to praise—though not so well
Maintained but that rare outbreaks, fierce and brief,
Revealed the hidden scorn, as quickly curbed.
That ostentatious show of past defeat,
That ready acquiescence in contempt,
I deemed no other than the letting go
His shivered sword, of one about to spring
Upon his foe's throat; but it was not thus:
Not that way looked your brooding purpose then.
For after-signs disclosed, what you confirmed,
That you prepared to task to the uttermost
Your strength, in furtherance of a certain aim
Which—while it bore the name your rivals gave
Their own most puny efforts—was so vast
In scope that it included their best flights,
Combined them, and desired to gain one prize
In place of many,—the secret of the world.
Of man, and man's true purpose, path and fate.
—That you, not nursing as a mere vague dream
This purpose, with the sages of the past,
Have struck upon a way to this, if all
You trust be true, which following, heart and soul,
You, if a man may, dare aspire to KNOW:
And that this aim shall differ from a host
Of aims alike in character and kind,
Mostly in this,—that in itself alone
Shall its reward be, not an alien end
Blending therewith; no hope nor fear noI joy
Nor woe, to elsewhere move you, but this pure
Devotion to sustain you or betray:
Thus you aspire.

Par. You shall not state it thus.
I should not differ from the dreamy crew
You speak of. I profess no other share
In the selection of my lot, than this
My ready answer to the will of God
Who summons me to be his organ. All
Whose innate strength supports them shall succeed
No better than the sages.

Fest. Such the aim, then,
God sets before you; and 'tis doubtless need
That he appoint no less the way of praise
Than the desire to praise; for, though I hold
With you, the setting forth such praise to be
The natural end and service of a man,
And hold such praise is best attained when man
Attains the general welfare of his kind—
Yet this, the end, is not the instrument.
Presume not to serve God apart from such
Appointed channel as he wills shall gather
Imperfect tributes, for that sole obedience
Valued perchance! He seeks not that his altars
Blaze, careless how, so that they do but blaze.
Suppose this, then; that God selected you
To KNOW (heed well your answers, for my faith
Shall meet implicitly what they affirm)
I cannot think you dare annex to such
Selection aught beyond a steadfast will,
An intense hope; nor let your gifts create
Scorn or neglect of ordinary means
Conducive to success, make destiny
Dispense with man's endeavour. Now, dare you search
Your inmost heart, and candidly avow
Whether you have not rather wild desire
For this distinction than security
Of its existence? whether you discern
The path to the fulfilment of your purpose
Clear as that purpose—and again, that purpose

Clear as your yearning to be singled out
For its pursuer. Dare you answer this ?
Par. {after a-pause]:- No, I have nought
to fear! Who will may know
The secret'st workings of my soul. What
though
It be so ?—if indeed the strong desire
Eclipse the aim in me ?—if splendour break
Upon the outset of my path alone,
And duskest shade succeed? What fairer
seal
Shall I require to my authentic mission
Than this fierce energy?—this instinct
striving
Because its nature is to strive?—enticed
By the security of no broad course,
Without success forever in its eyes!
How know I else such glorious fate my
own,
But in the restless irresistible force
That works within me? Is it for human
will
To institute such impulses?—still less,
To disregard their promptings! What
should I
Do, kept among you all; your loves, your
cares,
Your life—all to be mine? Be sure that
God
Ne'er dooms to waste the strength he
deigns impart!
Ask the geier-eagle why she stoops at once
Into the vast and unexplored abyss,
What full-grown power informs her from
the first,
Why she not marvels, strenuously beating
The silent boundless regions of the sky!
Be sure they sleep not whom God needs!
Nor fear
Their holding light his charge, when every
hour
That finds that charge delayed, is a new
death.
This for the faith in which I trust; and
hence
I can abjure so well the idle arts
These pedants strive to learn and teach;
Black Arts,
Great Works, the Secret and Sublime,
forsooth—
Let others prize: too intimate a tie
Connects me with our God! A sullen fiend
To do my bidding, fallen and hateful
sprites
To help me—what are these, at best, be-
side
God helping, God directing everywhere,
So that the earth shall yield her secrets up,
And every object there be charged to
strike,
Teach, gratify her master God appoints?
And I am young, my Festus, happy and
free!
I can devote myself; I have a life
To give; I, singled out for this, the One!
Think, think! the wide East, where all
Wisdom sprung;
The bright South, where she dwelt; the
hopeful North,
All are passed o'er—it lights on me! Tis
time
New hopes should animate the world, new
light
Should dawn from new revealings to a
race
Weighed down so long, forgotten so long;
thus shall
The heaven reserved for us at last receive
Creatures whom no unwonted splendours
blind,
But ardent to confront the unclouded
blaze
Whose beams not seldom blessed their
pilgrimage,
Not seldom glorified their life below.
Fest. My words have their old fate and
make faint stand
Against your glowing periods. Call this,
truth-
Why not pursue it in a fast retreat,
Some one of Learning's many palaces,
After approved example?—seeking there
Calm converse with the great dead, soul to
soul.
Who laid up treasure with the like intent
—So lift yourself into Ihsir airy place,
And fill out full their unfulfilled careers,
Unravelling the knots their baffled skill
Pronounced inextricable, true!—but left
Far less confused. A fresh eye, a fresh
hand,
Might do much at their vigour's waning-
point;
Succeeding with new-breathed new-
hearted force,
As at old games the runner snatched the
torch
From runner still: this way success might
be.
But you have coupled with your enterprise,
An arbitrary self-repugnant scheme
Of seeking it in strange and untried paths.
What books are in the desert? Writes the
sea
The secret of her yearning in vast caves
Where yours will fall the first of human
feet?
Has wisdom sat there and recorded aught
You press to read? Why turn aside from
her
To visit, where her vesture never glanced,
Now—solitudes consigned to barrenness
By God's decree, which who shall dare
impugn?
Now—ruins where she paused but would
not stay,
Old ravaged cities that, renouncing her,
She caded an endless curse on, so it came;

Or worst of all, now—men you visit, men,
Ignoblest troops who never heard her voice
Or hate it, men without one gift from Rome
Or Athens,—these shall Aureole's teachers be!
Rejecting past example, practice, precept.
Aidless mid these he thinks to stand alone:
Thick like a glory round the Stagirite
Your rivals throng, the sages: here stand you!
Whatever you may protest, knowledge is not
Paramount in your love; or for her sake
You would collect all help from every source—
Rival, assistant, friend, foe, all would merge
In the broad class of those who showed her haunts,
And those who showed them not.

Par. What shall I say?
Festus, from childhood I have been possessed
By a fire—by a true fire, or faint or fierce,
As from without some master, so it seemed,
Repressed or urged its current: this but ill
Expresses what would I convey: but rather
I will believe an angel ruled me thus,
Than that my soul's own workings, own high nature.
So became manifest. I knew not then
What whispered in the evening, and spoke out
At midnight. If some mortal, born too soon,
Were laid away in some great trance—the ages
Coming and going all the while—till dawned
His true time's advent; and could then record
The words they spoke who kept watch by his bed,—
Then I might tell more of the breath so light
Upon my eyelids, and the fingers light
Among my hair. Youth is confused; yet never
So dull was I but, when that spirit passed,
I turned to him, scarce consciously, as turns
A water-snake when fairies cross his sleep.
And having this within me and about me
While Einsiedeln, its mountains, lakes and woods
Confined me—what oppressive joy was mine
When life grew plain, and I first viewed the thronged,
The everlasting concourse of mankind!
Believe that ere I joined them, ere I knew
The purpose of the pageant, or the place
Consigned me in its ranks—while, just awake,
Wonder was freshest and delight most pure—
Twas then that least supportable appeared
A station with the brightest of the crowd,
A portion with the proudest of them all.
And from the tumult in my breast, this only
Could I collect, that I must thenceforth die
Or elevate myself far, far above
The gorgeous spectacle. I seemed to long
At once to trample on, yet save mankind,
To make some unexampled sacrifice
In their behalf, to wring some wondrous good
From heaven or earth for them, to perish, winning
Eternal weal in the act: as who should dare
Pluck out the angry thunder from its cloud,
That, all its gathered flame discharged on him,
No storm might threaten summer's azure sleep:
Yet never to be mixed with men so much
As to have part even in my own work, share
In my own largess. Once the feat achieved,
I would withdraw from their officious praise,
Would gently put aside their profuse thanks.
Like some knight traversing a wilderness,
Who, on his way, may chance to free a tribe
Of desert-people from their dragon-foe;
When all the swarthy race press round to kiss
His feet, and choose him for their king, and yield
Their poor tents, pitched among the sand-hills, for
His realm: and he points, smiling, to his scarf
Heavy with riveled gold, his burgonet
Gay set with twinkling stones—and to the East,
Where these must be displayed!

Fest. Good: let us hear
No more about your nature, 'which first shrank
'From all that marked you out apart from men!'

Par. I touch on that; these words but analyse
The first mad impulse: 'twas as brief as fond,
For as I gazed again upon the show,
I soon distinguished here and there a shape
Palm-wreathed and radiant, forehead and full eye.

Well pleased was I their state should thus at once
Interpret my owa thoughts:—' Behold the clue
'To all,* I rashly said, 'and what I pine
'To do, these have accomplished: we are peers.
' They know and therefore rule: I, too, will know!'
You were beside me, Festus, as you say;
You saw me plunge in their pursuits whom fame
Is lavish to attest the lords of mind,
Not pausing to make sure the prize in view
Would satiate my cravings when obtained,
But since they strove I strove. Then came a slow
And strangling failure. We aspired alike,
Yet not the meanest plodder, Tritheim counts
A marvel, but was all-sufficient, strong,
Or staggered only at his own vast wits;
While I was restless, nothing satisfied,
Distrustful, most perplexed. I would slur over
That struggle; suffice it, that I loathed myself
As weak compared with them, yet felt somehow
A mighty power was brooding, taking shape
Within me; and this lasted till one night
When, as I sat revolving it and more,
A still voice from without said—'Seest thou not,
'Desponding child, whence spring defeat and loss?
'Even from thy strength. Consider: hast thou gazed
'Presumptuously on wisdom's countenance,
'No veil between; and can thy faltering hands,
' Unguided by the brain the sight absorbs,
' Pursue their task as earnest blinkers do
'Whom radiance ne'er distracted? Live their life
' If thou wouldst share their fortune, choose their eyes
* Unfed by splendour. Let each task present
' Its petty good to thee. Waste not thy gifts
' In profitless waiting for the gods' descent,
'But have some idol of thine own to dress
' With their array. Know, not for knowing's sake,
'But to become a star to men for ever;
'Know, for the gain it gets, the praise it brings,
' The wonder it inspires, the love it breeds:
'Look one step onward, and secure that step I'
And I smiled as one never smiles but once,
Then first discovering my own aim's extent,
Which sought to comprehend the works of God,
And God himself, and all God's intercourse
With the human mind; I understand, no less,
My fellows' studies, whose true worth I saw,
But smiled not, well aware who stood by me.
And softer came the voice—'There is a way:
"Tis hard for flesh to tread therein, imbued
'With frailty—hopeless, if indulgence first
'Have ripened inborn germs of sin to strength:
'Wilt thou adventure for my sake and man's,
'Apart from all reward?' And last it breathed—
'Be happy, my good soldier* I am by thee,
'Be sure, even to the end!—I answered not,
Knowing him. As he spoke, I was endued
With comprehension and a steadfast will;
And when he ceased, my brow was sealed his own.
If there took place no special change in me,
How comes it all things wore a different hue
Thenceforward ?—pregnant with vast consequence,
Teeming with grand result, loaded with fate?
So that when, quailing at the mighty range
Of secret truths which yearn for birth, I haste
To contemplate undazzled some one truth,
Its bearings and effects alone—at once
What was a speck expands into a star,
Asking a life to pass exploring thus,
Till I near craze. 1 go to prove my soul!
I see my way as birds their trackless way.
I shall arrive! what time, what circuit first,
I ask not: but unless God send his hail
Or blinding fireballs, sleet or stifling snow,
In some time, his good time, I shall arrive:
He guides me and the bird. In his good time!

Mich. Vex him no further, Festus; it is so!

Fest. Just thus you help me ever. This would hold
Were it the trackless air, and not a path
Inviting you, distinct with footprints yet
Of many a mighty marcher gone that way.
You may have purer views than theirs, perhaps,
But they were famous in their day—the proofs

Remain. At least accept the light they lend.
Par. Their light! the sum of all is briefly this:-
They laboured and grew famous, and the fruits
Are best seen in a dark and groaning earth
Given over to a blind and endless strife
With evils, what of all their lore abates?
No; I reject and spurn them utterly
And all they teach. Shall I still sit beside
Their dry wells, with a white lip and filmed eye,
While in the distance heaven is blue above
Mountains where sleep the unsunned tarns?
Fest. And yet
As strong delusions have prevailed ere now.
Men have set out as gallantly to seek
Their ruin. I have heard of such: yourself
Avow all hitherto have failed and fallen.
Mich, Nay, Festus, when but as the pilgrims faint
Through the drear way, do you expect to see
Their city dawn amid the clouds afar?
Par. Ay, sounds it not like some old well-known tale?
For me, I estimate their works and them
So rightly, that at times I almost dream
I too have spent a life the sages' way,
And tread once more familiar paths. Perchance
I perished in an arrogant self-reliance
Ages ago; and in that act, a prayer
For one more chance went up so earnest, so
Instinct with better light let in by death,
That life was blotted out—not so completely
But scattered wrecks enough of it remain,
Dim memories, as now, when once more seems
The goal in sight again. All which, indeed,
Is foolish, and only means—the flesh I wear,
The earth I tread, are not more clear to me
Than my belief, explained to you or no.
Fest. And who am I, to challenge and dispute
That clear belief? I will divest all fear.
Mich. Then Aureole is God's commissary! he shall
Be great and grand—and all for us!
Par. No, sweet!
Not great and grand. If I can serve mankind
'Tis well; but there our intercourse must end:
I never will be served by those I serve.
Fest. Look well to this; here is a plague-spot, here,
Disguise it how you may! *Tis true, you utter
This scorn while by our side and loving us:
'Tis but a spot as yet; but it will break
Into a hideous blotch if overlooked.
How can that course be safe which from the first
Produces carelessness to human love?
It seems you have abjured the helps which men
Who overpass their kind, as you would do,
Have humbly sought; I dare not thoroughly probe
This matter, lest I learn too much. Let be
That popular praise would little instigate
Your efforts, nor particular approval
Reward you; put reward aside; alone
You shall go forth upon your arduous task,
None shall assist you, none partake your toil,
None share your triumph: still you must retain
Some one to cast your glory on, to share
Your rapture with. Were I elect like you,
I would encircle me with love, and raise
A rampart of my fellows; it should seem
Impossible for me to fail, so watched
By gentle friends who made my cause their own.
They should ward off fate's envy—the great gift,
Extravagant when claimed by me alone,
Being so a gift to them as well as me.
If danger daunted me or ease seduced,
How calmly their sad eyes should gaze reproach!
Mich. O Aureole, can I sing when all alone,
Without first calling, in my fancy, both
To listen by my side—even I! And you?
Do you not feel this? Say that you feel this!
Par. I feel 'tis pleasant that my aims, at length
Allowed their weight, should be supposed to need
A furthei strengthening in these goodly helps!
My course allures for its own sake, its sole
Intrinsic worth; and ne'er shall boat of mine
Adventure forth for gold and apes at once.
Your sages say, 'if human, therefore weak:'
If weak, more need to give myself entire
To my pursuit; and by its side, all else . . .
No matter! I deny myself but little
In waiving all assistance save its own.
Would there were some real sacrifice to make!
Your friends the sages threw their joys away,
While I must be content with keeping mine.
Fest. But do not cut yourself from human weal!

You cannot thrive—a man that dares affect
To spend his life in service to his kind
For no reward of theirs, unbound to them
By any tie; nor do so, Aureole! No—
There are strange punishments for such. Give up
(Although no visible good flow thence) some part
Of the glory to another; hiding thus,
Even from yourself, that all is for yourself.
Say, say almost to God—'I have done all
* For her, not for myself!'
Par. And who but lately
Was to rejoice in my success like you?
Whom should I love but both of you?
Fest. 1 know not:
But know this, you, that 'tis no will of mine
You should abjure the lofty claims you make;
And this the cause—I can no longer seek
To overlook the truth, that there would be
A monstrous spectacle upon the earth,
Beneath the pleasant sun, among the trees:
—A being knowing not what love is. Hear me!
You are endowed with faculties which bear
Annexed to them as 'twere a dispensation
To summon meaner spirits to do their will
And gather round them at their need; inspiring
Such with a love themselves can never feel,
Passionless 'mid their passionate votaries.
I know not if you joy in this or no,
Or ever dream that common men can live
On objects you prize lightly, but which make
Their heart's sole treasure: the affections seem
Beauteous at most to you, which we must taste
Or die: and this strange quality accords,
I know not how, with you; sits well upon
That luminous brow, though in another it scowls
An eating brand, a shame, I dare not judge you.
The rules of right and wrong thus set aside,
There's no alternative—I own you one
Of higher order, under other laws
Than bind us; therefore, curb not one *bold* glance!
Tis best aspire. Once mingled with us all...
Mich. Stay with us, Aureole! cast those hopes away,
And stay with us! An angel warns me, too,
Man should be humble; you are very proud:
And God, dethroned, has doleful plagues for such!
—Warns me to have in dread no quick repulse,
No slow defeat, but a complete success:
You will find all you seek, and perish so!
Par. [after a pause]. Are these the barren firstfruits of my quest?
Is love like this the natural lot of all?
How many years of pain might one such hour
O'erbalance? Dearest Michal, dearest Festus,
What shall I say, if not that I desire
To justify your love; and will, dear friends,
In swerving nothing from my first resolves.
Sec, the great moon! and ere the mottled owls
Were wide awake, I was to go. It seems
You acquiesce at last in all save this—
If I am like to compass what I seek
By the untried career I choose; and then,
If that career, making but small account
Of much of life's delight, will yet retain
Sufficient to sustain my soul: for thus
I understand these fond fears just expressed.
And first; the lore you praise and I neglect,
The labours and the precepts of old time,
I have not lightly disesteemed. But, friends,
Truth is within ourselves; it takes no rise
From outward things, whate'er you may believe.
There is an inmost centre in us all,
Where truth abides in fulness; and around,
Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in,
This perfect, clear perception—which is truth.
A baffling and perverting carnal mesh
Binds it, and makes all error: and to KNOW
Rather consists in opening out a way
Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,
Than in effecting entry for a light
Supposed to be without. Watch narrowly
The demonstration of a truth, its birth,
And you trace back the effluence to its spring
And source within us; where broods radiance vast,
To be elicited ray by ray, as chance
Shall favour: chance—for hitherto, your sage
Even as he knows not how those beams are born,
As little knows he what unlocks their fount:
And men have oft grown old among their books
To die case-hardened in their ignorance,
Whose careless youth had promised what long years
Of unremitted labour ne'er performed:
While, contrary, it has chanced some idle day,
To autumn loiterers just as fancy-free
As the midges in the sun, gives birth at last

To truth—produced mysteriously as cape
Of cloud grown out of the invisible air.
Hence, may not truth be lodged alike in all,
The lowest as the highest? some slight film
The interposing bar which binds a soul
And makes the idiot, just as makes the sage
Some film removed, the happy outlet whence
Truth issues proudly? See this soul of ours!
How it strives weakly in the child, is loosed
In manhood, clogged by sickness, back compelled
By age and waste, set free at last by death:
Why is it, flesh enthrals it or enthrones?
What is this flesh we have to penetrate?
Oh, not alone when life flows still, do truth
And power emerge, but also when strange chance
Ruffles its current; in unused conjuncture,
When sickness breaks the body—hunger, watching,
Excess or languor—oftenest death's approach,
Peril, deep joy or woe. One man shall crawl
Through life surrounded with all stirring things,
Unmoved; and he goes mad: and from the wreck
Of what he was, by his wild talk alone,
You first collect how great a spirit he hid.
Therefore, set free the soul alike in all,
Discovering the true laws by which the flesh
Accloys the spirit! We may not be doomed
To cope with seraphs, but at least the rest
Shall cope with us. Make no more giants, God,
But elevate the race at once! We ask
To put forth just our strength, our human strength,
All starting fairly, all equipped alike,
Gifted alike, all eagle-eyed, true-hearted—
See if we cannot beat thine angels yet!
Such is my task. I go to gather this
The sacred knowledge, here and there dispersed
About the world, long lost or never found.
And why should I be sad or loin of hope?
Why ever make man's good distinct from God's,
Or, finding they are one, why dare mistrust?
Who shall succeed if not one pledged like me?
Mine is no mad attempt to build a world
Apart from bis, like those who set themselves
To find the nature of the spirit they bore,
And, taught betimes that all their gorgeous dreams
Were only born to vanish in this life,
Refused to fit them to its narrow sphere,
But chose to figure forth another world
And other frames meet for their vast desires,—
And all a dream! Thus was life scorned; but life
Shall yet be crowned: twine amaranth! I am priest!
And all for yielding with a lively spirit
A poor existence, parting with a youth
Like those who squander every energy
Convertible to good, on painted toys,
Breath-bubbles, gilded dust! And though I spurn
All adventitious aims, from empty praise
To love's award, yet whoso deems such helps
Important, and concerns himself for me,
May know even these will follow with the rest—
As in the steady rolling Mayne, asleep
Yonder, is mixed its mass of schistous ore.
My own affections laid to rest awhile,
Will waken purified, subdued alone
By all I have achieved. Till then—till then ...
Ah, the time-wiling loitering of a page
Through bower and over lawn, till eve shall bring
The stately lady's presence whom he loves—
The broken sleep of the fisher whose rough coat
Enwraps the queenly pearl—these are faint types!
See, see, they look on me: I triumph now!
But one thing, Festus, Michal! I have told
All I shall e'er disclose to mortal: say—
Do you believe I shall accomplish this?

Fest. I do believe!

Mich. I ever did believe!

Par. Those words shall never fade from out my brain!
This earnest of the end shall never fade!
Are there not, Festus, are there not, dear Michal,
Two points in the adventure of the diver,
One—when, a beggar, he prepares to plunge,
One—when, a prince, he rises with his pearl?
Festus, I plunge!

Fest. Wc wait you when you rise!

H.—PARACELSUS ATTAINS

SCENE.—*Constantinople; the house of a Greek Conjurer.* 1521.

PARACELSUS

Over the waters in the vaporous West
The sun goes down as in a sphere of gold
Behind the arm of the city, which between,

With ail that length of domes and minarets,
Athwart the splendour, black and crooked runs - -
Like a Turk verse along a scimitar.
There lie, sullen memorial, and no more
Possess my aching sight! Tis done at last.
Strange—and the juggles of a sallow cheat
Have won me to this act! 'Tis as yon cloud
Should voyage unwrecked o'er many a mountain-top
And break upon a molehill. I have dared
Come to a pause with knowledge; scan for once
The heights already reached, without regard
To the extent above; fairly compute
All I have clearly gained; for once excluding
A brilliant future to supply and perfect
All half-gains and conjectures and crude hopes:
And all because a fortune-teller wills
His credulous seekers should inscribe thus much
Their previous life's attainment, in his roll,
Before his promised secret, as he vaunts,
Make up the sum: and here amid the scrawled
Uncouth recordings of the dupes of this
Old arch-genethliac,[1] lie my life's results!

A few blurred characters suffice to note
A stranger wandered long through many lands
And reaped the fruit he coveted in a few
Discoveries, as appended here and there,
The fragmentary produce of much toil,
In a dim heap, fact and surmise together
Confusedly massed as when acquired; he was
Intent on gain to come too much to stay
And scrutinise the little gained: the whole
Slipt in the blank space 'twixt an idiot's gibber
And a mad lover's ditty—there it lies.

And yet those blottings chronicle a life—
A whole life, and my life! Nothing to do,
No problem for the fancy, but a fife
Spent and decided, wasted past retrieve
Or worthy beyond peer. Stay, what does this
Remembrancer set down concerning 'life' ?
' "Time fleets, youth fades, life is an empty dream,"
'It is the echo of time: and he whose heart
'Beat first beneath a human heart, whose speech
'Was copied from a human tongue, can never
'Recall when he was living yet knew not this.
'Nevertheless Ions seasons pass o'er him

[1] Birthday-book maker, γενεθλιακός.

'Till some one hour's experience shows what nothing,
'It seemed, could clearer show; and ever after,
'An altered brow and eye and gait and speech
'Attest that now he knows the adage true,
' "Time fleets, youth fades, life is an empty dream.'"

Ay, my brave chronicler, and this same hour
As well as any; now, let my time be!

Now! I can go no farther; well or ill,
'Tis done. I must desist and take my chance.
I cannot keep on the stretch: 'tis no backshrinking—
For let but some assurance beam, some close
To my toil grow visible, and I proceed
At any price, though closing it, I die.
Else, here I pause. The old Greek's prophecy
Is like to turn out true: 'I shall not quit
'His chamber till I know what I desire!'
Was it the light wind sang it o'er the sea?

An end, a rest! strange how the notion, once
Encountered, gathers strength by moments! Rest!
Where has it kept so long? this throbbing brow
To cease, this beating heart to cease, all cruel
And gnawing thoughts to cease! To dare let down
My strung, so high-strung brain, to dare unnerve
My harassed o'ertasked frame, to know my place,
My portion, my reward, even my failure,
Assigned, made sure for ever! To lose myself
Among the common creatures of the world,
To draw some gain from having been a man,
Neither to hope nor fear, to live at length!
Even in failure, rest! But rest in truth
And power and recompense . . . I hoped that once!

What, sunk insensibly so deep? Has all
Been undergone for this? This is the request
My labour qualified me to present
With no fear of refusal? Had I gone
Slightingly through my task, and so judged fit
To moderate my hopes; nay, were it **now**
My sole concern to exculpate myself,

End things or mend them,—why, I could not choose
A humbler mood to wait for the event!
No, no, there needs not this; no, after all,
At worst I have performed my share of the task:
The rest is God's concern; mine, merely this,
To know that I have obstinately held
By my own work. The mortal whose brave foot
Has trod, unscathed, the temple-court so far
That he descries at length the shrine of shrines,
Must let no sneering of the demons' eyes,
Whom he could pass unquailing, fasten now
Upon him, fairly past their power; no, no—
He must not stagger, faint, fall down at last,
Having a charm to baffle them; behold,
He bares his front: a mortal ventures thus
Serene amid the echoes, beams and glooms!
If he be priest henceforth, if he wake up
The god of the place to ban and blast him there,
Both well! What's failure or success to me?
I have subdued my life to the one purpose
Whereto I ordained it; there alone I spy,
No doubt, that way I may be satisfied.

Yes, well have I subdued my life! beyond
The obligation of my strictest vow,
The contemplation of my wildest bond,
Which gave my nature freely up, in truth,
But in its actual state, consenting fully
All passionate impulses its soil was formed
To rear, should wither; but foreseeing not
The tract, doomed to perpetual barrenness,
Would seem one day, remembered as it was,
Beside the parched sand-waste which now it is,
Already strewn with faint blooms, viewless then.
I ne'er engaged to root up loves so frail
I felt them not; yet now, 'tis very plain
Some soft spots had their birth in me at first,
If not love, say, like love: there was a time
When yet this wolfish hunger after knowledge
Set not remorselessly love's claims aside.
This heart was human once, or why recall
Einsiedeln, now, and Wurzburg which the Mayne
Forsakes her course to fold as with an arm?

And Festus—my poor Festus, with his praise
And counsel and grave fears—where is he now
With the sweet maiden, long ago his bride?
I surely loved them—that last night, at least,
When we... gone! gone! the better. I am saved
The sad review of an ambitious youth
Choked by vile lusts, unnoticed in their birth,
But let grow up and wind around a will
Till action was destroyed. No, I have gone
Purging my path successively of aught
Wearing the distant likeness of such lusts.
I have made life consist of one idea:
Ere that was master, up till that was born,
I bear a memory of a pleasant life
Whose small events I treasure; till one morn
I ran o'er the seven little grassy fields,
Startling the flocks of nameless birds, to tell
Poor Festus, leaping all the while for joy,
To leave all trouble for my future plans,
Since I had just determined to become
The greatest and most glorious man on earth.
And since that morn all life has been forgotten:
All is one day, one only step between
The outset and the end: one tyrant all-
Absorbing aim fills up the interspace,
One vast unbroken chain of thought, kept up
Through a career apparently adverse
To its existence: life, death, light and shadow,
The shows of the world, were bare receptacles
Or indices of truth to be wrung thence,
Not ministers of sorrow or delight:
A wondrous natural robe in which she went.
For some one truth would dimly beacon me
From mountains rough with pines, and flit and wink
O'er dazzling wastes of frozen snow, and tremble
Into assured light in some branching mine
Where ripens, swathed in fire, the liquid gold—
And all the beauty, all the wonder fell
On either side the truth, as its mere robe;
I see the robe now—then I saw the form.
So far, then, I have voyaged with success,
So much is good, then, in this working sea
Which parts me from that happy strip of land:
But o'er that happy strip a sun shone, too!
And fainter gleams it as the waves grow rough,
And still more faint as the sea widens; last
I sicken on a dead gulf streaked with light

From its own putrefying depths alone.
Then, God was pledged to take me by the hand;
Now, any miserable juggle can bid
My pride depart. All is alike at length:
God may take pleasure in confounding pride
By hiding secrets with the scorned and base—
I am here, in short: so little have I paused
Throughout! I never glanced behind to know
If I had kept my primal light from wane,
And thus insensibly am—what I am!

Oh, bitter; very bitter!
And more bitter,
To fear a deeper curse, an inner ruin,
Plague beneath plague, the last turning the first
To light beside its darkness. Let me weep
My youth and its brave hopes, all dead and gone,
In tears which burn! Would I were sure to win
Some startling secret in their stead, a tincture
Of force to flush old age with youth, or breed
Gold, or imprison moonbeams till they change
To opal shafts!—only that, hurling it
Indignant back, I might convince myself
My aims remained supreme and pure as ever!
Even now, why not desire, for mankind's sake,
That if I fail, some fault may be the cause,
That, though I sink, another may succeed?
O God, the despicable heart of us!
Shut out this hideous mockery from my heart!
'Twas politic in you, Aureole, to reject
Single rewards, and ask them in the lump;
At all events, once launched, to hold straight on:
For now 'tis all or nothing. Mighty profit
Your gains will bring if they stop short of such
Full consummation! As a man, you had
A certain share of strength; and that is gone
Already in the getting these you boast.
Do not they seem to laugh, as who should say—
'Great master, we are here indeed, dragged forth
'To light; this hast thou done: be glad! Now, seek
'The strength to use which thou hast spent in getting!'

And yet 'tis much, surely 'tis very much,
Thus to have emptied youth of all its gifts,
To feed a fire meant to hold out till morn
Arrived with inexhaustible light; and lo,
I have heaped up my last, and day dawns not!
And I am left with grey hair, faded hands,
And furrowed brow. Ha, have I, after ail,
Mistaken the wild nursling of my breast?
Knowledge it seemed, and power, and recompense!
Was she who glided tlirough my room of nights,
Who laid my head on her soft knees and smoothed
The damp locks,—whose sly soothings just began
When my sick spirit craved repose awhile—
God! was I fighting sleep off for death's sake?

God! Thou art mind! Unto the master-mind
Mind should be precious. Spare my mind alone!
All else I will endure; if, as I stand
Here, with my gains, thy thunder smite me down,
I bow me; 'tis thy will, thy righteous will;
I o'erpass life's restrictions, and I die;
And if no trace of my career remain
Save a thin corpse at pleasure of the wind
In these bright chambers level with the air,
See thou to it! But if my spirit fail,
My once proud spirit forsake me at the last,
Hast thou done well by me? So do not thou!
Crush not my mind, dear God, though I be crushed!
Hold me before the frequence of thy seraphs
And say—'I crushed him, lest he should disturb
'My law. Men must not know their strength: behold,
'Weak and alone, how he had raised himself!'

But if delusions trouble me, and thou,
Not seldom felt with rapture in thy help
Throughout my toils and wanderings, dost intend
To work man's welfare through my weak endeavour,
To crown my mortal forehead with a beam
From thine own blinding crown, to smile, and guide
This puny hand and let the work so wrought
Be styled my work,—hear me! I covet not
An influx of new power, an angel's soul:
It were no marvel then—but I have reached
Thus far, a man; let me conclude, a man!
Give but one hour of my first energy,
Of that invincible faith, but only one!

That I may cover with an eagle-glance
The truths I have, and spy some certain way
To mould them, and completing them, possess!

Yet God is good: I started sure of that,
And why dispute it now? I'll not believe
But some undoubted warning long ere this
Had reached me: a fire-labarum was not deemed
Too much for the old founder of these walls.
Then, if my life has not been natural,
It has been monstrous: yet, till late, my course
So ardently engrossed me, that delight,
A pausing and reflecting joy, 'tis plain,
Could find no place in it. True, I am worn;
But who clothes summer, who is life itself?
God, that created all things, can renew!
And then, though after-life to please me now
Must have no likeness to the past, what hinders
Reward from springing out of toil, as changed
As bursts the flower from earth and root and stalk?
What use were punishment, unless some sin
Be first detected? let me know that first!
No man could ever offend as I have done...

[A voice from within.]

I hear a voice, perchance I heard
Long ago, but all too low,
So that scarce a care it stirred
If the voice were real or no:
I heard it in my youth when first
The waters of my life outburst:
But, now their stream ebbs faint, I hear
That voice, still low, but fatal-clear—
As if all poets, God ever meant
Should save the world, and therefore lent
Great gifts to, but who, proud, refused
To do his work, or lightly used
Those gifts, or failed through weak endeavour,
So, mourn cast off by him for ever,—
As if these leaned in airy ring
To take me; this the song they sing.

*Lost, lost! yet come,
With our wan troop make thy home.
Come, come! for we
Will not breathe, so much as breathe
Reproach to thee,
Knowing what thou sink'st beneath.
So sank we in those old years,
We who bid thee, come! thou last
Who, living yet, hast life o'erpast.
And altogether we, thy peers,
Will pardon crave for thee, the last
Whose trial is done, whose lot is cast
With those who watch but work no more,
Who gaze on life but live no more.
Yet we trusted thou shouldst speak
The message which our lips, too weak,
Refused to utter,—shouldst redeem
Our fault: such trust, and all a dream!
Yet we chose thee a birthplace
Where the richness ran to flowers:
Couldst not sing one song for grace?
Not make one blossom man's and ours?
Must one more recreant to his race
Die with unexerted powers,
And join us, leaving as he found
The world, he was to loosen, bound?
Anguish! ever and for ever;
Still beginning, ending never.
Yet, lost and last one, cornel
How couldst understand, alas,
What our pale ghosts strove to say,
As their shades did glance and pass
Before thee night and day?
Thou wast blind as we were dumb:
Once more, therefore, come, O come!
How should we clothe, how arm the spirit
Shall next thy post of life inherit—
How guard him from thy speedy ruin?
Tell us of thy sad undoing
Here, where we sit, ever pursuing
Our weary task, ever renewing
Sharp sorrow, far from God who gave
Our powers, and man they could not save!'

APRILE *enters.*

Ha, ha! our king that wouldst be, here at last?
Art thou the poet who shall save the world?
Thy hand to mine! Stay, fix thine eyes on mine!
Thou wouldst be king? Still fix thine eyes on mine!
Par. Ha, ha! why crouchest not? Am I not king?
So torture is not wholly unavailing!
Have my fierce spasms compelled thee from thy lair?
Art thou the sage I only seemed to be,
Myself of after-time, my very self
With sight a little clearer, strength more firm,
Who robes him in my robe and grasps my crown
For just a fault, a weakness, a neglect?
I scarcely trusted God with the surmise
That such might come, and thou didst hear the while!
Apr. Thine eyes are lustreless to mine; my hair
Is soft, nay silken soft: to talk with thee
Flushes my cheek, and thou art ashy-pale.

Truly, thou hast laboured, hast withstood
her lips,
The siren's! Yes,-'tis like thou hast at-
tained!
Tell me, dear master, wherefore now thou
comest?
I thought thy solemn songs would have
their meed
In after-time; that I should hear the earth
Exult in thee and echo with thy praise,
While I was laid forgotten in my grave.
Par. Ah fiend, I know thee, I am not
thy dupe!
Thou art ordained to follow in my track,
Reaping my sowing, as I scorned to reap
The harvest sown by sages passed away.
Thou art the sober searcher, cautious
striver,
As if, except through me, thou hast
searched or striven!
Ay, tell the world! Degrade me after all,
To an aspirant after fame, not truth—
To all but envy of thy fate, be sure!
Apr. Nay, sing them to me; I shall envy
not:
Thou shalt be king! Sing thou, and I will
sit
Beside, and call deep silence for thy songs,
And worship thee, as I had ne'er been
meant
To fill thy throne: but none shall ever
know!
Sing to me; for already thy wild eyes
Unlock my heart-strings, as some crystal-
shaft
Reveals by some chance blaze its parent
fount
After long time: so thou reveal'st my soul.
All will flash forth at last, with thee to
hear!
Par. (His secret! I shall get his secret—
fool!)
I am he that aspired to KNOW: and thou?
Apr. I would LOVE infinitely, and be
loved!
Par. Poor slave! I am thy king indeed.
Apr. Thou deem'st
That—born a spirit, dowered even as
thou,
Born for thy fate—because I could not
curb
My yearnings to possess at once the full
Enjoyment, but neglected all the means
Of realizing even the frailest joy,
Gathering no fragments to appease my
want,
Yet nursing up that want till thus I die—
Thou deem'st I cannot trace thy safe sure
march
O'er perils that o'erwhelm me, triumphing,
Neglecting nought below for aught above,
Despising nothing and ensuring all—
Nor that I could (my time to come again)
Lead thus my spirit securely as thine own.
Listen, and thou shalt see I know thee
well.
I would love infinitely ... Ah, lost! lost!
Oh ye who armed me at such cost,
How shall I look on all of ye
With your gifts even yet on me?
Par. (Ah, 'tis some moonstruck crea-
ture after all!
Such fond fools as are like to haunt this
den:
They spread contagion, doubtless: yet he
seemed
To echo one foreboding of my heart
So truly, that... no matter! How he stands
With eve's last sunbeam staying on his
hair
Which turns to it as if they were akin:
And those clear smiling eyes of saddest
blue
Nearly set free, so far they rise above
The painful fruitless striving of the brow
And enforced knowledge of the lips, firm-
set
In slow despondency's eternal sigh!
Has he, too, missed life's end, and learned
the cause?)
I charge thee, by thy fealty, be calm!
Tell me what thou wouldst be, and what
I am.
Apr. I would love infinitely, and be
loved.
First: I would carve in stone, or cast in
brass,
The forms of earth. No ancient hunter
lifted
Up to the gods by his renown, no nymph
Supposed the sweet soul of a woodland
tree
Or sapphirine spirit of a twilight star,
Should be too hard for me; no shepherd-
king
Regal for his white locks; no youth who
stands
Silent and very calm amid the throng,
His right hand ever hid beneath his robe
Until the tyrant pass; no lawgiver,
No swan-soft woman rubbed with lucid
oils
Given by a god for love of her—too
hard!
Every passion sprung from man, con-
ceived by man,
Would I express and clothe it in its right
form,
Or blend with others struggling in one
form,
Or show repressed by an ungainly form.
Oh, if you marvelled at some mighty spirit
With a fit frame to execute its will—
Even unconsciously to work its will—
You should be moved no less beside some
strong
Rare spirit, fettered to a stubborn body,
Endeavouring to subdue it and inform it

With its own splendour! All this I would do:
And I would say, this done, 'His sprites created,
'God grants to each a sphere to be its world,
'Appointed with the various objects needed
'To satisfy its own peculiar want;
'So, I create a world for these my shapes
'Fit to sustain their beauty and their strength!'
And, at the word, I would contrive and paint
Woods, valleys, rocks and plains, dells, sands and wastes,
Lakes which, when morn breaks on their quivering bed,
Blaze like a wyvern flying round the sun,
And ocean isles so small, the dog-fish tracking
A dead whale, who should find them, would swim thrice
Around them, and fare onward—all to hold
The offspring of my brain. Nor these alone:
Bronze labyrinth, palace, pyramid and crypt.
Baths, galleries, courts, temples and terraces,
Marts, theatres and wharfs—all filled with men,
Men everywhere! And this performed in turn,
When those who looked on, pined to hear the hopes
And fears and hates and loves which moved the crowd,
I would throw down the pencil as the chisel,
And I would speak; no thought which ever stirred
A human breast should be untold; all passions,
All soft emotions, from the turbulent stir
Within a heart fed with desires like mine,
To the last comfort shutting the tired lids
Of him who sleeps the sultry noon away
Beneath the tent-tree by the wayside well:
And this in language as the need should be,
Now poured at once forth in a burning flow,
Now piled up in a grand array of words.
This done, to perfect and consummate all,
Even as a luminous haze links star to star,
I would supply all chasms with music, breathing
Mysterious motions of the soul, no way
To be defined save in strange melodies.
Last, having thus revealed all I could love,
Having received all love bestowed **on** it,
I would die: preserving so throughout **my** course
God full on me, as I was full on men:
He would approve my prayer,' I have gone through
'The loveliness of life; create for me
'I f not for men, or take me to thyself,
'Eternal, infinite love!'
If thou hast ne'er
Conceived this mighty aim, this full desire,
Thou hast not passed my trial, and thou art
No king of mine.
Par. Ah me!
Apr. But thou art here!
Thou didst not gaze like me upon that end
Till thine own powers for compassing the bliss
Were blind with glory; nor grow mad to grasp
At once the prize long patient toil should claim,
Nor spurn all granted short of that. And I
Would do as thou, a second time: nay, listen!
Knowing ourselves, our world, our task so great,
Our time so brief, 'tis clear if we refuse
The means so limited, the tools so rude
To execute our purpose, life will fleet,
And we shall fade, and leave our task undone.
We will be wise in time: what though our work
Be fashioned in despite of their ill-service,
Be crippled every way ? 'Twere little praise
Did full resources wait on our goodwill
At every turn. Let all be as it is.
Some say the earth is even so contrived
That tree and flower, a vesture gay, conceal
A bare and skeleton framework. Had we means
Answering to our mind! But now I seem
Wrecked on a savage isle: how rear thereon
My palace? Branching palms the props shall be,
Fruit glossy mingling; gems are for the East;
Who heeds them? I can pass them. Serpents' scales,
And painted birds' down, furs and fishes* skins
Must help me; and a little here and there
Is all I can aspire to: still my art
Shall show its birth was in a gentler clime.
'Had I green jars of malachite, this way
'I'd range them: where those sea-shells glisten above,
'Cressets should hang, by right: this way we set
'The purple carpets, as these mats are laid,
' Woven of fern and rush and blossoming

Or if, by fortune, some completer grace

Be spared to **me, some** fragment, some slight sample
Of the prouder workmanship my own home boasts,
Some trifle little heeded there, but here
The place's one perfection—with what joy
Would I enshrine the relic, cheerfully
Foregoing all the marvels out of reach!
Could I retain one strain of all the psalm
Of the angels, one word of the fiat of God,
To let my followers know what such things are!
I would adventure nobly for their sakes:
When nights were still, and still the moaning sea,
And far away I could descry the land
Whence I departed, whither I return,
I would dispart the waves, and stand once more
At home, and load my bark, and hasten back,
And fling my gains to them, worthless or true.
* Friends,' I would say, *I went far, far for them,
' Past the high rocks the haunt of doves, the mounds
'Of red earth from whose sides strange trees grow out,
* Past tracks of milk-white minute blinding sand,
•Till, by a mighty moon, I tremblingly
'Gathered these magic herbs, berry and bud,
' In haste, not pausing to reject the weeds,
' But happy plucking them at any price.
'To me, who have seen them bloom in their own soil,
'They are scarce lovely: plait and wear them, you!
'And guess, from what they are, the springs that fed them,
'The stars that sparkled o'er them, night by night,
*The snakes that travelled far to sip their dew!'
Thus for my higher loves; and thus even weakness
Would win me honour. But not these alone
Should claim my care; for common life, its wants
And ways, would I set forth in beauteous hues:
The lowest hind should not possess a hope,
A fear, but I'd be by him, saying better
Than he his own heart's language. I would live
For ever in the thoughts I thus explored,
As a discoverer's memory is attached
To all he finds; they should be mine henceforth.
Imbued with me, though free to all before:

[

For clay, once cast into my soul's rich mine,
Should come up crusted o'er with gems. Nor this
Would need a meaner spirit, than the first;
Nay, 'twould be but the selfsame spirit, clothed
In humbler guise, but still the selfsame spirit:
As one spring wind unbinds the mountain snow
And comforts violets in their hermitage.
But, master, poet, who hast done all this,
How didst thou 'scape the ruin whelming me?
Didst thou, when nerving thee to this attempt,
Ne'er range thy mind's extent, as some wide hall,
Dazzled by shapes that filled its length with light,
Shapes clustered there to rule thee, rot obey,
That will not wait thy summons, will not rise
Singly, nor when thy practised eye and hand
Can well transfer their loveliness, but crowd
By thee for ever, bright to thy despair?
Didst thou ne'er gaze on each by turns, and ne'er
Resolve to single out one, though the rest
Should vanish, and to give that one, entire
In beauty, to the world; forgetting, so,
Its peers, whose number baffles mortal power?
And, this determined, wast thou ne'er seduced
By memories and regrets and passionate love,
To glance once more farewell? and did their eyes
Fasten thee, brighter and more bright, until
Thou couldst but stagger back unto their feet,
And laugh that man's applause or welfare ever
Could tempt thee to forsake them? Or when years
Had passed and still their love possessed thee wholly,
When from without some murmur startled thee
Of darkling mortals famished for one ray
Of thy so-hoarded luxury of light,
Didst thou ne'er strive even yet to break those spells
And prove thou couldst recover and fulfil
Thy early mission, long ago renounced,

And to that end, select some shape once more?
And did not mist-like influences, thick films,
Faint memories of the rest that charmed so long
Thine eyes, float fast, confuse thee, bear thee off,
As whirling snow-drifts blind a man who treads
A mountain ridge, with guiding spear, through storm?
Say, though I fell, I had excuse to fall;
Say, I was tempted sorely: say but this,
Dear lord, Aprile's lord!
Par. Clasp me not thus,
Aprile! That the truth should reach me thus!
We are weak dust. Nay, clasp not or I faint!
Apr. My king! and envious thoughts could outrage thee?
Lo, I forget my ruin, and rejoice
In thy success, as thou! Let our God's praise
Go bravely through the world at last! What care
Through me or thee? I feel thy breath. Why, tears?
Tears in the darkness, and from thee to me?
Par. Love me henceforth, Aprile, while I learn
To love; and, merciful God, forgive us both!
We wake at length from weary dreams; but both
Have slept in fairy-land: though dark and drear
Appears the world before us, we no less
Wake with our wrists and ankles jewelled still.
I too have sought to KNOW as thou to LOVE—
Excluding love as thou refusedst knowledge.
Still thou hast beauty and I, power. We wake:
What penance canst devise for both of us ?
Apr. I hear thee faintly. The thick darkness! Even
Thine eyes are hid. 'Tis as I knew: I speak,
And now I die. But I have seen thy face!
O poet, think of me, and sing of me!
But to have seen thee and to die so soon!
Par. Die not, Aprile! We must never part.
Are we not halves of one dissevered world,
Whom this strange chance unites once more? Part? never!
Till thou the lover, know; and I, the knower,
Love—until both are saved. Aprile, hear!
We will accept our gains, and use them—now!
God, he will die upon my breast! Aprile!
Apr. To speak but once, and die! yet by his side.
Hush! hush!
Ha! go you ever girt about
With phantoms, powers ? I have created such,
But these seem real as I.
Par. Whom can you see
Through the accursed darkness ?
Apr. Stay; I know,
I know them: who should know them well as I?
White brows, lit up with glory; poets all!
Par. Let him but live, and I have my reward!
Apr. Yes; I see now. God is the perfect poet,
Who in his person acts his own creations.
Had you but told me this at first! Hush! hush!
Par. Live! for my sake, because of my great sin,
To help my brain, oppressed by these wild words
And their deep import. Live! 'tis not too late.
I have a quiet home for us, and friends.
Michal shall smile on you. Hear you? Lean thus,
And breathe my breath. I shall not lose one word
Of all your speech, one little word, Aprile!
Apr. No, no. Crown me? I am not one of you!
'Tis he, the king, you seek. I am not one.
Par. Thy spirit, at least, Aprile! Let me love!

I have attained, and now I may depart.

III.—PARACELSUS

SCENE.—*Basil; a chamber in the house of* PARACELSUS. 1526.

PARACELSUS, FESTUS

Par. Heap logs and let the blaze laugh out!
Fest. True, true!
'Tis very fit all, time and chance and change
Have wrought since last we sat thus, face to face
And soul to soul—all cares, far-looking fears,
Vague apprehensions, all vain fancies bred
By your long absence, should be cast away,
Forgotten in this glad unhoped renewal
Of our affections.
Par. Oh, omit not aught

Which witnesses your own and Michal's own
Affection: spare not that! Only forget
The honours and the glories and what not,
It pleases you to tell profusely out.
Fest. Nay, even your honours, in a sense, I waive:
The wondrous Paracelsus, life's dispenser,
Fate's commissary, idol of the schools
And courts, shall be no more than Aureole still,
Still Aureole and my friend as when we parted
Some twenty years ago, and I restrained
As best I could the promptings of my spirit
Which secretly advanced you, from the first,
To the pre-eminent rank which, since, your own
Adventurous ardour, nobly triumphing,
Has won for you.
Par. Yes, yes. And Michal's face
Still wears that quiet and peculiar light
Like the dim circlet floating round a pearl?
Fest. Just so.
Par. And yet her calm sweet countenance,
Though saintly, was not sad; for she would sing
Alone. Does she still sing alone, bird-like,
Noi dreaming you are near? Her carols dropt
In flakes through that old leafy bower built under
The sunny wall at Wiirzburg, from her lattice
Among the trees above, while I, unseen,
Sat conning some rare scroll from Tritheim's shelves
Much wondering notes so simple could divert
My mind from study. Those were happy days.
Respect all such as sing when all alone!
Fest. Scarcely alone: her children, you may guess,
Are wild beside her.
Par. Ah, those children quite
Unsettle the pure picture in my mind:
A girl, she was so perfect, so distinct:
No change, no change! Not but this added grace
May blend and harmonize with its compeers,
And Michal may become her motherhood;
But 'tis a change, and I detest all change,
And most a change in aught I loved long since.
So, Michal—you have said she thinks of me?
Fest. O very proud will Michal be of you!
Imagine how we sat, long winter-nights,
Scheming and wondering, shaping your presumed
Adventure, or devising its reward;
Shutting out fear with all the strength of hope.
For it was strange how, even when most secure
In our domestic peace, a certain dim
And flitting shade could sadden all; it seemed
A restlessness of heart, a silent yearning,
A sense of something wanting, incomplete—
Not to be put in words, perhaps avoided
By mute consent—but, said or unsaid, felt
To point to one so loved and so long lost.
And then the hopes rose and shut out the fears—
How you would laugh should I recount them now!
I still predicted your return at last
With gifts beyond the greatest of them all,
All Tritheim's wondrous troop; did one of which
Attain renown by any chance, I smiled,
As well aware of who would prove his peer.
Michal was sure some woman, long ere this,
As beautiful as you were sage, had loved...
Par. Far-seeing, truly, to discern so much
In the fantastic projects and day-dreams
Of a raw restless boy!
Fest. Oh, no: the sunrise
Well warranted our faith in this full noon!
Can I forget the anxious voice which said
'Festus, havethoughtslikethesereshaped themselves
'In other brains than mine? have their possessors
'Existed in like circumstance? were they weak
'As I, or ever constant from the first,
'Despising youth's allurements and rejecting
'As spider-films the shackles I endure?
'Is there hope for me?'—and I answered gravely
As an acknowledged elder, calmer, wiser,
More gifted mortal. O you must remember,
For all your glorious . . .
Par. Glorious? ay, this hair,
These hands—nay, touch them, they are mine! Recall
With all the said recallings, times when thus
To lay them by your own ne'er turned you pale
As now. Most glorious, are they not?
Fest. Why—why—
Something must be subtracted from success

So wide, no doubt. He would be scrupulous, truly,
Who should object such drawbacks. Still, still, Aureole,
You are changed, very changed! 'Twere losing nothing
To look well to it: you must not be stolen
From the enjoyment of your well-won meed.
Par. My friend! you seek my pleasure, past a doubt:
You will best gain your point, by talking, not
Of me, but of yourself.
Fest. Have I not said
All touching Michal and my children? Sure
You know, by this, full well how Aennchen looks
Gravely, while one disparts her thick brown hair;
And Aureole's glee when some stray gannet builds
Amid the birch-trees by the lake. Small hope
Have I that he will honour (the wild imp)
His namesake. Sigh not! 'tis too much to ask
That all we love should reach the same proud fate.
But you are very kind to humour me
By showing interest in my quiet life;
You, who of old could never tame yourself
To tranquil pleasures, must at heart despise . . .
Par. Festus, strange secrets are let out by death
Who blabs so oft the follies of this world:
And I am death's familiar, as you know.
I helped a man to die, some few weeks since,
Warped even from his go-cart to one end—
The living on princes' smiles, reflected from
A mighty herd of favourites. No mean trick
He left untried, and truly well-nigh wormed
All traces of God's finger out of him:
Then died, grown old. And just an hour before,
Having lain long with blank and soulless eyes,
He sat up suddenly, and with natural voice
Said that in spite of thick air and closed doors
God told him it was June; and he knew well,
Without such telling, harebells grew in June;
And all that kings could ever give or take
Would not be precious as those blooms to him.
Just so, allowing I am passing sage,
It seems to me much worthier argument
Why pansies,[1] eyes thatlaugh, bear beauty's prize
From violets, eyes that dream—(your Michal's choice)—
Than all fools find to wonder at in me
Or in my fortunes. And be very sure
I say this from no prurient restlessness,
No self-complacency, itching to turn,
Vary and view its pleasure from all points,
And, in this instance, willing other men
May be at pains, demonstrate to itself
The realness of the very joy it tastes.
What should delight me like the news of friends
Whose memories were a solace to me oft,
As mountain-baths to wild fowls in their flight?
Ofter than you had wasted thought on me
Had you been wise, and rightly valued bliss.
But there's no taming nor repressing hearts:
God knows I need such!—So, you heard me speak?
Fest. Speak? when?
Par. When but this morning at my class?
There was noise and crowd enough. I saw you not.
Surely you know I am engaged to fill
The chair here?—that 'tis part of my proud fate
To lecture to as many thick-skulled youths
As please, each day, to throng the theatre,.
To my great reputation, and no small
Danger of Basil's benches long unused
To crack beneath such honour?
Fest. I was there;
I mingled with the throng: shall I avow
Small care was mine to listen?—too intent
On gathering from the murmurs of the crowd
A full corroboration of my hopes!
What can I learn about your powers? but they
Know, care for nought beyond your actual state,
Your actual value; yet they worship you,
Those various natures whom you sway as one!
But ere I go, be sure I shall attend...
Par. Stop, o' God's name: the thing's by no means yet
Past remedy! Shall I read this morning's labour
—At least in substance? Nought so worth the gaining
As an apt scholar! Thus then, with all due
Precision and emphasis—you, beside, are clearly
Guiltless of understanding more, a whit,
The subject than your stool—allowed to be

[1] Citrinula (flammula) hcrba Paracelso multum familiaris.—DORN.

A notable advantage.
Fest. Surely, Aureole,
You laugh at me!
Par. I laugh? Ha,ha! thank heaven,
I charge you, if 't be so! for I forget
Much, and what laughter should be like. No less,
However, I forego that luxury
Since it alarms the friend who brings it back.
True, laughter like my own must echo strangely
To thinking men; a smile were better far;
So, make me smile! If the exulting look
You wore but now be smiling, 'tis so long
Since I have smiled! Alas, such smiles are born
Alone of hearts like yours, or herdsmen's souls
Of ancient time, whose eyes, calm as their flocks,
Saw in the stars mere garnishry of heaven,
And in the earth a stage for altars only.
Never change, Festus: I say, never change!
Fest. My God, if he be wretched after all!
Far. When last we parted, Festus, you declared,
—Or Michal, yes, her soft lips whispered words
I have preserved. She told me she believed
I should succeed (meaning, that in the search
I then engaged in, I should meet success)
And yet be wretched: now, she augured false.
Fest. Thank heaven! but you spoke strangely: could I venture
To think bare apprehension lest your friend,
Dazzled by your resplendent course, might find
Henceforth less sweetness in his own, could move
Such earnest mood in you ? Fear not, dear friend,
That I shall leave you, inwardly repining
Your lot was not my own!
Par. And this for ever!
For ever! gull who may, they will be gulled!
They will not look nor think; 'tis nothing new
In them: but surely he is not of them!
My Festus, do you know, I reckoned, you—
Though all beside were sand-blind—you, my friend,
Would look at me, once close, with piercing eye
Untroubled by the false glare that confounds
A weaker vision: would remain serene,
Though singular amid a gaping throng.
I feared you, or I had come, sure, long ere this,
To Einsiedeln. Well, error has no end,
And Rhasis is a sage, and Basil boasts
A tribe of wits, and I am wise and blest
Past all dispute! 'Tis vain to fret at it.
I have vowed long ago my worshippers
Shall owe to their own deep sagacity
All further information, good or bad.
Small risk indeed my reputation runs,
Unless perchance the glance now searching me
Be fixed much longer; for it seems to spell
Dimly the characters a simpler man
Might read distinct enough. Old Eastern books
Say, the fallen prince of morning some short space
Remained unchanged in semblance; nay, his brow
Was hued with triumph: every spirit then
Praising, *his* heart on flame the while:—a tale!
Well, Festus, what discover you, I pray?
Fest. Some foul deed sullies then a life which else
Were raised supreme ?
Par. Good: I do well, most well!
Why strive to make men hear, feel, fret themselves
With what is past their power to comprehend?
I should not strive now: only, having nursed
The faint surmise that one yet walked the earth,
One, at least, not the utter fool of show,
Not absolutely formed to be the dupe
Of shallow plausibilities alone:
One who, in youth, found wise enough to choose
The happiness his riper years approve,
Was yet so anxious for another's sake,
That, ere his friend could rush upon a mad
And ruinous course, the converse of his own,
His gentle spirit essayed, prejudged for him
The perilous path, foresaw its destiny,
And warned the weak one in such tender words,
Such accents—his whole heart in every tone—
That oft their memory comforted that friend
When it by right should have increased despair:
—Having believed, I say, that this one man
Could never lose the light thus from the first
His portion—how should I refuse to grieve

At even my gain if it disturb our old
Relation, if it make me out more wise?
Therefore, once more reminding him how well
He prophesied, I note the single flaw
That spoils his prophet's title. In plain words,
You were deceived, and thus were you deceived—
I have not been successful, and yet am
Most miserable; 'tis said at last; nor you
Give credit, lest you force me to concede
That common sense yet lives upon the world!
Fest. You surely do not mean to banter me?
Par. You know, or—if you have been wise enough
To cleanse your memory of such matters—knew,
As far as words of mine could make it clear,
That 'twas my purpose to find joy or grief
Solely in the fulfilment of my plan
Or plot or whatsoe'er it was; rejoicing
Alone as it proceeded prosperously,
Sorrowing then only when mischance retarded
Its progress. That was in those Wiirzburg days!
Not to prolong a theme I thoroughly hate,
I have pursued this plan with all my strength;
And having failed therein most signally,
Cannot object to ruin utter and drear
As all-excelling would have been the prize
Had fortune favoured me. I scarce have right
To vex your frank good spirit late so glad
In my supposed prosperity, I know,
And, were I lucky in a glut of friends,
Would well agree to let your error live,
Nay, strengthen it with fables of success.
But mine is no condition to refuse
The transient solace of so rare a godsend,
My solitary luxury, my one friend:
Accordingly I venture to put off
The wearisome vest of falsehood galling me,
Secure when he is by. I lay me bare,
Prone at his mercy—but he is my friend!
Not that he needs retain his aspect grave;
That answers not my purpose; for 'tis like,
Some sunny morning—Basil being drained
Of its wise population, every corner
Of the amphitheatre crammed with learned clerks,
Herecolampadius, looking worlds of wit,
Here Castellanus, as profound as he,
Munsterus here, Frobenius there, all squeezed
And staring,—that the zany of the show,
Even Paracelsus, shall put off before **them**
His trappings with a grace but seldom judged
Expedient in such cases:—the grim smile
That will go round! Is it not therefore best
To venture a rehearsal like the present
In a small way? Where are the signs I seek,
The first-fruits and fair sample of the scorn
Due to all quacks? Why, this will never do!
Fest. These are foul vapours, Aureole; nought beside!
The effect of watching, studv, weariness.
Were there a spark of truth in the confusion
Of these wild words, you would not outrage thus
Your youth's companion. I shall ne'er regard
These wanderings, bred of faintness and much study.
'Tis not thus you would trust a trouble to me.
To Micnal's friend.
Par. I have said it, dearest Festus!
For the manner, 'tis ungracious probably;
You may have it told in broken sobs, one day.
And scalding tears, ere long: but I thought best
To keep that off as long as possible.
Do you wonder still?
Fest. No; it must oft fall out
That one whose labour perfects any work,
Shall rise from it with eye so worn that he
Of all men least can measure the extent
Of what he has accomplished. He alone
Who, nothing tasked, is nothing weary too,
May clearly scan the little he effects:
But we, the bystanders, untouched by toil,
Estimate each aright.
Par. This worthy Festus
Is one of them, at last! 'Tis so with all!
First, they set down all progress as a dream;
And next, when he whose quick discomfiture
Was counted on, accomplishes some few
And doubtful steps in his career,—behold,
They look for every inch of ground to vanish
Beneath his tread, so sure they spy success!
Fest. Few doubtful step3? when death retires before
Your presence—when the noblest of mankind,
Broken in body or subdued in soul,
May through your skill renew their vigour, raise

The shattered frame to pristine stateliness?
When men in racking pain may purchase dreams
Of what delights them most, swooning at once
Into a sea of bliss or rapt along
As in a flying sphere of turbulent light?
When we may look to you as one ordained
To free the flesh from fell disease, as frees
Our Luther's burning tongue the fettered soul?
When .. .
Par. When and where, the devil, did you get
This notable news?
Fest. Even from the common voice;
From those whose envy, daring not dispute
The wonders it decries, attributes them
To magic and such folly.
Par. Folly? Why not
To magic, pray? You find a comfort doubtless
In holding, God ne'er troubles him about
Us or our doings: once we were judged worth
The devil's tempting ... I offend: forgive me,
And rest content. Your prophecy on the whole
Was fair enough as prophesyings go;
At fault a little in detail, but quite
Precise enough in the main; and hereupon
1 pay due homage: you guessed long ago
(The prophet!) I should fail—and I have failed.
Fest. You mean to tell me, then, the hopes which fed
Your youth have not been realized as yet?
Some obstacle has barred them hitherto?
Or that their innate . . .
Par. As I said but now,
You have a very decent prophet's fame,
So you but shun details here. Little matter
Whether those hopes were mad,—the aims they sought,
Safe and secure from all ambitious fools;
Or whether my weak wits are overcome
By what a better spirit would scorn: I fail.
And now .methinks 'twere best to change a theme
I am a sad fool to have stumbled on.
I say confusedly what comes uppermost;
But there are times when patience proves at fault,
As now: this morning's strange encounter —you
Beside me once again! you, whom I guessed
Alive, since hitherto (with Luther's leave)
No friend have I among the saints at peace,
To judge by any good their prayers effect.
I knew you would have helped me—why not he,
My strange competitor in enterprise,
Bound for the same end by another path,
Arrived, or ill or well, before the time,
At our disastrous journey's doubtful close?
How goes it with Aprile? Ah, they miss
Your lone sad sunny idleness of heaven,
Our martyrs for the world's sake; heaven shuts fast:
The poor mad poet is howling by this time!
Since you are my sole friend then, here or there,
I could not quite repress the varied feelings
This meeting wakens; they have had their vent,
And now forget them. Do the rear-mice still
Hang like a fretwork on the gate (or what
In my time was a gate) fronting the road
From Einsiedeln to Lachen?
Fest. Trifle not:
Answer me, for my sake alone! You smiled
Just now, when I supposed some deed, unworthy
Yourself, might blot the else so bright result;
Yet if your motives have continued pure,
Your will unfaltering, and in spite of this,
You have experienced a defeat, why then
I say not you would cheerfully withdraw
From contest—mortal hearts are not so fashioned—
But surely you would ne'ertheless withdraw.
You sought not fame nor gain nor even love.
No end distinct from knowledge,—I repeat
Your very words: once satisfied that knowledge
Is a mere dream, you would announce as much,
Yourself the first. But how is the event?
You are defeated—and I find you here!
Par. As though 'here' did not signify defeat!
I spoke not of my little labours here,
But of the break-down of my general aims:
For you, aware of their extent and scope,
To look on these sage lecturings, approved
By beardless boys, and bearded dotards worse,
As a fit consummation of such aims,
Is worthy notice. A professorship
At Basil! Since you see so much in it,
And think my life was reasonably drained
Of life's delights to render me a match
For duties arduous as such post demands,—
Be it far from me to deny my power
To fill the petty circle lotted out
Of infinite space, or justify the host
Of honours thence accruing. So, take notice,

This jewel dangling from my neck preserves
The features of a prince, my skill restored
To plague his people some few years to come:
And all through a pure whim. He had eased the earth
For me, but that the droll despair which seized
The vermin of his household, tickled me.
I came to see. Here, drivelled the physician,
Whose most infallible nostrum was at fault;
There quaked the astrologer, whose horoscope
Had promised him interminable years;
Here a monk fumbled at the sick man's mouth
With some undoubted relic—a sudary
Of the Virgin; while another piebald knave
Of the same brotherhood (he loved them ever)
Was actively preparing 'neath his nose
Such a suffumigation as, once fired,
Had stunk the patient dead ere he could groan.
I cursed the doctor and upset the brother,
Brushed past the conjurer, vowed that the first gust
Of stench from the ingredients just alight
Would raise a cross-grained devil in my sword,
Not easily laid: and ere an hour the prince
Slept as he never slept since prince he was.
A day—and I was posting for my life,
Placarded through the town as one whose spite
Had near availed to stop the blessed effects
Of the doctor's nostrum which, well seconded
By the sudary, and most by the costly smoke—
Not leaving out the strenuous prayers sent up
Hard by in the abbey—raised the prince to life:
To the great reputation of the seer
Who, confident, expected all along
The glad event—the doctor's recompense—
Much largess from his highness to the monks—
And the vast solace of his loving people,
w hose general satisfaction to increase,
1 he prince was pleased no longer to defer
The burning of some dozen heretics
Remanded till God's mercy should be shown
Touching his sickness: last of all were joined
Ample directions to all loyal folk
To swell the complement by seizing me
Who—doubtless some rank sorcerer—endeavoured
To thwart these pious offices, obstruct
The prince's cure, and frustrate heaven by help
Of certain devils dwelling in his sword.
By luck, the prince in his first fit of thanks
Had forced this bauble on me as an earnest
Of further favours. This one case may serve
To give sufficient taste of many such,
So, let them pass. Those shelves support a pile
Of patents, licences, diplomas, titles
From Germany, France, Spain, and Italy;
Thsy authorize some honour; ne'ertheless,
I set more store by this Erasmus sent;
He trusts me; our Frobenius is his friend,
And him' I raised' (nay, read it) ' from the dead.'
I weary you, I see. I merely sought
To show, there's no great wonder after all
That, while I fill the class-room and attract
A crowd to Basil, I get leave to stay,
And therefore need not scruple to accept
The utmost they can offer, if I please:
For 'tis but right the world should be prepared
To treat with favour e'en fantastic wants
Of one like me, used up in serving her.
Just as the mortal, whom the gods in part
Devoured, received in place of his lost limb
Some virtue or other—cured disease, I think;
You mind the fables we have read together.
Fest. You do not think I comprehend a word.
The time was, Aureole, you were apt enough
To clothe the airiest thoughts in specious breath;
But surely you must feel how vague and strange
These speeches sound.
Par. Well, then: you know my hopes;
I am assured, at length, those hopes were vain;
That truth is just as far from me as ever;
That I have thrown my life away; that sorrow
On that account is idle, and further effort
To mend and patch what's marred beyond repairing,
As useless: and all this was taught your friend
By the convincing good old-fashioned method
Of force—by sheer compulsion. Is that plain?
Fest. Dear Aureole, can it be my fears were just?
God wills not ..
Par. Now, 'tis this I most adrnirc-

The constant talk men of your stamp keep up
Of God's will, as they style it; one would swear
Man had but merely to uplift his eye,
And see the will in question charactered
On the heaven's vault. 'Tis hardly wise to moot
Such topics: doubts are many and faith is weak.
I know as much of any will of God
As knows some dumb and tortured brute what Man,
His stem lord, wills from the perplexing blows
That plague him every way; but there, of course,
Where least he suffers, longest he remains—
My case; and for such reasons I plod on,
Subdued but not convinced. I know as little
Why I deserve to fail, as why I hoped
Better things in my youth. I simply know
I am no master here, but trained and beaten
Into the path I tread; and here I stay,
Until some further intimation reach me,
Like an obedient drudge. Though I prefer
To view the whole thing as a task imposed
Which, whether dull or pleasant, must be done—
Yet, I deny not, there is made provision
Of joys which tastes less jaded might affect;
Nay, some which please me too, for all my pride—
Pleasures that once were pains: the iron ring
Festering about a slave's neck grows at length
Into the flesh it eats. I hate no longer
A host of petty vile delights, undreamed of
Or spurned before; such now supply the place
Of my dead aims: as in the autumn woods
Where tall trees used to flourish, from their roots
Springs up a fungous brood sickly and pale,
Chill mushrooms coloured like a corpse's cheek.

Fest. If I interpret well your words, I own
It troubles me but little that your aims,
Vast in their dawning and most likely grown
Extravagantly since, have baffled you.
Perchance I am glad; you merit greater praise;
Because they are loo glorious to be gained,
You do not blindly cling to them and die;
You fell, but have not sullenly refused
To rise, because an angel worsted you
In wrestling, though the world holds not your peer,
And though too harsh and sudden is the change
To yield content as yet, still you pursue
The ungracious path as though 'twere rosy-strewn.
'Tis well: and your reward, or soon or late,
Will come from him whom no man serves in vain.

Par. Ah, very fine! For my part, I conceive
The very pausing from all futher toil,
Which you find heinous, would become a seal
To the sincerity of all my deeds.
To be consistent I should die at once;
I calculated on no after-life;
Yet (how crept in, how fostered, I know not)
Here am I with as passionate regret
For youth and health and love so vainly lavished,
As if their preservation had been first
And foremost in my thoughts; and this strange fact
Humbled me wondrously, and had due force
In rendering me the less averse to follow
A certain counsel, a mysterious warning—
You will not understand—but 'twas a man
With aims not mine and yet pursued like mine,
With the same fervour and no more success,
Perishing in my sight; who summoned me
As I would shun the ghastly fate I saw,
To serve my race at once; to wait no longer
That God should interfere in my behalf,
But to distrust myself, put pride away,
And give my gains, imperfect as they were,
To men. I have not leisure to explain
How, since, a singular series of events
Has raised me to the station you behold,
Wherein I seem to turn to most account
The mere wreck of the past,—perhaps receive
Some feeble glimmering token that God views
And may approve my penance: therefore here
You find me, doing most good or least harm.
And if folks wonder much and profit little
'Tis not my fault; only, I shall rejoice
When my part in the farce is shuffled through,
And the curtain falls: I must hold out till then.

Fest. Till when, dear Aureole?

Par. Till I'm fairly thrust
From my proud eminence. Fortune is fickle

And even professors fall: should that arrive,
I see no sin in ceding to my bent.
You little fancy what rude shocks apprise us
We sin; God's intimations rather fail
In clearness than in energy: 'twere well
Did they but indicate the course to take
Like that to be forsaken. I would fain
Be spared a further sample. Here I stand,
And here I stay, be sure, till forced to flit.

Fest. Be you but firm on that head! long ere then
All I expect will come to pass, I trust:
The cloud that wraps you will have disappeared.
Meantime, I see small chance of such event:
They praise you here as one whose lore, already
Divulged, eclipses all the past can show,
But whose achievements, marvellous as they be,
Are faint anticipations of a glory
About to be revealed. When Basil's crowds
Dismiss their teacher, I shall be content
That he depart.

Par. This favour at their hands
I look for earlier than your view of things
Would warrant. Of the crowd you saw today,
Remove the full half sheer amazement draws,
Mere novelty, nought else; and next, the tribe
Whose innate blockish dulness just perceives
That unless miracles (as seem my works)
Be wrought in their behalf, their chance is slight
To puzzle the devil; next, the numerous set
Who bitterly hate established schools, and help
The teacher that oppugns them, till he once
Have planted his own doctrine, when the teacher
May reckon on their rancour in his turn;
Take, too, the sprinkling of sagacious knaves
Whose cunning runs not counter to the vogue
But seeks, by flattery and crafty nursing,
To force my system to a premature
Short-lived development. Why swell the list?
Each has his end to serve, and his best way
Of serving it: remove all these, remains
A scantling, a poor dozen at the best,
Worthy to look for sympathy and service,
And likely to draw profit from my pains.

Fest. 'Tis **no encouraging picture: still these few**
Redeem their fellows. Once the germ implanted,
Its growth, if slow, is sure.

Par. God grant it so!
I would make some amends: but if I fail,
The luckless rogues have this excuse to urge,
That much is in my method and my manner,
My uncouth habits, my impatient spirit,
Which hinders of reception and result
My doctrine: much to say, small skill to speak!
These old aims suffered not a looking-off
Though for an instant; therefore, only when
I thus renounced them and resolved to reap
Some present fruit—to teach mankind some truth
So dearly purchased—only then I found
Such teaching was an art requiring cares
And qualities peculiar to itself:
That to possess was one thing—to displas
Another. With renown first in my thoughts,
Or popular praise, I had soon discovered it:
One grows but little apt to learn these things.

Fest. If it be so, which nowise I believe,
There needs no waiting fuller dispensation
To leave a labour of so little use.
Why not throw up the irksome charge at once?

Par. A task, a task!
But wherefore hide the whole
Extent of degradation, once engaged
In the confessing vein? Despite of **all**
My fine talk of obedience and repugnance,
Docility and what not, 'tis yet to learn
If when the task shall really be performed,
My inclination free to choose once more,
I shall do aught but slightly modify
The nature of the hated task I quit.
In plain words, I am spoiled; my life still tends
As first it tended; I am broken and trained
To my old habits: they are part of me.
I know, and none so well, my darling ends
Are proved impossible: no less, no less,
Even now what humours me, fond **fool,** as when
Their faint ghosts sit with me and flatter me
And send me back content to my dull round?
How can I change this soul?—this apparatus
Constructed solely for their purposes,
So well adapted to their every want,
To search **out** and **discover, prove and** perfect;
This intricate **machine whose most minute**

And meanest motions have their charm to me
Though to none else—an aptitude I seize,
An object I perceive, a use, a meaning,
A property, a fitness, I explain
And I alone:—how can I change my soul ?
And this wronged body, worthless save when tasked
Under that soul's dominion—used to care
For its bright master's cares and quite subdue
Its proper cravings—not to ail nor pine
So he but prosper—whither drag this poor
Tried patient body? God! how I essayed
To live like that mad poet, for a while,
To love alone; and how I felt too warped
And twisted and deformed! What should I do,
Even tho' released from drudgery, but return
Faint, as you see, and halting, blind and sore,
To my old life and die as I began?
I cannot feed on beauty for the sake
Of beauty only, nor can drink in balm
From lovely objects for their loveliness;
My nature cannot lose her first imprint;
I still must hoard and heap and class all truths
With one ulterior purpose: I must know!
Would God translate me to his throne, believe
That I should only listen to his word
To further my own aim! For other men,
Beauty is prodigally strewn around,
And I were happy could I quench as they
This mad and thriveless longing, and content me
With beauty for itself alone: alas,
I have addressed a frock of heavy mail
Yet may not join the troop of sacred knights;
And now the forest-creatures fly from me,
The grass-banks cool, the sunbeams warm no more.
Best follow, dreaming that ere night arrive,
I shall o'ertake the company and ride
Glittering as they!

Fest. I think I apprehend
What you would say: if you, in truth, design
To enter once more on the life thus left,
Seek not to hide that all this consciousness
Of failure is assumed!

Par. My friend, my friend,
I toil, you listen; I explain, perhaps
You understand: there our communion ends.
Have you learnt nothing from to-day's discourse?
When we would thoroughly know the sick man's state
We feel awhile the fluttering pulse, press soft
The hot brow, look upon the languid eye,
And thence divine the rest. Must I lay bare
My heart, hideous and beating, or tear up
My vitals for your gaze, ere you will deem
Enough made known ? You! who are you, forsooth?
That is the crowning operation claimed
By the arch-demonstrator—heaven the hall,
And earth the audience. Let Aprile and you
Secure good places: 'twill be worth the while.

Fest. Are you mad, Aureole? What can I have said
To call for this? I judged from your own words.

Par. Oh, doubtless! A sick wretch describes the ape
That mocks him from the bed-foot, and all gravely
You thither turn at once: or he recounts
The perilous journey he has late performed,
And you are puzzled much how that could be!
You find me here, half stupid and half mad:
It makes no part of my delight to search
Into these matters, much less undergo
Another's scrutiny; but so it chances
That I am led to trust my state to you:
And the event is, you combine, contrast
And ponder on my foolish words as though
They thoroughly conveyed all hidden here—
Here, loathsome with despair and hate and rage!
Is there no fear, no shrinking and no shame?
Will you guess nothing? will you spare me nothing?
Must I go deeper? Ay or no?

Fest. Dear friend . . .

Par. True: I am brutal—'tis a part of it;
The plague's sign—you are not a lazar-haunter,
How should you know? Well then, you think it strange
I should profess to have failed utterly,
And yet propose an ultimate return
To courses void of hope: and this, because
You know not what temptation is, nor how
'Tis like to ply men in the sickliest part.
You are to understand that we who make
Sport for the gods, are hunted to the end:
There is not one sharp volley shot at us,
Which 'scaped with life, though hurt, we slacken pace
And gather by the wayside herbs and roots
To staunch our wounds, secure from further harm:

We are assailed to life's extremest verge.
It will be well indeed if I return,
A harmless busy fool, to my old ways!
I would forget hints of another fate,
Significant enough, which silent hours
Have lately scared me with.
Fest. Another! and what?
Par. After all, Festus, you say well: I am
A man yet: I need never humble me.
I would have been—something, I know not what;
But though I cannot soar, I do not crawl.
There are worse portions than this one of mine.
You say well!
Fest. Ah!
Par. And deeper degradation!
If the mean stimulants of vulgar praise,
If vanity should become the chosen food
Of a sunk mind, should stifle even the wish
To find its early aspirations true,
Should teach it to breathe falsehood like life-breath—
An atmosphere of craft and trick and lies;
Should make it proud to emulate, surpass
Base natures in the practices which woke
Its most indignant loathing once . . . No, no!
Utter damnation is reserved for hell!
I had immortal feelings; such shall never
Be wholly quenched: no, no!
My friend, you wear
A melancholy face, and certain 'tis
There's little cheer in all this dismal work.
But was it my desire to set abroach
Such memories and forebodings? I foresaw
Where they would drive. 'Twere better we discuss
News from Lucerne or Zurich; ask and tell
Of Egypt's flaring sky or Spain's cork-groves.
Fest. I have thought: trust me, this mood will pass away!
I know you and the lofty spirit you bear,
And easily ravel out a clue to all.
These are the trials meet for such as you,
Nor must you hope exemption: to be mortal
Is to be plied with trials manifold.
Look round! The obstacles which kept the rest
From your ambition, have been spurned by you;
Their fears, their doubts, the chains that bind them all,
Were flax before your resolute soul, which nought
Avails to awe save these delusions bred
From its own strength, its selfsame strength disguised,
Mocking itself. Be brave, dear Aureole! Since
The rabbit has his shade to frighten him,
The fawn a rustling bough, mortals their cares,
And higher natures yet would slight and laugh
At these entangling fantasies, as you
At trammels of a weaker intellect,—
Measure your mind's height by the shade it casts!
I know you.
Par. And I know you, dearest Festus!
And how you love unworthily; and how
All admiration renders blind.
Fest. You hold
That admiration blinds?
Par. Ay and alas!
Fest. Nought blinds you less than admiration, friend!
Whether it be that all love renders wise
In its degree; from love which blends with love—
Heart answering heart—to love which spends itself
In silent mad idolatry of some
Pre-eminent mortal, some great soul of souls,
Which ne'er will know how well it is adored.
I say, such love is never blind; but rather
Alive to every the minutest spot
Which mars its object, and which hate (supposed
So vigilant and searching) dreams not of.
Love broods on such: what then? When first perceived
Is there no sweet strife to forget, to change,
To overflush those blemishes with all
The glow of general goodness they disturb?
—To make those very defects an endless source
Of new affection grown from hopes and fears?
And, when all fails, is there no gallant stand
Made even for much proved weak? no shrinking-back
Lest, since all love assimilates the soul
To what it loves, it should at length become
Almost a rival of its idol? Trust me,
If there be fiends who seek to work our hurt,
To ruin and drag down earth's mightiest spirits
Even at God's foot, 'twill be from such as love,
Their zeal will gather most to serve their cause;
And least from those who hate, who most essay
By contumely and scorn to blot the light
Which forces entrance even to their hearts:
For thence will our defender tear the veil
And show within each heart, as in a shrine,
The giant image of perfection, grown

In hate's despite, whose calumnies were spawned
In the untroubled presence of its eyes.
True admiration blinds not; nor am I
So blind. I call your sin exceptional;
It springs from one whose life has passed the bounds
Prescribed to life. Compound that fault with God!
I speak of men; to common men like me
The weakness you reveal endears you more,
Like the far traces of decay in suns.
I bid you have good cheer!

Par. *Prceclare! Optime!*

Think of a quiet mountain-cloistered priest
Instructing Paracelsus! yet 'tis so.
Come, I will show you where my merit lies.
Tis in the advance of individual minds
That the slow crowd should ground their expectation
Eventually to follow; as the sea
Waits ages in its bed till some one wave
Out of the multitudinous mass, extends
The empire of the whole, some feet perhaps,
Over the strip of sand which could confine
Its fellows so long time: thenceforth the rest,
Even to the meanest, hurry in at once,
And so much is clear gained. I shall be glad
If all my labours, failing of aught else,
Suffice to make such inroad and procure
A wider range for thought: nay, they do this;
For, whatsoe'er my notions of true knowledge
And a legitimate success, may be,
I am not blind to my undoubted rank
When classed with others: I precede my age:
And whoso wills is very free to mount
These labours as a platform whence his own
May have a prosperous outset. But, alas!
My followers—they are noisy as you heard;
But, for intelligence, the best of them
So clumsily wield the weapons I supply
And they extol, that I begin to doubt
Whether their own rude clubs and pebble-stones
Would not do better service than my arms
Thus vilely swayed—if error will not fall
Sooner before the old awkward batterings
Than my more subtle warfare, not half learned.

Fest. I would supply that art, then, or withhold
New arms until you teach their mystery.

Par. Content you, 'tis my wish; I have recourse
To the simplest training. Day by day I seek
To wake the mood, the spirit which alone
Can make those arms of any use to men.
Of course they are for swaggering forth at once
Graced with Ulysses' bow, Achilles' shield—
Flash on us, all in armour, thou Achilles!
Make our hearts dance to thy resounding step!
A proper sight to scare the crows away!

Fest. Pity you choose not then some other method
Of coming at your point. The marvellous art
At length established in the world bids fair
To remedy all hindrances like these:
Trust to Frobenius' press the precious lore
Obscured by uncouth manner, or unfit
For raw beginners; let his types secure
A deathless monument to after-time;
Meanwhile wait confidently and enjoy
The ultimate effect: sooner or later
You shall be all-revealed.

Par. The old dull question
In a new form; no more. Thus: I possess
Two sorts of knowledge; one, — vast, shadowy,
Hints of the unbounded aim I once pursued:
The other consists of many secrets, caught
While bent on nobler prize,—perhaps a few
Prime principles which may conduct to much:
These last I offer to my followers here.
Now, bid me chronicle the first of these,
My ancient study, and in effect you bid
Revert to the wild courses just abjured:
I must go find them scattered through the world.
Then, for the principles, they are so simple
(Being chiefly of the overturning sort),
That one time is as proper to propound them
As any other—to-morrow at my class.
Or half a century hence embalmed in print.
For if mankind intend to learn at all.
They must begin by giving faith to them
And acting on them: and I do not see
But that my lectures serve indifferent well:
No doubt these dogmas fall not to the earth,
For all their novelty and rugged setting.
I think my class will not forget the day
I let them know the gods of Israel,
Aetius, Oribasius, Galen, Rhasis,
Serapion, Avicenna, Averrdes,
Were blocks!

Fest. And that reminds me, I heard something

About your waywardness: you burned
their books,
It seems, instead of answering those sages.
Par. And who said that?
Fest. Some I met yesternight
With Œcolampadius. As you know, the
purpose
Of this short stay at Basil was to learn
His pleasure touching certain missives
sent
For our Zuinglius and himself. 'Twas he
Apprised me that the famous teacher here
Was my old friend.
Par. Ah, I forgot: you went...
Fest. From Zurich with advices for the
ear
Of Luther, now at Wittenberg—(you
know,
I make no doubt, the differences of late
With Carolstadius)—and returning sought
Basil and . . .
Par. I remember. Here 's a case,
now.
Will teacn you why I answer not, but burn
The books you mention. Pray, does
Luther dream
His arguments convince by their own force
The crowds that own his doctrine? No,
indeed!
His plain denial of established points
Ages had sanctified and men supposed
Could never be oppugned while earth was
under
And heaven above them—points which
chance or time
Affected not—did more than the array
Of argument which followed. Boldly
deny!
There is much breath-stopping, hair-
stiffcning
Awhile; then, amazed glances, mute
awaiting
The thunderbolt which does not come:
and next,
Reproachful wonder and inquiry: those
Who else had never stirred, are able now
To find the rest out for themselves, perhaps
To outstrip him who set the whole at work,
—As never will my wise class its instruc-
tor.
And you saw Luther?
Fest. 'Tis a wondrous soul!
Par. True: the so-heavy chain which
galled mankind
Is shattered, and the noblest of us all
Must bow to the deliverer—nay, the
worker
Of our own project—we who long before
Had burst our trammels, but forgot the
crowd,
We should have taught, still groaned be-
neath their load:
This he has done and nobly. Speed that
may!
Whatever be my chance or my mischance,
What benefits mankind must glad me too;
And men seem made, though not as I
believed,
For something better than the times pro-
duce.
Witness these gangs of peasants your new
lights
From Suabia have possessed, whom
Munzer leads,
And whom the duke, the landgrave and
the elector
Will calm in blood! Well, well; 'tis not
my world!
Fest. Hark!
Par. 'Tis the melancholy wind
astir
Within the trees; the embers too are grey:
Morn must be near.
Fest. Best ope the casement: see.
The night, late strewn with clouds and
flying stars,
Is blank and motionless: how peaceful
sleep
The tree-tops altogether! Like an asp,
The wind slips whispering from bough to
bough.
Par. Ay; you would gaze on a wind-
shaken tree
By the hour, nor count time lost.
Fest. So you shall gaze:
Those happy times will come again.
Par. Gone, gone,
Those pleasant times! Does not the moan-
ing wind
Seem to bewail that we have gained such
gains
And bartered sleep for them?
Fest. It is our trust
That there is yet another world to mend
All error and mischance.
Par. Another world!
And why this world, this common world,
to be
A make-shift, a mere foil, how fair soever,
To some fine life to come? Man must be
fed
With angels' food, forsooth; and some few
traces
Of a diviner nature which look out
Through his corporeal baseness, warrant
him
In a supreme contempt of all provision
For his inferior tastes—some straggling
marks
Which constitute his essence, just as truly
As here and there a gem would constitute
The rock, their barren bed, one diamond.
But were it so—were man all mind—he
gains
A station little enviable. From God
Down to the lowest spirit ministrant,
Intelligence exists which casts our mind
Into immeasurable shade. No, no:

Love, hope, fear, faith—these make humanity; -
These are its sign and note and character,
And these I have lost!—gone, shut from me for ever,
Like a dead friend safe from unkindness more!
See, morn at length. The heavy darkness seems
Diluted, grey and clear without the stars;
The shrubs bestir and rouse themselves as if
Some snake, that weighed them down all night, let go
His hold; and from the East, fuller and fuller,
Day, like a mighty river, flowing in;
But clouded, wintry, desolate and cold.
Yet see how that broad prickly star-shaped plant,
Half-down in the crevice, spreads its woolly leaves
All thick and glistering with diamond dew.
And you depart for Einsiedeln this day.
And we have spent all night in talk like this!
If you would have me better for your love,
Revert no more to these sad themes.
Fest. One favour,
And I have done. I leave you, deeply moved;
Unwilling to have fared so well, the while
My friend has changed so sorely. If this mood
Shall pass away, if light once more arise
Where all is darkness now, if you see fit
To hope and trust again, and strive again,
You will remember—not our love alone—
But that my faith in God's desire that man
Should trust on his support, (as I must think
You trusted) is obscured and dim through you:
For you are thus, and this is no reward.
Will you not call me to your side, dear Aureole?

IV.—PARACELSUS ASPIRES

SCENE.—*Colmar in Alsatia: an Inn.* 1528.

PARACELSUS, FESTUS

Par. [to JOHANNES OPORINUS, *his Secretary], Sic itur ad astral* Dear Von Visenburg
Is scandalized, and poor Torinus paralysed,
And every honest soul that Basil holds
Aghast; and yet we live, as one may say,
Just as though Liechtenfels had never set
So true a value on his sorry carcass,
And learned Putter had not frowned us dumb.
We live; andshall as surely start to-morrow
For Nuremberg, as we drink speedy scathe
To Basil in this mantling wine, suffused
A delicate blush, no fainter tinge is born
I' the shut heart of a bud. Pledge me, good John—
' Basil; a hot plague ravage it, and Putter
'Oppose the plague!' Even so? Do you too share
Their panic, the reptiles? Ha, ha; faint through these,
Desist for these! They manage matters so
At Basil, 'tis like: but others may find means
To bring the stoutest braggart of the tribe
Once more to crouch in silence—means to breed
A stupid wonder in each fool again,
Now big with admiration at the skill
Which stript a vain pretender of his plumes:
And, that done,—means to brand each slavish brow
So deeply, surely, ineffaceably,
That henceforth flattery shall not pucker it
Out of the furrow; there that stamp shall stay
To show *the* next they fawn on, what they are,
This Basil with its magnates,—fill my cup,—
Whom I curse soul and limb. And now despatch,
Despatch, my trusty John; and what remains
To do, whate'er arrangements for our trip
Are yet to be completed, see you hasten
This night; we'll weather the storm at least: to-morrow
For Nuremberg! Now leave us; this grave clerk
Has divers weighty matters for my ear:
[OPORINUS *goes out.*
And spare my lungs. At last, my gallant Festus,
I am rid of this arch-knave that dogs my heels
As a gaunt crow a gasping sheep; at last
May give a loose to my delight. How kind.
How very kind, my first best only friend!
Why, this looks like fidelity. Embrace me!
Not a hair silvered yet? Right! you shall live
Till I am worth your love; you shall be proud,
And I—but let time show! Did you not wonder?
I sent to you because our compact weighed
Upon my conscience—(you recall the night
At Basil, which the gods confound!)—because
Once more I aspire. I call you to my side:

You come. **You** thought my message strange?
Fest. So strange
That I must hope, indeed, your messenger
Has mingled his own fancies with the words
Purporting to be yours.
Par. He said no more,
Tis probable, than the precious folk I leave
Said fiftyfold more roughly. Well-a-day,
Tis true! poor Paracelsus is exposed
At last; a most egregious quack he proves:
And those he overreached must spit their hate
On one who, utterly beneath contempt,
Could yet deceive their topping wits. You heard
Bare truth; and at my bidding you come here
To speed me on my enterprise, as once
Your lavish wishes sped me, my own friend!
Fest. What is your purpose, Aureole?
Par. Oh, for purpose,
There is no lack of precedents in a case
Like mine; at least, if not precisely mine,
The case of men cast off by those they sought
To benefit
Fest. They really cast you off?
I only heard a vague tale of some priest,
Cured by your skill, who wrangled at your claim,
Knowing his life's worth best; and how the judge
The matter was referred to, saw no cause
To interfere, nor you to hide your full
Contempt of him; nor he, again, to smother
His wrath thereat, which raised so fierce a flame
That Basil soon was made no place for you.
Par. The affair of Liechtenfels? the shallowest fable,
The last and silliest outrage—mere pretence!
I knew it, I foretold it from the first,
How soon the stupid wonder you mistook
For genuine loyalty—a cheering promise
Of better things to come—would pall and pass;
And every word comes true. Saul is among
The prophets! Just so long as I was pleased
To play off the mere antics of my art,
Fantastic gambols leading to no end,
I got huge praise: but one can ne'er keep down
Our foolish nature's weakness. There they flocked,
Poor devils, jostling, swearing and perspiring,
Till the walls rang again; and all for me!
I **had a** kindness for them, which was right;
But then I stopped not till I tacked to that
A trust in them and a respect—a sort
Of sympathy for them; I must needs begin
To teach them, not amaze them,' to impart
'The spirit which should instigate the search
' Of truth,' just what you bade me! I spoke out.
Forthwith a mighty squadron, in disgust,
Filed off—' the sifted chaff of the sack,' I said.
Redoubling my endeavours to secure
The rest. When lo! one man had tarried so long
Only to ascertain if I supported
This tenet of his, or that; another loved
To hear impartially before he judged,
And having heard, now judged; this bland disciple
Passed for my dupe, but all along, it seems,
Spied error where his neighbours marvelled most;
That fiery doctor who had hailed me friend,
Did it because my by-paths, once proved wrong
And beaconed properly, would commend again
The good old ways our sires jogged safely o'er,
Though not their squeamish sons; the other worthy
Discovered divers verses of St. John,
Which, read successively, refreshed the soul,
But, muttered backwards, cured the gout, the stone,
The colic and what not. *Quid multa?* The end
Was a clear class-room, and a quiet leer
From grave folk, and a sour reproachful glance
From those in chief who, cap in hand, installed
The new professor scarce a year before;
And a vast flourish about patient merit
Obscured awhile by flashy tricks, but sure
Sooner or later to emerge in splendour—
Of which the example was some luckless wight
Whom my arrival had discomfited,
But now, it seems, the general voice recalled
To fill my chair and so efface the stain
Basil had long incurred. I sought no better,
Only a quiet dismissal from my post,
And from my heart I wished them better suited
And better served. Good night to Basil, then!
But fast as I proposed to rid the tribe
Of my obnoxious back, I could not spare them
The pleasure of a parting kick.
Fest. **You** smile:

Despise them as **they** merit!
Par. **If I** smile,
Tis with as very contempt as ever turned
Flesh into stone. This courteous recompense,
This grateful... Festus, were your nature

To be defiled, your eyes the eyes to ache
At gangrene-blotches, eating poison-blains,
The ulcerous barky scurf of leprosy
Which finds—a man, and leaves—a hideous thing
That cannot but be mended by hell fire,
—I would lay bare to you the human heart
Which God cursed long ago, and devils make since
Their pet nest and their never-tiring home.
Oh, sages have discovered we are born
For various ends—to love, to know: has ever
One stumbled, in his search, on any signs
Of a nature in us formed to hate? To hate?
If that be our true object which evokes
Our powers in fullest strength, be sure 'tis hate!
Yet men have doubted if the best and bravest
Of spirits can nourish him with hate alone.
I had not the monopoly of fools,
It seems, at Basil.
Fest. But your plans, your plans!
I have yet to learn your purpose, Aureole!
Par. Whether to sink beneath such ponderous shame,
To shrink up like a crushed snail, undergo
In silence and desist from further toil,
And so subside into a monument
Of one their censure blasted? or to bow
Cheerfully as submissively, to lower
My old pretensions even as Basil dictates,
To drop into the rank her wits assign me
And live as they prescribe, and make that use
Of my poor knowledge which their rules allow,
Proud to be patted now and then, and careful
To practise the true posture for receiving
The amplest benefit from their hoofs' appliance
When they shall condescend to tutor me?
Then, one may feel resentment like a flame
Within, and deck false systems in truth's garb,
And tangle and entwine mankind with error,
And give them darkness for a dower and falsehood
For a possession, ages: or one may mope
Into a shade through thinking, or else drowse
Into a dreamless sleep and so die off.
But I,—now Festus shall divine!—but I

Am merely setting out once more, embracing
My earliest aims again! What thinks he now?
***Fest.* Your aims? the aims?—to Know? and where is found**
The early trust...
***Par.* Nay, not so fast; I say,**
The aims—not the old means. You know they made me
A laughing-stock; I was a fool: you know
The when and the how: hardly those means again!
Not but they had their beauty; who should know
Their passing beauty, if not I? Still, dreams
They were, so let them vanish, yet in beauty
If that may be. Stay: thus they pass in song! ***[He sings.***

Heap cassia, sandal-buds and stripes
Of labdanum, and aloe-balls,
Smeared with dull nard an Indian wipes
From out her hair: such balsam falls
Down sea-side mountain pedestals,
From tree-tops where tired winds are fain,
Spent with the vast and howling main,
To treasure half their island-gain.

And strew faint sweetness from some old
Egyptian's fine worm-eaten shroud
Which breaks to dust when once unrolled;
Or shredded perfume, like a cloud
From closet long to quiet vowed,
With mothed and dropping arras hung,
Mouldering her lute and books among,
As when a queen, long dead, was young.

Mine, every word! And on such pile shall die
My lovely fancies, with fair perished things,
Themselves fair and forgotten; yes, forgotten,
Or why abjure them? So, I made this rhyme
That fitting dignity might be preserved;
No little proud was I; though the list of drugs
Smacks of my old vocation, and the verse
Halts like the best of Luther's psalms.
***Fest.* But, Aureole,**
Talk not thus wildly and madly. I am here—
Did you know all! I have travelled far, indeed,
To learn your wishes. Be yourself again!
For in this mood I recognize you less
Than in the horrible despondency
I witnessed last. You may account this, joy;
But rather let me gaze on that despair
Than hear these incoherent words and see
This flushed cheek and intensely-sparkling eye.

Par. Why, man, I was light-hearted in my prime,
I am light-hearted now; what would you have?
Aprile was a poet, I make songs—
'Tis the very augury of success I want!
Why should I not be joyous now as then?
Fest. Joyous! and how? and what remains for joy?
You have declared the ends (which I am sick
Of naming) are impracticable.
Par. Ay,
Pursued as I pursued them—the arch-fool!
Listen: my plan will please you not, 'tis like,
But you are little versed in the world's ways.
This is my plan—(first drinking its good luck)—
I will accept all helps; all I despised
So rashly at the outset, equally
With early impulses, late years have quenched:
I have tried each way singly: now for both!
All helps! no one sort shall exclude the rest.
I seek to know and to enjoy at once,
Not one without the other as before.
Suppose my labour should seem God's own cause
Once more, as first I dreamed,—it shall not baulk me
Of the meanest earthliest sensualest delight
That may be snatched; for every joy is gain,
And gain is gain, however small. My soul
Can die then, nor be taunted—'what was gained?
Nor, on the other hand, should pleasure follow
As though I had not spurned her hitherto,
Shall she o'ercloud my spirit's rapt communion
With the tumultuous past, the teeming future,
Glorious with visions of a full success.
Fest. Success!
Par. And wherefore not? Why not prefer
Results obtained in my best state of being,
To those derived alone from seasons dark
As the thoughts they bred? When I was best, my youth
Unwasted, seemed success not surest too?
It is the nature of darkness to obscure.
I am a wanderer: I remember well
One journey, how I feared the track was missed,
So long the city I desired to reach
Lay hid; when suddenly its spires afar
Flashed through the circling clouds; you may conceive
My transport. Soon the vapours closed again,
But I had seen the city, and one such glance
No darkness could obscure: nor shall the present—
A few dull hours, a passing shame or two,
Destroy the vivid memories of the past.
I will fight the battle out; a little spent
Perhaps, but still an able combatant.
You look at my grey hair and furrowed brow?
But I can turn even weakness to account:
Of many tricks I know, 'tis not the least
To push the ruins of my frame, whereon
The fire of vigour trembles scarce alive,
Into a heap, and send the flame aloft.
What should I do with age? So, sickness lends
An aid; it being, I fear, the source of all
We boast of: mind is nothing but disease,
And natural health is ignorance.
Fest. I see
But one good symptom in this notable scheme.
I feared your sudden journey had in view
To wreak immediate vengeance on your foes.
'Tis not so: I am glad.
Par. And if I please
To spit on them, to trample them, what then?
'Tis sorry warfare truly, but the fools
Provoke it. I would spare their self-conceit,
But if they must provoke me, cannot suffer
Forbearance on my part, if I may keep
No quality in the shade, must needs put forth
Power to match power, my strength against their strength,
And teach them their own game with their own arms—
Why, be it so and let them take their chance!
I am above them like a god, there's no
Hiding the fact, what idle scruples, then,
Were those that ever bade me soften it,
Communicate it gently to the world,
Instead of proving my supremacy.
Taking my natural station o'er their head,
Then owning all the glory was a man's!
—And in my elevation man's would be.
But live and learn, though life's short, learning, hard!
And therefore, though the wreck of my past self,
I fear, dear Piitter, that your lecture-room
Must wait awhile for its best ornament,
The penitent empiric, who set up
For somebody, but soon was taught his place;
Now, but too happy to be let confess
His error, snuff the candles, and illustrate
(Fiat experientia corpore vili)
Your medicine's soundness in his person. Wait,

Good Putter!
Fest. He- who sneers thus, is a god!
Par. Ay, ay, laugh at me! I am very glad
You are not gulled by all this swaggering; you
Can see the root of the matter!—how I strive
To put a good face on the overthrow
I have experienced, and to bury and hide
My degradation in its length and breadth;
How the mean motives I would make you think
Just mingle as is due with nobler aims,
The appetites I modestly allow
May influence me as being mortal still—
Do goad me, drive me on, and fast supplant
My youth's desires. You are no stupid dupe:
You find me out! Yes, T had sent for you
To palm these childish lies upon you, Festus!
Laugh—you shall laugh at me!
Fest. The past, then, Aureole,
Proves nothing ? Is our interchange of love
Yet to begin? Have I to swear I mean
No flattery in this speech or that ? For you,
Whate'er you say, there is no degradation;
These low thoughts are no inmates of your mind,
Or wherefore this disorder? You are vexed
As much by the intrusion of base views,
Familiar to your adversaries, as they
Were troubled should your qualities alight
Amid their murky souls; not otherwise,
A stray wolf which the winter forces down
From our bleak hills, suffices to affright
A village in the vales—while foresters
Sleep calm, though all night long the famished troop
Snuff round and scratch against their crazy huts.
These evil thoughts are monsters, and will flee.
Par. May you be happy, Festus, my own friend!
Fest. Nay. further; the delights you fain would think
The superseders of your nobler aims,
Though ordinary and harmless stimulants,
Will ne'er content you. . . .
Par. Hush! I once despised them,
But that soon passes. We are high at first
In our demand, nor will abate a jot
Of toil's strict value; but time passes o'er,
And humbler spirits accept what we refuse:
In short, when some such comfort is doled out
As these delights, we cannot long retain
Bitter contempt which urges us at first
To hurl it back, but hug it to our breast
And thankfully retire. This life of mine
Must be lived out and a grave thoroughly earned:
I am just fit for that and nought beside.
I told you once, I cannot now enjoy,
Unless I deem my knowledge gains through joy;
Nor can I know, but straight warm tears reveal
My need of linking also joy to knowledge:
So, on I drive, enjoying all I can,
And knowing all I can. I speak, of course,
Confusedly; this will better explain—feel here!
Quick beating, is it not ?—a fire of the heart
To work off some way, this as well as any.
So, Festus sees me fairly launched; his calm
Compassionate look might have disturbed me once,
But now, far from rejecting, I invite
What bids me press the closer, lay myself
Open before him, and be soothed with pity;
I hope, if he command hope, and believe
As he directs me—satiating myself
With his enduring love. And Festus quite me
To give place to some credulous disciple
Who holds that God is wise, but Paracelsus
Has his peculiar merits: I suck in
That homage, chuckle o'er that admiration,
And then dismiss the fool; for night is come,
And I betake myself to study again,
Till patient searchings after hidden lore
Half wring some bright truth from its prison; my frame
Trembles, my forehead's veins swell out, my hair
Tingles for triumph. Slow and sure the morn
Shall break on my pent room and dwindling lamp
And furnace dead, and scattered earths and ores;
When, with a failing heart and throbbing brow,
I must review my captured truth, sum up
Its value, trace what ends to what begins,
Its present power with its eventual bearings,
Latent affinities, the views it opens,
And its full length in perfecting my scheme.
I view it sternly circumscribed, cast down
From the high place my fond hopes yielded it,
Proved worthless—wliich, in getting, yet had cost
Another wrench to this fast-falling frame.
Then, quick, the cup to quaff, that chases sorrow!
I lapse back into youth, and take again
My fluttering pulse for evidence that God
Means good to me, will make my cause his own.

See! I have cast off this remorseless care
Which clogged a spirit born to soar so free,
And my dim chamber has become a tent,
Festus is sitting by me, and his Michal...
Why do you start? I say, she listening here,
(For yonder — Wurzburg through the orchard-bough!)
Motions as though such ardent words should find
No echo in a maiden's quiet soul,
But her pure bosom heaves, her eyes fill fast
With tears, her sweet lips tremble all the while!
Ha, ha!

Fest. It seems, then, you expect to reap
No unreal joy from this your present course,
But rather . . .

Par. Death! To die! I owe that much
To what, at least, I was. I should be sad
To live contented after such a fall,
To thrive and fatten after such reverse!
The whole plan is a makeshift, but will last
My time.

Fest. And you have never mused and said,
'I had a noble purpose, and the strength
'To compass it; but I have stopped half-way,
'And wrongly given the first-fruits of my toil
'To objects little worthy of the gift.
'Why linger round them still? why clench my fault?
'Why seek for consolation in defeat,
'In vain endeavours to derive a beauty
'From ugliness? why seek to make the most
'Of what no power can change, nor strive instead
'With mighty effort to redeem the past
'And, gathering up the treasures thus cast down,
'To hold a steadfast course till I arrive
'At their fit destination and my own?'
You have never pondered thus?

Par. Have I, you ask?
Often at midnight, when most fancies come,
Would some such airy project visit me:
But ever at the end ... or will you hear
The same thing in a tale, a parable?
You and I, wandering over the world wide,
Chance to set foot upon a desert coast.
Just as we cry, 'No human voice before
'Broke the inveterate silence of these rocks!'
—Their querulous echo startles us; we turn:
What ravaged structure still looks o'er the sea?
Some characters remain, too! While we read,
The sharp salt wind, impatient for the last
Of even this record, wistfully comes and goes,
Or sings what we recover, mocking it.
This is the record; and my voice, the wind's. *[He sings.*

Over the sea our galleys went,
With cleaving prows in order brave
To a speeding wind and a bounding wave,
A gallant armament:
Each bark built out of a forest-tree
Left leafy and rough as first it grew,
And nailed all over the gaping sides,
Within and without, with black bull-hides,
Seethed in fat and suppled in flame,
To bear the playful billows' game:
So, each good ship was rude to see,
Rude and bare to the outward view,
But each upbore a stately tent
Where cedar pales in scented row
Kept out the flakes of the dancing brine,
And an awning drooped the mast below,
In fold on fold of the purple fine,
That neither noontide nor starshine
Nor moonlight cold which maketh mad,
Might pierce the regal tenement.
When the sun dawned, oh, gay and glad
We set the sail and plied the oar;
But when the night-wind blew like breath,
For joy of one day's voyage more,
We sang together on the wide sea,
Like men at peace on a peaceful shore;
Each sail was loosed to the wind so free,
Each helm made sure by the twilight star,
And in a sleep as calm as death,
We, the voyagers from afar,
Lay stretched along, each weary crew
In a circle round its wondrous tent
Whence gleamed soft light and curled rich scent,
And with light and perfume, music too:
So the stars wheeled round, and the darkness past,
And at morn we started beside the mast,
And still each ship was sailing fast.

Now, one morn, land appeared—a speck
Dim trembling betwixt sea and sky:
'Avoid it,' cried our pilot, 'check
'The shout, restrain the eager eye!'
But the heaving sea was black behind
For many a night and many a day.
And land, though but a rock, drew eigh;
So, we broke the cedar pales away,
Let the purple awning flap in the wind,
And a statue bright was on every deck!

We shouted, every man of us,
And steered right into the harbour thus,
With pomp arid paean glorious.

A hundred shapes of lucid stone!
All day we built its shrine for each,
A shrine of rock for every one,
Nor paused till in the westering sun
We sat together on the beach
To sing because our task was done.
When lo! what shouts and merry songs!
What laughter all the distance stirs!
A loaded raft with happy throngs
Of gentle islanders!
'Our isles are just at hand,' they cried,
' Like cloudlets faint in even sleeping;
'**Our** temple-gates are opened wide,
'Our olive-groves thick shade are keeping
' For these majestic forms'—they cried.
Oh, then we awoke with sudden start
From our deep dream, and knew, too late,
How bare the rock, how desolate,
Which had received our precious freight:
Yet we called out—'Depart!
'Our gifts, once given, must here abide.
'Our work is done; we have no heart
'To mar our work,'—we cried.

Fest. In truth?
Par. Nay, wait: all this in tracings faint
On rugged stones strewn here and there, but piled
In order once: then follows—mark what follows!
'The sad rhyme of the men who proudly clung
'To their first fault, and withered in their pride.'
Fest. Come back then, Aureole; as you fear God, come!
This is foul sin; come back! Renounce the past
Forswear the future; look for joy no more,
But wait death's summons amid holy sights,
And trust me for the event—peace, if not joy.
Return with me to Einsiedeln, dear Aureole!
Par. No way, no way! it would not turn to good.
A spotless child sleeps on the flowering moss—
Tis well for him; but when a sinful man,
Envying such slumber, may desire to put
His guilt away, shall he return at once
To rest by lying there? Our sires knew well
(Spite of the grave discoveries of their sons)
The fitting course for such: dark cells, dim lamps,
A stone floor one may writhe on like a worm:
No mossy pillow blue with violets!
Fest. I see no symptom of these absolute
And tyrannous passions. You are calmer now.
This verse-making can purge you well enough
Without the terrible penance you describe.
You love me still: the lusts you fear will never
Outrage your friend. To Einsiedeln, once more!
Say but the word!
Par. No, no; those lusts forbid:
They crouch, I know, cowering with half-shut eye
Beside you; 'tis their nature. Thrust yourself
Between them and their prey; let some fool style me
Or king or quack, it matters not—then try
Your wisdom, urge them to forego their treat!
No, no; learn better and look deeper, Festus!
If you knew how a devil sneers within me
While you are talking now of this, now that,
As though we differed scarcely save in trifles!
Fest. Do we so differ? True, change must proceed,
Whether for good or ill; keep from me, which!
Do not confide all secrets: I was born
To hope, and you . . .
Par. To trust: you know the fruits!
Fest. Listen: I do believe, what you call trust
Was self-delusion at the best: for, see!
So long as God would kindly pioneer
A path for you, and screen you from the world,
Procure you full exemption from man's lot,
Man's common hopes and fears, on the mere pretext
Of your engagement in his service—yield you
A limitless licence, make you God, in fact,
And turn your slave—you were content to say
Most courtly praises! What is it, at last,
But selfishness without example? None
Could trace God's will so plain as you, while yours
Remained implied in it; but now you fail,
And we, who prate about that will, are fools!
In short, God's service is established **here**
As **he determines** fit, and **not** your **way,**

And this you cannot brook. Such discontent
Is weak. Renounce all creatureship at once!
Affirm an absolute right to have and use
Your energies; as though the rivers should say—
* We rush to the ocean • what have we to do
' With feeding streamlets, lingering in the vales,
* Sleeping in lazy pools ?' Set up that plea,
That will be bold at least!
Par. 'Tis like enough.
The serviceable spirits are those, no doubt,
The East produces: lo, the master bids,—
They wake, raise terraces and garden-grounds
In one night's space; and, this done, straight begin
Another century's sleep, to the great praise
Of him that framed them wise and beautiful,
Till a lamp's rubbing, or some chance akin,
Wake them again. I am of different mould.
I would have soothed my lord, and slaved for him
And done him service past my narrow bond,
And thus I get rewarded for my pains!
Beside, 'tis vain to talk of forwarding
God's glory otherwise; this is alone
The sphere of its increase, as far as men
Increase it; why, then, look beyond this sphere ?
We are his glory; and if we be glorious,
Is not the thing achieved?
Fest. Shall one like me
Judge hearts like yours? Though years have changed you much,
And you have left your first love, and retain
Its empty shade to veil your crooked ways,
Yet I still hold that you have honoured God.
And who shall call your course without reward?
For, wherefore this repining at defeat
Had triumph ne'er inured you to high hopes?
I urge you to forsake the life you curse,
And what success attends me?—simply talk
Of passion, weakness and remorse; in short,
Anything but the naked truth—you choose
This so-despised career, and cheaply hold
My happiness, or rather other men's.
Once more, return!
Par. And quickly. John the thief
Has pilfered half my secrets by this time:
And we depart by daybreak. I am weary,
I know not how; not even the wine-cup soothes
My brain to-night...
Do you not thoroughly despise me, Festus?
No flattery 1 One like you needs not be told
We live and breathe deceiving and deceived.
Do you not scorn me from your heart of hearts,
Me and my cant, each petty subterfuge,
My rhymes and all this frothy shower of words,
My glozing self-deceit, my outward crust
Of lies which wrap, as tetter, morphew, furfair
Wrapt the sound flesh ?—so, see you flatter not!
Even God flatters: but my friend, at least,
Is true. I would depart, secure henceforth
Against all further insult, hate and wrong
From puny foes; my one friend's scorn shall brand me:
No fear of sinking deeper!
Fest. No, dear Aureole!
No, no; I came to counsel faithfully.
There are old rules, made long ere we were born,
By which I judge you. I, so fallible,
So infinitely low beside your mighty
Majestic spirit!—even I can see
You own some higher law than ours which call
Sin, what is no sin—weakness, what is strength.
But I have only these, such as they are,
To guide me; and I blame you where they bid,
Only so long as blaming promises
To win peace for your soul: the more, that sorrow
Has fallen on me of late, and they have helped me
So that I faint not under my distress.
But wherefore should I scruple to avow
In spite of all, as brother judging brother,
Your fate is most inexplicable to me?
And should you perish without recompense
And satisfaction yet—too hastily
I have relied on love: you may have sinned,
But you have loved. As a mere human matter—
As I would have God deal with fragile men
In the end—I say that you will triumph yet!
Par. Have you felt sorrow, Festus?—'tis because
You love me. Sorrow, and sweet Michal yours!
Well thought on: never let her know this last
Dull winding-up of all: these miscreants dared
Insult me—me she loved:—so, grieve her not!

Fest. Your ill success can little grieve her now.
Par. Michaf is dead! pray Christ we do not craze!
Fest. Aureole, dear Aureole, look not on me thus!
Fool, fool! this is the heart grown sorrow-proof—
I cannot bear those eyes.
Par. Nay, really dead?
Fest. 'Tis scarce a month.
Par. Stone dead!
—then you have laid her
Among the flowers ere this. Now, do you know,
I can reveal a secret which shall comfort
Even you. I have no julep, as men think,
To cheat the grave; but a far better secret.
Know, then, you did not ill to trust your love
To the cold earth: I have thought much of it:
For I believe we do not wholly die.
Fest. Aureole!
Par. Nay, do not laugh; there is a reason
For what I say: I think the soul can never
Taste death. I am, just now, as you may see,
Very unfit to put so strange a thought
In an intelligible dress of words;
But take it as my trust, she is not dead.
Fest. But not on this account alone? you surely,
—Aureole, you have believed this all along?
Par. And Michal sleeps among the roots and dews,
While I am moved at Basil, and full of schemes
For Nuremberg, and hoping and despairing,
As though it mattered how the farce plays out,
So it be quickly played. Away, away!
Have your will, rabble! while we fight the prize,
Troop you in safety to the snug back-seats
And leave a clear arena for the brave
About to perish for your sport!—Behold!

V.—PARACELSUS ATTAINS

SCENE.—*Salzburg; a cell in the Hospital of St. Sebastian.* 1541.

FESTUS, PARACELSUS

Fest. No change! The weary night is well-nigh spent,
The lamp burns low, and through the casement-bars
Grey morning glimmers feebly: yet no change!
Another night, and still no sigh has stirred
That fallen discoloured mouth, no pang relit
Those fixed eyes, quenched by the decaying body,
Like torch-flame choked in dust. While all beside
Was breaking, to the last they held out bright,
As a stronghold where life intrenched itself;
But they are dead now—very blind and dead:
He will drowse into death without a groan.

My Aureole—my forgotten, ruined Aureole!
The days are gone, are gone! How grand thou wast!
And now not one of those who struck thee down—
Poor glorious spirit—concerns him even to stay
And satisfy himself his little hand
Could turn God's image to a livid thing.

Another night, and yet no change! Tis much
That I should sit by him, and bathe his brow,
And chafe his hands; 'tis much: but he will sure
Know me, and look on me, and speak to me
Once more—but only once! His hollow cheek
Looked all night long as though a creeping laugh
At his own state were just about to break
From the dying man: my brain swam, my throat swelled,
And yet I could not turn away. In truth,
They told me how, when first brought here, he seemed
Resolved to five, to lose no faculty;
Thus striving to keep up his shattered strength,
Until they bore him to this stifling cell:
When straight his features fell, an hour made white
The flushed face, and relaxed the quivering limb,
Only the eye remained intense awhile
As though it recognized the tomb-like place,
And then he lay as here he lies.
Ay, here!
Here is earth's noblest, nobly garlanded—
Her bravest champion with his well-won prize—
Her best achievement, her sublime amends
For countless generations fleeting fast
And followed by no trace;—the creature-god
She instances when angels would dispute

The title of her brood to rank with them.
Angels, this is our angel! Those bright forms
We clothe with purple, crown and call to thrones,
Are human, but not his; those are but men
Whom other men press round and kneel before;
Those palaces are dwelt in by mankind;
Higher provision is for him you seek
Amid our pomps and glories: see it here!
Behold earth's paragon! Now, raise thee, clay!

God! Thou art love! I build my faith on that.
Even as I watch beside thy tortured child
Unconscious whose hot tears fall fast by him,
So doth thy right hand guide us through the world
Wherein we stumble. God! what shall we say?
How has he sinned? How else should he have done?
Surely he sought thy praise—thy praise, for all
He might be busied by the task so much
As half forget awhile its proper end.
Dost thou well, Lord? Thou canst not but prefer
That I should range myself upon his side-
How could he stop at every step to set
Thy glory forth? Hadst thou but granted him
Success, thy honour would have crowned success,
A halo round a star. Or, say he erred,—
Save him, dear God; it will be like thee: bathe him
In light and life! Thou are not made like us;
We should be wroth in such a case; but thou
Forgivest—so, forgive these passionate thoughts
Which come unsought and will not pass away!
I know thee, who hast kept my path, and made
Light for me in the darkness, tempering sorrow
So that it reached me like a solemn joy;
It were too strange that I should doubt thy love.
But what am I? Thou madest him and knowest
How he was fashioned. I could never err
That way: the quiet place beside thy feet,
Reserved for me, was ever in my thoughts:
But he—thou shouldst have favoured him as well!

Ah! he wakens! Aureole, I am here! 'tis Festus!
I cast away ail wishes save one wish—
Let him but know me, only speak to me!
He mutters; louder and louder; any other
Than I, with brain less laden, could collect
What he pours forth. Dear Aureole, do but look!
Is it talking or singing, this he utters fast?
Misery that he should fix me with his eye.
Quick talking to some other all the while!
If he would husband this wild vehemence
Which frustrates *its* intent!—I heard, I know
I heard my name amid those rapid words.
Oh, he will know me yet! Could I divert
This current, lead it somehow gently back
Into the channels of the past!—His eye
Brighter than ever! It must recognize me!

I am Erasmus: I am here to pray
That Paracelsus use his skill for me.
The schools of Paris and of Padua send
These questions for your learning to resolve.
We are your students, noble master: leave
This wretched cell, what business have you here?
Our class awaits you; come to us once more!
(O agony! the utmost I can do
Touches him not; how else arrest his ear?)
I am commissioned . . . I shall craze like him.
Better be mute and see what God shall send.
Par. Stay, stay with me!
Fest. I will; I am come here
To stay with you—Festus, you loved of old;
Festus, you know, you must know!
Par. Festus! Where's Aprile, then? Has he not chanted softly
The melodies I heard all night? I could not
Get to him for a cold hand on my breast,
But I made out his music well enough.
0 well enough! If they have filled him full
With magical music, as they freight a star
With light, and have remitted all his sin.
They will forgive me too, I too shall know!
Fest, Festus, your Festus!
Par. Ask him if Aprile
Knows as he Loves—if I shall Love and Know?
! try; but that cold hand, like lead—so cold!
Fest. My hand, see!
Par. Ah, the curse, Aprile, Aprile!
We get so near—so very, very near!
Tis an old tale: Jove strikes the Titans down,
Not when they set about their mountain-piling
But when another rock would crown the work.

And Phaeton—doubtless his first radiant plunge
Astonished mortals, though the gods were calm,
And Jove prepared his thunder: all old tales!
Fest. And what are these to you?
Par. Ay, fiends must laugh
So cruelly, so well! most like I never
Could tread a single pleasure underfoot,
But they were grinning by my side, were chuckling
To see me toil and drop away by flakes!
Hell-spawn! I am glad, most glad, that thus I fail!
Your cunning has o'ershot its aim. One year,
One month, perhaps, and I had served your turn!
You should have curbed your spite awhile. But now.
Who will believe 'twas you that held me back?
Listen: there's shame and hissing and tempt.
And none but laughs who names me, none but spits
Measureless scorn upon me, me alone,
The quack, the cheat, the liar,—all on me!
And thus your famous plan to sink mankind
In silence and despair, by teaching them
One of their race had probed the inmost truth,
Had done all man could do, yet failed no less—
Your wise plan proves abortive. Men despair?
Ha, ha! why, they are hooting the empiric,
The ignorant and incapable fool who rushed
Madly upon a work beyond his wits;
Nor doubt they but the simplest of themselves
Could bring the matter to triumphant issue.
So, pick and choose among them all, accursed!
Try now, persuade some other to slave for you,
To ruin body and soul to work your ends!
No, no; I am the first and last, I think.
Fest. Dear friend, who are accursed ? who has done . . .
Par. What have I done? Fiends dare ask that? or you,
Brave men? Oh, you can chime in boldly, backed
By the others! What had you to do, sage peers?
Here stands my rivals; Latin, Arab, Jew,
Greek, join dead hands against me: all I ask
Is, that the world enrol my name with theirs,
And even this poor privilege, it seems,
They range themselves, prepared to disallow.
Only observe! why, fiends may learn from them!
How they talk calmly of my throes, my fierce
Aspirings, terrible watchings, each one claiming
Its price of blood and brain; how they dissect
And sneeringly disparage the few truths
Got at a life s cost; they too hanging the while
About my neck, their lies misleading me
And their dead names browbeating me! Grey crew,
Yet steeped in fresh malevolence from hell,
Is there a reason for your hate ? My truths
Have shaken a little the palm about each con- prince ?
Just think, Aprile, all these leering dotards
Were bent on nothing less than to be crowned
As we! That yellow blear-eyed wretch in chief
To whom the rest cringe low with feigned respect,
Galen of Pergamos and hell—nay speak
The tale, old man! We met there face to face:
I said the crown should fall from thee. Once more
We meet as in that ghastly vestibule:
Look to my brow! Have I redeemed my pledge ?
Fest. Peace, peace; ah, see!
Par. Oh, emptiness of fame!
Oh Persic Zoroaster, lord of stars!
—Who said these old renowns, dead long ago,
Could make me overlook the living world
To gaze through gloom at where they stood, indeed,
But stand no longer? What a warm light life
After the shade! In truth, my delicate witch,
My serpent-queen, you did but well to hide
The juggles I had else detected. Fire
May well run harmless o'er a breast like yours!
The cave was not so darkened by the smoke
But that your white limbs dazzled me: oh, white,
And panting as they twinkled, wildly dancing!
I cared not for your passionate gestures then,

But now I have forgotten the charm of
charms,
The foolish knowledge which I came to
seek,
While I remember that quaint dance; and
thus
I am come back, not for those mummeries,
But to love you, and to kiss your little feet
Soft as an ermine's winter coat!
Fest. A light
Will struggle through these thronging
words at last.
As in the angry and tumultuous West
A soft star trembles through the drifting
clouds.
These are the strivings of a spirit which
hates
So sad a vault should coop it, and calls up
The past to stand between it and its fate.
Were he at Einsiedeln—or Michal here!
Par. Cruel! I seek her now—I kneel—
I shriek—
I clasp her vesture—but she fades, still
fades;
And she is gone; sweet human love is gone!
'Tis only when they spring to heaven that
angels
Reveal themselves to you; they sit all day
Beside you, and lie down at night by you
Who care not for their presence, muse or
sleep,
And all at once they leave you, and you
know them!
We are so fooled, so cheated! Why, even
now
I am not too secure against foul play;
The shadows deepen and the walls con-
tract:
No doubt some treachery is going on.
Tis very dusk. Where are we put, Aprile?
Have they left us in the lurch? This murky
loathsome
Death-trap, this slaughter-house, is not
the hall
In the golden city! Keep by me, Aprile!
There is a hand groping amid the blackness
To catch us. Have the spider-fingers got
you,
Poet? Hold on me for your life! If once
They pull you!—Hold!
Tis but a dream—no more!
I have you still; the sun comes out again;
Let us be happy: all will yet go well!
Let us confer: is it not like, Aprile,
That spite of trouble, this ordeal passed,
The value of my labours ascertained,
Just as some stream foams long among the
rocks
But after glideth glassy to the sea,
So. full content shall henceforth be my lot?
What think you, poet? Louder! Your
clear voice
Vibrates too like a harp-string. Do **you**
ask
How co
Go
Grant n
I, you,
ot
But me
enoub,
For when they saw me, stainless 01 a
Preserved and sanctified by inward light,
They would complain that comfort, shut
from them,
I drank thus unespied; that they live on.
Nor taste the quiet of a constant joy,
For ache and care and doubt and weari-
ness,
While I am calm; help being vouchsafed
to me,
And hid from them.—Twere best con-
sider that!
You reason well, Aprile; but at least
Let me know this, and die! Is this too
much?
I will learn this, if God so please, and die!

If thou shalt please, dear God, if thou shalt
please!
We are so weak, we know our motives least
In their confused beginning. If at first
I sought... but wherefore bare my heart
to thee?
I know thy mercy; and already thoughts
Flock fast about my soul to comfort it,
And intimate I cannot wholly fail,
For love and praise would clasp me will-
ingly
Could I resolve to seek them. Thou art
good,
And I should be content. Yet—yet first
show
I have done wrong in daring! Rather give
The supernatural consciousness of
strength
Which fed my youth! Only one hour of
that
With thee to help—O what should bar me
then!

Lost, lost! Thus things are ordered here!
God's creatures,
And yet he takes no pride in us!—none,
none!
Truly there needs another life to come!
If this be all—(I must tell Festus that)
And other life await us not—for one,
I say 'tis a poor cheat, a stupid bungle,
A wretched failure. I, for one, protest
Against it, and I hurl it back with scorn.

Well, onward though alone! Small time
remains,
And much to do: I must have fruit, must
reap
Some profit from my toils. I doubt my
body

Will hardly serve me through; while I have laboured
It has decayed; and now that I demand
Its best assistance, it will crumble fast:
A sad thought, a sad fate! How very full
Of wormwood 'tis, that just at altar-service,
The rapt hymn rising with the rolling smoke,
When glory dawns and all is at the best,
The sacred fire may flicker and grow faint
And die for want of a wood-piler's help!
Thus fades the flagging body, and the soul
Is pulled down in the overthrow. Well, well—
Let men catch every word, let them lose nought
Of what I say; something may yet be done.

Vhey are ruins! Trust me who am one of you!
All ruins, glorious once, but lonely now.
It makes my heart sick to behold you crouch
Beside your desolate fane: the arches dim,
The crumbling columns grand against the moon,
Could I but rear them up once more—but that
May never be, so leave them! Trust me, friends,
Why should you linger here when I have built
A far resplendent temple, all your Own?
Trust me, they are but ruins! See, Aprile.
Men will not heed! Yet were I not prepared
With better refuge for them, tongue of mine
Should ne'er reveal how blank their dwelling is:
I would sit down in silence with the rest.

Ha, what? you spit at me, you grin and shriek
Contempt into my ear—my ear which drank
God's accents once? you curse me? Why men, men,
I am not formed for it! Those hideous eyes
Will be before me sleeping, waking, praying,
They will not let me even die. Spare, spare me,
Sinning or no, forget that, only spare me
The horrible scorn! You thought I could support it.
But now you see what silly fragile creature
Cowers thus. I am not good nor bad enough,
Not Christ nor Cain, yet even Cain was saved
From Hate like this. Let me but totter back!
Perhaps I shall elude those jeers which creep
Into my very brain, and shut these scorched
Eyelids and keep those mocking faces out.

Listen, Aprile! I am very calm:
Be not deceived, there is no passion here
Where the blood leaps like an imprisoned thing:
I am calm: I will exterminate the race!
Enough of that: 'tis said and it shall be.
And now be merry: safe and sound am I
Who broke through their best ranks to get at you.
And such a havoc, such a rout, Aprile!
Fest. Have you no thought, no memory for me,
Aureole? I am so wretched—my pure Michal
Is gone, and you alone are left me now,
And even you forget me. Take my hand—
Lean on me thus. Do you not know me, Aureole?
Par. Festus, my own friend, you are come at last?
As you say, 'tis an awful enterprise;
But you believe I shall go through with it:
'Tis like you, and I thank you. Thank him for me,
Dear Michal! See how bright St. Saviour's spire
Flames in the sunset; all its figures quaint
Gay in the glancing light: you might conceive them
A troop of yellow-vested white-haired Jews
Bound for their own land where redemption dawns.
Fest. Not that blest time—not our youth's time, dear God!
Par. Ha—stay! true, I forget—all is done since,
And he is come to judge me. How he Speaks,
How calm, how well! yes, it is true, all true;
All quackery; all deceit; myself can laugh
The first at it, if you desire: but still
You know the obstacles which taught me tricks
So foreign to my nature—envy and hate,
Blind opposition, brutal prejudice,
Bald ignorance—what wonder if I sunk
To humour men the way they most approved?
My cheats were never palmed on such as you,
Dear Festus! I will kneel if you require me,
Impart the meagre knowledge I possess,
Explain its bounded nature, and avow
My insufficiency—whate'er you will:
I give the fight up: let there be an end.
A privacy, an obscure nook for me.
I want to be forgotten even by God.
But if that cannot be, dear Festus, lay me,
When I shall die, within some narrow grave,

Not by itself—for that would be too proud—
But where such graves are thickest; let it look
Nowise distinguished from the hillocks round,
So that the peasant at his brother's bed
May tread upon my own and know it not;
And we shall all be equal at the last,
Or classed according to life's natural ranks,
Fathers, sons, brothers, friends—not rich, nor wise,
Nor gifted: lay me thus, then say,' He lived
'Too much advanced before his brother men;
'They kept him still in front: 'twas for their good
'But yet a dangerous station. It were strange
'That he should tell God he had never ranked
'With men: so, here at least he is a man.'
Fest. That God shall take thee to his breast, dear spirit,
Unto his breast, be sure! and here on earth
Shall spendour sit upon thy name for ever.
Sun! all the heaven is glad for thee: what care
If lower mountains light their snowy phares
At thine effulgence, yet acknowledge not
The source of day? Their theft shall be their bale:
For after-ages shall retrack thy beams,
And put aside the crowd of busy ones
And worship thee alone—the master-mind,
The thinker, the explorer, the creator!
Then, who should sneer at the convulsive throes
With which thy deeds were born, would scorn as well
The sheet of winding subterraneous fire
Which, pent and writhing, sends no less at last
Huge islands up amid the simmering sea.
Behold thy might in me! thou hast infused
Thy soul in mine; and I am grand as thou,
Seeing I comprehend thee—I so simple,
Thou so august. I recognize thee first;
I saw thee rise, I watched thee early and late,
And though no glance reveal thou dost accept
My homage—thus no less I proffer it,
And bid thee enter gloriously thy rest.
Par. Festus!
Fest. I am for noble Aureole, God!
I am upon his side, come weal or woe.
His portion shall be mine. He has done well.
I would have sinned, had I been strong enough,
As he has sinned. Reward him or I waive
Reward! If thou canst find no place for him,
He shall be king elsewhere, and I will be
His slave for ever. There are two of us.
Par. Dear Festus!
Fest. Here, dear Aureole! ever by you!
Par. Nay, speak on, or I dream again. Speak on!
Some story, anything—only your voice.
I shall dream else. Speak on! ay, leaning so!
Fest. Thus the Mayne glideth
Where my Love abideth.
Sleep's no softer: it proceeds
On through lawns, on through meads,
On and on, whate'er befall,
Meandering and musical,
Though the niggard pasturage
Bears not on its shaven ledge
Aught but weeds and waving grasses
To view the river as it passes,
Save here and there a scanty patch
Of primroses too faint to catch
A weary bee.
Par. More, more; say on!
Fest. And scarce it pushes
Its gentle way through strangling rushes
Where the glossy kingfisher
Flutters when noon-heats are near,
Glad the shelving banks to shun,
Red and steaming in the sun,
Where the shrew-mouse with pale throat
Burrows, and the speckled stoat;
Where the quick sandpipers flit
In and out the marl and grit
That seems to breed them, brown as they:
Nought disturbs its quiet way,
Save some lazy stork that springs.
Trailing it with legs and wings,
Whom the shy fox from the hill
Rouses, creep he ne'er so still.
Par. My heart! they loose *my* heart, those simple words;
Its darkness passes, which nought else could touch:
Like some dark snake that force may *not* expel,
Which glideth out to music sweet and low.
What were you doing when your voice broke through
A chaos of ugly images? You, indeed!
Are you alone here ?
Fest. All alone: you know me? This cell?
Par. An unexceptionable vault:
Good brick and stone: the bats kept oat, the rats
Kept in: a snug nook: how should I mistake it?
Fest. But wherefore am I here?

Par. Ah, well remembered!
Why, for a purpose—for a purpose, Festus!
Tis like me: here I trifle while time fleets,
And this occasion, lost, will ne'er return.
You are here to be instructed. I will tell
God's message: but I have so much to say,
I fear to leave naif out. All is confused
No doubt; but doubtless you will learn in time.
He would not else have brought you here: no doubt
I shall see clearer soon.
Fest. Tell me but this—
You are not in despair?
Par. I? and for what ?
Fest. Alas, alas! he knows not, as I feared!
Par. What is it you would ask me with that earnest
Dear searching face?
Fest. How feel you, Aureole ?
Par. Well:
Well. 'Tis a strange thing: I am dying, Festus,
And now that fast the storm of life subsides,
I first perceive how great the whirl has been.
I was calm then, who am so dizzy now—
Calm in the thick of the tempest, but no less
A partner of its motion and mixed up
With its career. The hurricane is spent.
And the good boat speeds through the brightening weather;
But is it earth or sea that heaves below?
The gulf rolls like a meadow-swell, o'erstrewn
With ravaged boughs and remnants of the shore;
And now some islet, loosened from the land,
Swims past with all its trees, sailing to ocean;
And now the air is full of uptorn canes,
Light strippings from the fan-trees, tamarisks
Unrooted, with their birds still clinging to them,
All high in the wind. Even so my varied life
Drifts by me; I am young, old, happy, sad,
Hoping, desponding, acting, taking rest,
And all at once: that is, those past conditions
Float back at once on me. If I select
Some special epoch from the crowd, 'tis but
To will, and straight the rest dissolve away,
And only that particular state is present
With all its long-forgotten circumstance
Distinct and vivid as at first—myself
A careless lookc r-on and nothing more,
Indifferent and umused, but nothing more.
And this is death: I understand it all.
New being waits me; new perceptions must
Be born in me before I plunge therein;
Which last is Death's affair; and while I speak,
Minute by minute he is filling me
With power; and while my foot is on the threshold
Of boundless life—the doors unopened yet,
All preparations not complete within—
I turn new knowledge upon old events,
And the effect is . .. but I must not tell;
It is not lawful. Your own turn will come
One day. Wait, Festus! You will die like me.
Fest. 'Tis of that past life that I burn to hear.
Par. You wonder it engages me just now?
In truth, I wonder too. What's life to me ?
Where'er I look is fire, where'er I listen
Music, and where I tend bliss evermore.
Yet how can I refrain? 'Tis a refined
Delight to view those chances,—one last view.
I am so near the perils I escape,
That I must play with them and turn them over,
To feel how fully they are past and gone.
Still, it is like, some further cause exists
For this peculiar mood—some hidden purpose;
Did I not tell you something of it, Festus?
I had it fast, but it has somehow slipt
Away from me: it will returr anon.
Fest. (Indeed, his cheek seems young again, his voice
Complete with its old tones: that little laugh
Concluding every phrase, with upturned eye,
As though one stooped above his head to whom
He looked for confirmation and approval,
Where was it gone so long, so well preserved?
Then, the fore-finger pointing as he speaks,
Like one who traces in an open book
The matter he declares; 'tis many a year
Since I remarked it last: and this in him,
But now a ghastly wreck!)
And can it be,
Dear Aureole, you have then found out at last
That worldly things are utter vanity ?
That man is made for weakness, and should wait
In patient ignorance, till God appoint...
Par. Ha, the purpose: the true purpose: that is it!
How could I fail to apprehend! You here,
I thus! But no more trifling: I see all,
I know all: my last mission shall be done
If strength suffice. No trifling! Stay; this posture
Hardly befits one thus about to speak:

I will arise.
Fest. Nay, Aureole, are you wild ?
You cannot leave your couch.
Par. No help; no help:
Not even your hand. So! there, I stand once more!
Speak from a couch ? I never lectured thus.
My gown—the scarlet lined with fur; now put
The chain about my neck; my signet-ring
Is still upon my hand, I think—even so;
Last, my good sword; ah, trusty Azoth, leapest
Beneath thy master's grasp for the last time?
This couch shall be my throne: I bid these walls
Be consecrate, this wretched cell become
A shrine, for here God speaks to men through me.
Now, Festus, I am ready to begin.
Fest. I am dumb with wonder.
Par. Listen, therefore, Festus!
There will be time enough, but none to spare.
I must content myself with telling only
The most important points. You doubtless feel
That I am happy, Festus; very happy.
Fest. 'Tis no delusion which uplifts him thus!
Then you are pardoned, Aureole, all your sin?
Par. Ay, pardoned: yet why pardoned ?
Fest. 'Tis God's praise
That man is bound to seek, and you . . .
Par. Have lived!
We have to live alone to set forth well
God's praise. 'Tis true, I sinned much, as I thought,
And in effect need mercy, for I strove
To do that very thing; but, do your best
Or worst, praise rises, and will rise for ever.
Pardon from him, because of praise denied—
Who calls me to himself to exalt himself?
He might laugh as I laugh!
Fest. But all comes
To the same thing. 'Tis fruitless for mankind
To fret themselves with what concerns them not;
They are no use that way: they should lie down
Content as God has made them, nor go mad
In thriveless cares to better what is ill.
Par. No, no; mistake me not; let me not work
More harm than I have worked! This is my case:
If I go joyous back to God, yet bring
No offering, if I render up my soul
Without the fruits it was ordained to bear,
If I appear the better to love God
For sin, as one who has no claim on him,—
Be not deceived! It may be surely thus
With me, while higher prizes still await
The mortal persevering to the end.
Beside I am not all so valueless:
I have been something, though too soon I left
Following the instincts of that happy time.
Fest. What happy time? For God's sake, for man's sake.
What time was happy ? All I hope to know
That answer will decide. What happy time?
Par. When but the time I vowed myself' to man?
Fest. Great God, thy judgments are inscrutable!
Par. Yes, it was in me; I was born for it—
L Paracelsus: it was mine by right.
Doubtless a searching and impetuous soul
Might learn from its own motions that some task
Like this awaited it about the world;
Might seek somewhere in this blank life of ours
For fit delights to stay its longings vast;
And grappling Nature, so prevail on her
To fill the creature full she dared thus frame
Hungry for joy; and, bravely tyrannous,
Grow in demand, still craving more and more,
And make each joy conceded prove a pledge
Of other joy to follow—bating nought
Of its desires, still seizing fresh pretence
To turn the knowledge and the rapture wrung
As an extreme, last boon, from destiny,
Into occasion for new coverings,
New strifes, new triumphs:—doubtless a strong soul,
Alone, unaided might attain to this,
So glorious is our nature, so august
Man's inborn uninstructed impulses,
His naked spirit so majestical!
But this was born in me; I was made so;
Thus much time saved: the feverish appetites,
The tumult of unproved desire, the unaimed
Uncertain yearnings, aspirations blind,
Distrust, mistake, and all that ends in tears
Were saved me; thus I entered on my course.
You may be sure I was not all exempt
From human trouble; just so much of doubt
As bade me plant a surer foot upon
The sun-road, kept my eye unruined 'mid
The fierce and flashing splendour, set my heart

Trembling so much as warned me I stood there
On sufferance—not to idly gaze, but cast
Light on a darkling race; save for that doubt,
I stood at first where all aspire at last
To stand: the secret of the world was mine.
I knew, I felt, (perception unexpressed,
Uncomprehended by our narrow thought,
But somehow felt and known in every shift
And change in the spirit,—nay, in every pore
Of the body, even,)—what God is, what we are,
What life is—how God tastes an infinite joy
In infinite ways—one everlasting bliss,
From whom all being emanates, all power
Proceeds; in whom is life for evermore,
Yet whom existence in its lowest form
Includes; where dwells enjoyment there is he:
With still a flying point of bliss remote,
A happiness in store afar, a sphere
Of distant glory in full view; thus climbs
Pleasure its heights for ever and for ever.
The centre-fire heaves underneath the earth,
And the earth changes like a human face;
The molten ore bursts up among the rocks,
Winds into the stone's heart, outbranches bright
In hidden mines, spots barren river-beds,
Crumbles into fine sand where sunbeams bask—
God joys therein. The wroth sea's waves are edged
With foam, white as the bitten lip of hate,
When, in the solitary waste, strange groups
Of young volcanos come up, cyclops-like,
Staring together with their eyes on flame—
God tastes a pleasure in their uncouth pride.
Then all is still; earth is a wintry clod:
But spring-wind, like a dancing psaltress, passes
Over its breast to waken it, rare verdure
Buds tenderly upon rough banks, between
The withered tree-roots and the cracks of frost,
Like a smile striving with a wrinkled face;
The grass grows bright, the boughs are swoln with blooms
Like chrysalids impatient for the air,
The shining dorrs are busy, beetles run
Along the furrows, ants make their ado;
Above, birds fly in merry flocks, the lark
Soars up and up. shivering for very joy;
Afar the ocean sleeps; white fishing-gulls
Flit where the strand is purple with its tribe
Of nested limpets; savage creatures seek
Their loves in wood and plain—and God renews
His ancient rapture. Thus he dwells in all,
From life's minute beginnings, up at last
To man—the consummation of this scheme
Of being, the completion of this sphere
Of life: whose attributes had here and there
Been scattered o'er the visible world before,
Asking to be combined, dim fragments meant
To be united in some wondrous whole,
Imperfect qualities throughout creation,
Suggesting some one creature yet to make,
Some point where all those scattered rays should meet
Convergent in the faculties of man.
Power- —neither put forth blindly, nor controlled
Calmly by perfect knowledge; to be used
At risk, inspired or checked by hope and fear:
Knowledge—not intuition, but the slow
Uncertain fruit of an enhancing toil,
Strengthened by love: love—not serenely pure,
But strong from weakness, like a chance-sown plant
Which, cast on stubborn soil, puts forth changed buds
And softer stains, unknown in happier climes;
Love which endures and doubts and is oppressed
And cherished, suffering much and much sustained,
And blind, oft-failing, yet believing love,
A half-enlightened, often-chequered trust:—
Hints and previsions of which faculties,
Are strewn confusedly everywhere about
The inferior natures, and all lead up higher
All shape out dimly the superior race,
The heir of hopes too fair to turn out false,
And man appears at last. So far the seal
Is put on life; one stage of being complete,
One scheme wound up: and from the grand result
A supplementary reflux of light,
Illustrates all the inferior grades, explains
Each back step in the circle. Not alone
For their possessor dawn those qualities,
But the new glory mixes with the heaven
And earth; man, once descried, imprints for ever
His presence on all lifeless things: the winds
Are henceforth voices, wailing or a shout,
A querulous mutter or a quick gay laugh,
Never a senseless gust now man is born.
The herded pines commune and have deep thoughts,
A secret they assemble to discuss
When the sun drops behind their trunks which glare
Like grates of hell: the peerless cup **afloat**

Of the lake-lily is an urn, some nymph
Swims bearing high above her head: no bird
Whistles unseen, but through the gaps above
That let light in upon the gloomy woods,
A shape peeps from the breezy forest-top,
Arch with small puckered mouth and mocking eye.
The morn has enterprise, deep quiet droops
With evening, triumph takes the sunset hour,
Voluptuous transport ripens with the corn
Beneath a warm moon like a happy face:
—And tills to fill us with regard for man.
With apprehension of his passing worth,
Desire to work his proper nature out,
And ascertain his rank and final place,
For these things tend still upward, progress is
The law of life, man is not Man as yet.
Nor shall I deem his object served, his end
Attained, his genuine strength put fairly forth,
While only here and there a star dispels
The darkness, here and there a towering mind
O'erJooks its prostrate fellows: when the host
Is out at once to the despair of night,
When all mankind alike is perfected,
Equal in full-blown powers—then, not till then,
I say, begins man's general infancy.
For wherefore make account of feverish starts
Of restless members of a dormant whole,
Impatient nerves which quiver while the body
Slumbers as in a grave? Oh long ago
The brow was twitched, the tremulous lids astir,
The peaceful mouth disturbed; half-uttered speech
Ruffled the lip, and then the teeth were set,
The breath drawn sharp, the strong right-hand clenched stronger,
As it would pluck a lion by the jaw;
The glorious creature laughed out even in sleep!
But when full roused, each giant-limb awake,
Each sinew strung, the great heart pulsing fast.
He shall start up and stand on his own earth,
Then shall his long triumphant march begin,
Thence shall his being date,—thus wholly roused,
What he achieves shall be set down to him.
When all the race is perfected alike
As man, that is; all tended to mankind,
And, man produced, all has its end thus far:
But in completed man begins anew
A tendency to God. Prognostics told
Man's near approach; so in man's self arise
August anticipations, symbols, types
Of a dim splendour ever on before
In that eternal circle life pursues.
For men begin to pass their nature's bound,
And find new hopes and cares which fast supplant
Their proper joys and griefs; they grow too great
For narrow creeds of right and wrong, which fade
Before the unmeasured thirst for good: while peace
Rises within them ever more and more.
Such men are even now upon the earth,
Serene amid the half-formed creatures round
Who should be saved by them and joined with them.
Such was my task, and I was born to it—
Free, as I said but now, from much that chains
Spirits, high-dowered but limited and vexed
By a divided and delusive aim,
A shadow mocking a reality
Whose truth avails not wholly to disperse
The flitting mimic called up by itself,
And so remains perplexed and nigh put out
By its fantastic fellow's wavering gleam.
I, from the first, was never cheated thus;
I never fashioned out a fancied good
Distinct from man's; a service to be done,
A glory to be ministered unto
With powers put forth at man's expense, withdrawn
From labouring in his behalf; a strength
Denied that might avail him. I cared not
Lest his success ran counter to success
Elsewhere: for God is glorified in man,
And to man's glory vowed I soul and limb.
Yet, constituted thus, and thus endowed,
I failed: I gazed on power till I grew blind.
Power; I could not take my eyes from that:
That only, I thought, should be preserved, increased
At any risk, displayed, struck out at once—
The sign and note and character of man.
I saw no use in the past: only a scene
Of degradation, ugliness and tears,
The record of disgraces best forgotten,
A sullen page in human chronicles
Fit to erase. I saw no cause why man
Should not stand all-sufficient even now,
Or why his annals should be forced to tell
That once the tide of light, about to break
Upon the world, was sealed within ite spring:

I would have had one day, one moment's space,
Change man's condition, push each slumbering claim
Of mastery o'er the elemental world
At once to full maturity, then roll
Oblivion o'er the work, and hide from man
What night had ushered morn. Not so, dear child
Of after-days, wilt thou reject the past
Big with deep warnings of the proper tenure
By which thou hast the earth: for thee the present
Shall have distinct and trembling beauty, seen
Beside that past's own shade when, in relief,
Its brightness shall stand out: nor yet on thee
Shall burst the future, as successive zones
Of several wonder open on some spirit
Flying secure and glad from heaven to heaven:
But thou shalt painfully attain to joy,
While hope and fear and love shall keep thee man!
All this was hid from me: as one by one
My dreams grew dim, my wide aims circumscribed,
As actual good within my reach decreased.
While obstacles sprung up this way and that
To keep me from eifecting half the sum,
Small as it proved; as objects, mean within
The primal aggregate, seemed, even the least,
Itself a match for my concentred strength—
What wonder if I saw no way to shun
Despair? The power I sought for man, seemed God's.
In this conjuncture, as I prayed to die,
A strange adventure made me know, one sin
Had spotted my career from its uprise;
I saw Aprile—my Aprile there!
And as the poor melodious wretch disburthened
His heart, and moaned his weakness in my ear,
I learned my own deep error; love's undoing
Taught me the worth of love in man's estate,
And what proportion love should hold with power
In his right constitution; love preceding
Power, and with much power, always much more love;
Love still too straitened in his present means,
And earnest for new power to set love free.
i learned this, and supposed the whole was learned:
And fhus, when men received with stupid wonder
My first revealings, would have worshipped me,
And I despised and loathed their proffered praise—
When, with awakened eyes, they took revenge
For past credulity in casting shame
On my real knowledge, and I hated them—
It was not strange I saw no good in man,
To overbalance all the wear and waste
Of faculties, displayed in vain, but born
To prosper in some better sphere: and why?
In my own heart love had not been made wise
To trace love's faint beginnings in mankind,
To know even hate is but a mask of love's,
To see a good in evil, and a hope
In ill-success; to sympathize, be proud
Of their half-reasons, faint aspirings, dim
Struggles for truth, their poorest fallacies,
Their prejudice and fears and cares and doubts;
All with a touch of nobleness, despite
Their error, upward tending all though weak,
Like plants in mines which never saw the sun,
But dream of him, and guess where he may be,
And do their best to climb and get to him.
All this I knew not, and I failed. Let men
Regard me, and the poet dead long ago
Who loved too rashly; and shape forth a third
And better-tempered spirit, warned by both:
As from the over-radiant star too mad
To drink the life-springs, beamless thence itself—
And the dark orb which borders the abyss,
Ingulfed in icy night,—might have its course
A temperate and equidistant world.
Meanwhile, I have done well, though not all well.
As yet men cannot do without contempt;
'Tis for their good, and therefore fit awhile
That they reject the weak, and scorn the false,
Rather than praise the strong and true, in me:
But after, they will know me. If I stoop
Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
It is but for a time; I press God's lamp
Close to my breast; its splendour, soon or late,

Will pierce the gloom: I shall emerge one day.
This hand, lie in your own, my own true friend!
You understand me' ?have said enough? Aprile! Hand in hand with you, Aprilel
Fest. Now die, dear Aureole!
Par. Festus, let my hand— *Fest.* And this was Paracelsus!

NOTE

THE liberties I have taken with my subject are very trifling; and the reader may slip the foregoing scenes between the leaves of any memoir of Paracelsus he pleases, by way of commentary. To prove this, I subjoin a popular account, translated from the *Biographie Universelle*, Paris, 1822, which I select, not as the best, certainly, but as being at hand, and sufficiently concise for my purpose. I also append a few notes, in order to correct those parts which do not bear out my own view of the character of Paracelsus; and have incorporated with them a notice or two, illustrative of the poem itself.

'PARACELSUS (Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bonfbastus ab Hohenheim) was born in 1493 at Einsiedeln (i), a little town in the canton of Schwyz, some leagues distant from Zurich. His father, who exercised the profession of medicine at Villach in Carinthia, was nearly related to George Bombast de Hohenheim, who became afterward Grand Prior of the Order of Malta; consequently Paracelsus could not spring from the dregs of the people, as Thomas Erastus, his sworn enemy, pretends.* It appears that his elementary education was much neglected, and that he spent part of his youth in pursuing the life common to the travelling *literati* of the age; that is to say, in wandering from country to country, predicting the future by astrology and cheiromancy, evoking apparitions, and practising the different operations of magic and alchemy, in which he had been initiated whether by his father or by various ecclesiastics, among the number of whom he particularizes the Abbot Tritheim (2), and many German bishops.

'As Paracelsus displays everywhere an ignorance of the rudiments of the most ordinary knowledge, it is not probable that he ever studied seriously in the schools: he contented himself with visiting the Universities of Germany, France, and Italy; and in spite of his boasting himself to have been the ornament of those institutions, there is no proof of his having legally acquired the title of Doctor, which he assumes. It is only known that he applied himself long, under the direction of the wealthy Sigismond Fugger of Schwatz, to the discovery of the Magnum Opus.

'Paracelsus travelled among the mountains of Bohemia, in the East, and in Sweden, in order to inspect the labours of the miners, to be initiated in the mysteries of the oriental adepts, and to observe the secrets of nature and the famous mountain of loadstone (3). He professes also to have visited Spain, Portugal, Prussia, Poland, and Transylvania; everywhere communicating freely, not merely with the physicians, but the old women, charlatans and conjurers of these several lands. It is even believed that he extended his journeyings as far as Egypt and Tartary, and that he accompanied the son of the Khan of the Tartars to Constantinople, for the purpose of obtaining the secret of the tincture of Trismegistus from a Greek who inhabited that capital.

'The period of his return to Germany is unknown: it is only certain that, at about the age of thirty-three, many astonishing cures which he wrought on eminent personages procured him such a celebrity, that he was called in 1526, on the recommendation of CEcolampadius (4), to fill a chair of physic and surgery at the University of Basil. There Paracelsus began by burning publicly in the amphitheatre the works of Avicenna and Galen, assuring his auditors that the latchets of his shoes were more instructed than those two physicians; that all Universities, all writers put together, were less gifted than the hairs of his beard and of the crown of his head; and that, in a word, he was to be regarded as the legitimate monarch of medicine. " You shall follow me," cried he, "you, Avicenna, Galen, Rhasis, Montagnana, Mesues, you, gentlemen of Paris, Montpellier, Germany, Cologne, Vienna.t and whomsoever the Rhine and Danube nourish; you who inhabit the isles of the sea; you, likewise, Dalmatians, Athenians; thou, Arab; thou, Greek; thou, Jew: all shall follow me, and the monarchy shall be mine."‡

'But at Basil it was speedily perceived that the new Professor was no better than an egregious quack. Scarcely a year elapsed before his lectures had fairly driven away an audience incapable of comprehending their emphatic jargon. That which above all contributed to sully his reputation was the debauched life he led. According to the testimony of Oporinus, who lived two years in his intimacy, Paracelsus scarcely ever ascended the lecture-desk unless half drunk, and only dictated to his secretaries when in a state of intoxication: if summoned to attend the sick, he rarely proceeded thither without previously drenching himself with wine. He was accustomed to retire to bed without changing his clothes; sometimes he spent the night in pot-houses with peasants, and in the morning

* I shall disguise M. Renauldin's next sentence a little. 'Hic (Erastus sc.) Paracelsum trimum a milite quodam, alii a sue exectum ferunt: constat imberbem ilium, mulierumque osorem f uisse.' A standing High-Dutch joke in those days at the expense of a number of learned men, as may be seen by referring to such rubbish as Melander's *Jocoseria*, etc. In the prints from his portrait by Tintoretto, painted a year before his death, Paracelsus is *barbatulus*, at all events. But Eractus was never without a good reason for his faith —e.g. 'Helvetium fuisse (Paracelsum) vix credo, vix enim ea regio tale monstrum ediderit.' (*De Medicina Nova.)*

† Erastus, who relates this, here oddly remarks, 'mirum quod non et Garamantos, Indos et *Anglos* adjunxit.' ' Not so wonderful neither, if we believe what another adversary 'had heard somewhere'— that all Paracelsus' system came of his pillaging 'Anglum quendam, Rogerium Bacchonem.'

‡ See his works *passim.* I must give one specimen:—Somebody had been styling him 'Luther alter.' 'And why not?' (he asks, as he well might). 'Luther is abundantly learned, therefore you hate him and me; but we are at least a match for you.— Nam et contra vos et vestros universos principes Avicennam, Galenum, Aristotelem, etc. me satis superque munitum esse novi. Et vertex iste meus calvus ac depilis multo plura et sublimiora novit quam vester vel Avicenna vel universal academiae. Prodite, et signum date, qui viri sitis, quid roboris habeatis? quid autem sitis? Doctores et magistri, pediculos pectentes et fricantes podicem.' (Frag. Med.)

knew no longer what he was about; and, nevertheless, up to the age of twenty-five his only drink had been water (5).

'At length, fearful of being punished for a serious outrage on a magistrate (6), he fled from Basil towards the end of the year 1527, and took refuge in Alsatia, whither he caused Oporinus to follow with his chemical apparatus.

'He then entered once more upon the career of ambulatory theosophist.* Accoidingly we find him at Colmar in 1528; at Nuremberg in 1529; at St. Gall in 1531; at Pfeffers in 1535; and at Augsburg in 1536: he next made some stay in Moravia, where he still further compromised his reputation by the loss of many distinguished patients, which compelled him to betake himself to Vienna; from thence he passed into Hungary; and in 1538 was at Villach, where he dedicated his *Chronicle* to the States of Carinthia, in gratitude for the many kindnesses with which they had honoured his father. Finally, from Mindelheim, which he visited in 1540, Paracelsus proceeded to Salzburg, where he died in the Hosoital of St. Stephen *(Sebastian* is meant), Sept. 24, 1541."—(Here follows a criticism on his writings, which I omit.)

(1) *Paracelsus* would seem to be a fantastic version of *Von Hohenheim;* Einsiedeln is the Latinized Eremus, whence Paracelsus is sometimes called, as in the correspondence of Erasmus, Eremita; Bombast, his proper name, probably acquired, from the characteristic phraseology of his lectures, that unlucky signification which it has ever since retained.

(2) Then Bishop of Spanheim, and residing at Wiirzburg in Franconia; a town situated in a grassy fertile country, whence its name, Herbipolis. He was much visited there by learned men, as may be seen by his *Epistoæ Familiares,* Hag. 1536: among others, by his staunch friend Cornelius Agrippa, to whom he dates thence, in 1510, a letter in answer to the dedicatory epistle prefixed to the treatise *De Occult. Philosophy* which last contains the following ominous allusion to Agrippa's sojourn: 'Quum nuper tecum, R. P. in coenobio tuo apud Hcrbipolim aliquamdiu conversatus, multa de chymicis, multa de magicis, multa de cabalisticis, cœterisque quæ; adhuc in occulto delitescunt, arcanis scientiis atque artibus una contulissemus,' etc.

(3) 'Inexplebilis ilia aviditas naturae perscrutandi secreta et reconditarum supellectile scientiarum animum locupletandi, uno eodemque loco diu persistere non patiebatur, sed Mercurii instar, omnes terras, nationes et urbes perlustrandi igniculos supponebat, ut cum viris naturae scrutatoribus, chymicis prccsertim, ore tenus conferret, et quae diuturnis laborious nocturnisque vigiliis invenerant una vel altera communicatione obtineret.' (Bitiskius in *Præfat.)* 'Patris auxilio primutn, deinde propria industria doctissimos viros in Germania, Italia, Gallia, Hispania, aliisque Europe regionibus, nactus est praeceptores; quorum liberali doctrina, et potissimum propria inquisitione ut qui esset ingenio acutissimo ac fere divino, tantum profecit, ut multi testati sint, in universa philosophia, tam ardua, tam arcana et abdita eruisse mortdlium neminem.' (Melch. Adam, in *Vit. Germ. Medic.)* 'Paracelsus qui in intima naturae viscera sic penitus introierit, metallorum stirpiumque vires et facultates tam incredibili ingenii acumine exploraverit ac perviderit, ad morbos omnes vel desperates et opinione hominum insanabiles percurandum; ut cum Theophrasto nata primum medicina perfectaque vidctur.' *(Petri Rami Orat. de Basilca.)* His passion for wandering is best described in his own words: 'Ecce amatorem adolescentem difficillimi itineris haud piget, ut venustam saltern puellam vel fceminara aspiciat: quanto minus nobilissimarum artium amore laboris ac cujuslibet taedii pigebit?' etc. *(Defensiones Septem adversus Æmulos suos.* 1573. Def. 4ta. *De peregrinationibus et exilio.)*

(4) The reader may remember that it was in conjunction with CEcolampadius, then Divinity Professor at Basil, that Zuinglms published in 1528 an answer to Luther's Confession of Faith; and that both proceeded in company to the subsequent conference with Luther and Melanchthon at Marpurg. Their letters fill a large volume.—*D.D. Johannis (Œcolampadii et Huldrichi Zuinglii Epistolarum,* lib. quatuor, Bas. 1536. It must be also observed that Zuinglius began to preach in 1516, and at Zurich in 1519, and that in 1525 the Mass was abolished in the cantons. The tenets of CEcolampadius were supposed to be more evangelical than those up to that period maintained by the glorious German, and our brave Bishop Fisher attacked them as the fouler heresy:—'About this time arose out of Luthei's school one CEcolampadius, like a mighty and fierce giant; who, as his master had gone beyond the Church, went beyond his master (or else it had been impossible he could have been reputed the better scholar), who denied the real presence; him, this worthy champion (the Bishop) sets upon, and with five books (like so many smooth stones taken out of the river that doth always run with living water) slays the Philistine; which five books were written in the year of our Lord 1526, at which time he had governed the see of Rochester twenty years.' *(Life of Bishop Fisher,* 1655.) Now, there is no doubt of the Protestantism of Paracelsus, Erasmus, Agrippa, etc., but the nonconformity of Paracelsus was always scandalous. L. Crasso *(Elogj d'Huomini Lettcrati,* Ven. 1666) informs us that his books were excommunicated by the Church. Quenstedt *(de Pair. Doct.)* affirms 'nec tantum novae medicinaj, verum etiam novae theologize autor est.' Delrio, in his *Disquisit. Magicar.,* classes him among those 'partim atheos, partim haereticos' (lib. i, cap. 3). 'Omnino tamen multa theologica in ejusdem scriptis plane atheismum olent, ac duriuscule sonant in auribus vere Christiani.' *(D. Gabrielis Clauderi Schediasma de Tinct. Univ. Norimb.,* 1736.) I shall only add one more authority:—'Oporinus dicit se (Paracelsum) aliquando Lutherum et Papam, non minus quam nunc Galenum et Hippocratem redacturum in ordinem minabatur, neque enim eorum qui hactenus in scripturam sacram scripsissent, sive veteres, sive recentiores, quenquam scripturae nucleum recte eruisse, sed circa corticem et quasi membranam tantum hærere.' *(Th. Erastus Disputat. de Med. Nova.)* These and similar notions had their due effect on Oporinus, who, says Zuingerus, in his *Theatram,* 'longum vale dixit ei (Paracelso), ne ob praeceptoris, alioqui amicissimi, horrendas blas-

* 'So migratory a life could afford Paracelsus but little leisure for application to books, and accordingly he informs us that for the space* of ten years he never opened a single volume, and that his whole medical library was not composed of six sheets: in effect, the inventory drawn up after his death states that the only books which he left were the Bible, the New Testament, the Commentaries of St. Jerome on the Gospels, a printed volume on Medicine, and seven manuscripts.'

phemias ipse quoque aliquando poenas **Deo Opt.** Max. lueret.'

(5) His defenders allow the drunkenness. Take a sample of their excuses: 'Gentis hoc, non viri vitiolum est, a Taciti seculo ad nostrum usque non interrupto filo devolutum, sinceritati forte Germanæ; coævum, et nescio an aliquo consanguinitatis vinculo junctum.' (Bitiskius.) The other charges were chiefly trumped up by Oporinus: 'Domi, quod Oporinus amanuensis ejus sa?pe narravit, nunquam nisi potus ad explicanda sua accessit, atque in medio conclavi ad columnam τετυφωμένος adsistens, apprehenso manibus capulo ensis, cujus /coîAcu/xa hospitium praebuit, ut aiunt, spiritui familiari, imaginationes aut concepta sua protulit:—alii lllud quod in capulo habuit, ab ipso Azoth appellatum, medicinam fuisse praestantissimam aut lapidem Philosophicum putant.' (Melch. Adam.) This famous sword was no laughing-matter in those days, and it is now a material feature in the popular idea of Paracelsus. I recollect a couple of allusions to it in our own literature, at the moment.

> Ne had been known the Danish Gonswart,
> Or Paracelsus with his long sword.
> *Volpone*, act ii. scene 2.
>
> Bumbastus kept a devil's bird
> Shut in the pummel of his sword,
> That taught him all the cunning pranks
> Of past and future mountebanks.
> *Hudibras*, part ii. cant. 3.

This Azoth was simply *"laudanum suum.'* But in his time he was commonly believed to possess the double tincture—the power of curing diseases and transmuting metals. Oporinus often witnessed, as he declares, both these effects, as did also Franciscus, the servant of Paracelsus, who describes, in a letter to Neander, a successful projection at which he was present, and the results of which, good golden ingots, were confided to his keeping. For the other quality, let the following notice vouch among many others:—' Degebat Theophrastus Norimbergæ procitus a medentibus illius urbis, et vaniloquus deceptorque proclamatus, qui, ut laboranti famæ subveniat, viros quosdam authoritatis summae in Republica ilia adit, et infamue amoliendae, artique suæ asserendae, specimen ejus pollicetur editurum, nullo stipendio vel accepto pretio, horum faciles præbentium aures jussu elephantiacos aliquot, a communione hominum caHerorum segregates, et in valetudinarium detrusos, qui alicno arbitrio eliguntur, quos virtute singulari remediorum suorum Theophrastus a fceda Græcorum lepra mundat, pristinaeque sanitati restituit; conservat illustre harum curationum urbs in archivis suis testimonium.' (Bitiskius.)* It is to be remarked that Oporinus afterwards repented of his treachery: 'Sed reipuit tandem, et quern vivum convitiis insectatus fuerat defunctum veneratione prosequutus, infames famas praeceptoris morsus in remorsus conscientiae conversi pcenitentia, heu nimis tarda, vulnera clausere exanimi quae spiranti inflixerant.' For these 'bites' of Oponnus, see *Disputat. Erasti*, and Andres Jocisci *Oratio de Vit. ob. Opor;* for the 'remorse', Mic. Toxita *in pref. Testamenti*, and Conringius (otherwise an enemy of Paracelsus), who says it was contained in a letter from Oporinus to Doctor Vegerus.

Whatever the moderns may think of these marvellous attributes, the title of Paracelsus to be considered the father of modern chemistry is indisputable. Gerardus Vossius, *De Philos" et Philos" sectis*, thus prefaces the ninth section of cap. 9, 'De Chymia'—'Nobilem hanc medicinae partem, diu sepultam avorum aetate, quasi ab orco revocavit Th. Paracelsus.' 1 suppose many hints lie scattered in his neglected books, which clever appropriators have since developed with applause. Thus, it appears from his treatise *De Phlebotomia*, and elsewhere, that he had discovered the circulation of the blood and the sanguification of the heart; as did after him Realdo Colombo, and still more perfectly Andrea Cesalpino of Arezzo, as Bayle and Bartoli observe. Even Lavater quotes a passage from his work, *De Natura Rerum*, on practical Physiognomy, in which the definitions and axioms are precise enough: he adds, * though an astrological enthusiast, a man of prodigious genius.' Sec Holcroft's translation, vol. iii, p. 179—'The Eyes.,' While on the subject of the writings of Paracelsus, I may explain a passage in the third part of the Poem. He was, as I have said, unwilling to publish his works, but in effect did publish a vast number. Valentius (in *Prcefat. in Paramyr.)* declares 'quod ad librorum Paracelsi copiam attinet, audio, a Germanis prope trecentos recenseri.' ' O foecunditas ingenii!' adds he, appositely. Many of these were, however, spurious: and Fred. Bitiskius gives his good edition (3 vols. fol. Gen. 1658) 'rejectis suppositis solo ipsius nomine superbientibus quorum ingens circumfertur numerus.' The rest were 'charissimum et pretiosissimum authoris pignus, extorsum potius ab illo quam obtentum.' 'Jam minime eo volente atque jubente hax ipsius scripta in lucem prodisse videntur; quippe quae muro inclusa ipso absente, servi cujusdam indicio, furto surrepta atque sublata sunt,' says Valentius. These have been the study of a host of commentators, amongst whose labours are most notable, Petri Severini, *Idea Mcdicince Philosophic?*, Bas. 1571; Mic. Toxetis, *Onomastica*, Arg. 1574; Dornei, *Dict. Parac*, Franc. 1584; and *Pi Philosœ Compendium cum scholiis auctorz Leone Suavio.* Paris. (This last, a good book.)

(6) A disgraceful affair. One Liechtenfels, a canon, having been rescued *in extremis* by the *'laudanum'* of Paracelsus, refused the stipulated fee, and was supported in his meanness by the authorities, whose interference Paracelsus would not brook. His own liberality was allowed by his bitterest foes, who found a ready solution of his indifference to profit in the aforesaid sword-handle and its guest. His freedom from the besetting sin of a profession he abhorred—(as he curiously says somewhere, 'Quis quæso deinceps honorem deferat professioni tali, quae a tarn facinorosis nebulonibus obitur et administratur?')—is recorded in his epitaph, which affirms—'Bona sua in pauperes distribuenda collocandaque erogavit,' *honoravit,* or *ordinavit*—for accounts differ.

* The premature death of Paracelsus casts no manner of doubt on the fact of his having possessed the "Elixir Vitas: the alchemists have abundant reasons to auduce, from which I select the following, as explanatory of a property of the Tincture not calculated on by its votaries:—'Objectionem illam, quod Paracelsus non fuerit longævus, nonnulli quoque solvunt per rationes physicas: vitas nimirum aboreviationem fortasse talibus accidere posse, ob Tincturam frequentiore ac largiore dosi sumtam, dum a summe efflcaci et penetrabili hujus virtute calor innatus quasi suffocatur.' (Gabrielis Clauderi Schediasma.)

t For a good defence of Paracelsus I refer the reader to Olaus Borrichius' treatise—*Hermetis, etc. Sapientia vindicata*, 1674. Or, if he is no more learned than myself in such matters, I mention simply that Paracelsus introduced the use of Mercury and Laudanum.

STRAFFORD

A TRAGEDY

1837

DEDICATED, IN ALL AFFECTIONATE ADMIRATION,

TO

WILLIAM C. MACREADY

LONDON: *April* 23, 1837.

PERSONS

CHARLES I.
Earl of HOLLAND.
Lord SAVILE.
Sir HENRY VANE.
WENTWORTH, Viscount WENTWORni, Earl of STRAFFORD.
JOHN PYM.
JOHN HAMPDEN.
The younger VANE.
DENZIL HOLLIS.
BENJAMIN RUDYARD.
NATHANIEL FIENNES.
Earl of LOUDON.
MAXWELL, *Usher of the Black Rod.*
BALFOUR, *Constable of the Tower.*
A Puritan.
Queen HENRIETTA.
LUCY PERCY, Countess of Carlisle.

Presbyterians, Scots Commissioners, Adherents of Strafford, Secretaries, Officers of the Court, etc. Two of Strafford's children.

ACT I

SCENE *I.--A House near Whitehall.* HAMPDEN, HOLLIS, *the* younger VANE, RUDYARD, FIENNES *and many of the Presbyterian Party:* LOUDON *and other Scots Commissioners.*

Vane. I say, if he be here—
Rud. (And he is here!)—
Hoi. For England's sake let every man be still
Nor speak of him, so much as say his name,
Till Pym rejoin us! Rudyard! Henry Vane!
One rash conclusion may decide our course
And with it England's fate—think—England's fate!
Hampden, for England's sake they should be still!
Vane. You say so, Hollis? Well, I must be still.
It is indeed too bitter that one man,
Any one man's mere presence, should suspend
England's combined endeavour: little need
To name him!
Rud. For you are his brother, Hollis!
Hamp. Shame on you, Rudyard! time to tell him that
When he forgets the Mother of us all.
Rud. Do I forget her?
Hamp. You talk idle hate
Against her foe: is that so strange a thing 7
Is hating Wentworth all the help she needs?
A Puritan. The Philistine strode, cursing as he went:
But David- -five smooth pebbles from the brook
Within his scrip . ..
Rud. Be you as still as David!
Fien. Here's Rudyard not ashamed to wag a tongue
Stiff with ten years' disuse of Parliaments;
Why, when the last sat, Wentworth sat with us!
Rud. Let's hope for news of them now he returns—
He that was safe in Ireland, as we thought!
—But I'll abide Pym's coming.
Vane. Now, by Heaven,
They may be cool who can, silent who will-
Some have a gift that way! Wentworth is here,
Here, and the King's safe closeted with him
Ere this. And when I think on all that's past
Since that man left us, how his single arm
Rolled the advancing good of England back
And set the woeful past up in its place,
Exalting Dagon where the Ark should be,—
How that man has made firm the fickle King
(Hampden, I will speak out!)—in aught he feared
To venture on before; taught tyranny
Her dismal trade, the use of all her tools,
To ply the scourge yet screw the gag so close
That strangled agony bleeds mute to death;
How he turns Ireland to a private stage
For training infant villanies, new ways

Of wringing treasure out of tears and blood,
Unheard oppressions nourished in the dark
To try how much man's nature can endure
— I f he dies under it, what harm? if not,
Why, one more trick is added to the rest
Worth a king's knowing, and what Ireland bears
England may learn to bear:—how all this while
That man has set himself to one dear task,
The bringing Charles to relish more and more
Power, power without law, power and blood too
—Can I be still?
Hamp. For that you should be still.
Vane. Oh Hampden, then and now! The year he left us,
The People in full Parliament could wrest
The Bill of Rights from the reluctant King;
And now, he'll find in an obscure small room
A stealthy gathering of great-hearted men
That take up England's cause: England is here!
Hamp. And who despairs of England?
Rud. That do I,
If Wentworth comes to rule her. I am sick
To think her wretched masters, Hamilton,
The muckworm Cottington, the maniac Laud,
May yet be longed-for back again. I say, I do despair.
Vane. And, Rudyard, I'll say this—
Which all true men say after me, not loud
But solemnly and as you'd say a prayer!
This King, who treads our England under-foot,
Has just so much... it may be fear or craft,
As bids him pause at each fresh outrage; friends,
He needs some sterner hand to grasp his own.
Some voice to ask, 'Why shrink? Am I not by?'
Now, one whom England loved for serving her,
Found in his heart to say, 'I know where best
' The iron heel shall bruise her, for she leans
'Upon me when you trample.' Witness, you!
So Wentworth heartened Charles, so England fell.
But inasmuch as life is hard to take
From England . ..
Many Voices. Go on, Vane! 'Tis well said, Vane!
Vane, —Who has not so forgotten Runnymead!—
Voices. 'Tis well and bravely spoken, Vane! Goon!
Vane. —There are some little signs of late she knows
The ground no place for her. She glances round,
Wentworth has dropped the hand, is gone his way
On other service: what if she arise?
No! the King beckons, and beside him stands
The same bad man once more, with the same smile
And the game gesture. Now shall England crouch,
Or catch at us and rise?
Voices. The Renegade!
Haman! Ahithophel!
Hamp. Gentlemen of the North,
It was not thus the night your claims were urged,
And we pronounced the League and Covenant,
The cause of Scotland, England's cause as well:
Vane there, sat motionless the whole night through.
Vane. Hampden!
Fien. Stay, Vane!
Lou. Be just and patient, Vane!
Vane. Mind how you counsel patience, Loudon! you
Have still a Parliament, and this your League
To back *it;* you are free in Scotland still:
While we are brothers, hope 'sfor England yet.
But know you wherefore Wentworth comes? to quench
This last of hopes ? that he brings war with him?
Know you the man's self? what he dares?
Lou. We know,
All know—'tis nothing new.
Vane. And what's new, then,
In calling for his life? Why, Pym himself—
You must have heard—ere Wentworth dropped our cause
He would see Pym first; there were many more
Strong on the people's side and friends of his,
Eliot that's dead, Rudyard and Hampden here.
But for these Wentworth cared not; only, Pym
He would see—Pym and he were sworn, 'tis said,
To live and die together; so, they met
At Greenwich. Wentworth, you are sure, was long,
Specious enough, the devil's argument
Lost nothing on his lips, he'd have Pym own
A patriot could not play a purer part

Than follow in his track; they two combined
Might put d6wh England. Well, Pym heard him out;
One glance—you know Pym's eye—one word was all:
'You leave us, WentworthI while your head is on.
T i l not leave you.'
Hamp. Has he left Wentworth, then?
Has England lost him? Will you let him speak,
Or put your crude surmises in his mouth?
Away with this! Will you have Pym or Vane?
Voices. Wait Pym's arrival! Pym shall speak.
Hamp, Meanwhile
Let Loudon read the Parliament's report
From Edinburgh: our last hope, as Vane says,
Is in the stand it makes. Loudon!
Vane. No, no!
Silent I can be: not indifferent!
Hamp. Then each keep silence, praying God to spare
His anger, cast not England quite away
In this her visitation!
A Puritan. Seven years long
The Midianite drove Israel into dens
And caves. Till God sent forth a mighty man,

PYM *enters.*

Even Gideon!
Pym. Wentworth 's come: nor sickness, care,
The ravaged body nor the ruined soul,
More than the winds and waves that beat his ship,
Could keep him from the King. He has not reached
Whitehall: they've hurried up a Council there
To lose no time and find Mm work enough.
Where's Loudon? your Scots' Parliament . ..
Lou. Holds firm:
We were about to read reports.
Pym. The King
Has just dissolved your Parliament.
Lou. and other Scots. Great God!
An oath-breaker! Stand by us, England, then!
Pym. The King's too sanguine; doubtless Wentworth's here;
But still some little form might be kept up.
Hamp. Now speak, Vane! Rudyard, you had much to say!
Hoi. The rumour's false, then . . .
Pym. Ay, the Court gives out
His own concerns have brought him back: I know
'Tis the King calls him. Wentworth supersedes
The tribe of Cottingtons and Hamiltons
Whose part is played; there's talk enough, by this,—
Merciful talk, the King thinks: time is now
To turn the record's last and bloody leaf
Which, chronicling a nation's great despair,
Tells they were long rebellious, and their lord
Indulgent, till, all kind expedients tried,
He drew the sword on them and reigned m peace.
Laud's laying his religion on the Scots
Was the last gentle entry: the new page
Shall run, the King thinks, 'Wentworth thrust it down
'At the sword's point.'
A Puritan. I'll do your bidding, Pym,
England's and God's—one blow!
Pym. A goodly thing—
We all say, friends, it is a goodly thing
To right that England. Heaven grows dark above:
Let's snatch one moment ere the thunder fall,
To say how well the English spirit comes out
Beneath it! All have done their best, indeed,
From lion Eliot, that grand Englishman,
To the least here: and who, the least one here,
When she is saved (for her redemption dawns
Dimly, most dimly, but it dawns—it dawns)
Who'd give at any price his hope away
Of being named along with the Great Men?
We would not—no, we would not give that up!
Hamp. And one name shall be dearer than all names.
When cliildren, yet unborn, are taught that name
After their fathers',—taught what matchless man . ..
Pym. . . . Saved England? What if Wentworth's should be still
That name ?
Rud. and others. We have just said it, Pym! His death
Saves her! We said it—there's no way beside!
I'll do God's bidding, Pym! They struck down Joab
And purged the land.
Vane. No villanous striking-down!
Rud. No, a calm vengeance: let the whole land rise
And shout for it. No Feltons!
Pym. Rudyard, no!

England rejects all Feltons; most of all
Since Wentworth . . . Hampden, say the trust again
Of England in her servants—but I'll think
You know me, all of you. Then, I believe,
Spite of the past, Wentworth rejoins you, friends!
Vane and others, Wentworth? Apostate! Judas! Double-dyed
A traitor! Is it Pym, indeed . . .
Pym. ... Who says
Vane never knew that Wentworth, loved that man,
Was used to stroll with him, arm locked in arm,
Along the streets to see the people pass,
And read in every island-countenance
Fresh argument for God against the King,—
Never sat down, say, in the very house
Where Eliot's brow grew broad with noble thoughts,
(You've joined us, Hampden—Hollis, you as well,)
And then left talking over Gracchus' death . . .
Vane. To frame, we know it well, the choicest clause
In the Petition of Right: he framed such clause
One month before he took at the King's hand
His Northern Presidency, which that Bill Denounced.
Pym. Too true! Never more, never more
Walked we together! Most alone I went.
I have had friends—all here are fast my friends—
But I shall never quite forget that friend.
And yet it could not but be real in him!
You, Vane,—you, Rudyard, have no right to trust
To Wentworth: but can no one hope with me?
Hampden, will Wentworth dare shed English blood
Like water?
Hamp, Ireland is Aceldama.
Pym. Will he turn Scotland to a hunting-ground
To please the King, now that he knows the King?
The People or the King? and that King, Charles!
Hamp. Pym, all here know you: you'll not set your heart
On any baseless dream. But say one deed
Of Wentworth's since he left us . . .
[Shouting without.
Vane. There! he comes,
And they shout for him! Wentworth'sat Whitehall,
The King embracing him, now, as we speak,
And he, to be his match in courtesies,
Taking the whole war's risk upon himself.
Now, while you tell us here how changed he is!
Hear you?
Pym. And yet if 'tis a dream, no more.
That Wentworth chose their side, and brought the King
To love it as though Laud had loved it first,
And the Queen after;—that he led their cause
Calm to success, and kept it spotless through,
So that our very eyes could look upon
The travail of our souls, and close content
That violence, which something mars even right
Which sanctions it, had taken off no grace
From its serene regard. Only a dream!
Hamp. We meet here to accomplish certain good
By obvious means, and keep tradition up
Of free assemblages, else obsolete,
In this poor chamber: nor without effect
Has friend met friend to counsel and confirm,
As, listening to the beats of England's heart,
We spoke its wants to Scotland's prompt reply
By these her delegates. Remains alone
That word grow deed, as with God's help it shall—
But with the devil's hindrance, who doubts too?
Looked we or no that tyranny should turn
Her engines of oppression to their use?
Whereof, suppose the worst be Wentworth here—
Shall we break off the tactics which succeed
In drawing out our formidablest foe,
Let bickering and disunion take their place?
Or count his presence as our conquest's proof,
And keep the old arms at their steady play ?
Proceed to England's work I Fiennes, read the list!
Fien. Ship-money is refused or fiercely paid
In every county, save the northern parts
Where Wentworth's influence . . .
[Shouting.
Vane. I, in England's name.
Declare her work, this way, at end! Till now,
Up to this moment, peaceful strife was best.
We English had free leave to think; till now,
We had a shadow of a Parliament
In Scotland. But all's changed: they change the first,

They try brute-force for law, they, first of all...
Voices. Good! Talk enough! The old true hearts with Vane!
Vane. Till we crush Wentworth for her, there's no act
Serves England!
Voices. Vane for England!
Pym. Pym should be
Something to England. I seek Wentworth, friends.

SCENE II.—*Whitehall.*

Lady CARLISLE *and* WENTWORTH.

Went. And the King?
Lady Car. Wentworth, lean on me! Sit then!
I'll tell you all: this horrible fatigue
Will kill you.
Went. No;—or, Lucy, just your arm;
I'll not sit till I've cleared this up with him:
After that, rest. The King?
Lady Car. Confides in you.
Went. Why ? or, why now ?—They have kind throats, the knaves!
Shout for me—they!
Lady Car. You come so strangely soon:
Yet we took measures to keep off the crowd—
Did they shout for you?
Went. Wherefore should they not ?
Does the King take such measures for himself?
Beside, there's such a dearth of malcontents,
You say!
Lady Car, I said but few dared carp at you.
Went. At me? at us, I hope! The King and I!
He's surely not disposed to let me bear
The fame away from him of these late deeds
In Ireland? I am yet his instrument
Be it for well or ill? He trusts me, too!
Lady Car. The King, dear Wentworth, purposes, I said,
To grant you, in the face of all the Court..,
Went. All the Court! Evermore the Court about us!
Savile and Holland, Hamilton and Vane
About us,—then the King will grant me—what?
That he for once put these aside and say—
'Tell me your whole mind, Wentworth!'
Lady Car. You professed
You would be calm.
Went. Lucy, and I am calm!
How else shall I do all I come to do,
Broken, as you may see, body and mind,
How shall I serve the King? Time wastes meanwhile,
You have not told me half. His footstep! No.
Quick, then, before I meet him,—I am calm—
Why does the King distrust me?
Lady Car. He does not
Distrust you.
Went. Lucy, you can help me; you
Have even seemed to care for me: one word!
Is it the Queen?
Lady Car. No, not the Queen: the party
That poisons the Queen's ear, Savile and Holland.
Went. I know, I know: old Vane, too, he's one too?
Goon—and he's made Secretary. Well?
Or leave them out and go straight to the charge—
The charge!
Lady Car. Oh, there's no charge, no precise charge;
Only they sneer, make light of—one may say,
Nibble at what you do.
Went. I know! but, Lucy,
I reckoned on you from the first!—Go on!
—Was sure could I once see this gentle friend
When I arrived, she'd throw an hour away
To help her ... what am I?
Lady Car. You thought of me, Dear Wentworth?
Went. But go on! The party here!
Lady Car. They do not think your Irish government
Of that surpassing value ...
Went. The one thing
Of value! The one service that the crown
May count on! All that keeps these very Vanes
In power, to vex me—not that they do vex,
Only it might vex some to hear that service
Decried, the sole support that's left the King!
Lady Car. So the Archbishop says.
Went. Ah? well, perhaps
The only hand held up in my defence
May be old Laud's! These Hollands then, these Saviles
Nibble? They nibble?—that's the very word!
Lady Car. Your profit in the Customs, Bristol says,
Exceeds the due proportion: while the tax .. .
Went. Enough! 'tis too unworthy,—I am not
So patient as I thought. What's Pym about?
Lady Car. Pym?
Went. Pym and the People.

Lady Car. Oh, the Faction!
Extinct—of no account: there'll never be
Another Parliament.
Went. Tell Savile that I
You may know—(ay, you do—the creatures here
Never forget!) that in my earliest life
I was not... much that I am now! The King
May take my word on points concerning Pym
Before Lord Sayile's, Lucy, or if not,
I bid them ruin their wise selves, not me,
These Vanes and Hollands! I'll not be their tool
Who might be Pym's friend yet.
But there's the King!
Where is he?
Lady Car, Just apprised that you arrive.
Went. And why not here to meet me? I was told
He sent for me, nay, longed for me.
Lady Cars Because,—
He is now ... I think a Council's sitting now
About this Scots affair.
Went. A Council sits?
They have not taken a decided course
Without me in the matter?
Lady Car. I should say . ..
Went. The war? They cannot have agreed to that?
Not the Scots' war?—without consulting me—
Me, that am here to show how rash it is,
How easy to dispense with?—Ah, you too
Against me! well,—the King may take his time.
—Forget it, Lucy! Cares make peevish: mine
Weigh me (but 'tis a secret) to my grave.
Lady Car. For life or death I am your own, dear friend! *[Goes out.*
Went. Heartless! but all are heartless here. Go now,
Forsake the People!
I did not forsake
The People: they shall know it, when the King
Will trust me!—who trusts all beside at once,
While I have not spoke Vane and Savile fair,
And am not trusted: have but saved the throne:
Have not picked up the Queen's glove prettily,
And am not trusted. But he'll see me now.
Weston is dead: the Queen's half English now—
More English: one decisive word will brush
These insects from ... the step I know so

The King! But now, to tell him... no—

What's in me he distrusts:—or, best begin
By proving that this frightful Scots affair
Is just what I foretold. So much to say,
And the flesh fails, now, and the time is, come,
And one false step no way to be repaired..
You were avenged, Pym, could you look on me.

PYM *enters.*

Went. I little thought of you just then.
Pym. No? I
Think always of you, Wentworth.
Went. The old voice!
I wait the King, sir.
Pym. True—you look so pale !
A Council sits within; when that breaks up
He'll see you.
Went. Sir, I thank you.
Pym. O, thank Laud!
You know when Laud once gets on Church affairs
The case is desperate: he'll not be long
To-day: he only means to prove, to-day,
We English all are mad to have a hand
In butchering the Scots for serving God
After their fathers' fashion: only that!
Went. Sir, keep your jests for those who relish them!
(Does he enjoy their confidence?) 'Tis kind
To tell me what the Council does.
Pym. You grudge
That I should know it had resolved on war
Before you came ? no need: you shall have all
The credit, trust me!
Went. Have the Council dared—
They have not dared ... that is—I know you not.
Farewell, sir: times are changed.
Pym. —Since we two met
At Greenwich ? Yes: poor patriots though we be,
You cut a figure, makes some slight return
For your exploits in Ireland! Changed indeed,
Could our friend Eliot look from out his grave!
Ah, Wentworth, one thing for acquaintance' sake,
Just to decide a question; have you. now,
Felt your old self since you forsook us?
Went. Sir!
Pym. Spare me the gesture! you misapprehend.
Think not I mean the advantage is with me.
I was about to say that, for my part,
I never quite held up my head since then—

Was quite myself since then: for first, you see,
I lost all credit after that event
With those who recollect how sure I was
Wentworth would outdo Eliot on our side.
Forgive me: Savile, old Vane, Holland here,
Eschew plain-speaking: 'tis a trick I keep.
Went. How, when, where, Savile, Vane, and Holland speak,
Plainly or otherwise, would have my scorn,
All of my scorn, sir .. .
Pym. . . . Did not my poor thoughts
Claim somewhat?
Went Keep your thoughts! believe the King
Mistrusts me for their prattle, all these Vanes
And Saviles! make your mind up, o' God's love,
That I am discontented with the King!
Pym. Why, you may be: I should be, that I know,
Were I like you.
Went Like me?
Pym. I care not much
For titles: our friend Eliot died no lord,
Hampden's no lord, and Savile is a lord;
But you care, since you sold your soul for one.
I can't think, therefore, your soul's purchaser
Did well to laugh you to such utter scorn
When you twice prayed so humbly for its price,
The thirty silver pieces ... I should say,
The Earldom you expected, still expect,
And may. Your letters were the movingest!
Console yourself: I've borne him prayers just now
From Scotland not to be oppressed by Laud,
Words moving in their way: he'll pay, be sure,
As much attention as to those you sent.
Went. False, sir! Who showed them you? Suppose it so,
The King did very well... nay, I was glad
When it was shown me: I refused, the first!
John Pym, you were my friend—forbear me once!
Pym. Oh, Wentworth, ancient brother of my soul,
That all should come to this!
Went. Leave me!
Pym. My friend,
Why should I leave you?
Went. To tell Rudyard this,
And Hampden this!
Pym. Whose faces once were bright
At my approach, now sad with doubt and fear,
Because I hope in you—yes, Wentworth, you
Who never mean to ruin England—you
Who shake off, with God's help, an obscene dream
In this Ezekiel chamber, where *it* crept
Upon you first, and wake, yourself, your true
And proper self, our Leader, England's Chief,
And Hampden's friend!
This is the proudest day!
Come, Wentworth! Do not even see the King!
The rough old room will seem itself again!
We'll both go in together: you've not seen
Hampden so long: come: and there's Fiennes: you'll have
To know young Vane. This is the proudest day!

[The KING *enters.* WENTWORTH *lets fall* PYM'S *hand.*

Cha. Arrived, my lord?—This gentleman, we know
Was your old friend.
The Scots shall be informed
What we determine for their happiness.
[PYM *goes out.*
You have made haste, my lord.
Went. Sir, I am come .. .
Cha. To see an old familiar—nay 'tis well;
Aid us with his experience: this Scots' League
And Covenant spreads too far, and we have proofs
That they intrigue with France: the Faction too,
Whereof your friend there is the head and front,
Abets them,—as he boasted, very like.
Went Sir, trust me! but for this once, trust me, sir!
Cha. What can you mean?
Went That you should trust me, sir!
Oh—not for my sake! but 'tis sad, so sad
That for distrusting me, you suffer—you
Whom I would die to serve: sir, do you think
That I would die to serve you?
Cha. But rise, Wentworth!
Went. What shall convince you? What does Savile do
To prove him ... Ah, one can't tear out one's heart
And show it, how sincere a thing it is!
Cha. Have I not trusted you?
Went. Say aught but that!
There is my comfort, mark you; all will be
So different when you trust me—as you shall!
It has not been your fault,—I was away,

Mistook, maligned, how was the King to know?
I am here, now—he means to trust me, now—
All will go on so well!
Cha. Be sure I do—
I've heard that I should trust you: as you came,
Your friend, the Countess, told me . . .
Went, No,—hear nothing—
Be told nothing about me!—you're not told
Your right-hand serves you, or your children love you!
Cha. You love me, Wentworth: rise!
Went. I can speak now.
I have no right to hide the truth. 'Tis I
Can save you: only I. Sir, what must be?
Cha. Since Laud's assured (the minutes are within)
—Loath as I am to spill my subjects' blood . . .
Went. That is, he'll have a war: what's done is done!
Cha. They have intrigued with France; that's clear to Laud.
Went. Has Laud suggested any way to meet
The war's expense?
Cha. He'd not decide so far
Until you joined us.
Went. Most considerate!
He's certain they intrigue with France, these Scots?
The People would be with us.
Cha. Pym should know.
Went. The People for us—were the People for us!
Sir, a great thought comes to reward your trust:
Summon a Parliament! in Ireland first,
Then, here.
Cha. In truth?
Went. That saves us! that puts off
The war, gives time to right their grievances—
To talk with Pym. I know the Faction,—Laud
So styles it,—tutors Scotland: all their plans
Suppose no Parliament: in calling one
You take them by surprise. Produce the proofs
Of Scotland's treason; then bid England help:
Even Pym will not refuse.
Cha. You would begin
With Ireland?
Went. Take no care for that: that's sure
To prosper.
Cha. You shall rule me. You were best
Return at once: but take this ere you go!
Now, do I trust you? You're an Earl: my Friend
Of Friends: yes, while . . . You hear me not!
Went. Say it all o'er again—but once again:
The first was for the music: once again!
Cha. Strafford, my friend, there may have been reports,
Vain rumours. Henceforth touching Strafford is
To touch the apple of my sight: why gaze
So earnestly?
Went. I am grown young again,
And foolish. What was it we spoke of?
Cha. Ireland,
The Parliament,—
Went. I may go when I will?
—Now?
Cha. Are you tired so soon of us?
Went. My King!
But you will not so utterly abhor
A Parliament? I'd serve you any way.
Cha. You said just now this was the only way.
Went. Sir, I will serve you.
Cha. Strafford, spare yourself:
You are so sick, they tell me.
Went. 'Tis my soul
That's well and prospers now.
This Parliament—
We'll summon it, the English one—I'll care
For everything. You shall not need them much.
Cha. If they prove restive .. .
Went. I shall be with you.
Cha. Ere they assemble ?
Went. I will come, or else
Deposit this infirm humanity
I' the dust. My whole heart stays with you, my King! *[As* WENTWORTH *goes out, the* QUEEN *enters.*
Cha. That man must love me.
Queen. It is over then ?
Why, he looks yellower than ever! Well,
At least we shall not hear eternally
Of services—services: he's paid at least.
Cha. Not done with: he engages to surpass
All yet performed in Ireland.
Queen. I had thought
Nothing beyond was ever to be done.
The war, Charles—will he raise supplies enough?
Cha. We've hit on an expedient; he . . . that is,
I have advised . . . we have decided on
The calling—in Ireland—of a Parliament.
Queen. O truly! You agree to that? Is that
The first fruit of his counsel ? But I guessed As much.
Cha. This is too idle, Henriette!

I should know best. He will strain every nerve,
And once a precedent established . . .
Queen. Notice
How sure he is of a long term of favour!
He'll see the next, and the next after that;
No end to Parliaments!
Cha. Well, it is done.
He talks it smoothly, doubtless. If, indeed,
The Commons here . . .
Queen. Here! you will summon them
Here? Would I were in France again to see
A King!
Cha, But, Henriette . . .
Queen. Oh, the Scots see clear!
Why should they bear your rule?
Cha. But listen, sweet!
Queen. Let Wentworth listen—you confide in him!
Cha. I do not, love,—I do not so confide!
The Parliament shall never trouble us
. . . Nay, hear me! I have schemes, such schemes: we'll buy
The leaders off: without that, Wentworth's counsel
Had ne'er prevailed on me. Perhaps I call it
To have excuse for breaking it for ever,
And whose will then the blame be? See you not?
Come, dearest!—look, the little fairy, now,
That cannot reach my shoulder! Dearest, come!

ACT II

SCENE I.—(As in Act I. Scene I.)

The same Party enters,

Rud. Twelve subsidies!
Vane. Oh, Rudyard, do not laugh
At least!
Rud. True: Strafford called the Parliament—
'Tis he should laugh!
A Puritan, Out of the serpent's root
Comes forth a cockatrice.
Fien. —A stinging one,
If that's the Parliament: twelve subsidies!
A stinging one! but, brother, where 's your word
For Strafford's other nest-egg, the Scots' war?
The Puritan. His fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent.
Fien. Shall be? It chips the shell, man; peeps abroad.
Twelve subsidies!—Why, how now, Vane?
Rud. Peace, Fiennes!
Fien. Ah?—But he was not more a dupe than I,
Or you, or any here, the day that Pym
Returned with the good news. Look up, friend Vane!
We all believed that Strafford meant us well
In summoning the Parliament.

HAMPDEN *enters.*

Vane. Now, Hampden,
Clear me! I would have leave to sleep again:
I'd look the People in the face again:
Clear me from having, from the first, hoped, dreamed
Better of Strafford!
Hamp. You may grow one day
A steadfast light to England, Henry Vane!
Rud. Meantime, by flashes I make shift to see
Strafford revived our Parliaments; before,
War was but talked of; there's an army, now:
Still, we've a Parliament! Poor Ireland bears
Another wrench (she dies the hardest death!)—
Why, speak of it in Parliament! and lo,
'Tis spoken, so console yourselves!
Fien. The jest!
We clamoured, I suppose, thus long, to win
The privilege of laying on our backs
A sorer burden than the King dares lay!
Rud. Mark now: we meet at length, complaints pour in
From every county, all the land cries out
On loans and levies, curses ship-money,
Calls vengeance on the Star Chamber; we lend
An ear. 'Ay, lend them all the ears you have!'
Puts in the King;' my subjects, as you find,
*Are fretful, and conceive great things of you.
'Just listen to them, friends; you'll sanction me
'The measures they most wince at, make them yours,
'Instead of mine, I know: and, to begin,
'They say my levies pinch them,—raise me straight
'Twelve subsidies!'
Fien. All England cannot furnish
Twelve subsidies!
Hoi. But Strafford, just returned
From Ireland—what has he to do with that?
How could he speak his mind? He left before
The Parliament assembled. Pym, who knows
Strafford . . .
Rud. Would I were sure we know ourselves!

What is for good, what, bad—who friend, who foe!
Hoi. Do you count Parliaments no gain ?
Rud. A gain?
While the King's creatures overbalance us?
—There's going on, beside, among ourselves
A quiet, slow, but most effectual course
Of buying over, sapping, leavening
The lump till all is leaven. Glanville's gone.
I'll put a case; had not the Court declared
That no sum short of just twelve subsidies
Will be accepted by the King—our House,
I say, would have consented to that offer
To let us buy off ship-money!
HoI. Most like,
If, say, six subsidies will buy it off,
The House . . .
Rud. Will grant them! Hampden, do you hear?
Congratulate with me! the King's the king,
And gains his point at last—our own assent
To that detested tax? All's over, then!
There's no more taking refuge in this room,
Protesting, *'Let* the King do what he will,
'We, England, are no party to our shame:
'Our day will come!' Congratulate with me!

PYM *enters.*

Vane. Pym, Strafford called this Parliament, you say,
But we'll not have our Parliaments like those
In Ireland, Pym!
Rud. Let him stand forth, your friend!
One doubtful act hides far too many sins;
It can be stretched no more, and, to my mind,
Begins to drop from those it covered.
Other Voices. Good!
Let him avow himself! No fitter time!
We wait thus long for you.
Rud. Perhaps, too long!
Since nothing but the madness of the Court,
In thus unmasking its designs at once,
Has saved us from betraying England. Stay—
This Parliament is Strafford's: let us vote
Our list of grievances too black by far
To suffer talk of subsidies: or best,
That ship-money's disposed of long ago
By England: any vote that's broad enough:
And then let Strafford, for the love of it,
Support his Parliament!
Vane. And vote as well
No war to be with Scotland! Hear you, Pym?
We'll vote, no war! No part nor lot in it
For England!
Many Voices. Vote, no war! Stop the new levies!
No Bishops' war! At once! When next we meet!
Pym. Much more when next wc meet! Friends, which of you
Since first the course of Strafford was in doubt,
Has fallen the most away in soul from me ?
Vane. 1 sat apart, even now under God's eye,
Pondering the words that should denounce you, Pym,
In presence of us all, as one at league
With England's enemy.
Pym. You are a good
And gallant spirit, Henry. Take my hand
And say you pardon me for all the pain
Till now! Strafford is wholly ours.
Many Voices. Sure? sure?
Pym. Most sure: for Charles dissolves the Parliament
While I speak here.
—And I must speak, friends, now!
Strafford is ours. The King detects the change,
Casts Strafford off for ever, and resumes
His ancient path: no Parliament for us,
No Strafford for the King!
Come, all of you,
To bid the King farewell, predict success
To his Scots' expedition, and receive
Strafford, our comrade now. The next will be
Indeed a Parliament!
Vane. Forgive me, Pym!
Voices. This looks like truth: Strafford can have, indeed,
No choice.
Pym. Friends, follow me! He's with the King.
Come, Hampden, and come, Rudyard, and come, Vane!
This is no sullen day for England, sirs!
Strafford shall tell you!
Voices. To Whitehall then! Come!

SCENE II.— *Whitehall.*

CHARLES *and* STRAFFORD.

Cha. Strafford!
Straf. Is it a dream? my papers, here—
Thus, as I left them, all the plans you found
So happy—(look! the track you pressed my hand
For pointing out)—and in this very room,
Over these very plans, you tell me, sir,
With the same face, too—tell me just one thing . . . . . .
That ruins them! How's this? What may this mean?
Sir, who has done this?

Cha. Strafford, who but I?
You bade me put the rest away: indeed
You are alone. ..
Straf. Alone, and like to be!
No fear, when some unworthy scheme grows ripe,
Of those, who hatched it, leaving me to loose
The mischief on the world! Laud hatches war,
Falls to his prayers, and leaves the rest to me,
And I'm alone.
Cha. At least, you knew as much
When first you undertook the war.
Straf. My liege,
Was this the way ? I said, since Laud would lap
A little blood, 'twere best to hurry over
The loathsome business, not to be whole months
At slaughter—one blow, only one, then, peace,
Save for the dreams. I said, to please you both
I'd lead an Irish army to the West,
While in the South an English... but you look
As though you had not told me fifty times
'Twas a brave plan! My army is all raised,
I am prepared to join it . . .
Cha, Hear me, Strafford!
Straf. .. , When, for some little thing, my whole design
Is set aside—(where is the wretched paper ?)
I am to lead—(ay, here it is)—to lead
The English army: why? Northumberland
That I appointed, chooses to be sick—
Is frightened: and, meanwhile, who answers for
The Irish Parliament? or army, either?
Is this my plan?
Cha. So disrespectful, sir?
Straf, My liege, do not believe it! I am yours,
Yours ever: 'tis too late to think about:
To the death, yours. Elsewhere, this untoward step
Shall pass for mine; the world shall think it mine.
But here! But here! I am so seldom here,
Seldom with you, my King! I, soon to rush
Alone upon a giant in the dark!
Cha. My Strafford!
Straf. [examines papers awhile]. 'Seize the passes of the Tyne!'
But, sir, you see—see all I say is true?
My plan was sure to prosper, so, no cause
To ask the Parliament for help; whereas
We need them frightfully.
Cha. Need the Parliament?
Straf. Now, for God's sake, sir, not one error more!
We can afford no error; we draw, now,
Upon our last resource: the Parliament
Must help us!
Cha. I've undone you, Strafford!
Straf. Nay-
Nay—why despond, sir, 'tis not come to that!
I have not hurt you? Sir, what have I said
To hurt you? I unsay it! Don't despond!
Sir, do you turn from me?
Cha. My friend of friends!
Straf. We'll make a shift. Leave me the Parliament!
Help they us ne'er so little and I'll make
Sufficient out of it. We'll speak them fair.
They're sitting, that's one great thing; that half gives
Their sanction to us; that's much: don't despond!
Why, let them keep their money, at the worst!
The reputation of the People's help
Is all we want: we'll make shift yet!
Cha. Good Strafford!
Straf. But meantime, let the sum be ne'er so small
They offer, we'll accept it: any sum—
For the look of it: the least grant tells the Scots
The Parliament is ours—their staunch ally
Turned ours: that told, there's half the blow to strike!
What will the grant be? What does Glanville think?
Cha. Alas!
Straf. My liege?
Cha. Strafford!
Straf. But answer me!
Have they . . . O surely not refused us half?
Half the twelve subsidies? We never looked
For all of them. How many do they give ?
Cha. You have not heard . . .
Straf. (What has he done?)—Heard what?
But speak at once, sir, this grows terribble!
[The KING *continuing silent.*
You have dissolved them!—I'll not leave this man.
Cha. 'Twas old Vane's ill-judged vehemence.
Straf. Old Vane?
Cha. He told them, just about to vote the half,
That nothing short of all twelve subsidies
Would serve our turn, or be accepted.
Straf. Vane*
Vane! Who, sir, promised me, that very Vane...
O God, to have it gone, quite gone from me,
The one last hope—I that despair, my hope—

That I should reach his heart one day, and cure
All bitterness one day, be proud again
And young again, care for the sunshine too,
And never think of Eliot any more,—
God, and to toil for this, go far for this,
Get nearer, and still nearer, reach this heart
And find Vane there!

[Suddenly taking up a paper, and continuing with a forced calmness,

Northumberland is sick:
Well, then, I take the army: Wilmot leads
The horse, and he, with Conway, must secure
The passes of the Tyne: Ormond supplies
My place in Ireland. Here, we'll try the City:
If they refuse a loan—debase the coin
And seize the bullion I we've no other choice.
Herbert. . .
And this while I am here! with you!
And there are hosts such, hosts like Vane!
I go,
And, I once gone, they'll close around you, sir,
When the least pique, pettiest mistrust, is sure
To nun me—and you along with me!
Do you see that? And you along with me!
—Sir, you'll not ever listen to these men,
And I away, fighting your battle? Sir,
If they—if She—charge me, no matter how—
Say you, 'At any time when he returns
'His head is mine!' Don't stop me there!
You know
My head is yours, but never stop me there!

Cha. Too shameful, Strafford! You advised the war,
And . . .

Straf. I ! I ! that was never spoken with
Till it was entered on! That loathe the war!
That say it is the maddest, wickedest...
Do you know, sir, I think within my heart,
That you would say I did advise the war;
And if, through your own weakness, or what's worse,
These Scots, with God to help them, drive me back,
You will not step between the raging People
And me, to say . . .
I knew it! from the first
I knew it! Never was so cold a heart!
Remember that I said it—that I never
Believed you for a moment!
—And, you loved me?
You thought your perfidy profoundly hid
Because I could not share the whisperings
With Vane, with Savile? What, the face was masked?
I had the heart to see, sir! Face of flesh,
But heart of stone—of smooth cold frightful stone!
Ay, call them! Shall I call for you? The Scots
Goaded to madness? Or the English—Pym--
Shall I call Pym, your subject? Oh, you think
I'll leave them in the dark about it all?
They shall not know you? Hampden, Pym shall not?

PYM, HAMPDEN, VANE, *etc., enter.*

[Dropping on his knee.] **Thus favoured with**
your gracious countenance
What shall a rebel League avail against
Your servant, utterly and ever yours?
So, gentlemen, the King's not even left
The privilege of bidding me farewell
Who haste to save the People—that you style
Your People—from the mercies of the Scots
And France their friend?
[To CHARLES.] Pym's grave grey eyes are fixed
Upon you, sir!
Your pleasure, gentlemen?

Hamp. The King dissolved us—'tis the King we seek
And not Lord Strafford.

Straf. —Strafford, guilty too
Ofcounselling the measure. [*To* CHARLES.]
(Hush . . . you know—
You have forgotten—sir, I counselled it)
A heinous matter, truly! But the King
Will yet see cause to thank me for a course
Which now, perchance ... (Sir, tell them so!)—he blames.
Well, choose some fitter time to make your charge:
I shall be with the Scots, you understand?
Then yelp at me!
Meanwhile, your Majesty
Binds me, by this fresh token of your trust...

[Under the pretence of an earnest farewell, STRAFFORD *conducts* CHARLES *to* ***the door, in such a manner as to hide his agitation from the rest: as the*** KING ***disappears, they turn as by one impulse to* PYM *, who has not changed his original posture of surprise.***

Hamp. Leave we this arrogant strong wicked man!

Vane and others. Hence, Pym! Come out of this unworthy place
To our old room again! He's gone.

[STRAFFORD, ***just about to follow the*** KING, ***looks back.***

Pym. Not gone:

[To STRAFFORD.] Keep tryst! the old appointment's made anew:
Forget not we shall meet again!
Straf. So be it!
And *if* an army follows me?
Vane. His friends
Will entertain your army!
Pym. I'll not say
You have misreckoned, Stratford; time shows.
Perish
Body and spirit! Fool to feign a doubt,
Pretend the scrupulous and nice reserve
Of one whose prowess shall achieve the feat!
What share have I in it? Do I affect
To see no dismal sign above your head
When God suspends his ruinous thunder there?
Strafford is doomed. Touch him no one of you! [PYM, HAMPDEN, *etc., go out.*
Straf. Pym, we shall meet again!

Lady CARLISLE *enters.*

You here, child?
Lady Car. Hush—
I know it all: hush, Strafford!
Straf. Ah? you know?
Well. I shall make a sorry soldier, Lucy!
All knights begin their enterprise, we read,
Under the best of auspices; 'tis morn,
The Lady girds his sword upon the Youth
(He's always very young)—the trumpets sound,
Cups pledge him, and, why, the King blesses him—
you need not turn a page of the romance
To learn the Dreadful Giant's fate. Indeed,
We've the fair Lady here; but she apart,—
A poor man, rarely having handled lance,
And rather old, weary, and far from sure
His Squires are not trie Giant's friends. All's one:
Let us go forth!
Lady Car. Go forth?
Straf. What matters it?
We shall die gloriously—as the book says.
Lady Car. To Scotland? Not to Scotland?
Straf. Am I sick
Like your good brother, brave Northumberland?
Beside, these walls seem falling on me.
Lady Car. Strafford,
The wind that saps these walls can undermine
Your camp in Scotland, too. Whence creeps the wind?
Have you no eyes except for Pym? Look here!
A breed of silken creatures lurk and thrive
In your contempt. You'll vanquish Pym? Old Vane
Can vanquish you. And Vane you think to fly?
Rush on the Scots! Do nobly! Vane's slight sneer
Shall test success, adjust the praise, suggest
The faint result: Vane's sneer shall reach you there.
—You do not listen!
Straf. Oh,—I give that up!
There's fate in it: I give all here quite up.
Care not what old Vane does or Holland does
Against me! 'Tis so idle to withstand!
In no case tell me what they do!
Lady Car. But, Strafford . . .
Straf. I want a little strife, beside; real strife;
This petty palace-warfare does me harm:
I shall feel better, fairly out of it.
Lady Car. Why do you smile?
Straf. I got to fear them, child!
I could have torn his throat at first, old Vane's,
As he leered at me on his stealthy way
To the Queen's closet. Lord, one loses heart!
I often found it on my lips to say
'Do not traduce me to her!'
Lady Car. But the King . . .
Straf. The King stood there, 'tis not so long ago,
—There; and the whisper, Lucy, 'Be my friend
'Of friends!'—My King! I would have...
Lady Car. . . . Died for him?
Straf. Sworn him true, Lucy: I can die for him.
Lady Car. But go not, Strafford! But you must renounce
This project on the Scots! Die, wherefore die?
Charles never loved you.
Straf. And he never will.
He's not of those who care the more for men
That they're unfortunate.
Lady Car. Then wherefore die
For such a master?
Straf. You that told me first
How good he was—when I must leave true friends
To find a truer friend! — that drew me here
From Ireland,—'I had but to show myself
'And Charles would spurn Vane, Savile, and the rest'—
You, child, to ask me this?
Lady Car. (If he have set
His heart abidingly on Charles!)
Then, friend,
I shall not see you any more.
Straf. Yes, Lucy.
There's one man here I have to meet.
Lady Car. (The King!

What way to save him from the King? My soul—
That lent from its own store the charmed disguise
Which clothes the King—he shall behold my soul!)
Strafford,—I shall speak best if you'll not gaze
Upon me: I had never thought, indeed,
To speak, but you would perish too, so surel
Could you but know what 'tis to bear, my friend,
One image stamped within you, turning blank
The else imperial brilliance of your mind,—
A weakness, but most precious,—like a flaw
I* the diamond, which should shape forth some sweet face
Yet to create, and meanwhile treasured there
Lest nature lose her gracious thought for ever!
Straf. When could it be? no! Yet. . . was it the day
We waited in the anteroom, till Holland
Should leave the presence-chamber ?
Lady Cat: What?
Straf. —That I
Described to you my love for Charles?
Lady Car. (Ah, no—
One must not lure him from a love like that!
Oh, let him love the King and die! 'Tis past.
I shall not serve him worse for that one brief
And passionate hope, silent for ever now!)
And you are really bound for Scotland then?
I wish you well: you must be very sure
Of the King's faith, for Pym and all his crew
Will not be idle—setting Vane aside!
Straf. If Pym is busy,—you may write of Pym.
Lady Car. What need, since there's your King to take your part?
He may endure Vane's counsel; but for Pym—
Think you he'll suffer Pym to . . .
Straf. Child, your hair
Is glossier than the Queen's!
Lady Car. Is that to ask
A curl of me?
Straf. Scotland——the weary way!
Lady Car. Stay, let me fasten it.
—A rival's, Strafford?
Straf. [showing the George], He hung it there: twine yours around it, child!
Lady Car. No—no—another time—I trifle so!
And there's a masque on foot. Farewell. The Court
Is dull; do something to enliven us
In Scotland: we expect it at your hands.
Straf. I shall not fail in Scotland.
Lady Car. Prosper—*if*
You'll think of me sometimes!
Straf. How think of him
And not of you ? of you, the lingering streak
(A golden one) in my good fortune's eve.
Lady Car. Strafford... Well, when the eve has its last streak
The night has its first star. *[She goes out.*
Straf. That voice of hers—
You'd think she had a heart sometimes! His voice
Is soft too.
Only God can save him now.
Be Thou about his bed, about his path!
His path! Where's England's path? Diverging wide,
And not to join again the track my foot
Must follow—whither? All that forlorn way
Among the tombs! Far—far—till . . . What, they do
Then join again, these paths? For, huge in the dusk,
There's—Pym to face!
Why then, I have a foe
To close with, and a fight to fight at last
Worthy my soul! What, do they beard the King,
And shall the King want Strafford at his need?
Am I not here?
Not in the market-place,
Pressed on by the rough artisans, so proud
To catch a glance from Wentworth! They lie down
Hungry yet smile * Why, it must end some day:
'Is he not watching for our sake?' Not there!
But in Whitehall, the whited sepulchre,
The...
Curse nothing to-night! Only one name
They'll curse in all those streets to-night. Whose fault?
Did I make kings ? set up, the first, a man
To represent the multitude, receive
All love in right of them—supplant them so.
Until you love the man and not the king—-
The man with the mild voice and mournful eyes
Which send me forth.
—To breast the bloody sea
That sweeps before me: with one star for guide.
Night has its first, supreme, forsaken star.

ACT III

SCENE *I.—Opposite. Westminster Hall.*

Sir HENRY VANE, Lord SAVILE, Lord HOLLAND *and others of the Court.*

Sir H. Vane. The Commons thrust you out?
Sav. And what kept you
From sharing their civility?
Sir H. Vane. Kept me?
Fresh news from Scotland, sir I worse than the last,
If that may be. All's up with Strafford there:
Nothing to bar the mad Scots marching hither
Next Lord's-day morning. That detained me, sir!
Well now, before they thrust you out,—go on,—
Their Speaker—did the fellow Lenthal say
All we set down for him?
Holland. Not a word missed.
Ere he began, we entered, Savile, I
And Bristol and some more, with hope to breed
A wholesome awe in the new Parliament.
But such a gang of graceless ruffians, Vane,
As glared at us!
Vane. So many?
Sav. Not a bench
Without its complement of burly knaves;
Your hopeful son among them: Hampden leant
Upon his shoulder—think of that!
Vane. I'd think
On Lenthal's speech, if I could get at it.
Urged he, I ask, how grateful they should prove
For this unlooked-for summons from the King?
Holland. Just as we drilled him.
Vane. That the Scots will march
On London?
Holland. All, and made so much of it,
A dozen subsidies at least seemed sure
To follow, when . ..
Vane. Well?
Holland. Tis a strange thing,now!
I've a vague memory of a sort of sound,
A voice, a kind of vast unnatural voice—
Pym, sir, was speaking! Savile, help me out:
What was it all?
Sav. Something about 'a matter'—
No,—' work for England.'
Holland. ' England's great revenge'
He talked of.
Sav. How should I get used to Pym
More than yourselves?
Holland. However that be,
'Twas something with which we had nought to do,
For we were 'strangers' and 'twas 'Eng land's work'—
(All this while looking us straight in the face)
In other words, our presence might be spared.
So, in the twinkling of an eye, before
I settled to my mind what ugly brute
Was likest Pym just then, they yelled us out,
Locked the doors after us, and here are we.
Vane. Eliot's old method . . .
Sav. Prithee, Vane, a truce
To Eliot and his times, and the great Duke,
And how to manage Parliaments! 'Twas you
Advised the Queen to summon this: why, Strafford
(To do him justice) would not hear of it.
Vane. Say rather, you have done the best of turns
To Strafford: he's at York, we all know why.
I would you had not set the Scots on Strafford
Till Strafford put down Pym for us, my lord!
Sav. Was it I altered Strafford's plans? did I . ..

A Messenger *enters.*

Mes. The Queen, my lords—she sends me: follow me
At once; 'tis very urgent! she requires
Your counsel: something perilous and strange
Occasions her command.
Sav. We follow, friend \
Now, Vane;—your Parliament will plague us all!
Vane. No Strafford here beside!
Sav. If you dare hint
I had a hand in his betrayal, sir . . .
Holland. Nay, find a fitter time for quarrels—Pym
Will overmatch the best of you; and, think,
The Queen!
Vane. Come on, then: understand, I loathe
Strafford as much as any—but his use!
To keep off Pym, to screen a friend or two,
I would we had reserved him yet awhile.

SCENE II. — *Whitehall.*

The QUEEN *and* Lady CARLISLE.

Queen. It cannot be.
Lady Car. It is so.
Queen. Why, the House
Have hardly met.
Lady Car. They met for that.

Queen. No, no!
Meet to impeach Lord Strafford? 'Tis a jest.
Lady Car. A bitter one.
Queen. Consider! 'Tis the House
We summoned so reluctantly, which nothing
But the disastrous issue of the war
Persuaded us to summon. They'll wreak all
Their spite on us, no doubt; but the old way
Is to begin by talk of grievances:
They have their grievances to busy them.
Lady Car. Pym has begun his speech.
Queen. Where's Vane?—That is,
Pym will impeach Lord Strafford if he leaves
His Presidency; he's at York, we know,
Since the Scots beat him: why should he leave York?
Lady Car. Because the King sent for him.
Queen. Ah—but if
The King did send for him, he let him know
We had been forced to call a Parliament—
A step which Strafford, now I come to think,
Was vehement against.
Lady Car. The policy
Escaped him, of first striking Parliaments
To earth, then setting them upon their feet
And giving them a sword: but this is idle.
Did the King send for Strafford? He will come.
Queen. And what am I to do?
Lady Car. What do? Fail, madam!
Be ruined for his sake! what matters how,
So it but stand on record that you made
An effort, only one?
Queen. The King away
At Theobald's!
Lady Car. Send for him at once: he must
Dissolve the House.
Queen. Wait till Vane finds the truth
Of the report: then . . .
.. Lady Car. —It will matter little
What the King does. Strafford that lends his arm
And breaks his heart for you!

Sir H. VANE *enters.*

Vane. The Commons, madam,
Are sitting with closed doors. A huge debate,
No lack of noise; but nothing, I should guess,
Concerning Strafford: Pym has certainly
Not spoken yet.
Queen [to Lady CARLISLE], You hear?
Lady Car. I do not hear
That the King's sent for!
Vane. Savile will be able
To tell you more.

HOLLAND *enters.*

Queen. The last news, Holland?
Holland. Pym
Is raging like a fire. The whole House means
To follow him together to Whitehall
And force the King to give up Strafford.
Queen. Strafford?
Holland. If they content themselves with Strafford! Laud
Is talked of, Cottington and Windebank too.
Pym has not left out one of them—I would
You heard Pym raging!
Queen. Vane, go find the King!
Tell the King, Vane, the People follow Pym
To brave us at Whitehall!

SAVILE *enters.*

Sav. Not to Whitehall—
'Tis to the Lords they go: they seek redress
On Strafford from his peers—the legal way,
They call it.
Queen. (Wait, Vane!)
Sav. But the adage gives
Long life to threatened men. Strafford can save
Himself so readily: at York, remember,
In his own county: what has he to fear?
The Commons only mean to frighten him
From leaving York. Surely, he will not come.
Queen. Lucy, he will not come!
Lady Car. Once more, the King
Has sent for Strafford. He will come.
Vane. Oh doubtless!
And bring destruction with Mm: that's his way.
What but his coming spoilt all Conway's plan?
The King must take his counsel, choose his friends,
Be wholly ruled by him! What's the result?
The North that was to rise, Ireland to help—
What came of it? In my poor mind, a fright
Is no prodigious punishment.
Lady Car. A fright?
Pym will fail worse than Strafford if he thinks
To frighten him. *[To the* QUEEN.] You will not save him then?
Sav. When something like a charge is made, the King
Will best know how to save him: and 'tis clear,
While Strafford suffers nothing by the matter,
The King may reap advantage: this in question,
No dinning you with ship-money complaints!

Queen [to Lady CARLISLE]. If we dissolve them, who will pay the army?
Protect us from the insolent Scots?
Lady Car. In truth,
I know not, madam. Strafford's fate concerns
Me little: you desired to learn what course
Would save him: I obey you.
Vane. Notice, too,
There can't be fairer ground for taking full
Revenge—(Strafford s revengeful)—than he'll have
Against his old friend Pym.
Queen. Why, he shall claim
Vengeance on Pyml
Vane. And Strafford, who is he
To 'scape unscathed amid the accidents
That harass all beside? I, for my part,
Should look for something of discomfiture
Had the King trusted me so thoroughly
And been so paid for it.
Holland. He'll keep at York:
All will blow over: he'll return no worse,
Humbled a little, thankful for a place
Under as good a man. Oh, we'll dispense
With seeing Strafford for a month or two!

STRAFFORD *enters.*

Queen. You here!
Straf. The King sends for me, madam.
Queen. Sir,
The King . ..
Straf. An urgent matter that imports the King I
[To Lady CARLISLE.] Why, Lucy, what's in agitation now,
That all this muttering and shrugging, see,
Begins at me? They do not speak!
Lady Car. 'Tis welcome!
For we are proud of you—happy and proud
To have you with us, Strafford!* You were staunch
At Durham: you did well there! Had you not
Been stayed, you might have ... we said, even now,
Our hope'sin you!
Vane [to Lady CARLISLE]. The Queen would speak with you.
Straf. Will one of you, his servants here, vouchsafe
To signify my presence to the King?
Sav. An urgent matter?
Straf. None that touches you, Lord Savile! Say, it were some treacherous
Sly pitiful intriguing with the Scots—
You would go free, at least! (They half divine
My purpose!) Madam, shall I see the King?
The service I would render, much concerns
His welfare.
Queen. But hi3 Majesty, my lord,
May not be here, may ...
Straf. Its importance, then,
Must plead excuse for this withdrawal, madam,
And for the grief it gives Lord Savile here.
Queen [who has been conversing with VANE *and* HOLLAND], The King will see you, sir!
[To Lady CARLISLE.] Mark me: Pym's worst
Is done by now: he has impeached the Earl,
Or found the Earl too strong for him, by now.
Let us not seem instructed! We should work
No good to Strafford, but deform ourselves
With shame in the world's eye. [*To* STRAFFORD.] His Majesty
Has much to say with you.
Straf. Time fleeting, too!
[To Lady CARLISLE.] N o means of getting them away? And She—
What does she whisper? Does she know my purpose?
What does she think of it? Get them away!
Queen [to Lady CARLISLE]. He comes to baffle Pym—he thinks the danger
Far off: tell him no word of it! a time
For help will come; we'll not be wanting then.
Keep him in play, Lucy—you, self-possessed
And calm! *[To* STRAFFORD.] TO spare your lordship some delay
I will myself acquaint the King. *To* Lady CARLISLE.] Beware!
[The QUEEN, VANE, HOLLAND, *and* SAVILE *go out.*
Straf. She knows it?
Lady Car. Tell me, Strafford!
Straf. Afterward!
This moment's the great moment of all time.
She knows my purpose?
Ijidy Car. Thoroughly: just now
She bade me hide it from you.
Straf. Quick, dear child,
The whole o' the scheme?
Lady Car. (Ah, he would learn if they
Connive at Pym's procedure! Could they but
Have once apprised the King! But there's no time
For falsehood, now.) Strafford, the whole is known.
Straf. Known and approved?
Lady Car. Hardly discountenanced.
Straf. And the King—say, the King consents as well?
Lady Car. The King's not yet informed, but will not dare
To interpose.
Straf. What need to wait him, then?

He'll sanction it! I stayed, child, tell him, long!
It vexed me to the soul—this waiting here.
You know him, there's no counting on the King.
Tell him I waited long!
Lady Car. (What can he mean? Rejoice at the King's hollowness?)
Straf. I knew
They would be glad of it,—all over once,
I knew they would be glad: but he'd contrive,
The Queen and he, to mar, by helping it,
An angel's making.
Lady Car. (Is he mad?) Dear Strafford,
Yon were not wont to look so happy.
Straf. Sweet,
I tried obedience thoroughly. I took
The King's wild plan: of course, ere I could reach
My army, Conway ruined it. I drew
The wrecks together, raised all heaven and earth,
And would have fought the Scots: the King at once
Made truce with them. Then, Lucy, then, dear child,
God put it in my mind to love, serve, die
For Charles, but never to obey him more!
While he endured their insolence at Ripon
I fell on them at Durham. But you'll tell
The King I waited? All the anteroom
Is filled with my adherents.
Lady Car. Strafford—Strafford,
What daring act is this you hint?
Straf. No.no!
'Tis here, not daring if you knew ? all here!
[Drawing papers from his breast.
Full proof, see, ample proof—does the Queen know
I have such damning proof? Bedford and Essex,
Brooke, Warwick, Savile (did you notice Savile?
The simper that I spoilt?), Saye, Mandeville—
Sold to the Scots, body and soul, by Pym!
Lady Car. Great heaven!
Straf. From Savile and his lords, to Pym
And his losels, crushed!—Pym shall not ward the blow
Nor Savile creep aside from it! The Crew
And the Cabal—I crush them!
Lady Car. And you go—
Strafford,—and now you go?—
Straf. —About no work
In the background, I promise you! I go
Straight to the House of Lords to claim these knaves.
Mainwaring!
Lady Car, Stay—stay, Strafford!
Straf She'll return,
The Queen—some little project of her own!
No time to lose: the King takes fright perhaps.
Lady Car. Pym's strong, remember!
Straf. Very strong, as fits
The Faction's head—with no offence to Hampden,
Vane, Rudyard and my loving Hollis: one
And all they lodge within the Tower tonight
In just equality. Bryan! Mainwaring!
[Many of his Adherents *enter.*
The Peers debate just now (a lucky chance)
On the Scots' war; my visit's opportune.
When all is over, Bryan, you proceed
To Ireland: these dispatches, mark me, Bryan,
Are for the Deputy, and these for Ormond:
We want the army here—my army, raised
At such a cost, that should have done such good.
And was inactive all the time! no matter,
We'll find a use for it. Willis ... or, no—you!
You, friend, make haste to York: bear this at once ...
Or,—better stay for form's sake, see yourself
The news you carry. You remain with me
To execute the Parliament's command,
Mainwaring! Help to seize these lesser knaves,
Take care there's no escaping at backdoors;
I'll not have one escape, mind me—not one!
I seem revengeful, Lucy? Did you know
What these men dare!
Lady Car. It is so much they dare!
Straf. I proved that long ago; my turn is now.
Keep sharp watch. Goring, on the citizens!
Observe who harbours any of the brood
That scramble off: be sure they smart for it!
Our coffers are but lean.
And you, child, too,
Shall have your task; deliver this to Laud.
Laud will not be the slowest in my praise:
' Thorough' he'll cry!—Foolish, to be so glad!
This life is gay and glowing, after all:
'Tis worth while, Lucy, having foes like mine
Just for the bliss of crushing them. To-day
Is worth the living for.
Lady Car. That reddening brow!
You seem . . .
Straf. Well—do I not? I would be well—
I could not but be well on such a day!
And, this day ended, 'tis of slight import
How long the ravaged frame subjects **the** soul
In Strafford.

Lady Car. Noble Strafford!
Straf. No farewell!
I'll see you anon, to-morrow—the first thing.
— I f She should come to stay me!
Lady Car. Go—'tis nothing—
Only my heart that swells: it has been thus
Ere now: go, Strafford!
. .*Straf.* To-night, then, let it be.
I must see Him: you, the next after Him.
I'll tell you how Pym looked. Follow me, friends!
You, gentlemen, shall see a sight this hour
To talk of all your lives. Close after me!
' My friend of friends!'

[STRAFFORD *and the rest go out.*

Lady Car. The King—ever the King!
No thought ofone beside, whose little word
Unveils the King to him—one word from me,
Which yet I do not breathe!
Ah, have I spared
Strafford a pang, and shall I seek reward
Beyond that memory? Surely too, some way
He is the better for my love. No, no—
He would not look so joyous—I'll believe
His very eye would never sparkle thus,
Had I not prayed for him this long, long while.

SCENE III.—*The Antechamber of the House of Lords.*

Many of the Presbyterian Party. The Adherents *of* STRAFFORD, *etc.*

***A Group of Presbyterians.*—1. I tell you** he struck Maxwell: Maxwell sought
To stay the Earl: he struck him and passed on.
2. Fear as you may, keep a good countenance
Before these ruffiers.
3. Strafford here the first,
With the great army at his back!
4. No doubt.
I would Pym had made haste: that's Bryan, hush—
The gallant pointing.

***Strafford's Followers.*—1. Mark these** worthies, now!
2. A goodly gathering! 'Where the carcass is
'There shall the eagles?—what's the rest?
3. For eagles
Say crows.

A Presbyterian. Stand back, sirs!

***One of Strafford's Followers.* Are we** in Geneva?

A Presbyterian. No, nor in Ireland; we have leave to breathe.

***One of Strafford's Followers.* Truly?** Behold how privileged we be
That serve 'King Pym'! There's Someone at Whitehall
Who skulks obscure; but Pym struts . . .

***The Presbyterian.* Nearer.**

***A Follower of Strafford.* Higher,**
We look to see him. [*To his* Companions. I I'm to have St. John
In charge; was he among the knaves just now
That followed Pym within there?

Another. The gaunt man
Talking with Rudyard. Did the Earl expect
Pym at his heels so fast? I like it not.

MAXWELL *enters.*

Another. Why, man, they rush into the net! Here's Maxwell—
Ha, Maxwell? How the brethren flock. around
The fellow! Do you feel the Earl's hand yet
Upon your shoulder, Maxwell?

Max. Gentlemen,
Stand back! a great thing passes here.

***A Follower of Strafford.* | *To another.*]The** Earl
Is at his work! [*To* M.] Say, Maxwell, what great thing!
Speak out! *[To a* Presbyterian.] Friend, I've a kindness for you! Friend,
I've seen you with St. John: O stockishness!
Wear such a ruff, and never call to mind
St. John's head in a charger? How, the plague,
Not laugh?

Another. Say, Maxwell, what great thing!

Another. Nay, wait:
The jest will be to wait.

First, And who's to bear
These demure hypocrites? You'd swear they came .. •
Came . . . just as we come!

***[A* Puritan *enters hastily and without** observing STRAFFORD'S Followers.

The Puritan. How goes on the work ? Has Pym . . .

***A Follower of Strafford.* The secret's out** at last. Aha,
The carrion's scented! Welcome, crow the first!
Gorge merrily, you with the blinking eye!
'King Pym has fallen!'

***The Puritan.* Pym?**

***A Strafford.* Pym!**

***A Presbyterian.* Only Pym?**

***Many of Strafford's Followers.* No, brother,** not Pym only; Vane as well,
Rudyard as well, Hampden, St. John as well!

A Presbyterian. My mind misgives: can it be true?

Another. Lost! Lost!

A Strafford. Say we true, Maxwell?

The Puritan. Pride before destruction,
A haughty spirit goeth before a fall.
Many of Strafford's Followers. Ah now!
The very thing! A word in season!
A golden apple in a silver picture,
To greet Pym as he passes!
[The doors at the back begin to open, noise and light issuing.
Max. Stand back, all!
Many of the Presbyterians. I hold with Pym! And I!
Strafford's Followers. Now for the text!
He comes! Quick!
The Puritan. How hath the oppressor ceased!
The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked!
The sceptre of the rulers, he who smote
The people in wrath with a continual stroke,
That ruled the nations in his anger—he
Is persecuted and none hindereth!
[The doors open, and STRAFFORD *issues in the greatest disorder, and amid cries from within of'* Void the House!'
Straf. Impeach me I Pym! I never struck, I think,
The felon on that calm insulting mouth
When it proclaimed—Pym's mouth proclaimed me . . . God!
Was it a word, only a word that held
The outrageous blood back on my heart—which beats!
Which beats! Some one word—'Traitor,' did he say,
Bending that eye, brimful of bitter fire,
Upon me?
Max. In the Commons' name, their servant
Demands Lord Strafford's sword.
Straf. What did you say?
Max. The Commons bid me ask your lordship's sword.
Straf. Let us go forth: follow me, gentlemen!
Draw your swords too: cut any down that bar us.
On the King's service! Maxwell, clear the way! *[The* Presbyterians *prepare to dispute his passage.*
Straf. I stay: the King himself shall see me here.
Your tablets, fellow!
[To MAINWARING.] Give that to the King!
Yes, Maxwell, for the next half-hour, let be!
Nay, you shall take my sword!
[MAXWELL *advances to take it.*
Or, no—not that!
Their blood, perhaps, may wipe out all thus far,
All up to that—not that! Why, friend, you see
When the King lays your head beneath my foot
It will not pay for that. Go, all of you!
Max. I dare, my lord, to disobey: none stir!
Straf. This gentle Maxwell!—Do not touch him, Bryan!
[To the Presbyterians.! Whichever cur of you will carry this
Escapes his fellow's fate. None saves his life?
None?
[Cries from within of' STRAFFORD!' Slingsby, I've loved you at least: make haste!
Stab me! I have not time to tell you why.
You then, my Bryan! Mainwaring, you then!
Is it because I spoke so hastily
At Allerton? The King had vexed me.
[To the Presbyterians.] You! —Not even you? If I live over this,
The King is sure to have your heads, you know!
But what if I can't live this minute through?
Pym, who is there with his pursuing smile!
[Louder cries of' STRAFFORD!'
The King! 1 troubled him, stood in the way
Of his negotiations, was the one
Great obstacle to peace, the Enemy
Of Scotland: and he sent for me, from York,
My safety guaranteed—having prepared
A Parliament—I see! And at Whitehall
The Queen was whispering with Vane—I see
The trap! *[Tearing off the George.* I tread a gewgaw underfoot,
And cast a memory from me. One stroke, now!
[His own Adherents *disarm him. Renewed cries of* 'STRAFFORD!'
England! I see thy arm in this and yield.
Pray you now—Pym awaits me—pray you now!
[STRAFFORD *reaches the doors: they open wide.* HAMPDEN *and a crowd discovered, and, at the bar,* PYM *standing apart. As* STRAFFORD *kneels, the scene shuts.*

ACT IV

SCENE *I.—Whitehall.*

The KINO, *the* QUEEN, HOLLIS, Lady CARLISLE. (VANE, HOLLAND, SAVILE, *in the background.)*

Lady Car. Answer them, Hollis, for his sake! One word!
Cha. [To HOLLIS.] YOU stand, silent and cold, as though I were

Deceiving you—my friend, my playfellow
Of other times. What wonder after all?
Just so, I dreamed my People loved me.
Hoi. Sir,
It is yourself that you deceive, not me.
You'll quit me comforted, your mind made up
That, since you've talked thus much and grieved thus much,
All you can do for Strafford has been done.
Queen. If you kill Strafford—(come, we grant you leave,
Suppose)—
Hoi. I may withdraw, sir?
Lady Car. Hear them out!
'Tis the last chance for Strafford! Hear them out!
Hoi. 'If we kill Strafford'—on the eighteenth day
Of Strafford's trial—'We!'
Cha. Pym, my good Hollis—
Pym, I should say!
Hoi. Ah, true—sir, pardon me!
You witness our proceedings every day;
But the screened gallery, I might have guessed,
Admits of such a partial glimpse at us,
Pyra takes up all the room, shuts out the view.
Still, on my honour, sir, the rest of the place
Is not unoccupied. The Commons sit
—That's England; Ireland sends, and Scotland too,
Their representatives; the Peers that judge
Are easily distinguished; one remarks
The People here and there: but the close curtain
Must hide so much!
Queen. Acquaint your insolent crew.
This day the curtain shall be dashed aside!
It served a purpose.
Hoi Think! This very day?
Ere Strafford rises to defend himself?
Cha. I will defend him, sir!—sanction the past
This day: it ever was my purpose. Rage
At me, not Strafford!
Lady Car. Nobly!—will he not
Do nobly?
Hoi Sir, you will do honestly;
And, for that deed, I too would be a king.
Cha. Only, to do this now!—'deaf (in your style)
'To subjects' prayers,'—I must oppose them now!
It seems their will the trial should proceed,—
So palpably their will!
Hoi. You peril much,
But it were no bright moment save for that.
Strafford, your prime support, the sole roof-tree
Which props this quaking House of Privilege,
(Floods come, winds beat, and see—the treacherous sand!)
Doubtless, if the mere putting forth an arm
Could save him, you'd save Strafford.
Cha. And they dare
Consummate calmly this great wrong! No hope?
This ineffaceable wrong! No pity then?
Hoi. No plague in store for perfidy ?—Farewell!
You called me, sir—*[To* Lady CARLISLE.] you, lady, bade me come
To save the Earl: I came, thank God for it,
To learn how far such perfidy can go!
You, sir, concert with me on saving him
Who have just ruined Strafford!
Cha. I?—and how?
Hoi. Eighteen days long he throws, one after one,
Pym's charges back: a blind moth-eaten law!
—He'll break from it at last: and whom to thank?
The mouse that gnawed the lion's net for him
Got a good friend,—but he, the other mouse,
That looked on while the lion freed himself—
Fared he so well, does any fable say?
Cha. What can you mean?
Hoi. Pym never could have proved
Strafford's design of bringing up the troops
To force this kingdom to obedience: Vane—
Your servant, not our friend, has proved it.
Cha. Vane?
Hoi. This day. Did Vane deliver up or no
Those notes which, furnished by his son to Pym,
Seal Strafford's fate?
Cha. Sir, as I live, I know
Nothing that Vane has done! What treason next?
I wash my hands of it. Vane, speak the truth!
Ask Vane himself!
Hoi. I will not speak to Vane,
Who speak to Pym and Hampden every day.
Queen. Speak to Vane's master then! What gain to him
Were Strafford's death?
Hoi. Ha? Strafford cannot turn
As you, sir, sit there—bid you forth, demand
If every hateful act were not set down
In his commission?—whether you contrived
Or no, that all the violence should seem

His work, the gentle ways—your own,—
his part,
To counteract the King's kind impulses—
While . . . but you know what he could
say! And then
He might produce,—mark, sir!—a certain
charge
To set the King's express command aside,
If need were, and be blameless. He might
add . ..
Cha, Enough!
Hoi. —Who bade him break
the Parliament,
Find some pretence for setting up sword-
law!
Queen. Retire!
Cha, Once more, whatever Vane
dared do,
I know not: he is rash, a fool—I know
Nothing of Vane!
HoI. Well—I believe you. Sir,
Believe me, in return, that. •.
[Turning to Lady CARLISLE.] Gentle lady,
The few words I would say, the stones
might hear
Sooner than these,—I rather speak to
you,
You, with the heart! The question, trust
me, takes
Another shape, to-day: not, if the King
Or England shall succumb,—but, who
shall pay
The forfeit, Strafford or his master. Sir,
You loved me once: think on my warning
now! *[Goes out.*
Cha. On you and on your warning both!
—Carlisle!
That paper!
*Queen** But consider!
Cha. Give it me!
There, signed—will that content you ? Do
not speak!
You have betrayed me, Vane! See! any
day,
According to the tenor of that paper,
He bids vour brother bring the army up,
Strafford shall head it and take full re-
venge.
Seek Strafford! Let him have the same,
before
He rises to defend himself!
Queen. In truth?
That your shrewd Hollis should have
worked a change
Like this! You, late reluctant...
Cha, Say, Carlisle,
Your brother Percy brings the army up,
Falls on the Parliament—{I'll think of you,
My Hollis!) say, we plotted long—'tis
mine,
The scheme is mine, remember! Say, I
cursed
Vane's folly in your hearing! If the Earl
Does rise to do us shame, the fault shall lie
With you, Carlisle!
Lady Car. Nay, fear not me! but
still
That's a bright moment, sir, you throw
away.
Tear down the *veil* and save him!
Queen. Go, Carlisle!
Lady Car. (I shall see Strafford—speak
to him: my heart
Must never beat so, then! And if I tell
The truth? What's gained by falsehood?
There they stand
Whose trade it is, whose life it is! How
vain
To gild such rottenness! Strafford shall
know.
Thoroughly know them!)
Queen. Trust to me! *[To*
CARLISLE.] Carlisle,
You seem inclined, alone of all the Court,
To serve poor Strafford: this bold plan of
yours
Merits much praise, and yet...
Lady Car. Time presses, madam.
Queen. Yet—may it not be something
premature?
Strafford defends himself to-day—reserves.
Some woundrous effort, one may well
suppose!
Lady Car. Ay, Hollis hints as much.
Cha. Why linger then?
Haste with the scheme—my scheme: I
shall be there
To watch his look. Tell him I watch his
look!
Queen. Stay, we'll precede you!
Lady Car. At your pleasure.
Cha, Say-
Say, Vane is hardly ever at Whitehall!
I shall be there, remember!
Lady Car. Doubt me not.
Cha. On our return, Carlisle, we wait
you here!
Lady Car, I'll bring his answer. Sir, I
follow you.
(Prove the King faithless, and I take away
All Strafford cares to live for: let it be——
'Tis the King's scheme!
My Strafford, I can save,
Nay, I have saved you, yet am scarce con-
tent,
Because my poor name will not cross your
mind.
Strafford, how much I am unworthy you!)

SCENE II.—*A Passage adjoining Westminster Hall.*

Many Groups of Spectators *of the Trial.* Officers *of the Court, etc.*

1st Spec, More crowd than ever! Not
know Hampden, man?
That's he, by Pym, Pym that is speaking
now.

No, truly, if you look so high you'll see
little enough of either!
2nd Spec Stay: Pym's arm
Points like a prophet's rod.
3rd Spec. Ay, ay, we've heard
Some pretty speaking: yet the Earl escapes.
4th Spec. I fear it: just a foolish word
or two
About his children—and we see, forsooth,
Not England's foe in Strafford, but the
man
Who, sick, half-blind . . .
2nd Spec. What's that Pym's
saying now
Which makes the curtains flutter? look!
A hand
Clutches them. Ah! The King's hand!
5th Spec. I had thought
Pym was not near so tall. What said he,
friend?
2nd Spec. 'Nor is this way a novel way
of blood,'
And the Earl turns as if to . . . look!
look!
Many Spectators. There!
What ails him? no—he rallies, see—goes
on,
And Strafford smiles. Strange!
An Officer. Haselrig!
Many Spectators. Friend? Friend?
The Officer. Lost, utterly lost: just when
we looked for Pym
To make a stand against the ill effects
Of the Earl's speech! Is Haselrig with-
out?
Pym's message is to him.
3rd Spec. Now, said I true?
Will the Earl leave them yet at fault or no?
1st Spec. Never believe it, man! These
notes of Vane's
Ruin the Earl.
5th Spec. A brave end: not a whit
Less firm, less Pym all over. Then, the trial
Is closed. No—Strafford means to speak
again?
An Officer. Stand back, there!
5th Spec. Why, the
Earl is coming hither!
Before the court breaks up! His brother,
look,—
You'd say he'd deprecated some fierce act
In Strafford's mind just now.
An Officer. Stand back, I say!
2nd Spec. Who *s the veiled woman that
he talks with?
Many Spectators. Hush—
The Earl! the Earl!

[Enter STRAFFORD, SLINGSBY, *and other* Secretaries, HOLLIS, Lady CARLISLE, MAXWELL, BALFOUR, *etc.* STRAFFORD *converses with* Lady CARLISLE.

HoI. So near the end I Be patient—
Return!

Straf. [to his Secretaries!. Here—anywhere—or, 'tis freshest here!
To spend one's April here, the blossom-
month:
Set it down here!
[They arrange a table, papers, etc.
So, Pym can quail, can cower
Because I glance at him, yet more's to do?
What's to be answered, Slingsby? Let us
end!
[To Lady CARLISLE.] Child, I refuse his
offer; whatsoe'er
It be! Too late! Tell me no word of him!
'Tis something, Hollis, I assure you that—
To stand, sick as you are, some eighteen
days
Fighting for life and fame against a pack
Of very curs, that lie through thick and
thin,
Eat flesh and bread by wholesale, and can't
say
* Strafford' if it would take my life!
Lady Car. Be moved!
Glance at the paper!
Straf. Already at my heels!
Pym's faulting bloodhounds scent the
track again.
Peace, child! Now, Slingsby!
[Messengers *from* LANE *and other of* STRAFFORD'S Counsel *within the Hall are coming and going during the Scene.*
Straf. [setting himself to write and dictate]. I shall beat you, Hollis!
Do you know that? In spite of St. John's
tricks,
In spite of Pym—your Pym who shrank
from me!
Eliot would have contrived it otherwise.
[To a Messenger.] In truth? This slip, tell
Lane, contains as much
As I can call to mind about the matter.
Eliot would have disdained . . .
[Calling after the Messenger.] And Rad-
cliffe, say,
The only person who could answer Pym,
Is safe in prison, just for that.
Well, well!
It had not been recorded in that case,
I baffled you.
[To Lady CARLISLE.] Nay, child, why look
so grieved?
All's gained without the King! You saw
Pym quail?
What shall I do when they acquit me, think
you,
But tranquilly resume my task as though
Nothing had intervened since I proposed
To call that traitor to account! Such tricks.
Trust me, shall not be played a second
time,
Not even against Laud, with his grey
hair—
Your good work, Hollis! Peace! To make
amends,

You, Lucy, shall be here when I impeach
Pym and his fellows.
HoL Wherefore not protest
Against our whole proceeding, long ago?
Why feel indignant now? Why stand this while
Enduring patiently?
Straf. Child, I'll tell you—
You, and not Pym—you, the slight graceful girl
Tall for a flowering lily, and not Hollis—
Why I stood patient I I was fool enough
To see the will of England in Pym's will;
To fear, myself had wronged her, and to wait
Her judgment: when, behold, in place of it...
[To a Messenger *who whispers.]* Tell Lane to answer no such question! Law,—
I grapple with their law! I'm here to try
My actions by their standard, not my own!
Their law allowed that levy: what's the rest
To Pym, or Lane, any but God and me?
Lady Car. The King's so weak! Secure this chance! 'Twas Vane,
Never forget, who furnished Pym the notes ...
Straf. Fit,—very fit, those precious notes of Vane,
To close the Trial worthily! I feared
Some spice of nobleness might linger yet
And spoil the character of all the past.
Vane eased me ... and I will go back and say
As much—to Pym, to England! Follow me!
I have a word to say! There, my defence Is done!
Stay! why be proud? Why care to own
My gladness, my surprise?—Nay, not surprise!
Wherefore insist upon the little pride
Of doing all myself, and sparing him
The pain? Child, say the triumph is my King's!
When Pym grew pale, and trembled, and sank down,
One image was before me: could I fail?
Child, care not for the past, so indistinct,
Obscure—there's nothing to forgive in it
'Tis so forgotten! From this day begins
A new life, founded on a new belief
In Charles.
HoL In Charles? Rather believe in Pym!
And here he comes in proof! Appeal to Pym!
Say how unfair ...
Straf. To Pym? I would say nothing!
I would not look upon Pym's face again.

Lady Car. Stay, let me have to think
I pressed your hand!
[STRAFFORD *and his friends go out.*

Enter HAMPDEN *and* VANE.

Vane. O Hampden, save the great misguided man!
Plead Strafford's cause with Pym! I have remarked
He moved no muscle when we all declaimed
Against him: you had but to breathe—he turned
Those kind calm eyes upon you.

[Enter PYM, *the* Solicitor-General ST. JOHN, *the* Managers *of the Trial,* FIENNES, RUDYARD, *etc.*

Rud. Horrible!
Till now all hearts were with you: I withdraw
For one. Too horrible! But we mistake
Your purpose, Pym: you cannot snatch away
The last spar from the drowning man.
Fien. He talks
With St. John of it—see, how quietly!
[To other Presbyterians.] You'll join us?
Strafford may deserve the worst:
But this new course is monstrous. Vane, take heart!
This Bill of his Attainder shall not have
One true man's hand to it.
Vane. Consider, Pym!
Confront your Bill, your own Bill: what is it?
You cannot catch the Earl on any charge,—
No man will say the law has hold of him
On any charge; and therefore you resolve
To take the general sense on his desert,
As though no law existed, and we met
To found one. You refer to Parliament
To speak its thought upon the abortive mass
Ofhalf-borne-out assertions, dubious hints
Hereafter to be cleared, distortions—ay,
And wild inventions. Every man is saved
The task of fixing any single charge
On Strafford: he has but to see in him
The enemy of England.
Pym. A right scruple!
I have heard some called England's enemy
With less consideration.
Vane. Pity me!
Indeed you made me think I was your friend!
I who have murdered Strafford, how remove
That memory from me?
Pym. I absolve you, Vane.
Take you no care for aught that you have done!

Vane. John Hampden, not this Bill! Reject this Bill!
He staggers through the ordeal: let him gOf
Strew no fresh fire before him! Plead for us!
When Strafford spoke, your eyes were thick with tears!
Hamp. England speaks louder: who are we, to play
The generous pardoner at her expense,
Magnanimously waive advantages,
And, if he conquer us, applaud his skill?
Vane. He was your friend.
Pym. I have heard that before.
Fien. And England trusts you.
Hamp. Shame be his, who turns
The opportunity of serving her
She trusts him with, to his own mean account—
Who would look nobly frank at her expense!
Fien. I never thought it could have come to this.
Pym. But I have made myself familiar, Fiennes,
With this one thought—have walked, and sat, and slept,
This thought before me. I have done such things,
Being the chosen man that should destroy
The traitor. You have taken up this thought
To play with, for a gentle stimulant,
To give a dignity to idler life
By the dim prospect of emprise to come,
But ever with the softening, sure belief,
That all would end some strange way right at last.
Fien. Had we made out some weightier charge!
Pym. You say
That these are petty charges: can we come
To the real charge at all? There he is safe
In tyranny's stronghold. Apostasy
Is not a crime, treachery not a crime:
The cheek burns, the blood tingles, when you speak
The words, but where's the power to take revenge
Upon them? We must make occasion serve,—
The oversight shall pay for the main sin
That mocks us.
Rud. But this unexampled course, This Bill!
Pym. By this, we roll the clouds away
Of precedent and custom, and at once
Bid the great beacon-light God sets in all,
The conscience of each bosom, shine upon
The guilt of Strafford: each man lay his hand
Upon Ms breast, and judge!
Vane. I only see
Strafford, nor pass his corpse for all beyond!
Rud. and others. Forgive him! He would join us, now he finds
What the King counts reward! The pardon, too,
Should be your own. Yourself should bear to Strafford
The pardon of the Commons.
Pym. Meet him? Strafford?
Have we to meet once more, then? Be it so!
And yet—the prophecy seemed half fulfilled
When, at the Trial, as he gazed, my youth,
Our friendship, divers thoughts came back at once
And left me, for a time ... 'Tis very sad!
To-morrow we discuss the points of law
With Lane—to-morrow?
Vane. Not before to-morrow—
So, time enough! I knew you would relent!
Pym. The next day, Haselrig, you introduce
The Bill of his Attainder. Pray for me!

SCENE III.—*Whitehall*

The KING.

Cha. My loyal servant! To defend himself
Thus irresistibly,—withholding aught
That seemed to implicate us!
We have done
Less gallantly by Strafford. Well, thefuture
Must recompense the past.
She tarries long.
I understand you, Strafford, now!
The scheme—
Carlisle's mad scheme—he'll sanction it, I fear,
For love of me. 'Twas too precipitate:
Before the army's fairly on its march,
He'll be a* large: no matter.
Well, Carlisle?

Enter PYM.

Pym. Fear me not, sir:—my mission is to save,
This time.
Cha. To break thus on me! Unannounced!
Pym. It is of Strafford I would speak.
Cha. No more
Of Strafford! I have heard too much from you.
Pym. I spoke, sir, for the People; will you hear
A word upon my own account?
Cha. Of Strafford?
(So turns the tide already? Have we tamed
The insolent brawler?—Strafford's eloquence

Is swift in its effect.) Lord Strafford, sir,
Has spoken for himself.
Pym. Sufficiently.
I would apprise you of the novel course
The People take: the Trial fails.
Cha. Yes, yes:
We are aware, sir: for your part in *it*
Means shall be found to thank you.
Pym. Pray you, read
This schedule! I would learn from your own mouth
—(It is a matter much concerning me)—
Whether, if two Estates of us concede
The death of Strafford, on the grounds set forth
Within that parchment, you, sir, can resolve
To grant your own consent to it. This Bill
Is framed by me. If you determine, sir,
That England's manifested will should guide
Your judgment, ere another week such will
Shall manifest itself. If not,—I cast
Aside the measure.
Cha. You can hinder, then,
The introduction of this Bill?
Pym. I can.
Cha. He is my friend, sir: I have wronged him: mark you.
Had I not wronged, him, this might be. You think
Because you hate the Earl. .. (turn not away,
We know you hate him)—no one else could love
Strafford: but he has saved me, some affirm.
Think of his pride! And do you know one strange,
One frightful thing ? We all have used the man
As though a drudge of ours, with not a source
Of happy thoughts except in us; and yet
Strafford has wife and children, household cares,
Just as if we had never been. Ah sir,
You are moved, even you, a solitary man
Wed to your cause—to England if you will!
Pym. Yes—think, my soul—to England! Draw not back!
Cha. Prevent that Bill, sir! All your course seems fair
Till now. Why, in the end, 'tis I should sign
The warrant for his death! You have said much
I ponder on; I never meant, indeed,
Strafford should serve me any more. I take
The Commons' counsel; but this Bill is yours—
Nor worthy of its leader: care not, sir,
For that, however! I will quite forget
You named it to me. You are satisfied?
Pym. Listen to me, sir! Eliot laid his hand,
Wasted and white, upon my forehead once;
Wentworth—he's gone now!—has talked on, whole nights,
A nd I beside him; Hampden loves me: sir,
How can I breathe and not wish England well,
And her King well?
Cha. I thank you, sir, who leave
That King his servant. Thanks, sir!
Pym. Let me speak!
—Who may not speak again; whose spirit yearns
For a cool night after this weary day:
—Who would not have my soul turn sicker yet
In a new task, more fatal, more august,
More full of England's utter weal or woe.
I thought, sir, could I find myself with you,
After this trial, alone, as man to man—
I might say something, warn you, pray you, save—
Mark me, King Charles, save——you!
But God must do it. Yet I warn you, sir—
(With Strafford's faded eyes yet full on me)
As you would have no deeper question moved
—'How long the Many must endure the One,'
Assure me, sir, if England give assent
To Strafford's death, you will not interfere!
Or——
Cha. God forsakes me. I am in a net
And cannot move. Let all be as you say!

Enter Lady CARLISLE.

Lady Car. He loves you—looking beautiful with joy
Because you sent me! he would spare you all
The pain! he never dreamed you would forsake
Your servant in the evil day—nay, see
Your scheme returned! That generous heart of his!
He needs it not—or, needing it, disdains
A course that might endanger you—you, sir,
Whom Strafford from his inmost soul...
[Seeing PYM.] Well met!
No fear for Strafford! All that's true and brave
On your own side shall help us: we are now
Stronger than ever.
Ha—what, sir, is this?
All is not well! What parchment have you there?
Pym. Sir, much is saved us both.
Lady Car. This Bill! Your Up

Whitens—you could not read one line to me
Your voice would falter so!
Pym. No recreant yet!
The great word went from England to my soul,
And I arose. The end is very near.
Lady Car. I am to save him! All have shrunk beside;
'Tis only I am left. Heaven will make strong
The hand now as the heart. Then let both die!

ACTV

SCENE *I.—Whitehall.*

HOLLIS, Lady CARLISLE.

Hoi Tell the King then! Come in with me!
Lady Car. **Not so!**
He must not hear till it succeeds.
Hoi. Succeed?
No dream was half so vain—you'd rescue Strafford
And outwit Pym! I cannot tell you... lady,
The block pursues me, and the hideous show.
To-day... is it to-day? And all the while
He's sure of the King's pardon. Think, I have
To tell this man he is to die. The King
May rend his hair, for me! I'll not see Strafford!
Lady Car. Only, if I succeed, remember ——Charles
Has saved him. He would hardly value life
Unless his gift. My staunch friends wait. Go in—
You must go in to Charles!
Hoi. And all beside
Left Strafford long ago. The King has signed
The warrant for his death! the Queen was sick
Of the eternal subject. For the Court,—
The Trial was amusing in its way,
Only too much of it: the Earl withdrew
In time. But you, fragile, alone, so young
Amid rude mercenaries—you devise
A plan to save him! Even though it fails,
What shall reward you?
Lady Car. I may go, you think,
To France with him? And you reward me, friend,
Who lived with Strafford even from his youth
Before he set his heart on state-affairs
And they bent down that noble brow of his.
I have learned somewhat of his latter life,
And all the future I shall know: but, Hollis,
1 ought to make his youth my own as welL
Tell me,——when he is saved!
Hoi. My gentle friend,
He should know all and love you, but 'tis vain!
Lady Car. Love? no—too late now! Let him love the King!
'Tis the King's scheme! I have your word, remember!
We'll keep the old delusion up. But, quick!
Quick! Each of us has work to do, beside!
Go to the King! I hope—Hollis—I hope!
Say nothing of my scheme! Hush, while we speak
Think where he is! Now for my gallant friends!
Hoi. Where he is? Calling wildly upon Charles,
Guessing his fate, pacing the prison-floor.
Let the King tell him! I'll not look on Strafford.

SCENE II.—*The Tower.*

STRAFFORD *sitting with his* Children.

They sing.

O bell' andare
Per barca in mare,
Verso la sera
Di Primavera!

William. The boat's in the broad moonlight all this while—

Verso la sera
Di Primavera !

And the boat shoots from underneath the moon
Into the shadowy distance; only still
You hear the dipping oar—

Verso la sera,

And faint, and fainter, and then all's quite gone,
Music and light and all, like a lost star.
Anne. But you should sleep, father: you were to sleep.
Straf. I do sleep, Anne; or if not—you must know
There's such a thing as ...
Wil. You're too tired to sleep?
Straf. It will come by-and-by and all day long,
In that old quiet house I told you of:
We sleep safe there.
Anne. Why not in Ireland?
Straf. **No!**
Too many dreams!—That song's for Venice, William:
You know how Venice looks upon the map—
Isles that the mainland hardly can let go?
Wil. You've been to Venice, father?
Straf. I was young, then.

Wil. A city with no King; that's why I like
Even a song that comes from Venice.
Straf. William I
Wil. Oh, I know why! Anne, do you love the King?
But I'll see Venice for myself one day.
Straf. See many lands, boy—England last of all,—
That way you'll love her best.
Wil. Why do men say
You sought to ruin her then?
Straf. Ah,—they say that.
Wil. Why?
Straf I suppose they must have words to say,
As you to sing.
Anne, But they make songs beside:
Last night I heard one, in the street beneath,
That called you . .. Oh, the names!
Wil. Don't mind her, father!
They soon left off when I cried out to them.
Straf We shall so soon be out of it, my boy!
'Tis not worth while: who heeds a foolish song?
Wil. Why, not the King.
Straf Well: it has been the fate
Of better; and yet,—wherefore not feel sure
That Time, who in the twilight comes to mend
All the fantastic day's caprice, consign
To the low ground once more the ignoble Term,
And raise the Genius on his orb again,—
That Time will do me right?
Anne. (Shall we sing, William?
He does not look thus when we sing.)
Straf For Ireland,
Something is done: too little, but enough
To show what might have been.
Wil. (I have no heart
To sing now! Anne, how very sad he looks!
Oh, I so hate the King for all he says!)
Straf Forsook them! What, the common songs will run
That I forsook the People? Nothing more?
Ay, Fame, the busy scribe, will pause, no doubt,
Turning a deaf ear to her thousand slaves
Noisy to be enrolled,—will register
The curious glosses, subtle notices,
Ingenious clearings-up one fain would see
Beside that plain inscription of The Name—
The Patriot Pym, or the Apostate Strafford!
[The Children *resume their song timidly, but break off.*

Enter HOLLIS *and an* Attendant.

Straf No,—Hollis? in good time!—Who is he ?
HoI. **One**
That must be present.
Straf Ah — I understand.
They will not let me see poor Laud alone.
How politic! They'd use me by degrees
To solitude: and, just as you came in,
I was solicitous what life to lead
When Strafford's 'not so much as Constable
'In the King's service.' Is there any means
To keep oneself awake ? What would you do
After this bustle, Hollis, in my place?
HoI Strafford!
Straf Observe, not but that Pym and you
Will find me news enough—news I shall hear
Under a quince-tree by a fish-pond side
At Wentworth. Garrard must be re-engaged
My newsman. Or, a better project now—
What if when all's consummated, and the Saints
Reign, and the Senate's work goes swimmingly,—
What if I venture up. some day, unseen,
To saunter through the Town, notice how Pym,
Your Tribune, likes Whitehall, drop quietly
Into a tavern, hear a point discussed.
As, whether Strafford's name were John or James—
And be myself appealed to—I, who shall
Myself have near forgotten!
HoL I would speak ...
Straf Then you shall speak,—not now. I want, just now,
To hear the sound of my own tongue. This place
Is full of ghosts.
HoI. Nay, you must hear me, Strafford!
Straf Oh, readily! Only, one rare thing more,—
The minister! Who will advise the King,
Turn his Sejanus, Richelieu and what not,
And yet have health—children, for aught I know—
My patient pair of traitors! Ah,—but, William—
Does not his cheek grow thin?
Wil. 'Tis you look thin, Father!
Straf A scamper o'er the breezy wolds
Sets all to-rights.
HoI. You cannot sure forget
A prison-roof is o'er you, Strafford?
Straf No,

Why, no. I would not touch on that, the first.
I left you that. Well, Hollis ? Say at once,
The King can find no time to set me free!
A mask at Theobald's?[1]
Hoi. Hold: no such affair
Detains him.
Straf. True: what needs so great a matter?
The Queen's lip may be sore. Well: when he pleases,—
Only, I want the air: it vexes flesh
To be pent up so long.
Hoi The King—I bear
His message, Strafford: pray you, let me speak!
Straf. Go, William! Anne, try o'er your song again!
[The Children *retire.*
They shall be loyal, friend, at all events.
1 know your message: you have nothing new
To tell me: from the first I guessed as much.
I know, instead of coming here himself,
Leading me forth in public by the hand,
The King prefers to leave the door ajar
As though I were escaping—bids me trudge
While the mob gapes upon some show prepared
On the other side of the river! Give at once
His order of release! I've heard, as well
Of certain poor manoeuvres to avoid
The granting pardon at his proper risk;
First, he must prattle somewhat to the Lords,
Must talk a trifle with the Commons first,
Be grieved I should abuse his confidence,
And far from blaming them, and . . . Where's the order?
Hoi Spare me!
Straf. Why, he'd not have me steal away?
With an old doublet and a steeple hat
Like Prynne's? Be smuggled into France, perhaps?
Hollis, 'tis for my children! 'Twas for them
I first consented to stand dav by day
And give your Puritans the best of words,
Bepatient,speakwhencalled upon, observe
Their rules, and not return them prompt their lie!
What's in that boy ofmine that he should prove
Son to a prison-breaker? I shall stay
And he'll stay with me. Charles should know as much,
He too has children!
[Turning to HOLLIS'S Companion.] Sir, you feel for me!
No need to hide that face! Though it have looked
Upon me from the judgment-seat . . . I know
Strangely, that somewhere it has looked on me . . .
Your coming has my pardon, nay, my thanks:
For there is one who comes not.
HoI Whom forgive,
As one to die!
Straf. True, all die, and all need
Forgiveness: I forgive him from my soul.
HoI. 'Tis a world's wonder: Strafford, you must die!
Straf. Sir, if your errand is to set me free
This heartless jest mars much. Ha! Tears in truth?
We'll end this! See this paper, warm—feel—warm
With lying next my heart! Whose hand is there?
Whose promise ? Read, and loud for God to hear!
'Strafford shall take no hurt'—read it, I say!
'In person, honour, nor estate'—
HoI.. The King . . .
Straf. I could unking him by a breath! You sit
Where Loudon sat, who came to prophesy
The certain end, and offer me Pym's grace
If I'd renounce the King: and I stood firm
On the King's faith. The King who lives...
Hoi To sign
The warrant for your death.
Straf. 'Put not your trust
'In princes, neither in the sons of men,
'In whom is no salvation!'
HoI Trust in God!
The scaffold is prepared: they wait for you:
He has consented. Cast the earth behind!
Charles. You would not see me, Strafford, at your foot!
It was wrung from me! Only, curse me not!
HoI. [to STRAFFORD]. AS you hope grace and pardon in your need.
Be merciful to this most wretched man.
[Voices from within.

Verso la sera
Di Primavera.

Straf. You'll be good to those children, sir? I know
You'll not believe her, even should the Queen
Think they take after one they rarely saw.
I had intended that my son should live
A stranger to these matters: but you are
So utterly deprived of friends! He too
Must serve you—will you not be good to him?
Or, stay, sir, do not promise—do not swear!
You, Hollis—do the best you can for me!
I've not a soul to trust to: Wandesford's dead,

[1] A house near Cheshunt in Herts.

And you've got Radcliffe safe, Laud's turn comes next:
I've found small time of late for my affairs,
But I trust any of you, Pyrn himself—
No one could hurt them: there's an infant, too.
These tedious cares! Your Majesty could spare them.
Nay—pardon me, my King! I had forgotten
Your education, trials, much temptation,
Some weakness: there escaped a peevish word—
'Tis gone: I bless you at the last. You know
All's between you and me: what has the world
To do with it? Farewell!
Cha. [at the door], Balfour! Balfour!

Enter BALFOUR.

The Parliament!—go to them: I grant all
Demands. Their sittings shall be permanent:
Tell them to keep their money if they will:
I'll come to them for every coat I wear
And every crust I eat: only I choose
To pardon Strafford. As the Queen shall choose!
—You never heard the People howl for blood,
Beside!
Bal. Your Majesty may hear them now:
The walls can hardly keep their murmurs out:
Please you retire!
Cha. Take all the troops, Balfour!
Bal. There are some hundred thousand of the crowd.
Cha. Come with me, Strafford! You'll not fear, at least!
Straf. Balfour, say nothing to the world of this!
I charge you, as a dying man, forget
You gazed upon this agony of one . . .
Of one . . . or if . • . why you may say, Balfour,
The King was sorry: 'tis no shame in him:
Yes, you may say he even wept, Balfour,
And that I walked the lighter to the block
Because of it. I shall walk lightly, sir!
Earth fades, heaven breaks on me: I shall stand next
Before God's throne: the moment's close at hand
When man the first, last time, has leave to lay
His whole heart bare before its Maker, leave
To clear up the long error of a life
And choose one happiness for evermore.
With all mortality about me, Charles,
The sudden wreck, the dregs of violent death—
What if, despite the opening angel-song,
There penetrate one prayer for you? Be saved
Through me! Bear witness, no one could prevent
My death! Lead on! ere he awake—best, now!
All must be ready: did you say, Balfour,
The crowd began to murmur? They'll be kept
Too late for sermon at St. Antholin's!
Now! But tread softly—children are at play
In the next room. Precede! I follow—

Enter Lady CARLISLE, *with many* Attendants.

Lady Car. Me!
Follow me, Strafford, and be saved! The King?
[To the KING.] Well—as you ordered, they are ranged without,
The convoy . . . *[seeing the* KING'S *state.]*
[To STRAFFORD.] YOU know all, then! Why, I thought
it looked best that the King should save you,—Charles
Alone; 'tis a shame that you should owe me aught.
Or no, not shame! Strafford, you'll not feel shame
At being saved by me?
HoI All true! Oh Strafford,
She saves you! all her deed! this lady's deed!
And is the boat in readiness ? You, friend,
Are Billingsley, no doubt. Speak to her, Strafford!
See how she trembles, waiting for your voice!
The world's to learn its bravest story yet.
Lady Car. Talk afterward! Long nights in France enough,
To sit beneath the vines and talk of home.
Straf. You love me, child? Ah, Strafford can be loved
As well as Vane! I could escape, then?
Lady Car. Haste!
Advance the torches, Bryan!
Straf. I will die.
They call me proud: but England had no right,
When she encountered me—her strength to mine—
To find the chosen foe a craven. Girl,
I fought her to the utterance, I fell,
I am hers now, and I will die. Beside,
The lookers-on! Eliot is all about
This place, with his most uncomplaining brow.
Lady Car. Strafford!
Straf. I think if you could know how much
Hove you, you would be repaid, my friend!
Lady Car. Then, for my sake!

Straf. Even for your sweet sake,
1 stay.
Hoi. For *their* sake!
Straf. To bequeath a stain?
Leave me! Girl, humour me and let me die!
Lady Car. Bid him escape — wake, King! Bid him escape!
Straf. True, I will go! Die, and forsake the King?
I'll not draw back from the last service.
Lady Car. Strafford!
Straf. And, after all, what is disgrace to me?
Let us come, child! That it should end this way!
Lead then! but I feel strangely; it was not
To end this way.
Lady Car. Lean—lean on me!
Straf. My King!
Oh, had he trusted me—his friend of friends!
Lady Car. I can support him, Hollis!
Straf. Not this way!
This gate—I dreamed of it, this very gate.
Lady Car. It opens on the river: our good boat
Is moored below, our friends are there.
Straf. The same:
Only with something ominous and dark,
Fatal, inevitable.
Lady Car. Strafford! Strafford!
Straf. Not by this gate! I feel what will be there!
I dreamed of it, I tell you: touch it not!
Lady Car. To save the King,—Strafford, to save the King!
[As STRAFFORD *opens the door,* PYM *is discovered with* HAMPDEN, VANE, *etc.* STRAFFORD *falls back;* PYM *follows slowly and confronts him.*
Pym. Have I done well? Speak, England! Whose sole sake
I still have laboured for, with disregard
To my own heart,—for whom my youth was made
Barren, my manhood waste, to offer up
Her sacrifice—this friend, this Wentworth here—
Who walked in youth with me, loved me, it may be,
And whom, for his forsaking England's cause,
I hunted by all means (trusting that she
Would sanctify all means) even to the block
Which waits for him. And saying this, I feel
No bitterer pang than first I felt, the hour
I swore that Wentworth might leave us, but I
Would never leave him: I do leave him now.
I render up my charge (be witness, God!)
To England who imposed it, I have done
Her bidding—poorly, wrongly,—it may be,
With ill effects—fcr I am weak, a man:
Still, I have done my best, my human best,
Not faltering for a moment. It is done.
And this said, if I say ... yes, I will say
I never loved but one man—David not
More Jonathan! Even thus, I love him now:
And look for my chief portion in that world
Where great hearts led astray are turned again,
(Soon it may be, and, certes, will be soon:
My mission over, I shall not live long,)—
Ay, here I know I talk—I dare and must,
Of England, and her great reward, as all
I look for there; but in my inmost heart,
Believe. I think of stealing quite away
To walk once more with Wentworth—my youth's friend
Purged from all error, gloriously renewed,
And Eliot shall not blame us. Then indeed . . .
This is no meeting, Wentworth! Tears increase
Too hot. A thin mist—is it blood?—enwraps
The face I loved once. Then, the meeting be!
Straf. I have loved England too; we'll meet then, Pym,
As well die now! Youth is the only time
To think and to decide on a great course:
Manhood with action follows; but 'tis dreary,
To have to alter our whole life in age—
The time past, the strength gone! As well die now.
When we meet, Pym, I'd be set right—not now!
Best die. Then if there's any fault, fault too
Dies, smothered up. Poor grey old little Laud
May dream his dream out, of a perfect Church,
In some blind corner. And there's no one left.
I trust the King now wholly to you, Pym!
And yet, I know not: I shall not be there:
Friends fail—if he have any. And he's weak,
And loves the Queen, and... Oh, my fate is nothing—
Nothing! But not that awful head—not that!
Pym. If England shall declare such will to me . . .
Straf. Pym, you help England! I, that am to die,
What I must see! 'tis here—all here! My God,
Let me but gasp out, in one word of fire,
How thou wilt plague him, satiating hell!

What? England that you help, become through you
A green and putrefying charnel, left
Our children... some of us have children, Pym—
Some who, without that, still must ever wear
A darkened brow, an over-serious look,
And never properly be young! No word?
What if I curse you? Send a strong curse forth
Clothed from my heart, lapped round with horror till
She's fit with her white face to walk the world
Scaring kind natures from your cause and you—
Then to sit down with you at the board-head,
The gathering for prayer... O speak, but speak!
... Creep up, and quietly follow each one home,
You, you, you, be a nestling care for each
To sleep with,—hardly moaning in his dreams,
She gnaws so quietly,—till, lo he starts,
Gets off with half a heart eaten away!
Oh, shall you 'scape with less if she's my child?
You will not say a word—to me—to Him?
***Pym.* If England shall declare such will to me . . .**
***Straf.* No, not for England now, not for Heaven now,—**
See, Pym, for my sake, mine who kneel to you!
There, I will thank you for the death, my friend!
This is the meeting: let me love you well!
***Pym.* England,—I am thine own! Dost thou exact**
That service? I obey thee to the end.
***Straf. O* God, I shall die first—I shall die first!**

SORDELLO

1840

TO J. MILSAND, OF DIJON

DEAR FRIEND,—Let the next poem be introduced by your name, therefore remembered along with one of the deepest of my affections, and so repay all trouble it ever cost me. I wrote it twenty-five years ago for only a few, counting even in these on somewhat more care about its subject than they really had. My own faults of expression were many; but with care for a man or book such would be surmounted, and without it what avails the faultlessness of either? I blame nobody, least of all myself, who did my best then and since; for I lately gave time and pains to turn my work into what the many might,—instead of what the few must,—like- but after all, I imagined another thing at first, and therefore leave as I find it. The historical decoration was purposely of no more importance than a background requires; and my stress lay on the incidents in the development of a soul: little else is worth study. I, at least, always thought so—you, with many known and unknown to me, think so—others may one day think so; and whether my attempt remain for them or not, 1 trust, though away and past it, to continue ever yours,

R. B.

LONDON: *June* 9, 1863.

BOOK THE FIRST

W H O will, may hear Sordello's story told:
His story? Who believes me shall behold
The man, pursue his fortunes to the end,
Like me: for as the friendless-people's friend
Spied from his hill-top once, despite the din
And dust of multitudes, Pentapolin
Named o' the Naked Arm,[1] 1 single out
Sordello, compassed murkily about
With ravage of six long sad hundred years.
Only believe me. Ye believe?
Appears
Verona . . . Never,—I should warn you first,—
Of my own choice had this, if not the worst
Yet not the best expedient, served to tell
A story I could body forth so well
By making speak, myself kept out of view,
The very man as he was wont to do.
And leaving you to say the rest for him.
Since, though I might be proud to see the dim
Abysmal past divide its hateful surge,
Letting of all men this one man emerge
Because it pleased me, yet, that moment past,
I should delight in watching first to last
His progress as you watch it, not a whit
More in the secret than yourselves who sit
Fresh-chapleted to listen. But it seems
Your setters-forth of unexampled themes,
Makers of quite new men, producing them,
Would best chalk broadly on each vesture's hem

[1] See *Don Quixote,* **Part I.** ch. **18.**

The wearer's quality; or take their stand,
Motley on back and pointing-pole in hand,
Beside him. So, for once I face ye, friends,
Summoned together from the world's four ends,
Dropped down from heaven or cast up from hell,
To hear the story I propose to tell.
Confess now, poets know the dragnet's trick,
Catching the dead, if fate denies the quick,
And shaming her; 'tis not for fate to choose
Silence or song because she can refuse
Real eyes to glisten more, real hearts to ache
Less oft, real brows turn smoother for our sake:
I have experienced something of her spite;
But there's a realm wherein she has no right
And I have many lovers. Say, but few
Friends fate accords me? Here they are: now view
The host I muster! Many a lighted face
Foul with no vestige of the grave's disgrace;
What else should tempt them back to taste our air
Except to see how their successors fare?
My audience! and they sit, each ghostly man
Striving to look as living as he can,
Brother by breathing brother; thou art set,
Clear-witted critic, by . . . but I'll not fret
A wondrous soul of them, nor move death's spleen
Who loves not to unlock them. Friends! I mean
The living in good earnest—ye elect
Chiefly for love—suppose not I reject
Judicious praise, who contrary shall peep,
Some fit occasion, forth, for fear ye sleep,
To glean your bland approvals. Then, appear,
Verona! stay—thou, spirit, come not near
Now—not this time desert thy cloudy place
To scare me, thus employed, with that pure face!
I need not fear this audience, I make free
With them, but then this is no place for thee!
The thunder-phrase of the Athenian,[1] grown
Up out of memories of Marathon,
Would echo like his own sword's griding screech
Braying a Persian shield,—the silver speech
Of Sidney's self, the starry paladin,
Turn intense as a trumpet sounding in
The knights to tilt,—wert thou to hear! What heart
Have I to play my puppets, bear my part
Before these worthies?
Lo, the past is hurled
In twain: up-thrust, out-staggering on the world.
Subsiding into shape, a darkness rears
Its outline, kindles at the core, appears
Verona. Tis six hundred years and more
Since an event. The Second Friedrich wore
The purple, and the Third Honorius filled
The holy chair. That autumn eve was stilled:
A last remains of sunset dimly burned
O'er the far forests, like a torch-flame turned
By the wind back upon its bearer's hand
In one long flare of crimson; as a brand,
The woods beneath lay black. A single eye
From all Verona cared for the soft sky.
But, gathering in its ancient market-place,
Talked group with restless group; and not a face
But wrath made livid, for among them were
Death's staunch purveyors, such as have in care
To feast him. Fear had long since taken root
In every breast, and now these crushed its fruit,
The ripe hate, like a wine: to note the way
It worked while each grew drunk! Men grave and grey
Stood, with shut eyelids, rocking to and fro,
Letting the silent luxury trickle slow
About the hollows where a heart should be;
But the young gulped with a delirious glee
Some foretaste of their first debauch in blood
At the fierce news: for, be it understood,
Envoys apprised Verona that her prince
Count Richard of Saint Boniface, joined since
A year with Azzo, Este's Lord, to thrust
Taurello Salinguerra, prime in trust
With Ecelin Romano, from his seat
Ferrara,—over zealous in the feat
And stumbling on a peril unaware,
Was captive, trammelled in his proper snare,
They phrase it, taken by his own intrigue.
Immediate succour from the Lombard League
Of fifteen cities that affect the Pope,
For Azzo, therefore, and his fellow-hope
Of the Guelf cause, a glory overcast!
Men's faces, late agape, are now aghast.
'Prone is the purple pavis;[1] Este makes
'Mirth for the devil when he undertakes

[1] Æschylus.

[1] Shield.

'To play the Ecelin; as if it cost
'Merely your pushing-by to gain a post
' Like his! The patron tells ye, once for all,
'There be sound reasons that preferment fall
'On our beloved*...
' Duke o' the Rood, why not?'
Shouted an Estian,' grudge ye such a lot?
'The hill-cat boasts some cunning of her own,
'Some stealthy trick to better beasts unknown,
*That quick with prey enough her huncer blunts,
'And feeds her fat while gaunt the lion hunts.'
'Taurello,' quoth an envoy, 'as in wane
'Dwelt at Ferrara. Like an osprey fain
'To fly but forced the earth his couch *to* make
'Far inland, till his friend the tempest wake,
'Waits he the Kaiser's coming; and as yet
'That fast friend sleeps, and he too sleeps: but let
'Only the billow freshen, and he snuffs
'The aroused hurricane ere it enroughs
'The sea it means to cross because of him.
'Sinketh the breeze? His hope-sick eye grows dim;
'Creep closer on the creature! Every day
'Strengthens the Pontiff; Ecelin, they say,
' Dozes now at Oliero, with dry lips
' Telling upon his perished finger-tips
'How many ancestors are to depose
'Ere he be Satan's Viceroy when the doze
* Deposits him in hell. So, Gueifs rebuilt
'Their houses; not a drop of blood was spilt
'When Cino Bocchimpane chanced to meet
' Buccio Virtu—God's wafer, and the street
'Is narrow! Tutti Santi, think, a-swarm
'With Ghibellins, and yet he took no harm!
'This could not last. Off Salinguerra went
'To Padua, Podesta, "with pure intent,"
' Said he, " my presence, judged the single bar
' "To permanent tranquillity, may jar
' "No longer"—so! his back is fairly turned?
'The pair of goodly palaces are burned,
'The gardens ravaged, and our Gueifs laugh, drunk
'A week with joy. The next, their laughter sunk
'In sobs of blood, for they found, some strange way,
'01d Salinguerra back again—I say,
'01d Salinguerra in the town once more
Uprooting, overturning, flame before,
'Blood fetlock-high beneath him. Azzo fled;
'Who 'scaped the carnage followed; then the dead
'Were pushed aside from Salinguerra's throne,
'He ruled once more Ferrara, all alone,
'Till Azzo, stunned awhile, revived, would pounce
'Coupled with Boniface, like lynx and ounce,
'On the gorged bird. The burghers ground their teeth
'To see troop after troop encamp beneath
T the standing corn thick o'er the scanty patch
'It took so many patient months to snatch
'Out of the marsh; while just within their walls
'Men fed on men. At length Taurello calls
'A parley: "let the Count wind up the war!"
'Richard, light-hearted as a plunging star,
'Agrees to enter for the kindest ends
'Ferrara, flanked with fifty chosen friends,
'No horse-boy more, for fear your timid sort
'Should fly Ferrara at the bare report.
'Quietly through the town they rode, jog-jog;
' "Ten, twenty, thirty,—curse the catalogue
' "Of burnt Guelf houses! Strange, Taurello shows
' "Not the least sign of life"—whereat arose
' A general growl:" How ? With his victors by?
' " I and my Veronese? My troops and I?
' " Receive us, was your word ?" So jogged they on,
'Nor laughed their host too openly: once gone
'Into the trap!—'
Six hundred years ago I
Such the time's aspect and peculiar woe
(Yourselves may spell it yet in chronicles,
Albeit the worm, our busy brother, drills
His sprawling path through letters anciently
Made fine and large to suit some abbot's eye)
When the new Hohenstauffen dropped the mask,
Flung John of Brienne's favour from his. casque,
Forswore crusading, had no mind to-leave
Saint Peter's proxy leisure to retrieve
Losses to Otho and to Barbaross,
Or make the Alps less easy to recross;
And, thus confirming Pope Honorius' fear,
Was excommunicate that very year.

'The triple-bearded Teuton come to life!'
Groaned the.Great League; and, arming for the strife,
Wide Lombardy, on tiptoe to begin,
Took up, as it was Guelf or Ghibellin,
Its cry: what cry?
'The Emperor to come!'
His crowd of feudatories, all and some,
That leapt down with a crash of swords, spears, shields,
One fighter on his fellow, to our fields,
Scattered anon, took station here and there,
And carried it, till now, with little care—
Cannot but cry for him; how else rebut
Us longer ?—cliffs, an earthquake suffered jut
In the mid-sea, each domineering crest
Which nought save such another throe can wrest
From out (conceive) a certain chokeweed grown
Since o'er the waters, twine and tangle thrown
Too thick, too fast accumulating round,
Too sure to over-riot and confound
Ere long each brilliant islet with itself,
Unless a second shock save shoal and shelf,
Whirling the sea-drift wide: alas, the bruised
And sullen wreck! Sunlight to be diffused
For that!—sunlight, 'neath which, a scum at first,
The million fibres of our chokeweed nurst
Dispread themselves, mantling the troubled main,
And, shattered by those rocks, took hold again,
So kindly blazed it—that same blaze to brood
O'er every cluster of the multitude
Still hazarding new clasps, ties, filaments,
An emulous exchange of pulses, vents
Of nature into nature; till some growth
Unfancied yet, exuberantly clothe
A surface solid now, continuous, one :
'The Pope, for us the People, who begun
'The People, carries on the People thus,
' To keep that Kaiser off and dwell with us!'
See you?
Or say, Two Principles that live
Each fitly by its Representative.
'Hill-cat'—who called him so?—the gracefullest
Adventurer, the ambiguous stranger-guest
Of Lombardy (sleek but that ruffling fur,
Those talons to their sheath!) whose velvet pun-
Soothes jealous neighbours when a Saxon scout
—Arpo or Yoland, is it?—one without
A country or a name, presumes to couch
Beside their noblest; until men avouch
That, of all Houses in revisan,
Conrad descries no fitter, rear or van,
Than Ecelo! They Mughed as they enrolled
That name at Milan on the page of gold,
Godego's lord,—Ramon, Marostica,
Cartiglion, Bassano, Loria,
And every sheep-cote on the Suabian's fief!
No laughter when his son, 'the Lombard Chief
Forsooth, as Barbarossa's path was bent
To Italy along the Vale of Trent,
Welcomed mm at Roncaglia! Sadness now—
The hamlets nested on the Tyrol's brow,
The Asolan and Euganean hills,
The Rhetian and the Julian, sadness fills
Them all, for Ecelin vouchsafes to stay
Among and care about them; day by day
Choosing this pinnacle, the other spot,
A castle building to defend a cot,
A cot built for a castle to defend,
Nothing but castles, castles, nor an end
To boasts how mountain ridge may join with ridge
By sunken gallery and soaring bridge.
He takes, in brief, a figure that beseems
The griesliest nightmare of the Church's dreams,
—A Signory firm-rooted, unestranged
From its old interests, and nowise changed
By its new neighbourhood: perchance the vaunt
Of Otho, 'my own Este shall supplant
' Your Este,* come to pass. The sire led in
A son as cruel; and this Ecelin
Had sons, in turn, and daughters sly and tall
And curling and compliant; but for all
Romano (so they styled him) throve, that neck
Of his so pinched and white, that hungry cheek
Proved 'twas some fiend, not him, the man's-flesh went
To feed: whereas Romano's instrument,
Famous Taurello Salinguerra, sole
I' the world, a tree whose boughs were slipt the bole
Successively, why should not he shed blood
To further a design? Men understood
Living was pleasant to him as he wore
His careless surcoat, glanced some missive o'er,
Propped on his truncheon in the public way,
While his lord lifted writhen hands to pray,
Lost at Oliero's convent.
Hill-cats, fare
Our Azzo, our Guelf Lion! Why disgrace
A worthiness conspicuous near and fat
(Atii at Rome while free and consular,

Este at Padua who repulsed the Hun)
By trumpeting the Church's princely son?
—Styled Patron of Rovigo's Polesine,
Ancona's march, Ferrara's... ask, in fine,
Our chronicles, commenced when some old monk
Found it intolerable to be sunk
(Vexed to the quick by his revolting cell)
Quite out of summer while alive and well:
Ended when by his mat the Prior stood,
'Mid busy promptings of the brotherhood,
Striving to coax from his decrepit brains
The reason Father Porphyry took pains
To blot those ten lines out which used to stand
First on their charter drawn by Hildebrand.
The same night wears. Verona's rule of yore
Was vested in a certain Twenty-four;
And while within his palace these debate
Concerning Richard and Ferrara's fate,
Glide we by clapping doors, with sudden glare
Of cressets vented on the dark, nor care
For aught that's seen or heard until we shut
The smother in, the lights, all noises but
The carroch's booming: safe at last! Why strange
Such a recess should lurk behind a range
Of banquet rooms? Your finger—thus—you push
A spring, and the wall opens, would you rush
Upon the banqueters, select your prey,
Waiting (the slaughter-weapons in the way
Strewing this very bench) with sharpened ear
A preconcerted signal to appear;
Or if you simply crouch with beating heart,
Bearing in some voluptuous pageant part
To startle them. Nor mutes nor masquers now;
Nor any... does that one man sleep whose brow
The dying lamp-flame sinks and rises o'er?
What woman stood beside him? not the more
Is he unfastened from the earnest eyes
Because that arras fell between! Her wise
And lulling words are yet about the room,
Her presence wholly poured upon the gloom
Down even to her vesture's creeping stir.
And so reclines he, saturate with her,
Until an outcry from the square beneath
Pierces the charm: he springs up, glad to breathe,
Above the cunning element, and shakes
The stupor off as (look you) morning breaks
On the gay dress, and, near concealed by it,
The lean frame like a half-burnt taper, lit
Erst at some marriage-feast, then laid away
Till the Armenian bridegroom's dying day,
In his wool wedding-robe.
For he—for he,
Gate-vein of this hearts' blood of Lombardy,
(If I should falter now)—for he is thine!
Sordello, thy forerunner, Florentine!
A herald-star I know thou didst absorb
Relentless into the consummate orb
That scared it from its right to roll along
A sempiternal path with dance and song
Fulfilling its allotted period,
Serenest of the progeny of God—
Who yet resigns it not! His darling stoops
With no quenched lights, desponds with no blank troops
Of disenfranchised brilliances, for, blent
Utterly with thee, its shy element
Like thine upburneth prosperous and clear.
Still, what if I approach the august sphere
Named now with only one name, disentwine
That under-current soft and argentine
From its fierce mate in the majestic mass
Leavened as the sea whose fire was mixt with glass
In John's transcendent vision,—launch once more
That lustre? Dante, pacer of the shore
Where glutted hell disgorgeth filthiest gloom,
Unbitten by its whirring sulphur-spume—
Or whence the grieved and obscure waters slope
Into a darkness quieted by hope;
Plucker of amaranths grown beneath God's eye
In gracious twilights where his chosen lie,—
I would do this! If I should falter now!
In Mantua territory half is slough,
Half pine-tree forest; maples, scarlet oaks
Breed o'er the river-beds; even Mincio chokes
With sand the summer through: but 'tis morass
In winter up to Mantua walls. There was,
Some thirty years before this evening's coil,
One spot reclaimed from the surrounding spoil,
Goito; just a castle built amid
A few low mountains; firs and larches hid
Their main defiles, and rings of vineyard bound
The rest. Some captured creature in a pound,
Whose artless wonder quite precludes distress,
Secure beside in its own loveliness,

So peered with airy head, below, above,
The castle at its toils, the lapwings love
To glean among at grape-time. Pass within.
A maze of corridors contrived for sin,
Dusk winding-stairs, dim galleries got past,
You gain the inmost chambers, gain at last
A maple-panelled room: that haze which seems
Floating about the panel, if there gleams
A sunbeam over it, will turn to gold
And in light-graven characters unfold
The Arab's wisdom everywhere; what shade
Marred them a moment, those slim pillars made,
Cut like a company of palms to prop
The roof, each kissing top entwined with top,
Leaning together; in the carver's mind
Some knot of bacchanals, flushed cheek combined
With straining forehead, shoulders purpled, hair
Diffused between, who in a goat-skin bear
A vintage; graceful sister-palms 1 But quick
To the main wonder, now. A vault, see; thick
Black shade about the ceiling, though fine slits
Across the buttress suffer light by fits
Upon a marvel in the midst. Nay, stoop—
A dullish grey-streaked cumbrous font, a group
Round it,—each side of it, where'er one sees,—
Upholds it; shrinking Caryatides
Of just-tinged marble like Eve's lilied flesh
Beneath her maker's finger when the fresh
First pulse of life shot brightening the snow.
The font's edge burthens every shoulder, so
They muse upon the ground, eyelids half closed;
Some, with meek arms behind their backs disposed,
Some, crossed above their bosoms, some, to veil
Their eyes, some, propping chin and cheek so pale,
Some, hanging slack an utter helpless length
Dead as a buried vestal whose whole strength
Goes when the grate above shuts heavily.
So dwell these noiseless girls, patient to see,
Like priestesses because of sin impure
Penanced for ever, who resigned endure,
Having that once drunk sweetness to the dregs.
And every eve, Sordello's visit begs
Pardon for them: constant as eve he came
To sit beside each in her turn, the same
As one of them, a certain space; and awe
Made a great indistinctness till he saw
Surset slant cheerful through the buttress-chinks,
Gold seven times globed; surely our maiden shrinks
And a smile stirs her as if one faint grain
Her load were lightened, one shade less the stain
Obscured her forehead, yet one more bead slipt
From off the rosary whereby the crypt
Keeps count of the contritions of its charge?
Then with a step more light, a heart more large,
He may depart, leave her and every one
To linger out the penance in mute stone.
Ah, but Sordello? 'Tis the tale I mean
To tell you.
In this castle may be seen,
On the hill-tops, or underneath the vines,
Or eastward by the mound of firs and pines
That shuts out Mantua, still in loneliness,
A slender boy in a loose page's dress,
Sordello: do but look on him awhile
Watching ('tis autumn) with an earnest smile
The noisy flock of thievish birds at work
Among the yellowing vineyards; see him lurk
('Tis winter with its sullenest of storms)
Beside that arras length of broidered forms,
On tiptoe, lifting in both hands a light
Which makes yon warrior's visage flutter bright
—Ecelo, dismal father of the brood,
And Ecelin, close to the girl he wooed,
Auria, and their Child, with all his wives
From Agnes to the Tuscan that survives,
Lady of the castle, Adelaide. His face
—Look, now he turns away! Yourselves shall trace
(The delicate nostril swerving wide and fine,
A sharp and restless lip, so well combine
With that calm brow) a soul fit to receive
Delight at every sense; you can believe
Sordello foremost in the regal class
Nature has broadly severed from her mass
Of men, and framed for pleasure, as she frames
Some happy lands, that have luxurious names,
For loose fertility; a footfall there
Suffices to upturn to the warm air
Half-germinating spices; mere decay
Produces richer life: ana day by day
New pollen on the lily-petal grows,
And still more labyrinthine buds the rose*

You recognize at once the finer dress
Of flesh that amply lets in loveliness
At eye and ear, while round the rest is furled
(As though she would not trust them with her world)
A veil that shows a sky not near so blue,
And lets but half the sun look fervid through.
How can such love?—like souls on each full-fraught
Discovery brooding, blind at first to aught
Beyond its beauty, till exceeding love
Becomes an aching weight; and, to remove
A curse that haunts such natures—to preclude
Their finding out themselves can work no good
To what they love nor make it very blest
By their endeavour,—they are fain invest
The lifeless thing with life from their own soul,
Availing it to purpose, to control,
To dwell distinct and have peculiar joy
And separate interests that may employ
That beauty fitly, for its proper sake.
Nor rest they here; fresh births of beauty wake
Fresh homage, every grade of love is past,
With every mode of loveliness: then cast
Inferior idols off their borrowed crown
Before a coming glory. Up and down
Runs arrowy fire, while earthly forms combine
To throb the secret forth; a touch divine—
And the scaled eyeball owns the mystic rod;
Visibly through his garden walketh God.
So fare they. Now revert. One character
Denotes them through the progress and the stir,—
A need to blend with each external charm.
Bury themselves, the whole heart wide and warm,—
In something not themselves; they would belong
To what they worship—stronger and more strong
Thus prodigally fed—which gathers shape
And feature, soon imprisons past escape
The votary framed to love and to submit
Nor ask, as passionate he kneels to it,
Whence grew the idol's empery. So runs
A legend; light had birth ere moons and suns,
Flowing through space a river and alone,
Till chaos burst and blank the spheres were strown
Hither and thither, foundering and blind:
When into each of them rushed light—to find
Itself no place, foiled of Its radiant chance.
Let such forego their just inheritance!
For there's a class that eageriy looks, too,
On beauty, but, unlike the gentler crew,
Proclaims each new revealment born a twin
With a distinctest consciousness within^
Referring still the quality, now first
Revealed, to their own soul—its instinct. nursed
In silence, now remembered better, shown
More thoroughly, but not the less then own;
A dream come true; the special exercise
Of any special function that implies
The being fair, or good, or wise, or strong,
Dormant within their nature all along—
Whose fault? So, homage, other souls direct
Without, turns inward. 'How should this deject
'Thee, soul?' they murmur; 'wherefore strength be quelled
'Because, its trivial accidents withheld,
'Organs are missed that clog the world, inert,
' Wanting a will, to quicken and exert,
' Like thine—existence cannot satiate,
' Cannot surprise ? Laugh thou at envious fate,
'Who, from earth's simplest combination stampt
' With individuality—uncrampt
'By living its faint elemental life,
' Dost soar to heaven's complexest essence, rife
'With grandeurs, unaffronted to the last,
'Equal to being all!'
In truth? Thou hast
Life, then—wilt challenge life for us; our race
Is vindicated so, obtains its place
In thy ascent, the first of us; whom we
May follow, to the meanest, finally,
With our more bounded wills?
Ah. but to find
A certain mood enervate sucn a mind,
Counsel it slumber in the solitude
Thus reached nor, stooping, task for mankind's good
Its nature just as life and time accord
'—Too narrow an arena to reward
'Emprize—the world's occasion worthless since
'Not absolutely fitted to evince
'Its mastery 1' Or if yet worse befall,
And a desire possess it to put all
That nature forth, forcing our straitened sphere
Contain it,—to display completely here
The mastery another life should learn,
Thrusting in time eternity's concern,—

So that Sordello ...
Fool, who spied the mark
Of leprosy upon him, violet-dark
Already as he loiters? Born just now,
With the new century, beside the glow
And efflorescence out of barbarism;
Witness a Greek or two from the abysm
That stray through Florence-town with studious air,
Calming the chisel of that Pisan pair:
If Nicolo should carve a Christus yet!
While at Siena is Guidone set,
Forehead on hand; a painful birth must be
Matured ere Saint Eufemia's sacristy
Or transept gather fruits of one great gaze
At the moon: look you! The same orange haze,—
The same blue stripe round that—and, in the midst,
Thy spectral whiteness, Mother-maid, who didst
Pursue the dizzy painter!
Woe, then, worth
Any officious babble letting forth
The leprosy confirmed and ruinous
To spirit lodged in a contracted house!
Go back to the beginning, rather; blend
It gently with Sordello's *life;* the end
Is piteous, you may see, but much between
Pleasant enough. Meantime, some pyx to screen
The full-grown pest, some lid to shut upon
The goblin! So they found at Babylon,
(Colleagues, mad Lucius and sage Antonine)
Sacking the city, by Apollo's shrine,
In rummaging among the rarities,
A certain coffer; he who made the prize
Opened it greedily; and out there curled
Just such another plague, for half the world
Was stung. Crawl in then, hag, and couch asquat,
Keeping that blotchy bosom thick in spot
Until your time is ripe! The coffer-lid
Is fastened, and the coffer safely hid
Under the Loxian's[1] choicest gifts of gold.
Who will may hear Sordello's story told,
And how he never could remember when
He dwelt not at Goito. Calmly, then,
About this secret lodge of Adelaide's
Glided his youth away; beyond the glades
On the fir-forest border, and the rim
Of the low range of mountain, was for him
No other world: but this appeared his own
To wander through at pleasure and alone.
The castle too seemed empty; far and wide
Might he disport; only the northern side
Lay under a mysterious interdict-
Slight, just enough remembered to restrict
His roaming to the corridors, the vault
Where those font-bearers expiate their fault,

[1] Apollo (the bowman).

The maple-chamber, and the little nooks
And nests, and breezy parapet that looks
Over the woods to Mantua: there he strolled.
Some foreign women-servants, very old,
Tended and crept about him—all his clue
To the world's business and embroiled ado
Distant a dozen hill-tops at the most.
And first a simple sense of life engrossed
Sordello in his drowsy Paradise;
The day's adventures for the day suffice—
Its constant tribute of perceptions strange,
With sleep and stir in healthy interchange,
Suffice, and leave him for the next at ease
Like the great palmer-worm that strips the trees,
Eats the life out of every luscious plant,
And, when September finds them sere or scant,
Puts forth two wondrous winglets, alters quite,
And hies him after unforeseen delight.
So fed Sordello, not a shard dissheathed;
As ever, round each new discovery, wreathed
Luxuriantly the fancies infantine
His admiration, bent on making fine
Its novel friend at any risk, would fling
In gay profusion forth: a ficklest king,
Confessed those minions!—eager to dispense
So much from his own stock of thought and sense
As might enable each to stand alone
And serve him for a fellow; with his own,
Joining the qualities that just before
Had graced some older favourite. Thus they wore
A fluctuating halo, yesterday
Set flicker and to-morrow filched away,—
Those upland objects each of separate name,
Each with an aspect never twice the same,
Waxing and waning as the new-born host
Of fancies, like a single night's hoar-frost,
Gave to familiar things a face grotesque;
Only, preserving through the mad burlesque
A grave regard. Conceive! the orpine patch
Blossoming earliest on the log-house thatch
The day those archers wound along the vines—
Related to the Chief that left their lines
To climb with clinking step the northern stair
Up to the solitary chambers where
Sordello never came. Thus thrall reached thrall:
He o'er-festooning every interval,
As the adventurous spider, making light
Of distance, shoots her threads from depth. to height,

From barbican to battlement: so flung
Fantasies forth and in their centre swung
Our architect,—the breezy morning fresh
Above, and merry,—all his waving mesh
Laughing with lucid dew-drops rainbow-edged.
This world of ours by tacit pact is pledged
To laying such a spangled fabric low
Whether by gradual brush or gallant blow.
But its abundant will was baulked here: doubt
Rose tardily in one so fenced about
From most that nurtures judgment,—care and pain:
Judgment, that dull expedient we are fain,
Less favoured, to adopt betimes and force
Stead us, diverted from our natural course
Of joys—contrive some yet amid the dearth,
Vary and render them, it may be, worth
Most we forego. Suppose Sordello hence
Selfish enough, without a moral sense
However feeble; what informed the boy
Others desired a portion in his joy?
Or say a ruthful chance broke woof and warp—
A heron's nest beat down by March winds sharp,
A fawn breathless beneath the precipice,
A bird with unsoiled breast and unfUmed eyes
Warm in the brake—could these undo the trance
Lapping Sordello? Not a circumstance
That makes for you, friend Naddo! Eat fern-seed
And peer beside us and report indeed
If (your word)' genius' dawned with throes and stings
And the whole fiery catalogue, while springs,
Summers, and winters quietly came and went.
Time put at length that period to content,
By right the world should have imposed: bereft
Of its good offices, Sordello, left
To study his companions, managed rip
Their fringe off, learn the true relationship,
Core with its crust, their nature with his own:
Amid his wild-wood sights he lived alone.
As if the poppy felt with him I Though he
Partook the poppy's red effrontery
Till Autumn spoiled their fleering quite with rain,
And, turbanless, a coarse brown rattling crane
Lay bare. That 's gone: yet why renounce, for that,
His disenchanted tributaries—flat
Perhaps, but scarce so utterly forlorn.
Their simple presence might not well be borne
Whose parley was a transport once: recall
The poppy's gifts, it flaunts you, after all,
A poppy:—why distrust the evidence
Of each soon satisfied and healthy sense?
The new-born judgment answered, 'little boots
'Beholding other creatures' attributes
'And having none!' or, say that it sufficed,
'Yet, could one but possess, oneself,' (enticed
Judgment) 'some special office!' Nought beside
Serves you?' Well then, be somehow justified
'For this ignoble wish to circumscribe
'And concentrate, rather than swell, the tribe
'Of actual pleasures: what, now, from without
'Effects it?—proves, despite a lurking doubt,
'Mere sympathy sufficient, trouble spared?
'That, tasting joys by proxy thus, you fared
'The better for them?' Thus much craved his soul.
Alas, from the beginning love is whole
And true; if sure of nought beside, most sure
Of its own truth at least; nor may endure
A crowd to see its face, that cannot know
How hot the pulses throb its heart below:
While its own helplessness and utter want
Of means to worthily be ministrant
To what it worships, do but fan the more
Its flamej exalt the idol far before
Itself as it would have it ever be.
Souls like Sordello, on the contrary,
Coerced and put to shame, retaining will,
Care little, take mysterious comfort still,
But look forth tremblingly to ascertain
If others judge their claims not urged in vain,
And say for them their stifled thoughts aloud.
So, they must ever five before a crowd:
—'Vanity,' Naddo tells you.
Whence contrive
A crowd, now? From these women just alive,
That archer-troop? Forth glided—not alone
Each painted warrior, every girl of stone,
Nor Adelaide (bent double o'er a scroll,
One maiden at her knees, that eve, his soul
Shook as he stumbled through the arras'd glooms
On them, for, 'mid quaint robes and weird perfumes,
Started the meagre Tuscan up,—her eyes,
The maiden's, also, bluer with surprise)

—But the entire out-world: whatever, scraps
And snatches, song and story, dreams perhaps,
Conceited the world's offices, and he
Had hitherto transferred to flower or tree,
Not counted a befitting heritage
Each, of its own right, singly to engage
Some man, no other,—such now dared to stand
Alone. Strength, wisdom, grace on every hand
Soon disengaged themselves, and he discerned
A sort of human life: at least, was turned
A stream of lifelike figures through his brain.
Lord, liegeman, valvassor and suzerain,
Ere he could choose, surrounded him; a stuff"
To work his pleasure on; there, sure enough:
But as for gazing, what shall fix that gaze?
Are they to simply testify the ways
He who convoked them sends his soul along
With the cloud's thunder or a dove's brood-song?
—While they live each his life, boast each his own
Peculiar dower of bliss, stand each alone
In some one point where something dearest loved
is easiest gained—far worthier to be proved
Than aught he envies in the forest-wights!
No simple and self-evident delights,
But mixed desires of unimagined range,
Contrasts or combinations, new and strange,
Irksome perhaps, yet plainly recognized
By this, the sudden company—loves prized
By those who are to prize his own amount
Of loves. Once care because such make account,
Allow that foreign recognitions stamp
The current value, and his crowd shall vamp
Him counterfeits enough; and so their print
Be on the piece, 'tis gold, attests the mint.
And 'good,' pronounce they whom his new appeal
Is made to: if their casual print conceal—
This arbitrary good of theirs o'ergloss
What he has lived without, nor felt the loss—
Qualities strange, ungainly, wearisome,
—What matter? So must speech expand the dumb
Part-sigh, part-smile with which Sordello, late
Whom no poor woodland-sights could satiate,
Betakes himself to study hungrily
Just what the puppets his crude phantasy
Supposes notablest,—popes, kings, priests, knights,—
May please to promulgate for appetites;
Accepting all their artificial joys
Not as he views them, but as he employs
Each shape to estimate the other's stock
Of attributes, whereon—a marshalled flock
Of authorized enjoyments—he may spend
Himself, be men, now, as he used to blend
With tree and flower—nay more entirely, else
'Twere mockery: for instance, 'How excels
'My *life* that chieftain's?' (who apprised the youth
Ecelin, here, becomes this month, in truth,
Imperial Vicar?) * Turns he in his tent
* Remissly? Be it so—my head is bent
'Deliciously amid my girls to sleep.
'What if he stalks the Trentine-pass? Yon steep
'I climbed an hour ago with little toil:
'We are alike there. But can I, too, foil
'The Guelf'spaidstabber, carelessly afford
'Saint Mark's a spectacle, the sleight o' the sword
'Baffling the treason in a moment?' Here
No rescue! Poppy he is none, but peer
To Ecelin, assuredly: his hand,
Fashioned no otherwise, should wield a brand
With Ecelin's success—try, now! He soon
Was satisfied, returned as to the moon
From earth; left each abortive boy's-attempt
For feats, from failure happily exempt,
In fancy at his beck. 'One day I will
'Accomplish it! Are they not older still
'—Not grown-up men and women? 'Tis beside
'Only a dream; and though I must abide
'With dreams now, I may find a thorough vent
'For all myself, acquire an instrument
'For acting what these people act; my soul
'Hunting a body out may gain its whole
* Desire some day!' How else express chagrin
And resignation, show the hope steal in
With which he let sink from an aching wrist
The rough-hewn ash-bow? Straight, a gold shaft hissed
Into the Syrian air, struck Malek down
Superbly! 'Crosses to the breach! God's Town
'Is gained him back!' Why bend rough ash-bows more?
Thus lives he: if not careless as before,
Comforted: for one may anticipate,
Rehearse the future, be prepared when fate

Shall have prepared in turn real men whose names
Startle, real places of enormous fames,
Este abroad and Ecelin at home
To worship him,—Mantua, Verona, Rome
To witness it. Who grudges time so spent?
Rather test qualities to heart's content—
Summon them, thrice selected, near and far-
Compress the starriest imo one star,
And grasp the whole at once!
The pageant thinned
Accordingly; from rank to rank, like wind
His spirit passed to winnow and divide;
Back fell the simpler phantasms; every side
The strong clave to the wise; with either classed
The beauteous; so, till two or three amassed
Mankind's beseemingnesses, and reduced
Themselves eventually,—graces loosed,
Strengths lavished,—all to heighten up One Shape
Whose potency no creature should escape.
Can it be Friedrich of the bowmen's talk?
Surely that grape-juice, bubbling at the stalk,
Is some grey scorching Saracenic wine
The Kaiser quaffs with the Miramoline[1]—
Those swarthy hazel-clusters, seamed and chapped,
Or filberts russet-sheathed and velvet-capped,
Are dates plucked from the bough John Brienne sent
To keep in mind his sluggish armament
Of Canaan:—Friedrich's, all the pomp and fierce
Demeanour! But harsh sounds and sights transpierce
So rarely the serene cloud where he dwells
Whose looks enjoin, whose lightest words are spells
On the obdurate! That right arm indeed
Has thunder for its slave; but where's the need
Of thunder if the stricken multitude
Hearkens, arrested in its angriest mood,
While songs go up exulting, then dispread,
Dispart, disperse, lingering overhead
Like an escape of angels? 'Tis the tune,
Nor much unlike the words his women croon
Smilingly, colourless and faint-designed
Each, as a worn-out queen's face some remind
Of her extreme youth's love-tales. • Uglamor
'Made that!' Half minstrel and half emperor,
What but ill objects vexed him? Such he slew.
The kinder sort were easy to subdue
By those ambrosial glances, dulcet tones;
And these a gracious hand advanced to thrones
Beneath him. Wherefore twist and torture this,
Striving to name afresh the antique bliss,
Instead of saying, neither less nor more,
He had discovered, as our world before,
Apollo? That shall be the name; nor bid
Me rag by rag expose how patchwork hid
The youth—what thefts of every clime and day
Contributed to purfle the array
He climbed with (June at deep) some close ravine
Mid clatter of its million pebbles sheen,
Over which, singing soft, the runnel slipped
Elate with rains: into whose streamlet dipped
He foot, yet trod, you thought, with unwet sock—
Though really on the stubs of living rock
Ages ago it crenelled; vines for roof,
Lindens for wall; before him, aye aloof,
Flittered in the cool some azure damsel-fly,
Born of the simmering quiet, there to die.
Emerging whence, Apollo still, he spied
Mighty descents of forest* multiplied
Tuft on tuft, here, the frolic myrtle-trees,
There gendered the grave maple stocks at ease.
And, proud of its observer, straight the wood
Tried old surprises on him; black it stood
A sudden barrier ('twas a cloud passed o'er)
So dead and dense, the tiniest brute no more
Must pass; yet presently (the cloud dispatched)
Each clump, behold, was glistering detached
A shrub, oak-boles shrunk into ilex-stems!
Yet could not he denounce the stratagems
He saw thro', till, hours thence, aloft would hang
White summer-lightnings; as it sank and sprang
To measure, that whole palpitating breast
Of heaven, 'twas Apollo, nature prest
At eve to worship.
Time stole: by degrees
The Pythons perish off; his votaries
Sink to respectful distance; songs redeem
Their pains, but briefer; their dismissals seem
Emphatic; only girls are very slow
To disappear—his Delians! Some that glow
O' the instant, more with earlier loves to wrench
Away, reserves to quell, disdains to quench;

[1] *Emir at MaromenIm,* **Prince of the Faithful.**

Alike in one material circumstance—
All soon or late adore Apollo! Glance
The bevy through, divine Apollo's choice,
His Daphne! *We secure Count Richard's voice
'In Este's counsels, good for Este's ends
'As our Taurello,' say his faded friends,
'By granting him our Palma!'—the sole child
They mean, of Agnes Este who beguiled
Ecelin, years before this Adelaide
Wedded and turned him wicked: 'but the maid
'Rejects his suit,' those sleepy women boast.
She, scorning all beside, deserves the most
Sordello: so, conspicuous in his world
Of dreams sat Palma. How the tresses curled
Into a sumptuous swell of gold and wound
About her like a glory! even the ground
Was bright as with spilt sunbeams; breathe not, breathe
Not!—poised, see, one leg doubled underneath,
Its small foot buried in the dimpling snow,
Rests, but the other, listlessly below,
O'er the couch-side swings feeling for cool air,
The vein-streaks swollen a richer violet where
The languid blood lies heavily; yet calm
On her slight prop, each flat and outspread palm,
As but suspended in the act to rise
By consciousness of beauty, whence her eyes
Turn with so frank a triumph, for she meets
Apollo's gaze in the pine glooms.
Time fleets:
That's worst! Because the pre-appointed age
Approaches. Fate is tardy with the stage
And crowd she promised. Lean he grows and pale,
Though restlessly at rest. Hardly avail
Fancies to soothe him. Time steals, yet alone
He tarries here! The earnest smile is gone.
How long this might continue matters not;
—For ever, possibly; since to the spot
None come: our lingering Taurello quits
Mantua at last, and light our lady flits
Back to her place disburdened of a care.
Strange—to be constant here if he is there I
Is it distrust? Oh, never! for they both
Goad Ecelin alike, Romano's growth
Is daily manifest, with Azzo dumb
And Richard wavering: let but Friedrich come,
Find matter for the minstrelsy's report
—Lured from the Isle and its young Kaiser's court
To sing us a Messina morning up,
And, double rillet of a drinking cup,
Sparkle along to ease the land of drouth,
Northward to Provence that, and thus far south
The other! What a method to apprise
Neighbours of births, espousals, obsequies,
Which in their very tongue the Troubadour
Records! and his performance makes a tour,
For Trouveres bear the miracle about,
Explain its cunning to the vulgar rout,
Until the Formidable House is famed
Over the country—as Taurello aimed,
Who introduced, although the rest adopt,
The novelty. Such games, her absence stopped,
Begin afresh now Adelaide, recluse
No longer, in the light of day pursues
Her plans at Mantua: whence an accident
Which, breaking on Sordello's mixed content
Opened, like any flash that cures the blind,
The veritable business of mankind.

BOOK THE SECOND

THE woods were long austere with snow: at last
Pink leaflets budded on the beech, and fast
Larches, scattered through pine-tree solitudes,
Brightened, 'as in the slumbrous heart o' the woods
'Our buried year, a witch, grew young again
'To placid incantations, and that stain
'About were from her cauldron, green smoke blent
'With those black pines'—so Eglamor gave vent
To a chance fancy. Whence a just rebuke
From his companion; brother Naddo shook
The solemnest of brows:' Beware.' he said,
'Of setting up conceits in nature s stead!'
Forth wandered our Sordello. Nought so sure
As that to-day's adventure will secure
Palma, the visioned lady—only pass
O'er yon damp mound and its exhausted grass,
Under that brake where sundawn feeds the stalks
Of withered fern with gold, into those walks
Of pine and take her! Buoyantly he went.
Again his stooping forehead was besprent
With dew-drops from the skirting ferns. Then wide
Opened the great morass, shot every side

With flashing water through and through; a-shine,
Thick-steaming, all-alive. Whose shape divine,
Quivered i' the farthest rainbow-vapour, glanced
Athwart the flying herons? He advanced,
But warily; though Mincio leaped no more,
Each foot-fall burst up in the marish-floor
A diamond jet: and if he stopped to pick
Rose-lichen, or molest the leeches quick,
And circling blood-worms, minnow, newt or loach,
A sudden pond would silently encroach
This way and that. On Palma passed. The verge
Of a new wood was gained. She will emerge
Flushed, now, and panting,—crowds to see,—will own
She loves him—Boniface to hear, to groan,
To leave his suit! One screen of pine-trees still
Opposes: but—the startling spectacle—
Mantua, this time! Under the walls—a crowd
Indeed, real men and women, gay and loud
Round a pavilion. How he stood!
In truth
No prophecy had come to pass: his youth
In its prime now—and where was homage poured
Upon Sordello?—born to be adored,
And suddenly discovered weak, scarce made
To cope with any, cast into the shade
By this and this. Yet something seemed to prick
And tingle in his blood; a sleight—a trick—
And much would be explained. It went for nought—
The best of their endowments were ill bought
With his identity: nay, the conceit,
That this day's roving led to Paima's feet
Was not so vain—list! The word, 'Palma!' Steal
Aside, and die, Sordello; this is real,
And this—abjure!
What next? The curtains see
Dividing! She is there; and presently
He will be there—the proper You, at length—
In your own cherished dress of grace and strength:
Most like, the very Boniface!
Not so.
It was a showy man advanced; but though
A glad cry welcomed him, then every sound
Sank and the crowd disposed themselves around,
—'This is not he,' Sordello felt; while, 'Place
'For the best Troubadour of Boniface!'
Hollaed the Jongleurs,—'Eglamor, whose lay
[1] Concludes his patron's Court of Love to-day!'
Obsequious Naddo strung the master's lute
With the new lute-string, 'Elys,' named to suit
The song: he stealthily at watch, the while,
Biting his lip to keep down a great smile
Of pride: then up he struck. Sordello's brain
Swam; for he knew a sometime deed again;
So, could supply each foolish gap and chasm
The minstrel left in his enthusiasm,
Mistaking its true version—was the tale
Not of Apollo? Only, what avail
Luring her down, that Elys an he pleased,
If the man dared no further? Has he ceased?
And, lo, the people's frank applause half done,
Sordello was beside him, had begun
(Spite of indignant twitchings from his friend
The Trouvere) the true lay with the true end,
Taking the other's names and time and place
For his. On flew the song, a giddy race,
After the flying story; word made leap
Out word, rhyme—rhyme; the lay could barely keep
Pace with the action visibly rushing past:
Both ended. Back fell Naddo more aghast
Than some Egyptian from the harassed bull
That wheeled abrupt and, bellowing, fronted full
His plague, who spied a scarab 'neath the tongue,
And found 'twas Apis' flank his hasty prong
Insulted. But the people—but the cries,
The crowding round, and proffering the prize!
—For he had gained some prize. He seemed to shrink
Into a sleepy cloud, just at whose brink
One sight withheld him. There sat Adelaide,
Silent; but at her knees the very maid
Of the North Chamber, her red lips as rich,
The same pure fleecy hair; one weft of which,
Golden and great, quite touched his cheek as o'er
She leant, speaking some six words and no' more.

He answered something, anything; and she
Unbound a scarf aad laid it heavily
Upon him, her neck's warmth and all. Again
Moved the arrested magic; in his brain
Noises grew, and a light that turned to glare,
And greater glare, until the intense flare
Engulfed him, shut the whole scene from his sense.
And when he woke 'twas many a furlong thence,
At home; the sun shining his ruddy wont;
The customary birds'-chirp; but his front
Was crowned—was crowned! Her scented scarf around
His neck! Whose gorgeous vesture heaps the ground?
A prize ? He turned, and peeringly on him
Brooded the women-faces, kind and dim,
Ready to talk—'The Jongleurs in a troop
'Had brought him back, Naddo and Squarcialupe
'And Tagliafer; how strange! a childhood spent
'In taking, well for him. so brave a bent!
'Since Eglamor,' they neard, 'was dead with spite,
'And Palma chose him for her minstrel.' Light
Sordello rose—to think, now; hitherto
He had perceived. Sure, a discovery grew
Out of it all! Best live from first to last
The transport o'er again. A week he passed,
Sucking the sweet out of each circumstance,
From the bard's outbreak to the luscious trance
Bounding his own achievement. Strange! A man
Recounted an adventure, but began
Imperfectly; his own task was to fill
The frame-work up, sing well what he sung ill,
Supply the necessary points, set loose
As many incidents of little use
—More imbecile the other, not to see
Their relative importance clear as he!
But, for a special pleasure in the act
Of singing—had he ever turned, in fact,
From Elys, to sing Elys ?—from each fit
Of rapture to contrive a song of it?
True, this snatch or the other seemed to wind
Into a treasure, helped himself to find
A beauty in himself; for, see, he soared
By means of that mere snatch, to many a hoard
Of fancies; as some falling cone bears soft
The eye along the fir-tree-spire, aloft
To a dove's nest. Then, how divine the cause
Why such performance should exact applause
From men, if they had fancies too? Did fate
Decree they found a beauty separate
In the poor snatch itself?—'Take Elys, there,
'—" Her head that's sharp and perfect like a pear,
'"So close and smooth are laid the few fine locks
'"Coloured like honey oozed from topmost rocks
'"Sun-blanched the livelong summer"—if they heard
'Just those two rhymes, assented at my word,
'And loved them as I love them who have run
'These fingers through those pale locks, let the sun
'Into the white cool skin—who first could clutch,
'Then praise—I needs must be a god to such.
'Or what if some, above themselves, and yet
'Beneath me, like their Eglamor, have set
'An impress on our gift? So, men btiieve
'And worship what they know not, nor receive
'Delight from. Have they fancies—slow, perchance,
'Not at their beck, which indistinctly glance
'Until, by song, each floating part be linked
'To each, and all grow palpable, distinct!"
He pondered this.
Meanwhile, sounds low and drear
Stole on him, and a noise of footsteps,. near
And nearer, while the underwood was pushed
Aside, the larches grazed, the dead leaves crushed
At the approach of men. The wind seemed laid;
Only, the trees shrunk slightly and a shade
Came o'er the sky although 'twas midday yet:
You saw each half-shut downcast floweret
Flutter—'a Roman bride, when they'd dispart
'Her unbound tresses with the Sabine dart,
'Holding that famous rape in memory still,
'Felt creep into her curls the iron chill,
'And looked thus,' Eglamor would say—indeed
'Tis **Eglamor,** no other, these **precede**

Home hither in the woods. ''Twere surely sweet
'Far from the scene of one's forlorn defeat
'To sleeD!' judged Naddo, who in person led
Jon[Icurs and Trouveres, chanting at their head,
A scanty company; for, sooth to say,
Our beaten Troubadour had seen his day.
Old worshippers were something shamed, old friends
Nigh weary; still the death propojed amends.
'Let us but get them safely through my song
'And home again!' quoth Naddo. Allalong,
This man (they rest the bier upon the sand)
—This calm corpse with the loose flowers in his hand,
Eglamor, lived Sordello's opposite.
For him indeed was Naddo's notion right,
And verse a temple-worship vague and vast,
A ceremony that withdrew *the* last
Opposing bolt, looped back the lingering veil
Which hid the holy place: should one so frail
Stand there without such effort ? or repine
If much was blank, uncertain at the shrine
He knelt before, till, soothed by many a rite,
The power responded, and some sound or sight
Grew up, his own forever, to be fixed,
In rhyme, the beautiful, forever!—mixed
With his own life, unloosed when he should please,
Having it safe at hand, ready to ease
All pain, remove all trouble; every time
He loosed that fancy from its bonds of rhyme,
OLike Perseus when he loosed his naked love)
Faltering; so distinct and far above
Himself, these fancies! He, no genius rare,
Transfiguring in fire or wave or air
At will, but a poor gnome that, cloistered up
In some rock-chamber with his agate cup,
His topaz rod, his seed-pearl, in these few
And their arrangement finds enough to do
For his best art. Then, how he loved that art!
The calling marking him a man apart
From men—one not to care, take counsel for
Cold hearts, comfortless faces—(Eglamor
Was neediest of his tribe)—since verse, the gift,
Was his, and men, the whole of them, must shift
Without it, e'en content themselves with wealth
And pomp and power, snatching a life by stealth.
So, Eglamor was not without his pride!
The sorriest bat which cowers throughout noontide
While other birds are jocund, has one time
When moon and stars are blinded, and the prime
Of earth is his to claim, nor find a peer;
And Eglamor was noblest poet here—
He well knew, 'mid those April woods he cast
Conceits upon in plenty as he passed,
That Naddo might suppose him not to think
Entirely on the coming triumph: wink
At the one weakness! 'Twas a fervid child,
That song of his; no brother of the guild
Had e'er conceived its like. The rest you know,
The exaltation and the overthrow:
Our poet lost his purpose, lost his rank,
His life—to that it came. Yet envy sank
Within him, as he heard Sordello out,
And, for the first time, shouted—tried to shout
Like others, not from any zeal to show
Pleasure that way: the common sort did so,
What else was Eglamor? who, bending down
As they, placed his beneath Sordello's crown,
Printed a kiss on his successor's hand,
Left one great tear on it, then joined his band
—In time; for some were watching at the door:
Who knows what envy may effect ? 'Give o'er,
'Nor charm his lips, nor craze him!' (here one spied
And disengaged the withered crown)—'Beside
'His crown? How prompt and clear those verses rang
'To answer yours! nay, sing them!' And he sang
Them calmly. Home he went; friends used to wait
His coming, zealous to congratulate;
But, to a man—so quickly runs report—
Could do no less than leave him, and escort
His rival. That eve, then, bred many a thought:
What must his future life be? was he brought
So low, who stood so lofty this Spring morn?
At length he said,'Best sleep now with my scorn,
* And by to-morrow I devise some plain
'Expedient!' So, he slept, nor woke again.

They found as much, those friends, when they returned
O'erflowing with the marvels they had learned
About Sordello's paradise, his roves
Among the hills and vales and plains and groves,
Wherein, no doubt, this lay was roughly cast,
Polished by slow degrees, completed last
To Eglamor's discomfiture and death.
Such form the chanters now, and, out of breath,
They lay the beaten man in his abode,
Naddo reciting that same luckless ode,
Doleful to hear. Sordello could explore
By means of it, however, one step more
In joy; and, mastering the round at length,
Learnt how to live in weakness as in strength,
When from his covert forth he stood, addressed
Eglamor, bade the tender ferns invest,
Primaeval pines o'ercanopy his couch,
And, most of all, his fame—(shall I avouch
Eglamor heard it, dead though he might look,
And laughed as from his brow Sordello took
The crown, and laid on the bard's breast, and said
It was a crown, now, fit for poet's head?)
—Continue. Nor the prayer quite fruitless fell.
A plant they have, yielding a three-leaved bell[1]
Which whitens at the heart ere noon, and ails
Till evening; evening gives it to her gales
To clear away with such forgotten things
As are an eyesore to the morn: this brings
Him to their mind, and bears his very name.
So much for Eglamor. My own month came;
Twas a sunrise of blossoming and May.
Beneath a flowering laurel thicket lay
Sordello; each new sprinkle of white stars
That smell fainter of wine than Massic jars
Dug up at Baias, when the south wind shed
The ripest, made him happier; filleted
And robed the same, only a lute beside
Lay on the turf. Before him far and wide
The country stretched: Goito slept behind
—The castle and its covert, which confined
Him with his hopes and fears; so fain of old
To leave the story of his birth untold.
At intervals, 'spite the fantastic glow
Of his Apollo-life, a certain low
And wretched whisper, winding through the bliss,
Admonished, no such fortune could be his,
All was quite false and sure to fade one day:
The closelier drew he round him his array
Of brilliance to expel the truth. But when
A reason for his difference from men
Surprised him at the grave, he took no rest
Wlille aught of that old life, superbly dressed
Down to its meanest incident, remained
A mystery: alas, they soon explained
Away Apollo! and the tale amounts
To this: when at Vicenza both her counts
Banished the Vivaresi kith and kin,
Those Maltraversi hung on Ecelin,
Reviled him as he followed; he for spite
Must fire their quarter, though that self-same night
Among the flames young Ecelin was born
Of Adelaide, there too, and barely torn
From the roused populace hard on the rear,
By a poor archer when his chieftain's fear
Grew high; into the thick Elcorte leapt,
Saved her, and died; no creature left except
His child to thank. And when the full escape
Was known—how men impaled from chine to nape
Unlucky Prata, all to pieces spurned
Bishop Pistore's concubines, and burned
Taurello's entire household, flesh and fell,
Missing the sweeter prey—such courage well
Might claim reward. The orphan, ever since,
Sordello, had been nurtured by his prince
Within a blind retreat where Adelaide—
(For, once this notable discovery made,
The past at every point was understood)
—Might harbour easily when times were rude,
When Azzo schemed for Palma, to retrieve
That pledge of Agnes Este—loth to leave
Mantua unguarded with a vigilant eye,
While there Taurello bode ambiguously—
He who could have no motive now to moil
For his own fortunes since their utter spoil—
As it were worth while yet (went the report)
To disengage himself from her. In short,
Apollo vanished; a mean youth, just named
His lady's minstrel, was to be proclaimed
—How shall I phrase it ?—Monarch of the World!
For, on the day when that array was furled
Forever, and in place of one a slave
To longings, wild indeed, but longings save
In dreams as wild, suppressed—one daring not
Assume the mastery such dreams allot,
Until a magical equipment, strength,
Grace, wisdom, decked him too,—he chose at length,

[1] St. Bruno's lily, the *Antherl'*tm Lillastrum.*

Content with unproved wits and failing frame,
In virtue of his simple will, to claim
That mastery, no less—to do his best
With means so limited, and let the rest
Go by,—the seal was set: never again
Sordello could in his own sight remain
One of the many, one with hopes and cares
And interests nowise distinct from theirs,
Only peculiar in a thriveless store
Of fancies, which were fancies and no more;
Never again for him and for the crowd
A common law was challenged and allowed
If calmly reasoned of, howe'er denied
By a mad impulse nothing justified
Short of Apollo's presence. The divorce
Is clear: why needs Sordello square his course
By any known example? Men no more
Compete with him than tree and flower before.
Himself, inactive, yet is greater far
Than such as act, each stooping to his star,
Acquiring thence his function; he has gained
The same result with meaner mortals trained
To strength or beauty, moulded to express
Each the idea that rules him; since no less
He comprehends that function, but can still
Embrace the others, take of might his fill
With Richard as of grace with Palma, mix
Their qualities, or for a moment fix
On one; abiding free meantime, uncramped
By any partial organ, never stamped
Strong, and to strength turning all energies—
Wise, and restricted to becoming wise—
That is, he loves not, nor possesses One
Idea that, star-like over, lures him on
To its exclusive purpose. * Fortunate!
*This flesh of mine ne'er strove to emulate
'A soul so various—took no casual mould
'Of the first fancy and, contracted, cold,
'Clogged her forever—soul averse to change
'As flesh: whereas flesh leaves soul free to range,
'Remains itself a blank, cast into shade,
'Encumbers little, if it cannot aid.
'So, range, free soul!—who, by self-consciousness,
'The last drop of all beauty dost express—
'The grace of seeing grace, a quintessence
'For thee: while for the world, that can dispense
' Wonder on men who, themselves, wonder —make
'A shift to love at second-hand, and take
'**For** idols those who do but idolize,
'Themselves,—the world that counts men strong or wise,
' Who, themselves, court strength, wisdom, —it shall bow
' Surely in unexampled worship now,
' Discerning me!'—
(Dear monarch, I beseech,
Notice how lamentably wide a breach
Is here: discovering this, discover too
What our poor world has possibly to do
With it! As pigmy natures as you please—
So much the better for you; take your ease,
Look on, and laugh; style yourself God alone;
Strangle some day with a cross olive-stone!
All that is right enough: but why want us
To know that you yourself know thus and thus?)
'The world shall bow to me conceiving all
' Man's life, who see its blisses, great and small,
'Afar—not tasting any; no machine
'To exercise my utmost will is mine:
'Be mine mere consciousness! Let men perceive
' What I could do, a mastery believe,
' Asserted and established to the throng
' By their selected evidence of song
' Which now shall prove, whate'er they are,. or seek
'To be, I am—whose words, not actions speak,
'Who change no standards of perfection,, vex
' With no strange forms created to perplex
'But just perform their bidding and no-more,
'At their own satiating-point give o'er,
' While each shall love in me the love that leads
' His soul to power's perfection.' Song, not deeds,
(For we get tired) was chosen. Fate would brook
Mankind no other organ; he would look
For not another channel to dispense
His own volition by, receive men's sense
Of its supremacy—would live content,
Obstructed else, with merely verse for vent.
Nor should, for instance, strength an outlet seek
And, striving, be admired: nor grace bespeak
Wonder, displayed in gracious attitudes:
Nor wisdom, poured forth, change unseemly moods;
But he would give and take on song's one point.
Like some huge throbbing stone that, poised a-joint,
Sounds, to affect on its basaltic bed,
Must sue in just one accent; tempests shed'

Thunder, and raves the windstorm: only let
That key by any little noise be set—
The far benighted hunter's halloo pitch
On that, the hungry curlew chance to scritch
Or serpent hiss it, rustling through the rift,
However loud, however low—all lift
The groaning monster, stricken to the heart.
Lo ye, the world's concernment, for its part,
And this, for his, will hardly interfere!
Its businesses in blood and blaze this year
But wile the hour away—a pastime slight
Till he shall step upon the platform: right!
And, now thus much is settled, cast in rough,
Proved feasible, he counselled! thought enough,—
Slumber, Sordello! any day will serve:
Were it a less digested plan! how swerve
To-morrow? Meanwhile eat these sun-dried grapes,
And watch the soaring hawk there! Life escapes
Merrily thus.
He thoroughly read o'er
His truchman Naddo's missive six times more.
Praying him visit Mantua and supply
A famished world.
The evening star was high
When he reached Mantua, but his fame arrived
Before him: friends applauded, foes connived.
And Naddo looked an angel, and the rest
Angels, and all these angels would be blest
Supremely by a song—the thrice-renowned
Goito-manufacture. Then he found
(Casting about to satisfy the crowd)
That happy vehicle, so late allowed,
A sore annoyance; 'twas the song's effect
He cared for, scarce the song itself: reflect!
In the past life, what might be singing's use?
Just to delight his Delians, whose profuse
Praise, not the toilsome process which procured
That praise, enticed Apollo: dreams abjured,
No overleaping means for ends—take both
For granted or take neither! I am loth
To say the rhymes at last were Eglamor's;
But Naddo, chuckling, bade competitors
Go pine; ' the master certes meant to waste
* No effort, cautiously had probed the taste
*He'd please anon: true bard, in short,—disturb
'His title if they could; nor spur nor curb,
'Fancy nor reason, wanting in him; whence
'The staple of his verses, common sense:
'He built on man's broad nature—gift of gifts,
'That power to build! The world contented shifts
'With counterfeits enough, a dreary sort
'Of warriors, statesmen, ere it can extort
'Its poet-soul—that's, after all, a freak
'(The having eyes to see and tongue to speak)
'With our herd's stupid sterling happiness
'So plainly incompatible that—yes—
'Yes—should a son of his improve the breed
'And turn out poet, he were cursed indeed!'
'Well, there's Goito and its woods anon,
'If the worst happen; best go stoutly on
'Now!' thought Sordello.
Ay, and goes on yet!
You pother with your glossaries to get
A notion of the Troubadour's intent
In rondel, tenzon, virlai or sirvent—
Much as you study arras how to twirl
His angelot, plaything of page and girl
Once; but you surely reach, at last,—or, no!
Never quite reach what struck the people so,
As from the welter of their time he drew
Its elements successively to view,
Followed all actions backward on their course,
And catching up, unmingled at the source,
Such a strength, such a weakness, added then
A touch or two, and turned them into men.
Virtue took form, nor vice refused a shape;
Here heaven opened, there was hell agape,
As Saint this simpered past in sanctity,
Sinner the other flared portentous by
A greedy people. Then why stop, surprised
At his success ? The scheme was realized
Too suddenly in one respect: a crowd
Praising, eyes quick to see, and lips as loud
To speak, delicious homage to receive,
The woman's breath to feel upon his sleeve,
Who said,' But Anafest—why asks he less
'Than Lucio, in your verses ? how confess,
'It seemed too much but yestereve!'—tlie youth,
Who bade him earnestly,' Avow the truth!
'You love Bianca, surely, from your song;
*I knew I was unworthy!'—soft or strong,
In poured such tributes ere he had arranged
Ethereal ways to take them, sorted, changed,
Digested. Courted thus at unawares,
In spite of his pretensions and his cares,

He caught himself shamefully hankering
After the obvious petty joys that spring
From true life, fain relinquish pedestal
And condescend with pleasures—one and all
To be renounced, no doubt; for, thus to chain
Himself to single joys and so refrain
From tasting their quintessence, frustrates, sure,
His prime design; each joy must he abjure
Even for love of it.
He laughed: what sage
But perishes if from his magic page
He look because, at the first line, a proof
'Twas heard salutes him from the cavern roof?
'On! Give yourself, excluding aught beside,
'To the day's task; compel your slave provide
'Its utmost at the soonest; turn the leaf
' Thoroughly conned. These lays of yours, in brief—
' Cannot men bear, now, something better ? -fly
'A pitch beyond this unreal pageantry
' Of essences? the period sure has ceased
'For such: present us with ourselves, at least,
' Not portions of ourselves, mere loves and hates
'Made flesh: wait not!'
Awhile the poet waits
However. The first trial was enough:
He left imagining, to try the stuff
That held the imaged thing, and, let it writhe
Never so fiercely, scarce allowed a tithe
To reach the light—his Language. How he sought
The cause, conceived a cure, and slow rewrought
That Language,—welding words into the crude
Mass from the new speech round him, till a rude
Armour was hammered out, in time to be
Approved beyond the Roman panoply
Melted to make it,—boots not. This obtained
With some ado, no obstacle remained
To using it; accordingly he took
An action with its actors, quite forsook
Himself to live in each, returned anon
With the result—a creature, and, by one
And one, proceeded leisurely to equip
Its limbs in harness of his workmanship.
'Accomplished! Listen, Mantuans!' Fond essay!
Piece after piece that armour broke away,
Because perceptions whole, like that he sought
To clothe, reject so pure a work of thought
As language: thought may take perception's place
But hardly co-exist in any case,
Being its mere presentment—of the whole
By parts, the simultaneous and the sole
By the successive and the many. Lacks
The crowd perception? painfully it tacks
Thought to thought, which Sordello, needing such,
Has rent perception into: it's to clutch
And reconstruct—his office to diffuse,
Destroy: as hard, then, to obtain a Muse
As to become Apollo. 'For the rest,
'E'en if some wondrous vehicle expressed
'The whole dream, what impertinence in me
'So to express it, who myself can be
'The dream! nor, on the other hand, are those
'I sing to, over-likely to suppose
'A higher than the highest I present
'Now, which they praise already: be content
'Both parties, rather—they with the old verse,
'And I with the old praise—far go, fare worse!'
A few adhering rivets loosed, upsprings
The angel, sparkles off his mail, which rings
Whirled from each delicatest limb it warps;
So might Apollo from the sudden corpse
Of Hyacinth have cast his luckless quoits.
He set to celebrating the exploits
Of Montfort o'er the Mountaineers.
Then came
The world's revenge: their pleasure, now his aim
Merely,—what was it? 'Not to play the fool
'So much as learn our lesson in your school!'
Replied the world. He found that, every time
He gained applause by any ballad-rhyme,
His auditory recognized no jot
As he intended, and, mistaking not
Him for his meanest hero, ne'er was dunce
Sufficient to believe him—all, at once.
His will . . . conceive it caring for his will!
—Mantuans, the main of them, admiring still
How a mere singer, ugly, stunted, weak,
Had Montfort at completely (so to speak)
His fingers' ends; while past the praise-tide swept
To Montfort, either's share distinctly kept:
The true meed for true merit!—his abates
Into a sort he most repudiates,
And on them angrily he turns. Who were
The Mantuans, afte- all, that he should care

About their recognition, ay or no?
In spite of the convention months ago,
(Why blink the truth?) was not he forced to help
This same ungrateful audience, every whelp
Of Naddo's litter, make them pass for peers
With the bright band of old Goito years,
As erst he toiled for flower or tree? Why, there
Sat Palma! Adelaide's funereal hair
Ennobled the next corner. Ay, he strewed
A fairy dust upon that multitude,
Although he feigned to take them by themselves;
His giants dignified those puny elves,
Sublimed their faint applause. In short, he found
Himself still footing a delusive round,
Remote as ever from the self-display
He meant to compass, hampered every way
By what he hoped assistance. Wherefore then
Continue, make believe to find in men
A use he found not?
Weeks, months, years went by,
And Io, Sordello vanished utterly,
Sundered in twain; each spectral part at strife
With each; one jarred against another life;
The Poet thwarting hopelessly the Man—
Who, fooled no longer, free in fancy ran
Here, there: let slip no opportunities
As pitiful, forsooth, beside the prize
To drop on him some no-time and acquit
His constant faith (the Poet-half's to wit—
That waiving any compromise between
No joy and all joy kept the hunger keen
Beyond most methods)—of incurring scoff
From the Man-portion—not to be put off
With self-reflectings by the Poet's scheme,
Though ne'er so bright. Who sauntered forth in dream,
Dressed any how, nor waited mystic frames,
Immeasurable gifts, astounding claims,
But just his sorry self?—who yet might be
Sorrier for aught he in reality
Achieved, so pinioned Man's the Poet-part,
Fondling, in turn of fancy, verse; the Art
Developing his soul a thousand ways—
Potent, by its assistance, to amaze
The multitude with majesties, convince
Each sort of nature that the nature's prince
Accosted it. Language, the makeshift, grew
Into a bravest of expedients, too;
Apollo, seemed it now, perverse had thrown
Quiver and bow away, the lyre alone
Sufficed. While, out of dream, his day's work went
To tune a crazy tenzon[1] or sirvent[2]—
So hampered him the Man-part, thrust to judge
Between the bard and the bard's audience, grudge
A minute's toil that missed its due reward!
But the complete Sordello, Man and Bard,
John's cloud-girt angel, this foot on the land,
That on the sea, with, open in his hand,
A bitter-sweetling of a book—was gone.
Then, if internal struggles to be one,
Which frittered him incessantly piecemeal,
Referred, ne'er so obliquely, to the real
Intruding Mantuans! ever with some call
To action while he pondered, once for all,
Which looked the easier effort—to pursue
This course, still leap o'er paltry joys, yearn through
The present ill-appreciated stage
Of self-revealment, and compel the age
Know him—or else, forswearing bard-craft, wake
From out his lethargy and nobly shake
Off timid habits of denial, mix
With men, enjoy like men. Ere he could fix
On aught, in rushed the Mantuans; much they cared
For his perplexity! Thus unprepared,
The obvious if not only shelter lay
In deeds, the dull conventions of his day
Prescribed the like of him: why not be glad
'Tis settled Palma's minstrel, good or bad,
Submits to this and that established rule?
Let Vidal change, or any other fool,
His murrey-coloured robe for filamot,
And crop his hair; too skin-deep, is it not,
Such vigour? Then, a sorrow to the heart,
His talk! Whatever topics they might start
Had to be groped for in his consciousness
Straight, and as straight delivered them by guess.
Only obliged to ask himself, 'What was,'
A speedy answer followed; but, alas,
One of God's large ones, tardy to condense
Itself into a period; answers whence
A tangle of conclusions must be stripped
At any risk ere, trim to pattern clipped,
They matched rare specimens the Mantuan flock
Regaled him with, each talker from his stock
Of sorted-o'er opinions, every stage,
Juicy in youth or desiccate with age,
Fruits like the fig-tree's, rathe-ripe, rotten-rich,
Sweet-sour, all tastes to take: a practice which

[1] *Tenzon.* A dramatic skirmish In verse before the Court of Love.
2Sirvent. Martial, political, and satirical songs. Both Provencal terms.

He too had not impossibly attained,
Once either of those fancy-flights restrained;
CFor, at conjecture how might words appear
To others, playing there what happened here,
And occupied abroad by what he spurned
At home, 'twas slipped, the occasion he returned
To seize:) he'd strike that lyre adroitly—speech,
Would but a twenty-cubit plectre reach;
A clever hand, consummate instrument,
Were both brought close; each excellency went
For nothing, else. The question Naddo asked,
Had just a lifetime moderately tasked
To answer, Naddo's fashion. More disgust
And more: why move his soul, since move it must
At minute's notice or as good it failed
To move at all? The end was, he retailed
Some ready-made opinion, put to use
This quip, that maxim, ventured reproduce
Gestures and tones—at any folly caught
Serving to finish with, nor too much sought
If false or true 'twas spoken; praise and blame
Of what he said grew pretty nigh the same
—Meantime awards to meantime acts: his soul,
Unequal to the compassing a whole,
Saw, in a tenth part, less and less to strive
About. And as for men in turn... contrive
Who could to take eternal interest
In them, so hate the worst, so love the best!
Though, in pursuance of his passive plan,
He hailed, decried, the proper way.
As Man
So figured he; and how as Poet? Verse
Came only not to a stand-still. The worse,
That his poor piece of daily work to do
Was—not sink under any rivals; who
Loudly and long enough, without these qualms,
Turned, from Bocafoli's stark-naked psalms,
To Plara's sonnets spoilt by toying with,
'As knops that stud some almug to the pith
* Pricked for gum, wry thence, and crinkled worse
'Than pursed eyelids of a river-horse
' Sunning himself o' the slime when whirrs the breese'—
Gad-fly, that is. He might compete with these!
But—but—
'Observe a pompion-twine afloat;
• Pluck me one cup from off the castle-moat!
'Along with cup you raise leaf, stalk and root,
'The entire surface of the pool to boot.
' So could I pluck a cup, put in one song
'A single sight, did not my hand, **too** strong,
'Twitch in the least the root-strings of the whole.
'How should externals satisfy my soul?'
'Why that's precise the error Squarcialupe'
(Hazarded Naddo) 'finds; " the man can't stoop
"To sing us out," quoth he, "a mere romance;
"He'd fain do better than the best, enhance
"The subjects' rarity, work problems out
"Therewith." Now, you're a bard, a bard past doubt,
And no philosopher; why introduce
Crotchets like these? fine, surely, but no use
In poetry—which still must be, to strike,
Based upon common sense; there's nothing like
Appealing to our nature! what beside
Was your first poetry? No tricks were tried
In that, no hollow thrills, affected throes!
"The man," said we, " tells his own joys and woes:
" We'll trust him." Would you have your songs endure?
Build on the human heart!—why, to be sure
Yours is one sort of heart—but I mean theirs,
Ours, every one's, the healthy heart one cares
To build on! Central peace, mother of strength,
That's father of... nay, go yourself that length,
Ask those calm-hearted doers what they do
When they have got their calm! And is it true,
Fire rankles at the heart of every globe?
Perhaps. But these are matters one may probe
Too deeply for poetic purposes:
Rather select a theory that. . . yes,
Laugh! what does that prove?—stations you midway
And saves some little o'er-refining. Nay,
That's rank injustice done me! I restrict
The poet? Don't I hold the poet picked
Out of a host of warriors, statesmen ... did
I tell you? Very like! As well you hid
That sense of power, you have! True bards believe
'All able to achieve what they achieve—

'That is, just nothing—in one point abide
'Profounder simpletons than all beside.
'Oh, ay! The knowledge that you are a bard
'Must constitute your prime, nay sole, reward!'
So prattled Naddo, busiest of the tribe
Of genius-haunters—how shall I describe
What grubs or nips or rubs or rips—your louse
For love, your flea for hate, magnanimous,
Malignant, Pappacoda, Tagliafer,
Picking a sustenance from wear and tear
By implements it sedulous employs
To undertake, lay down, mete out, o'ertoise
Sordello? Fifty creepers to elude
At once! They settled staunchly; shame ensued:
Behold the monarch of mankind succumb
To the last fool who turned him round his thumb,
As Naddo styled it! 'Twas not worth oppose
The matter of a moment, gainsay those
He aimed at getting rid of; better think
Their thoughts and speak their speech, secure to slink
Back expeditiously to his safe place,
And chew the cud—what he and what his race
Were really, each of them. Yet even this
Conformity was partial. He would miss
Some point, brought into contact with them ere
Assured in what small segment of the sphere
Of his existence they attended him;
Whence blunders, falsehoods rectified—a grim
List—slur it over! How? If dreams were tried,
His will swayed sicklily from side to side,
Nor merely neutralized his waking act
But tended e'en in fancy to distract
The intermediate will, the choice of means.
He lost the art of dreaming: Mantuan scenes
Supplied a baron, say, he sang before,
Handsomely reckless, full to running-o'er
Of gallantries; 'abjure the soul, content
With body, therefore!' Scarcely had he bent
'Iimself in dream thus low, when matter fast
Cried out, he found, for spirit to contrast
And task it duly; by advances slight,
The simple stuff becoming composite,
Count Lori grew Apollo: best recall
His fancy! Then would some rough peasant-Paul,
Like those old Ecelin confers with, glance
His gay apparel o'er; that countenance
Gathered his shattered fancies into one,
And, body clean abolished, soul alone
Sufficed the grey Paulician; by and by,
To balance the ethereality,
Passions were needed; foiled he sank again.
Meanwhile the world rejoiced ('tis time explain)
Because a sudden sickness set it free
From Adelaide. Missing the mother-bee,
Her mountain-hive Romano swarmed; at once
A rustle-forth of daughters and of sons
Blackened the valley. 'I am sick too, old,
'Half-crazed I think; what good's the Kaiser's gold
'To such an one? God help me! for I catch
'My children's greedy sparkling eyes at watch—
'"He bears that double breastplate on," they say,
"'So many minutes less than yesterday!"
'Beside, Monk Hilary is on his knees
'Now, sworn to kneel and pray till God shall please
'Exact a punishment for many things
'You know, and some you never knew; which brings
'To memory, Azzo's sister Beatrix
'And Richard's Giglia are my Alberic's
'And Ecelin's betrothed; the Count himself
'Must get my Palma: Ghibellin and Guelf
'Mean to embrace each other.' So began
Romano's missive to his fighting man
Taurello—on the Tuscan's death, away
With Friedrich sworn to sail from Naples' bay
Next month for Syria. Never thunder-clap
Out of Vesuvius' throat, like this mishap
Startled him. 'That accursed Vicenza! I
'Absent, and she selects this time to die!
'Ho, fellows, for Vicenza!' Haifa score
Of horses ridden dead, he stood before
Romano in his reeking spurs: too late—
'Boniface urged me, Este could not wait,'
The chieftain stammered; 'let me die in peace—
'Forget me! Was it I who craved increase
'Of rule? Do you and Friedrich plot your worst
'Against the Father: as you found me first
'So leave me now. Forgive me! Palma, sure,
'Is at Goito still. Retain that lure—
'Only be pacified!'
The country rung
With such a piece of news: on every tongue,
How Ecelin's great servant, congeed **off,**
Had done a long day's service, so, **might doff**

The green and yellow, and recover breath
At Mantua, whither,—since Retrude's death,
(The girlish slip of a Sicilian bride
From Otho's house, he carried to reside
At Mantua till the Ferrarese should pile
A structure worthy her imperial style,
The gardens raise, the statues there enshrine.
She never lived to see)—although his line
Was ancient in her archives and she took
A pride in him, that city, nor forsook
Her child when he forsook himself and spent
A prowess on Romano surely meant
For his own growth—whither he ne'er resorts
If wholly satisfied (to trust reports)
With Ecelin. So, forward in a trice
Were shows to greet him. 'Take a friend's advice,'
Quoth Naddo to Sordello, 'nor be rash
'Because your rivals (nothing can abash
'Some folks) demur that we pronounced you best
'To sound the great man's welcome; 'tis a test,
'Remember! Strojavacca looks asquint,
'The rough fat sloven; and there's plenty hint
'Your pinions have received of late a shock—
' Outsoar them, cobswan of the silver flock!
'Sing well!' A signal wonder, song's no whit
Facilitated.
Fast the minutes flit;
Another day, Sordello finds, will bring
The soldier, and he cannot choose but sing;
So, a last shift, quits Mantua—slow, alone:
Out of that aching brain, a very stone,
Song must be struck. What occupies that front?
Just how he was more awkward than his wont
The night before, when Naddo, who had seen
Taurello on his progress, praised the mien
For dignity no crosses could affect—
Such was a joy, and might not he detect
A satisfaction if established joys
Were proved imposture? Poetry annoys
Its utmost: wherefore fret? Verses may come
Or keep away! And thus he wandered, dumb
Till evening, when he paused, thoroughly spent,
On a blind hill-top: down the gorge he went,
Yielding himself up as to an embrace.
The moon came out; like features of a face,
A querulous fraternity of pines,
Sad blackthorn clumps, leafless and grovelling vines
Also came out, made gradually up
The picture; 'twas Goito's mountain-cup
And castle. He had dropped through one defile
He never dared explore, the Chief erewhile
Had vanished by. Back rushed the dream, enwrapped
Him wholly. 'Twas Apollo now they lapped,
Those mountains, not a pettish minstrel meant
To wear his soul away in discontent,
Brooding on fortune's malice. Heart and brain
Swelled; he expanded to himself again,
As some thin seedling spice-tree starved and frail,
Pushing between cat's head and ibis' tail
Crusted into *the* porphyry pavement smooth,
—Suffered remain just as it sprung, to soothe
The Soldan's pining daughter, never yet
Well in her chilly green-glazed minaret,—
When rooted up, the sunny day she died,
And flung into the common court beside
Its parent tree. Come home, Sordello! Soon
Was he low muttering, beneath the moon,
Of sorrow saved, of quiet evermore,—
Since from the purpose, he maintained before,
Only resulted wailing and hot tears.
Ah, the slim castle! dwindled of late years,
But more mysterious; gone to ruin—trails
Of vine through every loop-hole. Nought avails
The night as, torch in hand, he must explore
The maple chamber: did I say, its floor
Was made of intersecting cedar beams?
Worn now with gaps so large, there blew cold streams
Of air quite from the dungeon; lay your ear
Close and 'tis like, one after one, you hear
In the blind darkness water drop. The nests
Andnooks retain their longranged vesture-chests
Empty and smelling of the iris root
The Tuscan grated o'er them to recruit
Her wasted wits. Palma was gone that day,
Said the remaining women. Last, he lay
Beside *the* Carian group reserved and still.
The Body, the Machine for Acting Will.
Had been at the commencement proved unfit;
That for Demonstrating, Reflecting it,

Mankind—no fitter: was the Will Itself
In fault?
His forehead pressed the moonlit shelf
Beside the youngest marble maid awhile;
Then, raising it, he thought, with a long smile,
'I shall be king again!' as he withdrew
The envied scarf; into the font he threw
His crown.
Next day, no poet! 'Where-fore?' asked
Taurello, when the dance of Jongleurs, masked
As devils, ended; ' don't a song come next?'
The master of the pageant looked per-plexed
Till Naddo's whisper came to his relief.
'His Highness knew what poets were: in brief,
' Had not the tetchy race prescriptive right
'To peevishness, caprice? or, call it spite,
' One must receive their nature in its length
'And breadth, expect the weakness with the strength!'
—So phrasing, till, his stock of phrases spent,
The easy-natured soldier smiled assent,
Settled his portly person, smoothed his chin,
And nodded that the bull-bait might begin.

BOOK THE THIRD

A N D the font took them: let our laurels lie!
Braid moonfern now with mystic trifoly
Because once more Goito gets, once more,
Sordello to itself! A dream is o'er,
And the suspended life begins anew;
Quiet those throbbing temples, then, sub-due
That cheek's distortion! Nature's strict embrace,
Putting aside the past, shall soon efface
Its print as well—factitious humours grown
Over the true—loves, hatreds not his own—
And turn him pure as some forgotten vest
Woven of painted byssus, silkiest
Tufting the Tyrrhene whelk's pearl-sheeted lip,
Left welter where a trireme let it slip
F the sea, and vexed a satrap; so the stam
O' the world forsakes Sordello, with its pain,
Its pleasure: how the tinct loosening es-capes,
Cloud after cloud! Mantua's familiar shapes
Die, fair and J bul die, fading as they flit,
Men, women, ind the pathos and the wit,
Wise speech and foolish, deeds to smile or sigh
For, good, bad, seemly or ignoble, die.
The last face glances through the eglan-tines,
The last voice murmurs, 'twixt the blos-somed vines,
Of Men, of that machine supplied by thought
To compass self-perception with, he sought
Ey forcing half himself—an insane pubs
Of a god's blood, on clay *it* could con-vulse,
Never transmute—on human sights and sounds,
To watch the other half with; irksome bounds
It ebbs from to its source, a fountain sealed
Forever. Better sure be unrevealed
Than part revealed: Sordello well or ill
Is finished: then what further use of Will,
Point in the prime idea not realized,
An oversight? inordinately prized,
No less, and pampered with enough of each
Delight to prove the whole above its reach.
'To need become all natures, yet retain
'The law of my own nature—to remain
'Myself, yet y e a r n... as if that chestnut, think,
'Should yearn for this first larch-bloom crisp and pink,
' Or those pale fragrant tears where zephyrs stanch
'March wounds along the fretted pine-tree branch!
'Will and the means to show will, great and small,
'Material, spiritual,—abjure them all
'Save any so distinct, they may be left
'To amuse, not tempt become! and, thus bereft,
'Just as I first was fashioned would I be!
'Nor, moon, is it Apollo now, but me
'Thou visitest to comfort and befriend!
'Swim thou into my heart, and there an end,
' Since I possess thee!—nay, thus shut mine eyes
'And know, quite know, by this heart's fall and rise,
'When thou dost bury thee in clouds, and when
'Out-standest: wherefore practise upon men
'To make that plainer to myself?'
Slide here
Over a sweet and solitary year
Wasted; or simply notice change in him—
How eyes, once with exploring bright, grew dim
And satiate with receiving. Some distress
Was caused, too, by a sort of consciousness.

Under the imbecility,—nought kept
That down; he slept, but was aware he slept,
So, frustrated: as who brainsick made pact
Erst with the overhanging cataract
To deafen him, yet still distinguished plain
His own blood's measured clicking at his brain.
To finish. One declining Autumn day—
Few birds about the heaven chill and grey,
No wind that cared trouble the tacit woods—
He sauntered home complacently, their moods
According, his and nature's. Every spark
Of Mantua life was trodden out; so dark
The embers, that the Troubadour, who sung
Hundreds of songs, forgot, its trick his tongue,
Its craft his brain, how either brought to pass
Singing at all; that faculty might class
With any of Apollo'snow. The year
Began to find its early promise sere
As well. Thus beauty vanishes; thus stone
Outlingers flesh: nature's and his youth gone,
They left the world to you, and wished you joy.
When, stopping his benevolent employ,
A presage shuddered through the welkin; harsh
The earth's remonstrance followed. 'Twas the marsh
Gone of a sudden. Mincio, in its place,
Laughed, a broad water, in next morning's face,
And, where the mists broke up immense and white
F the steady wind, burned like a spilth of light
Out of the crashing of a myriad stars.
And here was nature, bound by the same bars
Of fate with him!
'No! youth once gone is gone;
'Deeds, let escape, are never to be done.
"Leaf-fall and grass-spring for the year; for us—
'Oh forfeit I unalterably thus
'My chance? nor two lives wait me, this to spend,
'Learning save that? Nature has time, may mend
'Mistake, she knows occasion will recur;
'Landslip or seabreach, how affects it her
'With her magnificent resources?—I
'Must perish once and perish utterly.
'Not any strollings now at even-close
'Down the field-path, Sordello! by thorn-rows
Alive with lamp-flies, swimming spots of fire
And dew, outlining the black cypress' spire
She waits you at, Elys, who heard you first
Woo her, the snow-month through, but ere she durst
Answer 'twas April. Linden-flower-tanie-long
Her eyes were on the ground; 'tis July, strong
Now; and because white dust-clouds overwhelm
The woodside, here or by the village elm
That holds the moon, she meets you, somewhat pale,
But letting you lift up her coarse flax *veil*
And whisper (the damp little hand in yours)
Of love, heart's love, your heart's love that endures
Till death. Tush! No mad mixing with the rout
Of haggard ribalds wandering about
The hot torchlit wine-scented island-house
Where Friedrich holds his wickedest carouse,
Parading,—to the gay Palermitans,
Soft Messinese, dusk Saracenic clans
Nuocera holds,—those tall grave dazzling Norse,
High-cheeked, lank-haired, toothed whiter than the morse,
Queens of the caves of jet stalactites,
He sent his barks to fetch through icy seas,
The blind night seas without a saving star,
And here in snowy birdskin robes they are,
Sordello!—here, mollitious alcoves gilt
Superb as Byzant domes that devils built!
—Ah, Byzant, there again! no chance to go
Ever like august cheery Dandolo,
Worshipping hearts about him for a wall,
Conducted, blind eyes, hundred years and all,
Through vanquished Byzant where friends note for him
What pillar, marble massive, sardius slim.
'Twere fittest he transport to Venice Square—
Flattered and promised life to touch them there
Soon, by those fervid sons of senators!
No more lifes, deaths, loves, .hatreds, peaces, wars!
Ah, fragments of a whole ordained to be,
Points in the life I waited! what are ye
But roundels of a ladder which appeared
Awhile the very platform it was reared
To lift me on?—that happiness I find
Proofs of my faith in, even in the blind

'Instinct which bade forego you all unless
' Ye led me past yourselves. Ay, happiness
'Awaited me; the way life should be used
[1]'Was to acquire, and deeds like you conduced
'To teach it by a self-revealment, deemed
* Life's very use, so long! Whatever seemed
'Progress to that, was pleasure; aught that stayed
' My reaching it—no pleasure. I have laid
'The ladder down; I climb not; still, aloft
'The platform stretches! Blisses strong and soft,
'I dared not entertain, elude me; yet
'Never of what they promised could I get
'A glimpse till now! The common sort, the crowd,
'Exist, perceive; with Being are endowed,
'However slight, distinct from what they See,
'However bounded; Happiness must be,
'To feed the first by gleanings from the last,
'Attain its qualities, and slow or fast
'Become what they behold; such peace-in-strife,
' By transmutation, is the Use of Life,
'The Alien turning Native to the soul
' Or body—which instructs me; I am whole
'There and demand a Palma; had the world
'Been from my soul to a like distance hurled,
' 'Twere Happiness to make it one with me:
* Whereas I must, ere I begin to Be,
' Include a world, in flesh, I comprehend
'in spirit now; and this done, what's to blend
'With? Nought is Alien in the world—my Will
'Owns all already; yet can turn it—still
' Less—Native, since my Means to correspond
'With Will are so unworthy, 'twas my bond
'To tread the very joys that tantalize
'Most now, into a grave, never to rise.
'I dae then! Will the rest agree to die?
'Next Age or no? Shall its Sordello try
' Clue after clue, and catch at last the clue
* I miss ?—that's underneath my finger too,
'Twice, thrice a day, perhaps,—some yearning traced
'Deeper, some petty consequence embraced
'Closer! Why fled I Mantua, then?—complained
'So much my Will was fettered, yet remained
'Content within a tether half the range
'I could assign it?—able to exchange
' My ignorance (I felt) for knowledge, and
'Idle because I could thus understand—
'Could e'en have penetrated to its core
'Our mortal mystery, yet—fool—forboie,
'Preferred elaborating in the dark
'My casual stuff, by any wretched spark
'Bora of my predecessors, though one stroke
'Of mine had brought the flame forth! Mantua's yoke,
'Myminstrel's-trade, was to behold mankind,—
'My own concern was just to bring my mind
' Behold, just extricate, for my acquist,
'Each object suffered stifle in the mist
'Which hazard, custom, blindness interpose
'Betwixt tilings and myself.'
Whereat he rose.
The level wind carried above the firs
Clouds, the irrevocable travellers,
Onward.
'Pushed thus into a drowsy copse,
'Arms twine about my neck, each eyelid drops
'Under a humid finger; while there fleets,
' Outside the screen, a pageant time repeats
'Never again! To be deposed, immured
'Clandestinely—still petted, still assured
'To govern were fatiguing work—the Sight
'Fleeting meanwhile! 'Tis noontide: wreak ere night
'Somehow my will upon it, rather! Slake
'This thirst somehow, the poorest impress take
' That serves! A blasted bud displays you, torn,
' Faint rudiments of the full flower unborn;
'But who divines what glory coats o'erclasp
'Of the bulb dormant in the mummy's grasp
'Taurello sent?*...
'Taurello? Palma sent
'Your Trouvere,' (Naddo interposing leant
Over the lost bard's shoulder)—'and, believe,
'You cannot more reluctantly receive
'Than I pronounce her message: we depart
'Together. What avail a poet's heart
' Verona's pomps and gauds ? five blades of grass
'Suffice him. News? Why, where your marish was,
'On its mud-banks smoke rises after smoke
'I' the valley, like a spout of hell newbroke.
'Oh, the world's tidings! small your thanks, I guess,
'For them. The father of our Patroness,
'Has played Taurello an astounding trick,
'Parts between Ecelin and Alberic

His wealth and goes into a convent: both
'Wed Guelfs: the Count and Palma plighted troth
'A week since at Verona: and they want
* You doubtless to contrive the marriage-chant
'Ere Richard storms Ferrara.' Then was told
The tale from the beginning—how, made bold
By Salinguerra's absence, Guelfs had burned
And pillaged till he unawares returned
To take revenge: how Azzo and his friend
Were doing their endeavour, how the end
O' the siege was nigh, and how the Count, released
From further care, would with his marriage-feast
Inaugurate a new and better rule,
Absorbing thus Romano.
' Shall I school
* My master,' added Naddo,' and suggest
'How you may clothe in a poetic vest
'These doings, at Verona? Your response
'To Palma! Wherefore jest? "Depart at once?"
'A good resolve! In truth, I hardly hoped
'So prompt an acquiescence. Have you groped
'Out wisdom in the wilds here?—thoughts may be
'Over-poetical for poetry.
'Pearl-white, you poets liken Palma's neck;
'And yet what spoils an orient like some speck
'Of genuine white, turning its own white grey?
you takeme? Curse the cicala!'
One more day,
One eve—appears Verona! Many a group,
you mind) instructed of the osprey's swoop
On lynx and ounce, was gathering—Christendom
Sure to receive, whate'er the end was, from
The evening's purpose cheer or detriment,
Since Friedrich only waited some event
Like this, of Ghibellins establishing
Themselves within Ferrara, ere, as King
Of Lombardy, he'd glad descend there, wage
Old warfare with the Pontiff, disengage
His barons from the burghers, and restore
The rule of Charlemagne, broken of yore
By Hildebrand.
I' the palace, each by each,
Sordello sat and Palma: little speech
At first in that dim closet, face with face
(Despite the tumult in the market-place)
Exchanging quick low laughters: now would rush
Word upon word to meet a sudden flush,
A look left off, a shifting lips' surmise—
But for the most part their two histories
Ran best thro' the locked fingers and linked arms.
And so the night flew on with its alarms
Till in burst one of Palma's retinue;
'Now, Lady!" gasped he. Then arose the two
And leaned into Verona's air, dead-still.
A balcony lay black beneath until
Out, 'mid a gush of torchfire, grey-haired men
Came on it and harangued the people: then
Sea-like that people surging to and fro
Shouted, 'Hale forth the carroch—trumpets, ho,
'A flourish! Run it in the ancient grooves!
'Back from the bell! Hammer—that whom behoves
'May hear the League is up! Peal—learn who list,
'Verona means not first of towns break tryst
'To-morrow with the League!*
Enough. Now turn—
Over the eastern cypresses: discern 1
Is any beacon set a-glimmer?
Rang
The air with shouts that overpowered the clang
Of the incessant carroch, even: 'Haste—
'The candle's at the gateway! ere *it* waste,
'Each soldier stand beside it, armed to march
'With Tiso Sampier through the eastern arch!'
Ferrara's succoured, Palma!
Once again
They sat together; some strange thing in train
To say, so difficult was Palma's place
In taking, with a coy fastidious grace
Like the oird's flutter ere it fix and feed.
But when she felt she held her friend indeed
Safe, she threw back her curls, began implant
Her lessons; telling of another want
Goito's quiet nourished than his own;
Palma—to serve him—to be served, alone
Importing; Agnes' milk so neutralized
The blood of Ecelin. Nor be surprised
If, while Sordello fain had captive led
Nature, in dream was Palma subjected
To some out-soul, which dawned not though she pined
Delaying, till its advent, heart and mind
Their life. 'How dared I let expand the force
'Within me, till some out-soul, whose resource
'It grew for, should direct it? **Every** law
'Of life, its **every fitness, every flaw.**

•Must One determine whose corporeal shape ,„.
'Would be no other than the prime escape
'And revelation to me of a Will
'Orb-like o'ershrouded and inscrutable
'Above, save at the point which, I should know,
'Shone that myself, my powers, might overflow
'So far, so much: as now it signified
'Which earthly shape it henceforth chose my guide,
'Whose mortal lip selected to declare
' Its oracles, what fleshly garb would wear
'—The first of intimations, whom to love;
' The next, how love him. Seemed that orb, above
' The castle-covert and the mountain-close,
'Slow in appearing?—if beneath it rose
' Cravings, aversions,—did our green precinct
'Take pride in me, at unawares distinct
' With this or that endowment,—how, repressed
' At once, such jetting power shrank to the rest!
[c] Was I to have a chance touch spoil me, leave
' My spirit thence unfitted to receive
'The consummating spell?—that spell so near
'Moreover! "Waits he not the waking year?
'"His almond-blossoms must be honey-ripe
'"By this; to welcome him, fresh runnels stripe
'" The thawed ravines; because of him, the wind
'"Walks like a herald. I shall surely find
"'Him now!"
'And chief, that earnest April morn
'Of Richard's Love-court, was it time, so worn
'And white my cheek, so idly my blood beat,
'Sitting that morn beside the Lady's feet
'And saying as she prompted; till outburst
' One face from all the faces. Not then first
'I knew it; where in maple chamber glooms,
• Crowned with what sanguine-heart pomegranate blooms,
'Advanced it ever? Men's acknowledgment
'Sanctioned my own: 'twas taken, Palma's bent,—
'Sordello,—recognized, accepted.
'Dumb
•Sat she still scheming. Ecelin would come
'**Gaunt,** scared," Cesano baffles me," he'd say:
'•*Better I fought it out, my father's way!
'"Strangle Ferrara in its drowning flats,
"'And you and your Taurello yonder!—what's
'"Romano's business there?" An hour's concern
'To cure the fro ward Chief!—induce return
'As heartened from those overmeaning eyes,
' Wound up to persevere,—his enterprise
' Marked out anew, its exigent of wit
'Apportioned,—she at liberty to sit
'And scheme against the next emergence,

'To covet her Taurello-sprite, made fly
'Or fold the wing—to con your horoscope
'For leave command those steely shafts shoot ope,
'Or straight assuage their blinding eagerness
[J] In blank smooth snow. What semblance of success
'To any of my plans for making you
* Mine and Romano's? Break the first wall through,
' Tread o'er the ruins of the Chief, supplant
'His sons beside, still, vainest were the vaunt:
'There, Salinguerra would obstruct me sheer,
'And the insuperable Tuscan, here,
' Stay me! But one wild eve that Lady died
' In her lone chamber: only I beside:
'Taurello far at Naples, and my sire
'At Padua, Ecelin away in ire
'With Alberic. She held me thus—a clutch
' To make our spirits as our bodies touch—
'And so began flinging the past up, heaps
'Of uncouth treasure from their sunless sleeps
'Within her soul; deeds rose along with dreams,
'Fragments of many miserable schemes,
'Secrets, more secrets, then—no, not the last—
''Mongst others, like a casual trick o' the past,
'How . . . ay, she told me, gathering up her face,
'All left of it, into one arch-grimace
'To die with . . .
'Friend, 'tis gone! but not the fear
'Of that fell laughing, heard as now I hear.
'Nor faltered voice, nor seemed her heart grow weak
'When i' the midst abrupt she ceased to speak
'—Dead, as to serve a purpose, mark!—or in
'Rushed o' the very instant Ecelin
'**(How** summoned, who divines?)—looking as if
'He understood why Adelaide lay stiff

'Already in my arms; for "Girl, how must
' " I manage Este in the matter thrust
'" Upon me, how unravel y^ur bad coil ?—
'"Since " (he declared) " 'tis on your brow
—a soil
'"Like hers there!" then in the same
breath, "he lacked
*" No counsel after all, had signed no pact
4"With devils, nor was treason here or
there,
'"Goito or Vicenza, his affair:
'"He buried it in Adelaide's deep grave,
'" Would begin life afresh, now,—would
not slave
'" For any Friedrich's nor Taurello's sake!
'"What booted him to meddle or to
make
*" In Lombardy ? " And afterward I knew
'The meaning of his promise to undo
'All she had done—why marriages were
made,
' New friendships entered on, old followers
paid
' With curses for their pains,—new friends'
amaze
'At height, when, passing out by Gate
Saint Blaise,
' He stopped short in Vicenza, bent his head
'Over a friar's neck,—"had vowed," he
said,
'"Long since, nigh thirty years, because
his wife
'"And child were saved there, to bestow
his life
'"On God, his gettings on the Church."
'Exiled
'Within Goito, still one dream beguiled
'My days and nights; 'twas found, the orb
I sought
'To serve, those glimpses came of Fomal-
haut,
'No other: but how serve it?—authorize
'You and Romano mingle destinies?
'And straight Romano's angel stood be-
side
4 Me who had else been Boniface's bride,
'For Salinguerra 'twas, with neck low
bent,
'And voice lightened to music, (as he meant
'To learn, not teach me,) who withdrew
the pall
'From the dead past and straight revived
it all,
* Making me see how first Romano waxed,
'Wherefore he waned now, why, if I re-
laxed
*My grasp (even I!) would drop a thing
effete,
'Frayed by itself, unequal to complete
'Its course, and counting every step astray
'A gain so much. Romano, every way
'Stable, a Lombard House now—why
start back
'**Into** the very outset of its track?
'This patching principlo which late allied
'Our House with other Houses—what be-
side
'Concerned the apparition, the first Knight
'Who followed Conrad hither in such
plight
'His utmost wealth was summed in his one
steed?
'For Ecelo, that prowler, was decreed
'A task, in the beginning hazardous
'To him as ever task can be to us;
'But did the weather-beaten thief despair
'When first our crystal cincture of warm air
'That binds the Trevisan,—as its spice-belt
'(Crusaders say) the tract where Jesus
dwelt,—
' Furtive he pierced, and Este was to face—
'Despaired Saponian strength of Lom-
bard grace?
' Tried he at making surer aught made sure,
'Maturing what already was mature?
' No; his heart prompted Ecelo, "Confront
'"Este, inspect yourself. What's nature?
Wont.
'"Discard three-parts your nature, and
adopt
' "The rest as an advantage!" Old strength
propped
'The man who first grew Podesta among
'The Vicentines, no less than, while there
sprung
'His palace up in Padua like a threat,
'Their noblest spied a grace, unnoticed yet
'In Conrad's crew. Thus far the object
gained,
'Romano was established—has re-
mained—
'"For are you not Italian, truly peers
'" With Este ? *Azzo* better soothes our ears
'"Than *Albericl* or is this lion's-crine
'"From over-mounts" (this yellow hair
of mine)
'" So weak a graft on Agnes Este's stock ?"
'(Thus went he on with something of a
mock)
'"Wherefore recoil, then, from the very
fate
'"Conceded you, refuse to imitate
' "Your model farther? Este long since left
'"Being mere Este: as a blade its heft,
'"Este required the Pope to further him:
'"And you, the Kaiser — whom your
father's whim
'"Foregoes or, better, never shall forego
' "If Palma dare pursue what Ecelo
'"Commenced, but Ecelin desists from:
just
'"As Adelaide of Susa could intrust
'"Her donative,—her Piedmont given the
Pope,
'"Her Alpine-pass for him to shut or ope
'" 'Twixt France and Italy,—to the superb
'"Matilda's perfecting,—so, **lest aught**
curb

'"Our Adelaide's great counter-project for
'"Giving her Trentine to the Emperor
'"With passage here from Germany,—shall you
'"Take it,—my slender plodding talent, too!"
'—Urged me Taurello with his half-smile. 'He
'As Patron of the scattered family
' Conveyed me to his Mantua, kept in bruit
'Azzo's alliances and Richard's suit
'Until, the Kaiser excommunicate,
'"Nothing remains," Taurello said, "but wait
'"Some rash procedure: Palma was the link,
' "As Agnes' child, between us, and they shrink
'"From losing Palma: judge if we advance,
'"Your father's method, your inheritance!"
'The day I was betrothed to Boniface
'At Padua by Taurello's self, took place
'The outrage of the Ferrarese: again,
'The day I sought Verona with the train
'Agreed for,—by Taurello's policy
'Convicting Richard of the fault, since we
' Were present to annul or to confirm,—
'Richard, whose patience had outstayed its term,
'Quitted Verona for the siege. 'And now
' What glory may engird Sordello's brow
'Through this? A month since at Oliero slunk
'All that was Ecelin into a monk;
'But how could Salinguerra so forget
' His liege of thirty years as grudge even yet
'One effort to recover him? He sent
'Forthwith the tidings of this last event
'To Ecelin—declared that he, despite
'The recen' folly, recognized his right
'To order Salinguerra: "Should he wring
'"Its uttermost advantage out, or fling
'"This chance away? Or were his sons now Head
'" O' the House ?" Through me Taurello's missive sped;
' My father's answer will by me return.
' Behold! " For him," he writes," no more concern
'"With strife than, for his children, with fresh plots
"'Of Friedrich. Old engagements out he blots
'"For aye: Taurello shall no more subserve,
'"Nor Ecelin impose." Lest this unnerve
'Taurello at this juncture, slack his grip
' Of Richard, suffer the occasion slip,—
'L in his sons* default (who. mating with
'Este, forsake Romano as the frith
'Its mainsea for that firmland, sea makes head
'Against) I stand, Romano,—in their stead
'Assume the station they desert, and give
'Still, as the Kaiser's representative,
'Taurello licence he demands. Midnight—
'Morning—by noon to-morrow, making light
' Of the League's issue, we, in some gay weed
'Like yours, disguised together, may precede
'The arbitrators to Ferrara: reach
'Him, let Taurello's noble accents teach
' The rest! Then say if I have misconceived
'Your destiny, too readily believed
'The Kaiser's cause your own!' And Palma's fled.
Though no affirmative disturbs the head,
A dying lamp-flame sinks and rises o'er,
Like the alighted planet Pollux wore,
Until, morn breaking, he resolves to be
Gate-vein of this heart's blood of Lombardy,
Soul of this body—to wield this aggregate
Of souls and bodies, and so conquer fate
Though he should live—a centre of disgust
Even—apart, core of the outward crust
He vivifies, assimilates. For thus
I bring Sordello to the rapturous
Exclaim at the crowd's cry, because one round
Of life was quite accomplished; and he found
Not only that a soul, whate'er its might,
Is insufficient to its own delight,
Both in corporeal organs and in skill
By means of such to body forth its Will—
Aiid, after, insufficient to apprise
Men of that Will, oblige them recognize
The Hid by the Revealed—but that,—the last
Nor lightest of the struggles overpast,—
Will, he bade abdicate, which would not void
The throne, might sit there, suffer be enjoyed
Mankind, a varied and divine array
Incapable of homage, the first way,
Nor fit to render incidentally
Tribute connived at, taken by the by,
In joys. If thus with warrant to rescind
The ignominious exile of mankind—
Whose proper service, ascertained intact
As yet, (to be by him themselves made act,
Not watch Sordello acting each of them)
Was to secure—if the true diadem
Seemed imminent while our Sordello drank
The wisdom of that golden Palma,—thank
Verona's Lady in her citadel
Founded by Gaulish Brennus, legends tell:

And truly when she left him, the sun reared
A head like the first clamberer's who peered
A-top the Capitol, his face on flame
With triumph, triumphing till Manlius came.
Nor slight too much my rhymes—that spring, dispread,
Dispart, disperse, lingering overhead
Like an escape of angels! Rather say,
My transcendental platan! mounting gay
(An archimage so courts a novice-queen)
With tremulous silvered trunk, whence branches sheen
Laugh out, thick-foliaged next, a-shiver soon
With coloured buds, then glowing like the moon
One mild flame,—last a pause, a burst, and all
Her ivory limbs are smothered by a fall,
Bloom-flinders and fruit-sparkles and leaf-dust,
Ending the weird work prosecuted just
For her amusement; he decrepit, stark,
Dozes; her uncontrolled delight may mark
Apart—
Yet not so, surely never so
Only, as good my soul were suffered go
O'er the lagune: forth fare thee, put aside—
Entrance thy synod, as a god may glide
Out of the world he fills, and leave it mute
For myriad ages as we men compute,
Returning into it without a break
O' the consciousness! They sleep, and I awake
O'er the lagune, being at Venice.
Note,
In just such songs as Eglamor (say) wrote
With heart and soul and strength, for he believed
Himself achieving all to be achieved
By singer—in such songs you find alone
Completeness, judge the song and singer one,
And either purpose answered, his in it
Or its in him: while from true works (to wit
Sordello's dream-performances that will
Never be more than dreamed) escapes there still
Some proof, the singer's proper life was 'neath
The life his song exhibits, this a sheath
To that; a passion and a knowledge far
Transcending these, majestic as they are,
Smouldered; his lay was but an episode
In the bard's life: which evidence you owed
To some slight weariness, some looking-off
Or start-away. The childish skit or scoff
In 'Charlemagne,' (his poem, dreamed divine
In every point except one silly line
About the restiff daughters)—what may lurk
In that? 'My life commenced before this work,'
(So I interpret the significance
Of the bard's start aside and look askance)
'My life continues after: on I fare
'With no more stopping, possibly, no care
'To note the undercurrent, the why and how,
'Where, when, o' the deeper life, as thus just now.
'But, silent, shall I cease to live? Alas
'For you! who sigh, "When shall it come to pass
'"We read that story? How will he compress
'" The future gains, his life's true business,
'"Into the better lay which—that one flout,
'"Howe'er inopportune it be, lets out—
'"Engrosses him already, though professed
'"To meditate with us eternal rest,
'"And partnership in all his life has found ?"'
'Tis but a sailor's promise, weather-bound:
'Strike sail, slip cable, here the bark be moored
'For once, the awning stretched, the poles assured!
'Noontide above; except the wave's crisp dash,
'Or buzz of colibri, or tortoise' splash,
'The margin's silent: out with every spoil
'Made in our tracking, coil by mighty coil,
'This serpent of a river to his head
'I ' the midst! Admire each treasure, as we spread
'The bank, to help us tell our history
'Aright: give ear, endeavour to descry
'The groves of giant rushes, how they grew
'Like demons' endlong tresses we sailed through,
'What mountains yawned, forests to give us vent
'Opened, each doleful side, yet on we went
'Till... may that beetle (shake your cap) attest
'The springing of a land-wind from the West!'
—Wherefore? Ah yes, you frolic it to-day!
To-morrow, and, the pageant moved away
Down to the poorest tent-pole, we and you
Part company: no other may pursue
Eastward your voyage, be informed what fate
Intends, if triumph or decline await
The tempter of the everlasting steppe.
I muse this on a ruined palace-step
At Venice: why should I break off, nor sit
Longer upon my step, exhaust the fit

England gave birth to? Who's adorable
Enough reclaim a——no Sordello's Will
Alack!—be queen to me ? That Bassanese
Busied among her smoking fruit-boats? These
Perhaps from our delicious Asolo
Who twinkle, pigeons o'er the portico
Not prettier, bind June lilies into sheaves
To deck the bridge-side chapel, dropping leaves
Soiled by their own loose gold-meal? Ah, beneath
The cool arch stoops she, brownest cheek! Her wreath
Endures a month—a half-month—if I make
A queen of her, continue for her sake
Sordello's story? Nay, that Paduan girl
Splashes with barer legs where a live whirl
In the dead black Giudecca proves seaweed
Drifting has sucked down three, four, all indeed
Save one pale-red striped, pale-blue turbaned post
For gondolas.
You sad dishevelled ghost
That pluck at me and point, are you advised
I breathe? Let stay those girls (e'en her disguised
—Jewels i' the locks that love no crownet like
Their native field-buds and the green wheat-spike,
So fair!—who left this end of June's turmoil,
Shook off, as might a lily its gold soil,
Pomp, save a foolish gem or two, and free
In dream, came join the peasants o'er the sea.)
Look they too happy, too tricked out? Confess
There is such niggard stock of happiness
To share, that, do one's uttermost, dear wretch,
One labours ineffectually to stretch
It o'er you so that mother and children, both
May equitably flaunt the sumpter-cloth!
Divide the robe yet farther: be content
With seeing just a score pre-eminent
Through shreds of it, acknowledged happy wights,
Engrossing what should furnish all, by rights!
For, these in evidence, you clearlier claim
A like garb for the rest,—grace all, the same
As these my peasants. I ask youth and strength
And health for each of you, not more—at length
Grown wise, who asked at home that the whole race
Might add the spirit's to the body's grace,
And all be dizened out as chiefs and bards.
But *in* this magic weather one discards
Much old requirement. Venice seems a type
Of Life—'twixt blue and blue extends, a stripe,
As Life, the somewhat, hangs 'twixt nought and nought:
'Tis Venice, and 'tis Life—as good you sought
To spare me the Piazza's slippery stone
Or keep me to the unchoked canals alone,
As hinder Life the evil with the good
Which make up Living, rightly understood.
Only, do finish something! Peasants, queens,
Take them, made happy by whatever means,
Parade them for the common credit, vouch
That a luckless residue, we sent to crouch
In corners out of sight, was just as framed
For happiness, its portion might have claimed
As well, and so, obtaining joy, had stalked
Fastuous as any!—such my project, baulked
Already; I hardly venture to adjust
The first rags, when you find me. To mistrust
Me!—nor unreasonably. You, no doubt,
Have the true knack of tiring suitors out
With those thin lips on tremble, lashless eyes
Inveterately tear-shot: there, be wise,
Mistress of mine, there, there, as if I meant
You insult!—shall your friend (not slave) be shent
For speaking home? Beside, care-bit erased
Broken-up beauties ever took my taste
Supremely; and I love you more, far more
Than her I looked should foot Life's temple-floor.
Years ago, leagues at distance, when and where
A whisper came, 'Let others seek!—thy care
'Is found, thy life's provision; if thy race
[1] Should be thy mistress, and into one face
[1] The many faces crowd?' Ah, had I, judge,
Or no, your secret? Rough apparel—grudge
All ornaments save tag or tassel worn
To hint we are not thoroughly forlorn—
Slouch bonnet, unloop mantle, careless go
Alone (that's saddest, but it must be so)
Through Venice, sing now and now glance aside,
Aught desultory or undignified,—

Then, ravishingest lady, will you pass
Or not each formidable group, the mass
Before the Basilic (that feast gone by,
God's great day of the Corpus Domini)
And, wistfully foregoing proper men,
Come timid up to me for alms ? And then
The luxury to hesitate, feign do
Some unexampled grace!—when, whom but you
Dare I bestow your own upon? And hear
Further before you say, it is to sneer
I call you ravishing; for I regret
Little that she, whose early foot was set
Forth as she'd plant it on a pedestal,
Now, i' the silent city, seems to fall
Toward me—no wreath, only a lip's unrest
To quiet, surcharged eyelids to be pressed
Dry of their tears uponmy bosom. Strange
Such sad chance should produce in thee such change,
My love! Warped souls and bodies! yet God spoke
Of right-hand, foot and eye—selects our yoke,
Sordello, as your poetship may find!
So, sleep upon my shoulder, child, nor mind
Their foolish talk; we'll manage reinstate
Your old worth; ask moreover, when they prate
Of evil men past hope, 'Don't each contrive,
* Despite the evil you abuse, to live?—
'Keeping, each losel, through a maze of lies,
' His own conceit of truth ? to which he hies
' By obscure windings, tortuous, if you will,
'But to himself not inaccessible;
' He sees truth, and his lies are for the crowd
'Who cannot see; some fancied right allowed
'His vilest wrong empowered the losel clutch
'One pleasure from a multitude of such
' Denied him.' Then assert, 'Allmen appear
'To think all better than themselves, by here
'Trusting a crowd they wrong; but really,' nay,
'All men think all men stupider than they,
'Since, save themselves, no other comprehends
'The complicated scheme to make amends
'—Evil, the scheme by which, thro' Ignorance.
'Good labours to exist.' A slight advance,—
Merely to find the sickness you die through,
And nought beside! but if one can't eschew
One's portion in the common lot, at least
One can avoid an ignorance increased
Tenfold by dealing out hint after hint
How nought were like dispensing without stint
The water of life—so easy to dispense
Beside, when one has probed the centre whence
Commotion's born—could tell you of it all!
'—Meantime, just meditate my madrigal
'O' the mugwort that conceals a dewdrop safe!'
What, dullard? we and you in smothery chafe,
Babes, baldheads, stumbled thus far into Zin
The Horrid,[1] getting neither out nor in,
A hungry sun above us, sands that bung
Our throats,—each dromedary lolls a tongue,
Each camel churns a sick and frothy chap,
And you, 'twixt tales of Potiphar's mishap,
And sonnets on the earliest ass chat spoke,
—Remark, you wonder any one needs choke
With founts about! Potsherd him, Gibeonites!
While awkwardly enough your Moses smites
The rock, though he forego his Promised Land
Thereby, have Satan claim his carcass, and
Figure as Metaphysic Poet... ah,
Mark ye the dim first oozings? Meribah !-
Then, quaffing at the fount my courage gained,
Recall—not that I prompt ye—who explained . ..
'Presumptuous!' interrupts one. You, not I
'Tis. brother, marvel at and magnify
Such office: 'office,' quotha? can we get
To the beginning of the office yet?
What do we here? simply experiment
Each on the other's power and its intent
When elsewhere tasked,—if this of mine were trucked
For yours to either's good,—we watch construct,
In short, an engine: with a finished one,
What it can do, is all,—nought, how 'tis done.
But this of ours yet in probation, dusk
A kernel of strange wheelwork through its husk
Grows into shape by quarters and by halves;
Remark this tooth's spring, wonder what that valve's
Fall bodes, presume each faculty's device,
Make out each other more or less precise—
The scope of the whole engine's to be proved;
We die: which means to say, the whole's removed,

[1] Isaiah xiii. 21, 22.
[8] Waters of Meribah, that is, of Strife See Exodus xvii. 7.

Dismounted wheel by wheel, this complex gin,—
To be set up anew elsewhere, begin
A task indeed, but with a clearer clime
Than the murk lodgment of our building-time.
And then, I grant you, it behoves forget
How 'tis done—all that must amuse us yet
So long: and, while you turn upon your heel,
Pray that I be not busy slitting steel
Or shredding brass, camped on some virgin shore
Under a cluster of fresh stars, before
I name a tithe o' the wheels I trust to do!
So occupied, then, are we: hitherto,
At present, and a weary while to come,
The office of ourselves,—nor blind nor dumb,
And seeing somewhat of man's state,—has been,
For the worst of us, to say they so have seen;
For the better, what it was they saw; the best
Impart the gift of seeing to the rest:
'So that I glance,' says such an one, 'around,
'And there's no face but I can read profound
'Disclosures in; this stands for hope, that —fear,
'And for a speech, a deed in proof, look here!
'' Stoop, else the strings of blossom, where the nuts
'"O'erarch, will blind thee! Said I not? She shuts
'"Both eyes this time, so close the hazels meet!
'"Thus, prisoned in the Piombi, I repeat
'"Events one rove occasioned, o'er and o'er,
'"Putting 'twixt me and madness evermore
'"Thy sweet shape, Zanze! Therefore stoop!"
'"That's truth!"
'(Adjudge you) "the incarcerated youth
'"Would say that!"
'Youth? Plara the bard? Set down
'That Plara spent his youth in a grim town
'Whose cramped ill-featured streets huddled about
'The minster for protection, never out
'Of its black belfry's shade and its bells' roar.
'The brighter shone the suburb,—all the more
'Ugly and absolute that shade's reproof
'Of any chance escape of joy,—some roof,
'Taller than they, allowed the rest detect,—
•Before the sole permitted laugh (suspect
'Who could, 'twas meant for laughter, that ploughed cheek's
'Repulsive gleam!) when the sun stopped both peaks
'Of the cleft belfry like a fiery wedge,
'Then sank, a huge flame on its socket edge,
'With leavings on the grey glass oriel-pane
'Ghastly some minutes more. No fear of rain—
'The minster minded that! in heaps the dust
'Lay everywhere. This town, the minster's trust,
'Held Plara; who, its denizen, bade hail
'In twice twelve sonnets, Tempe's dewy vale.'
'"Exact the town, the minster and the street!"'
'As all mirth triumphs, sadness means defeat:
'Lust triumphs and is gay, Love's triumphed o'er
'And sad: but Lucio's sad. I said before,
'Love's sad, not Lucio; one who loves may be
'As gay his love has leave to hope, as he
'Downcast that lusts' desire escapes the springe:
'Tis of the mood itself I speak, what tinge
'Determines it, else colourless,—or mirth.
'Or melancholy, as from heaven or earth.
'"Ay, that's the variation's gist!"
'Indeed?
'Thus far advanced in safety then, proceed!
'And having seen too what I saw, be bold
'And next encounter what I do behold
'(That's sure) but bid you take on trust!'
Attack
The use and purpose of such sights! Alack,
Not so unwisely does the crowd dispense
On Salinguerras praise in preference
To the Sordellos: men of action, these!
Who, seeing just as little as you please,
Yet turn that little to account,—engage
With, do not gaze at,—carry on, a stage,
The work o' the world, not merely make report
The work existed ere their day! In short,
When at some future no-time a brave band
Sees, using what it sees, then shake my hand
In heaven, my brother! Meanwhile where's the hurt
Of keeping the Makers-see on the alert,
At whose defection mortals stare aghast
As though heaven's bounteous windows were slammed fast
Incontinent? Whereas all you, beneath,
Should scowl at, bruise their lips and break their teeth
Who ply the pullies, for neglecting you:
And therefore have I moulded, made anew

A Man, and give him to be turned and tried,
Be angry with or pleased at. On your side,
Have ye times, places, actors of your own?
Try them upon Sordello when full-grown,
And then—ah then! If Hercules first parched
His foot in Egypt only to be marched
A sacrifice for Jove with pomp to suit,
What chance have I? The demigod was mute
Till, at the altar, where time out of mind
Such guests became oblations, chaplets twined
His forehead long enough, and he began
Slaying the slayers, nor escaped a man.
Take not affront, my gentle audience! whom
No Hercules shall make his hecatomb,
Believe, nor from his brows your chaplet rend—
That's your kind suffrage, yours, my patron-friend,
Whose great verse blares unintermittent on
Like your own trumpeter at Marathon,—
You who, Plataea and Salamis being scant,
Put up with *Ætna.* for a stimulant—
And did well, I acknowledged, as he loomed
Over the midland sea last month, presumed
Long, lay demolished in the blazing West
At eve, while towards him tilting cloudlets pressed
Like Persian ships at Salamis. Friend, wear
A crest proud as desert while I declare
Had I a flawless ruby fit to wring
Tears of its colour from that painted king[1]
Who lost it, I would, for that smile which went
To my heart, fling it in the sea, content,
Wearing your verse in place, an amulet
Sovereign against all passion, wear and fret!
My English Eyebright, if you are not glad
That, as I stopped my task awhile, the sad
Dishevelled form, wherein I put mankind
To come at times and keep my pact in mind,
Renewed me,—hear no crickets in the hedge,
Nor let a glowworm spot the river's edge
At home, and may the summer showers gush
Without a warning from the missel thrush!
So, to our business, now—the fate of such
As find our common nature—overmuch
Despised because restricted and unfit
To bear the burthen they impose on it—
Cling when they would discard it; craving strength
To leap from the allotted world, at length
They do leap,—flounder on without a term,
Each a god's germ, doomed to remain a germ
In unexpanded infancy, unless .. •
But that's the story—dull enough, confess!
There might be fitter subjects to allure;
Still, neither misconceive my portraiture
Nor undervalue its adornments quaint:
What seems a fiend perchance may prove a saint.
Ponder a story ancient pens transmit,
Then say if you condemn me or acquit,
John the Beloved, banished Antioch
For Patmos, bade collectively his flock
Farewell, but set apart the closing eve
To comfort those his exile most would grieve,
He knew: a touching spectacle, that house
In motion to receive him! Xanthus' spouse
You missed, made panther's meat a month since; but
Xanthus himself (his nephew 'twas, they shut
'Twixt boards and sawed asunder) Polycarp,
Soft Charicle, next year no wheel could warp
To swear by Caesar's fortune, with the rest
Were ranged; thro' whom the grey disciple pressed,
Busily blessing right and left, just stopped
To pat one infant's curls, the hangman cropped
Soon after, reached the portal. On its hinge
The door turns and he enters: what quick twinge
Ruins the smiling mouth, those wide eyes fix
Whereon, why like some spectral candlestick's
Branch the disciple's arms ? Dead swooned he, woke
Anon, heaved sigh, made shift to gasp, heart-broke,
' Get thee behind me, Satan! Have I toiled
' To no more purpose ? Is the gospel foiled
'Here too, and o'er my son's, my Xanthus' hearth,
'Portrayed with sooty garb and features swarth—
'Ah, Xanthus, am I to thy roof beguiled
'To see the—the—the Devil domiciled?'
Whereto sobbed Xanthus, 'Father, 'tis yourself
* Installed, a limning which our utmost pelf
'Went to procure against to-morrow's loss;
'And that's no twy-prong, but a pastoral cross,
'You're painted with!'
His puckered brows unfold—
And you shall hear Sordello's story told.

[1] Polycratcs of Saraos.

BOOK THE FOURTH

MEANTIME Ferrara lay in rueful case;
The lady-city, for whose sole embrace
Her pair of suitors struggled, felt their arms
A brawny mischief to the fragile charms
They tugged for—one discovering that to twist
Her tresses twice or thrice about his wrist
Secured a point of vantage—one, how best
He'd parry that by planting in her breast
His elbow spike—each party too intent
For noticing, howe'er the battle went,
The conqueror would but have a corpse to kiss.
'May Boniface be duly damned for this!'
—Howled some old Ghibellin, as up he turned,
From the wet heap of rubbish where they burned
His house, a little skull with dazzling teeth:
'A boon, sweet Christ—let Salinguerra seethe
'In hell for ever, Christ, and let myself
'Be there to laugh at him!'—moaned some young Guelf
Stumbling upon a shrivelled hand nailed fast
To the charred lintel of the doorway, last
His father stood within to bid him speed.
The thoroughfares were overrun with weed
—Docks, quitchgrass, loathly mallows no man plants.
The stranger, none of its inhabitants
Crept out of doors to taste fresh air again,
And ask the purpose of a splendid train
Admitted on a morning; every town
Of the East League was come by envoy down
To treat for Richard's ransom: here you saw
The Vicentine, here snowy oxen draw
The Paduan carroch, its vermilion cross
On its white field. A-tiptoe o'er the fosse
Looked Legate Montelungo wistfully
After the flock of steeples he might spy
In Este's time, gone (doubts he) long ago
To mend the ramparts: sure the laggards know
The Pope's as good as here! They paced the streets
More soberly. At least, 'Taurello greets
'The League,' announced a pursuivant,—'will match
'Its courtesy, and labours to dispatch
'At earliest Tito, Friedrich's Pretor, sent
'On pressing matters from his post at Trent,
'With Mainard Count of Tyrol,—simply waits
'Their going to receive the delegates.'
'Tito!' Our delegates exchanged a glance,
And, keeping the main way, admired askance
The lazy engines of outlandish birth,
Couched like a king each on its bank of earth—
Arbalist, manganel and catapult;
While stationed by, as waiting a result,
Lean silent gangs of mercenaries ceased
Working to watch the strangers. 'This, at least,
'Were better spared; he scarce presumes gainsay
'The League's decision! Get our friend away
'And profit for the future: how else teach
'Fools 'tis not safe to stray within claw's reach
'Ere Salinguerra's final gasp be blown?
'Those mere convulsive scratches find the bone.
'Who bade him bloody the spent osprey's nare?'
The carrochs halted in the public square.
Pennons of every blazon once a-flaunt,
Men prattled, freelier that the crested gaunt
White ostrich with a horse-shoe in her beak
Was missing, and whoever chose might speak
'Ecelin' boldly out: so,—'Ecelin
'Needed his wife to swallow half the sin
'And sickens by himself: the devil's whelp,
'He styles his son, dwindles away, no help
'From conserves, your fine triple-curded froth
'Of virgin's blood, your Venice viper-broth—
'Eh? Jubilate!'—'Peace! no little word
'You utter here that's not distinctly heard
'Up at Oliero: he was absent sick
'When we besieged Bassano—who, i' the thick
'O' the work, perceived the progress Azzo made,
'Like Ecelin, through his witch Adelaide?
'She managed it so well that, night by night
'At their bed-foot stood up a soldier-sprite,
'First fresh, pale by-and-by without a wound,
'And, when it came with eyes filmed as in swound,
'They knew the place was taken.'—'Ominous
'That Ghibellins should get what cautelous
'Old Redbeard sought from Azzo's sire to wrench
'Vainly; Saint George contrived his town a trench
'O' the marshes, an impermeable bar.*
'—Young Ecelin is meant the tutelar
'Of Padua, rather; veins embrace upon
'His hand like Brenta and Bacchiglion.'
What now?—'The founts! God's bread, touch not a plank!
'A crawling hell of carrion—every tank

'Choke-full!—found out just now to Cino's cost—
•The same who gave Taurello up for lost,
'And, making no account of fortune's freaks,
'Refused to budge from Padua then, but sneaks
'Back now with Concorezzi: 'faith! they drag
' Their carroch to San Vitale, plant the flag
'On his own palace, so adroitly razed
'He knew it not; a sort of Guelf folk gazed
'And laughed apart; Cino disliked their air—
'Must pluck up spirit, show he does not care—
'Seats himself on the tank's edge—will begin
'To hum, *za, za, Cavaler Ecelin*—
'A silence; he gets warmer, clinks to chime,
'Now both feet plough the ground, deeper each time,
'At last, *za, za* and up with a fierce kick
'Comes his own mother's face caught by the thick
'Grey hair about his spur!'
Which means, they lift
The covering, Salinguerra made a shift
To stretch upon the truth; as well avoid
Further disclosures; leave them thus employed.
Our dropping Autumn morning clears apace,
And poor Ferrara puts a softened face
On her misfortunes. Let us scale this tall
Huge foursquare line of red brick garden-wall
Bastioned within by trees of every sort
On three sides, slender, spreading, long and short;
Each grew as it contrived, the poplar ramped,
The fig-tree reared itself,—but stark and cramped,
Made fools of, like tamed lions: whence, on the edge,
Running 'twixt trunk and trunk to smooth one ledge
Of shade, were shrubs inserted, warp and woof,
Which smothered up that variance. Scale the roof
Of solid tops, and o'er the slope you slide
Down to a grassy space level and wide,
Here and there dotted with a tree, but trees
Of rarer leaf, each foreigner at ease,
Set by itself: and in the centre spreads,
Borne upon three uneasy leopards' heads,
A laver, broad and shallow, one bright spirt
Of water bubbles in. The walls begirt
With trees leave off on either hand; pursue
Your path along a wondrous avenue
Those walls abut on, heaped of gleamy stone,
With aloes leering everywhere, grey-grown
From many a Moorish summer: how they wind
Out of the fissures! likelier to bind
The building than those rusted cramps which drop
Already in the eating sunshine. Stop,
You fleeting shapes above there! Ah, the pride
Or else despair of the whole country-side!
A range of statues, swarming o'er with wasps,
God, goddess, woman, man, the Greek rough-rasps
In crumbling Naples marble—meant to look
Like those Messina marbles Constance took
Delight in, or Taurello's self conveyed
To Mantua for his mistress, Adelaide,—
A certain font with caryatides
Since cloistered at Goito: only, these
Are up and doing, not abashed, a troop
Able to right themselves—who see you, stoop
Their arms o' the instant after you! Unplucked
By this or that, you pass; for they conduct
To terrace raised on terrace, and, between,
Creatures of brighter mould and braver mien
Than any yet, the choicest of the Isle
No doubt. Here, left a sullen breathing-while,
Up-gathered on himself the Fighter stood
For his last fight, and, wiping treacherous blood
Out of the eyelids just held ope beneath
Those shading fingers in their iron sheath,
Steadied his strengths amid the buzz and stir
Of the dusk hideous amphitheatre
At the announcement of his over-match
To wind the day's diversion up, dispatch
The pertinacious Gaul: while, limbs one heap,
The Slave, no breath in her round mouth, watched leap
Dart after dart forth, as her hero's car
Clove dizzily the solid of the war
—Let coil about his knees for pride in him.
We reach the farthest terrace, and the grim
San Pietro Palace stops us.
Such the state
Of Salinguerra's plan to emulate
Sicilian marvels, that his girlish wife
Retrude still might lead her ancient life
In her new home: whereat enlarged so much
Neighbours upon the novel princely touch

He took,—who here imprisons Boniface.
Here must the Envoys come to sue for grace;
And here, emerging from the labyrinth
Below, Sordello paused beside the plinth
Of the door-pillar.
He had really left
Verona for the cornfields (a poor theft
From the morass) where Este s camp was made;
The Envoys' march, the Legate's cavalcade—
All had been seen by him, but scarce as when,—
Eager for cause to stand aloof from men
At every point save the fantastic tie
Acknowledged in his boyish sophistry,—
He made account of such. A crowd,—he meant
To task the whole of it; each part's intent
Concerned him therefore: and, the more he pried,
The less became Sordello satisfied
With his own figure at the moment. Sought
He respite from his task? Descried he aught
Novel in the anticipated sight
Of all these livers upon all delight?
This phalanx, as of myriad points combined,
Whereby he still had imaged the mankind
His youth was passed in dreams of rivalling,
His age—in plans to prove at least such thing
Had been so dreamed,—which now he must impress
With his own will, effect a happiness
By theirs,—supply a body to his soul
Thence, and become eventually whole
With them as he had hoped to be without—
Made these the mankind he once raved about?
Because a few of them were notable,
Should all be figured worthy note? As well
Expect to find Taurello's triple line
Of trees a single and prodigious pine.
Real pines rose here and there; but, close among,
Thrust into and mixed up with pines, a throng
Of shrubs, he saw—a nameless common sort
O'erpast in dreams, left out of the report
And hurried into corners, or at best
Admitted to be fancied like the rest.
Reckon that morning's proper chiefs—how few!
And yet the people grew, the people grew,
Grew ever, as if the many there indeed,
More left behind and most who should succeed,—
Simply in virtue of their mouths and eyes,
Petty enjoyments and huge miseries,—
Mingled with, and made veritably great
Those chiefs: he overlooked not Maineard's state
Nor Concorezzi's station, but instead
Of stopping there, each dwindled to be head
Of infinite and absent Tyroiese
Or Paduans; startling all the more, that these
Seemed passive and disposed of, uncared for,
Yet doubtless on the whole (like Eglamor)
Smiling; for if a wealthy man decays
And out of store of robes must wear, ail days,
One tattered suit, alike in sun and shade,
'Tis commonly some tarnished gay brocade
Fit for a feast-night's flourish and no more:
Nor otherwise poor Misery from her store
Of looks is fain upgather, keep unfurled
For common wear as she goes through the world,
The faint remainder of some worn-out smile
Meant for a feast-night's service merely. While
Crowd upon crowd rose on Sordello thus,—
(Crowds no way interfering to discuss,
Much less dispute, life's joys with one employed
In envying them,—or, if they aught enjoyed,
Where lingered something indefinable
In every look and tone, the mirth as well
As woe, that fixed at once his estimate
Of the result, their good or bad estate)—
Old memories returned with new effect:
And the new body, ere he could suspect,
Cohered, mankind and he were really fused,
The new self seemed impatient to be used
By him, but utterly another way
Than that anticipated: strange to say,
They were too much below him, more in thrall
Than he, the adjunct than the principal.
What booted scattered units?—here a mind
And there, which might repay his own to find,
And stamp, and use?—a few, howe'er august,
If all the rest were grovelling in the dust?
No: first a mighty equilibrium, sure,
Should he establish, privilege procure
For all, the few had long possessed! He felt
An error, an exceeding error melt:
While he was occupied with Mantuan chants,
Behoved him think of men, and take their wants,

Such as he now distinguished every side,
As his own want whichmight be satisfied,—
And, after that, think of rare qualities
Of his own soul demanding exercise.
It followed naturally, through no claim
On their part, which made virtue of the aim
At serving them, on his,—that, past retrieve,
He felt now in their toils, theirs—nor could leave
Wonder how, in the eagerness to rule,
Impress his will on mankind, he (the fool!)
Had never even entertained the thought
That this his last arrangement might be fraught
With incidental good to them as well,
And that mankind's delight would help to swell
His own. So, if he sighed, as formerly
Because the merry time of life must fleet,
'Twas deeplier now,—for could the crowds repeat
Their poor experiences? His hand that shook
Was twice to be deplored. 'The Legate, look!
'With eyes, like fresh-blown thni3h-eggs on a thread,
'Faint-blue and loosely floating in his head,
'Large tongue, moist open mouth; and this long while
'That owner of the idiotic smile
'Serves them!'
He fortunately saw in time
His fault, however, and since the office prime
Includes the secondary—best accept
Both offices; Taurello, its adept,
Could teach him the preparatory one,
And how to do what he had fancied done
Long previously, ere take the greater task.
How render first these people happy ? Ask
The people's friends: for there must be one good,
One way to it—the Cause! He understood
The meaning now of Palma; why the jar
Else, the ado, the trouble wide and far
Of Guelfs and Ghibellins, the Lombard hope
And Rome's despair?—'twixt Emperor and Pope
The confused shifting sort of Eden tale—
Hardihood still recurring, still to fail—
That foreign interloping fiend, this free
And native overbrooding deity:
Yet a dire fascination o'er the palms
The Kaiser ruined, troubling even the calms
Of paradise; or, on the other hand,
The Pontiff, as the Kaisers understand,
One snake-like cursed of God to love the ground,
Whose heavy length breaks in the noon profound
Some saving tree—which needs the Kaiser, dressed
As the dislodging angel of that pest:
Yet flames that pest bedropped, flat head, full fold,
With coruscating dower of dyes. 'Behold
'The secret, so to speak, and master-spring
'O' the contest!—which of the two Powers shall bring
'Men good, perchance the most good: ay, it may
'Be that!—the question, which best knows the way.'
And hereupon Count Mainard strutted past
Out of San Pietro; never seemed the last
Of archers, slingers: and our friend began
To recollect strange modes of serving man—
Arbalist, catapult, brake, manganel,
And more. 'This way of theirs may,—who can tell?—
'Need perfecting,' said he: 'let all be solved
'At once! Taurello 'tis, the task devolved
'On late: confront Taurello!'
And at last
He did confront him. Scarce an hour had past
When forth Sordello came, older by years
Than at his entry. Unexampled fears
Oppressed him, and he staggered off, blind, mute
And deaf, like some fresh-mutilated brute,
Into Ferrara—not the empty town
That morning witnessed: he went up and down
Streets whence the veil had been stript shred by shred,
So that, in place of huddling with their dead
Indoors, to answer Salinguerra's ends,
Townsfolk make shift to crawl forth, sit like friends
With any one. A woman gave him choice
Of her two daughters, the infantile voice
Or the dimpled knee, for half a chain, his throat
Was clasped with; but an archer knew the coat—
Its blue cross and eight lilies,—bade beware
One dogging him in concert with the pan-
Though thrumming on the sleeve that hid his knife.
Night set in early, autumn dews were rife,
They kindled great fires while the Leaguers' mass
Began at every carroch: he must pass
Between the kneeling people. Presently
The carroch of Verona caught his eye
With purple trappings; silently he bent
Over its nre, when voices violent

Began, 'Affirm not whom the youth was like
'That struck me-from the porch: I did not strike
'Again: I too have chestnut hair; my kin
'Hate Azzo and stand up for Ecelin.
*Here, minstrel, drive bad thoughts away! Sing! Take
'My glove for guerdon!' And for that man's sake
He turned: 'A song of Eglamor's!'—scarce named,
When, 'Our Sordello's rather!'—all exclaimed;
'Is not Sordello famousest for rhyme?'
He had been happy to deny, this time,—
Profess as heretofore the aching head
And failing heart,—suspect that in his stead
Some true Apollo had the charge of them,
Was champion to reward or to condemn,
So his intolerable risk might shift
Or share itself; but Naddo's precious gift
Of gifts, he owned, be certain! At the close—
'I made that,' said he to a youth who rose
As if to hear: 'twas Palma through the band
Conducted him in silence by her hand.
Back now for Salinguerra. Tito of Trent
Gave place to Palma and her friend, who went
In turn at Montelungo's visit: one
After the other were they come and gone,—
These spokesmen for the Kaiser and the Pope,
This incarnation of the People's hope,
Sordello,—all the say of each was said;
And Salinguerra sat,—himself instead
Of these to talk with, lingered musing yet.
'Twas a drear vast presence-chamber roughly set
In order for the morning's use; full face,
The Kaiser's ominous sign-mark had first place,
The crowned grim twy-necked eagle, coarsely-blacked
With ochre on the naked wall; nor lacked
Romano's green and yellow either side;
But the new token Tito brought had tried
The Legate's patience—nay, if Palma knew
What Salinguerra almost meant to do
Until the sight of her restored his lip
A certain half-smile, three months* chieftainship
Had banished! Afterward, the Legate found
No change in him, nor asked what badge he wound
And unwound carelessly. Now sat the Chief
Silent as when our couple left, whose brief
Encounter wrought so opportune effect
In thoughts he summoned not, nor would reject,
Though time 'twas now if ever, to pause-fix
On any sort of ending: wiles and tricks
Exhausted, judge! his charge, the crazy town,
Just managed to be hindered crashing down—
His last sound troops ranged—care observed to post
His best of the maimed soldiers innermost—
So much was plain enough, but somehow struck
Him not before. And now with this strange luck
Of Tito's news, rewarding his address
So well, what thought he of?—how the success
With Friedrich's rescript there, would either hush
Old Ecelin's scruples, bring the manly flush
To his young son's white cheek, or, last, exempt
Himself from telling what there was to tempt?
No: that this minstrel was Romano's last
Servant—himself the first! Could he contrast
The whole!—that minstrel's thirty years just spent
In doing nought, their notablest event
This morning's journey hither, as I told—
Who yet was lean, outworn and really old,
A stammering awkward man that scarce dared raise
His eye before the magisterial gaze—
And Salinguerra with his fears and hopes
Of sixty years, his Emperors and Popes,
Cares and contrivances, yet, you would say,
'Twas a youth nonchalantly looked away
Through the embrasure northward o'er the sick
Expostulating trees—so agile, quick
And graceful turned the head on the broad chest
Encased in pliant steel, his constant vest,
Whence split the sun off in a spray of fire
Across the room; and, loosened of its tire
Of steel, that head let breathe the comely brown
Large massive locks discoloured as *if* a crown
Encircled them, so frayed the basnet where
A sharp white line divided clean the hair;
Glossy above, glossy below, it swept
Curling and fine about a brow thus kept
Calm, laid coat upon coat, marble and sound:
This was the mystic mark the Tuscan found,
Mused of, turned over books about. Square-faced,
No lion more; two vivid eyes, enchased

In hollows filled with many a shade and streak
Settling from the bold nose and bearded cheek.
Nor might the half-smile reach them that deformed
A lip supremely perfect else—unwarmed,
Unwidened, less or more; indifferent
Whether on trees or men his thoughts were bent,
Thoughts rarely, after all, in trim and train
As now a period was fulfilled again:
Of such, a series made his life, compressed
In each, one story serving for the rest—
How his life-streams rolling arrived at last
At the barrier, whence, were it once overpast,
They would emerge, a river to the end,—
Gathered themselves up, paused, bade fate befriend,
Took the leap, hung a minute at the height,
Then fell back to oblivion infinite:
Therefore he smiled. Beyond stretched garden-grounds
Where the late adversary, breaking bounds,
Had gained him an occasion, That above,
That eagle, testified he could improve
Effectually. The Kaiser's symbol lay
Beside his rescript, a new badge by way
Of baldric; while,—another tiling that marred
Alike emprise, achievement and reward,—
Ecelin's missive was conspicuous too.
What past life did those flying thoughts pursue?
As his, few names in Mantua half so old;
But at Ferrara, where his sires enrolled
It latterly, the Adelardi spared
No pains to rival them: both factions shared
Ferrara, so that, counted out, 'twould yield
A product very like the city's shield,
Half black and white, or Ghibellin and Guelf
As after Salinguerra styled himself
And Este who, till Marchesalla died,
(Last of the Adelardi)—never tried
His fortune there: with Marchesalla's child
Would pass,—could Blacks and Whites be reconciled
And young Taurello wed Linguetta,—wealth
And sway to a sole grasp. Each treats by stealth
Already: when the Guelfs, the Ravennese
Arrive, assault the Pietro quarter, seize
Linguetta, and are gonel Men's first dismay
Abated somewhat, hurries down, to lay
The after indignation, Boniface,
This Richard's father. ' Learn the full disgrace
'Averted, ere you blame us Guelfs, who rate
'Your Salinguerra, your sole potentate
'That might have been, 'mongst Este's valvassors—
'Ay, Azzo's—who, not privy to, abhors
'Our step' but we were zealous.' Azzo then
To do with! Straight a meeting of old men:
'Old Salinguerra dead, his heir a boy,
*What if we change our ruler and decoy
'The Lombard Eagle of the azure sphere
*With Italy to build in, fix him here,
*Settle the city's troubles in a trice?
'For private wrong, let public good suffice!'
In fine, young Salinguerra's staunchest friends
Talked of the townsmen making him amends,
Gave him a goshawk, and affirmed there was
Rare sport, one morning, over the green grass
A mile or so. He sauntered through the plain,
Was restless, fell to thinking, turned again
In time for Azzo's entry with the bride;
Count Boniface rode smirking at their side;
'She brings him half Ferrara,' whispers flew,
'And all Ancona! If the stripling knew!'
Anon the stripling was in Sicily
Where Heinrich ruled in right of Constance; he
Was gracious nor his guest incapable;
Each understood the other. So it fell,
One Spring, when Azzo, thoroughly at ease,
Had near forgotten by what precise degrees
He crept at first to such a downy seat,
The Count trudged over in a special heat
To bid him of God's love dislodge from each
Of Salinguerra's palaces,—a breach
Might yawn else, not so readily to shut,
For who was just arrived at Mantua but
The youngster, sword on thigh and tuft on chin,
With tokens for Celano, Ecelin,
Pistore, and the like! Next news,—no whit
Do any of Ferrara's domes befit
His wife of Heinrich's very blood: a band
Of foreigners assemble, understand
Garden-constructing, level and surround,
Build up and bury in. A last news crowned
The consternation: since his infant's birth,
He only waits they end his wondrous girth
Of trees that link San Pietro with Toma,
To visit Mantua. When the Podesta
Ecelin, at Vicenza, called his friend
Taurello thither, what could be their end
But to restore the Ghibellins' late Head,
The Kaiser helping? He with most to dread
From vengeance and reprisal, Azzo, there
With Boniface beforehand, as aware

Of plots in progress, gave alarm, expelled
Both plotters: but the Guelfs in triumph yelled ,..
Too hastily. The burning and the flight,
And how Taurello, occupied that night
With Ecelin, lost wife and son, I told:
—Not how he bore the blow, retained his hold,
Got friends safe through, left enemies the worst
O' the fray, and hardly seemed to care at first:
But afterward men heard not constantly
Of Salinguerra's House so sure to be!
Though Azzo simply gained by the event
A shifting of his plagues—the first, content
To fall behind the second and estrange
So far his nature, suffer such a change
That in Romano sought he wife and child,
And for Romano's sake seemed reconciled
To losing individual life, which shrunk
As the other prospered—mortised in his trunk;
Like a dwarf palm which wanton Arabs foil
Of bearing its own proper wine and oil,
By grafting into it the stranger-vine,
Which sucks its heart out, sly and serpentine.
Till forth one vine-palm feathers to the root,
And red drops moisten the insipid fruit.
Once Adelaide set on,—the subtle mate
Of the weak soldier, urged to emulate
The Church's valiant women deed for deed,
And paragon her namesake, win the meed
O' the great Matilda,—soon they overbore
The rest of Lombardy,—not as before
By an instinctive truculence, but patched
The Kaiser's strategy until it matched
The Pontiff's, sought old ends by novel means.
'Only, why is it Salinguerra screens
' Himself behind Romano ?—him we bade
'Enjoy our shine i' the front, not seek the shade!'
—Asked Heinrich, somewhat of the tardiest
To comprehend. Nor Philip acquiesced
At once in the arrangement; reasoned, plied
His friend with offers of another bride,
A statelier function—fruitlessly: 'twas plain
Taurello through some weakness must remain
Obscure. And Otho, free to judge of both
—Ecelin the unready, harsh and loth,
And this more plausible and facile wight
With every point a-sparkle—chose the right,
Admiring how his predecessors harped
On the wrong man: ' thus,' quoth he,' wits are warped
' By outsides!' Carelessly, meanwhile, his life
Suffered its many turns of peace and strife
In many lands—you hardly could surprise
The man; who shamed Sordello (recognize!)
In this as much beside, that, unconcerned
What qualities were natural or earned,
With no ideal of graces, as they came
He took them, singularly well the same—
Speaking the Greek's own language, just because
Your Greek eludes you, leave the least of flaws
In contracts with him; while, since Arab lore
Holds the stars' secret—take one trouble more
And master it! 'Tis done, and now deter
Who may the Tuscan, once Jove trined for her,
From Friedrich's path!—Friedrich, whose pilgrimage
The same man puts aside, whom he'll engage
To leave next year John Brienne in the lurch,
Come toBassano, see Saint Francis' church
And judge of Guido the Bolognian's piece
Which, — lend Taurello credit, — rivals Greece—
Angels, with aureoles like golden quoits
Pitched home, applauding Ecelin's exploits.
For elegance, he strung the angelot,
Made rhymes thereto; for prowess, clove he not
Tiso, last siege, from crest to crupper? Why
Detail you thus a varied mastery
But to show how Taurello, on the watch
For men, to read their hearts and thereby catch
Their capabilities and purposes,
Displayed himself so far as displayed these:
While our Sordello only cared to know
About men as a means whereby he'd show
Himself, and men had much or little worth
According as they kept in or drew forth
That self; the other's choicest instruments
Surmised him shallow.
Meantime, malcontents
Dropped off, town after town grew wiser. 'How
'Change the world's face?' asked people; 'as 'tis now
' It has been, will be ever: very fine
' Subjecting things profane to things divine,
' In talk! This contumacy will fatigue
'The vigilance of Este and the League!
' The Ghibellins gain on us!'—as it happed.
Old Azzo and old Boniface, entrapped
By Ponte Alto, both in one month's space
Slept at Verona: either left a brace

Of sons—but, three years after, either's pair
Lost Guglielm and Aldobrand its heir:
Azzo remained and Richard—all the stay
Of Este and Saint Boniface, at bay
As 'twere. Then, either Ecelin grew old
Or his brain altered—not o' the proper mould
For new appliances—his old palm-stock
Endured no influx of strange strengths. He'd rock
As in a drunkenness, or chuckle low
As proud of the completeness of his woe,
Then weep real tears;—now make some mad onslaught
On Este, heedless of the lesson taught
So painfully,—now cringe for peace, sue peace
At price of past gain, bar of fresh increase
To the fortunes of Romano. Up at last
Rose Este, down Romano sank as fast.
And men remarked these freaks of peace and war
Happened while Salinguerra was afar:
Whence every friend besought him, all in vain,
To use his old adherent's wits again.
Not he!—* who had advisers in his sons,
'Could plot himself, nor needed any one's
'Advice.' 'Twas Adelaide's remaining staunch
Prevented his destruction root and branch
Forthwith; but when she died, doom fell, for gay
He made alliances, gave lands away
To whom it pleased accept them, and withdrew
For ever from the world. Taurello, who
Was summoned to the convent, then refused
A word at the wicket, patience thus abused,
Promptly threw off alike his imbecile
Ally's yoke, and his own frank, foolish smile.
Soon a few movements of the happier sort
Changed matters, put himself in men's report
As heretofore; he had to fight, beside,
And that became him ever. So, in pride
And flushing of this kind of second youth,
He dealt a good-will blow. Este in truth
Lay prone—and men remembered, somewhat late,
A laughing old outrageous stifled hate
He bore to Este—how it would outbreak
At times spite of disguise, like an earthquake
In sunny weather—as that noted day
When with his hundred friends he tried to slay
Azzo before the Kaiser's face: and how,
On Azzo's calm refusal to allow
A liegeman's challenge, straight he too was calmed:
As if his hate could bear to lie embalmed,
Bricked up, the moody Pharaoh, and survive
All intermediate crumblings, to arrive
At earth's catastrophe—'twas Este's crash
Not Azzo's he demanded, so, no rash
Procedure! Este's true antagonist
Rose out of Ecelin: all voices whist.
All eyes were sharpened, wits predicted. He
'Twas, leaned in the embrasure absently,
Amused with his own efforts, now, to trace
With his steel-sheathed forefinger Friedrich's face
I' the dust: but as the trees waved sere, his smile
Deepened, and words expressed its thought erewhile.
'Ay, fairly housed at last, my old compeer?
'That we should stick together, all the year
'I kept Vicenza!—How old Boniface,
'Old Azzo caught us in its market-place,
'He by that pillar, I at this,—caught each
'In mid swing, more than fury of his speech,
'Egging the rabble on to disavow
'Allegiance to their Marquis—Bacchus, how
'They boasted! Ecelin must turn their drudge,
'Nor, if released, will Salinguerra grudge
'Paying arrears of tribute due long since—
'Bacchus! My man could promise then, nor wince:
'The bones-and-muscles! Sound of wind and limb,
'Spoke he the set excuse I framed for him:
'And now he sits me, slavering and mute,
'Intent on chafing each starved purple foot
'Benumbed past aching with the altar slab:
'Will no vein throb there when some monk shall blab
'Spitefully to the circle of bald scalps,
'"Friedrich's affirmed to be our side the Alps"
'—Eh, brother Lactance, brother Anaclet?
'Sworn to abjure the world, its fume and fret,
'God's own now? Drop the dormitory bar,
'Enfold the scanty grey serge scapular
'Twice o'er the cowl to muffle memories out!
'So! But the midnight whisper turns a shout,
'Eyes wink, mouths open, pulses circulate
'In the stone walls: the past, the world you hate
'Is with you, ambush, open field—or see
'The surging flame—we fire Vicenza—glee!
'Follow, let Pilio and Bernardo chafe!
'Bring up the Mantuans—**through** San Biagio—safe!

'Ah, the mad people waken? Ah, they writhe
'And reach us ? if theyblock the gate ? No tithe
'Can pass—keep back, you Bassanese! The edge,
'Use the edge—shear, thrust, hew, melt down the wedge,
' Let out the black of those black upturned eyes!
'Hell—are they sprinkling fire too? The blood fries
'And hisses on your brass gloves as they tear
'Those upturned faces choking with despair.
' Brave! Slidder through the reeking gate!
"How now?
'" You six had charge of her ?" And then the vow
'Comes, and the foam spirts, hair's plucked, till one shriek
'(I hear it) and you fling—you cannot speak—
'Your gold-flowered basnet to a man who haled
'The Adelaide he dared scarce view unveiled
'This morn, naked across the fire: how crown
'The archer that exhausted lays you down
'Your infant, smiling at the flame, and dies?
' While one, while mine . ..
'Bacchus! I think there lies
'More than one corpse there' (and he paced the room)
'—Another cinder somewhere: 'twas my doom
'Beside, my doom! If Adelaide is dead,
' I live the same, this Azzo lives instead
'Of that to me, and we pull, any how,
'Este into a heap: the matter's now
'At the true juncture slipping us so oft.
'Ay, Heinrich died and Otho, please you, doffed
'His crown at such a juncture! Still, if holds
'Our Friedrich's purpose, if this chain enfolds
'The neck of.. • who but this same Ecelin
'That must recoil when the best days begin!
'Recoil? that's nought; if the recoiler leaves
'His name for me to fight with, no one grieves:
'But he must interfere, forsooth, unlock
'His cloister to become my stumbling-block
'Just as of old! Ay, ay, there 'tis again—
'The land's inevitable Head—explain
'The reverences that subject us! Count
'These Ecelins now! Not to say as fount,
'Originating power of thought,—from twelve
'That drop i' the trenches they joined hands to delve,
'Six shall surpass him, but... why men must twine
'Somehow with something! Ecelin's a fine
'Clear name! Twere simpler, doubtless, twine with me
'At once: our cloistered friend's capacity
'Was of a sort! I had to share myself
'In fifty portions, like an o'ertasked elf
' That's forced illume in fifty points the vast
'Rare vapour he's environed by. At last
'My strengths, though sorely frittered, e'en converge
'And crown . . . no, Bacchus, they have yet to urge
'The man be crowned!
'That aloe, an he durst,
'Would climb! Just such a bloated sprawler first
' I noted in Messina's castle-court
'The day I came, when Heinrich asked in sport
' If I would pledge my faith to win him back
'His right in Lombardy: "for, once bid pack
*" Marauders," he continued," in my stead
'" You rule, Taurello!" and upon this head
'Laid the silk glove of Constance—I see her
'Too, mantled head to foot in miniver,
'Retrude following!
' I am absolved
'From further toil: the empery devolved
'On me, 'twas Tito's word: I have to lay
'For once my plan, pursue my plan my way,
'Prompt nobody, and render an account
'Taurello to Taurello! Nay, I mount
' To Friedrich: he conceives the post I kept,
'—Who did true service, able or inept,
'Who's worthy guerdon, Ecelin or I.
'Me guerdoned, counsel follows: would he vie
'With the Pope really? Azzo, Boniface
'Compose a right-arm Hohenstauffen's race
'Must break ere govern Lombardy. I point
'How easy 'twere to twist, once out of joint,
'The socket from the bone: my Azzo's stare
'Meanwhile! for I, this idle strap to wear,
'Shall—fret myself abundantly, what end
'To serve? There's left me twenty years to spend
'—How better than my old way? Had I one
'Who laboured to o'erthrow my work—a son

'Hatching with Azzo superb treachery,
'To root my pines up and then poison me,
'Suppose—'twere worth while frustrate that! Beside
'Another life's ordained me: the world's tide
'Rolls, and what hope of parting from the press
' Of waves, a single wave through weariness
'Gently lifted aside, laid upon shore?
' My lifemust be lived out in foam and roar,
'No question. Fifty years the province held
'Taurello; troubles raised, and troubles quelled,
'He in the midst—who leaves this quaint stone place,
'These trees a year or two, then not a trace
'Of him! How obtain hold, fetter men's tongues
'Like this poor minstrel with the foolish songs—
'To which, despite our bustle, he is linked?
'—Flowers one may teaze, that never grow extinct.
'Ay, that patch, surely, green as ever, where
'T set Her Moorish lentisk, by the stair,
*To overawe the aloes; and we trod
'Those flowers, how call you such?—into the sod;
'A stately foreigner—a world of pain
'To make it thrive, arrest rough winds—all vain!
'It would decline; these would not be destroyed:
' And now, where is it ? where can you avoid
'The flowers? I frighten children twenty years
' Longer!—which way, too, Ecelin appears
'To thwart me, for his son's besotted youth
'Gives promise of the proper tiger-tooth:
'They feel it at Vicenza! Fate, fate, fate,
'My fine Taurello! Go you, promulgate
'Friedrich's decree, and here's shall aggrandize
* Young Ecelin—your Prefect's badge! a prize
'Too precious, certainly.
'How now? Compete
'With my old comrade? shuffle from their
'His children? Paltry dealing! Don't I know
'Ecelin? now, I think, and years ago!
'What's changed—the weakness? did not I compound
'For that, and undertake to keep him sound
'Despite it? Here's Taurello hankering
'After a boy's preferment—this plaything
'To carry, Bacchus!' And he laughed.
Remark
Why schemes wherein cold-blooded men embark
Prosper, when your enthusiastic sort
Fail: while these last are ever stopping short—
(So much they should—so little they can do!)
The careless tribe see nothing to pursue
If they desist; meantime their scheme succeeds.
Thoughts were caprices in the course of deeds
Methodic with Taurello; so, he turned,—
Enough amused by fancies fairly earned
Of Este's horror-struck submitted neck,
And Richard, the cowed braggart, at his beck,—
To his own petty but immediate doubt
If he could pacify the League without
Conceding Richard; just to this was brought
That interval of vain discursive thought!
As, shall I say, some Ethiop, past pursuit
Of all enslavers, dips a shackled foot
Burnt to the blood, into the drowsy black
Enormous watercourse which guides him back
To his own tribe again, where he is king;
And laughs because he guesses, numbering
The yellower poison-wattles on the pouch
Of the first lizard wrested from its couch
Under the slime (whose skin, the while, he strips
To cure his nostril with, and festered lips,
And eyeballs bloodshot through ths desert-blast)
That he has reached its boundary, at last
May breathe;—thinks o'er enchantments of the South
Sovereign to plague his enemies, their mouth,
Eyes, nails, and hair; but, these enchantments tried
In fancy, puts them soberly aside
For truth, projects a cool return with friends,
The likelihood of winning mere amends
Ere long; thinks that, takes comfort silently,
Then, from the river's brink, his wrongs and he,
Hugging revenge close to their hearts, are soon
Off-striding for the Mountains of the Moon.
Midnight: the watcher nodded on his spear,
Since clouds dispersing left a passage clear
For any meagre and discoloured moon
To venture forth; and such was peering soon
Above the harassed city—her close lanes
Closer, not half so tapering her fanes,
As though she shrunk into herself to keep
What little life was saved, more safely. Heap

By heap the watch-fires mouldered, and beside
The blackest spoke Sordello and replied
Palma with none to listen. * 'Tis your cause:
'What makes a Ghibellin? There should be laws—
'(Remember how my youth escaped! I trust
'To you for manhood, Palma! tell me just
'As any child)—there must be laws at work
'Explaining this. Assure me, good may lurk
' Under the bad,—my multitude has part
'In your designs, their welfare is at heart
' With Salinguerra, to their interest
'Refer the deeds he dwelt on,—so divest
'Our conference of much that scared me. Why
'Affect that heartless tone to Tito? I
'Esteemed myself, yes, in my inmost mind
'This morn, a recreant to my race—mankind
' O'erlooked till now: why boast my spirit's force,
'—Such force denied its object? why divorce
'These, then admire my spirit's flight the same
As though it bore up, helped some half-orbed flame
Else quenched in the dead void, to living space?
'That orb cast off to chaos and disgrace,
'Why vaunt so much my unencumbered dance,
'Making a feat's facilities enhance
'Its marvel? But I front Taurello, one
Of happier fate, and all I should have done,
'He does; the people's good being paramount
'With him, their progress may perhaps account
'For his abiding still; whereas you heard
'The talk with Tito—the excuse preferred
'For burning those five hostages,—and broached
' By way of blind, as you and I approached,
'I do believe.'
She spoke: then he, 'My thought
'Plainlier expressed! All to your profit—nought
'Meantime of these, of conquests to achieve
'For them, of wretchedness he might relieve
' While profiting your party. Azzo, too,
' Supports a cause: what cause ? Do Guelfs pursue
' Their ends by means like yours, or better? * When
The Guelfs were proved alike, men weighed with men,
And deed with deed, blaze, blood, with blood and blaze,
Morn broke: 'Once more, Sordello, meet its gaze
' Proudly—the people's charge against thee fails
'In every point, while either party quails!
'These are the busy ones: be silent thou!
'Two parties take the world up, and allow
'No third, yet have one principle, subsist
'By the same injustice; whoso shall enlist
'With either, ranks with man's inveterate foes.
'So there is one less quarrel to compose:
'The Guelf, the Ghibellin may be to curse—
'I have done nothing, but both sides do worse
' Than nothing. Nay, to me, forgotten, reft
'Of insight, lapped by trees and flowers, was left
' The notion of a service—ha ? What lured
' Me here, what mighty aim was I assured
'Must move Taurello? What if there remained
'A cause, intact, distinct from these, ordained
'For me, its true discoverer?'
Some one pressed
Before them here, a watcher, to suggest
The subject for a ballad:' They must know
'The tale of the dead worthy, long ago
'Consul of Rome—that's long ago for us,
'Minstrels and bowmen, idly squabbling thus
'In the world's corner—but too late no doubt,
'For the brave time he sought to bring about.
'—Not know Crescentius Nomentanus?'
Then
He cast about for terms to tell him, when
Sordello disavowed it, how they used
Whenever their Superior introduced
A novice to the Brotherhood—('for I
'Was just a brown-sleeve brother, merrily
'Appointed too,' quoth he, ' till Innocent
* Bade me relinquish, to my small content,
'My wife or my brown sleeves')—some brother spoke
Ere nocturns of Crescentius, to revoke
The edict issued, after his demise.
Which blotted fame alike and effigies,
All out except a floating power, a name
Including, tending to produce the same
Great act. Rome, dead, forgotten, lived at least
Within that brain, though to a vulgar priest
And a vile stranger,—two not worth a slave
Of Rome's, Pope John, King Otho,—fortune gave
The rule there: so, Crescentius, haply dressed
In white, called Roman Consul for a jest,

Taking the people at their word, forth stepped
As upon Brutus' heel, nor ever kept
Rome waiting,—stood erect, and from his brain
Gave Rome out on its ancient place again,
Ay, bade proceed with Brutus' Rome, Kings styled
Themselves mere citizens of, and, beguiled
Into great thoughts thereby, would choose the gem
Out of a lapfull, spoil their diadem
—The Senate's cypher was so hard to scratch!
He flashes like a phanal, all men catch
The flame, Rome's just accomplished! when returned
Otho, with John, the Consul's step had spurned,
And Hugo Lord of Este, to redress
The wrongs of each. Crescentius in the stress
Of adverse fortune bent. 'They crucified
'Their Consul in the Forum; and abide
'E'er since such slaves at Rome, that I—(fori
'Was once a brown-sleeve brother, merrily
'Appointed)—I had option to keep wife
'Or keep brown sleeves, and managed in the strife
'Lose both. A song of Rome!'
And Rome, indeed,
Robed at Goito in fantastic weed,
The Mother-City of his Mantuan days,
Looked an established point of light whence rays
Traversed the world; for, all the clustered homes
Beside of men, seemed bent on being Romes
In their degree; the question was, how each
Should most resemble Rome, clean out of reach.
Nor, of the Two, did either principle
Struggle to change, but to possess Rome, —still
Guelf Rome or Ghibellin Rome.
Let Rome advance!
Rome, as she struck Sordello's ignorance—
How could he doubt one moment? Rome's the Cause!
Rome of the Pandects, all the world's new laws—
Of the Capitol, of Castle Angelo;
New structures, that inordinately glow,
Subdued, brought back to harmony, made ripe
By many a relic of the archetype
Extant for wonder; every upstart church
That hoped to leave old temples in the lurch,
Corrected by the Theatre forlorn
That,—as a mundane shell, its world late born,—
Lay and o'ershadowed it. These hints combined
Rome typifies the scheme to put mankind
Once more in full possession of their rights.
'Let us have Rome again! On me it lights
'To build up Rome—on me, the first and last:
'For such a future was endured the past!'
And thus, in the grey twilight, forth he sprung
To give his thought consistency among
The very People—let their facts avail
Finish the dream grown from the archer's tale.

BOOK THE FIFTH

Is it the same Sordello in the dusk
As at the dawn?—merely a perished husk
Now, that arose a power fit to build
Up Rome again? The proud conception chilled
So soon? Ay, watch that latest dream of thine
—A Rome indebted to no Palatine—
Drop arch by arch, Sordello! Art possessed
Of thy wish now, rewarded for thy quest
To-day among Ferrara's squalid sons?
Are this and this and jthis the shining ones
Meet for the Shining City? Sooth to say,
Your favoured tenantry pursue their way
After a fashion! This companion slips
On the smooth causey, t'other blinkard trips
At his mooned sandal. 'Leave to lead the brawls
'Here i' the atria?' No, friend! He that sprawls
On aught but a stibadium... what his dues
Who puts the lustral vase to such an use?
Oh, huddle up the day's disasters! March,
Ye runagates, and drop thou, arch by arch, Rome!
Yet before they quite disband—a whim—
Study mere shelter, now, for him, and him,
Nay, even the worst,—just house them! Any cave
Suffices: throw out earth! A loophole? Brave!
They ask to feel the sun shine, see the grass
Grow, hear the larks sing? Dead art thou, alas,
And I am dead! But here's our son excels
At hurdle-weaving any Scythian, fells
Oak and devises rafters, dreams and shapes
His dream into a door-post, just escapes
The mystery of hinges. Lie wc both
Perdue another age. The goodly growth

Of brick and stone! Our building-pelt was rough,
But that descendant's garb suits well enough
A portico-contriver. Speed the years—
What's time to us? At last, a city rears
Itself! nay, enter—what's the grave to us?
Lo, our forlorn acquaintance carry thus
The head! Successively sewer, forum, cirque—
Last age, an aqueduct was counted work,
But now they tire the artificer upon
Blank alabaster, black obsidian,
—Careful, Jove's face be duly fulgurant,
And mother Venus' kiss-creased nipples pant
Back into pristine pulpiness, ere fixed
Above the baths. What difference betwixt
This Rome and ours—resemblance what, between
That scurvy dumb-show and this pageant sheen—
These Romans and our rabble? Use thy wit!
The work marched: step by step,—a workman fit
Took each, nor too fit,—to one task, one time,—
No leaping o'er the petty to the prime,
When just the substituting osier lithe
For brittle bulrush, sound wood for soft withe,
To further loam-and-roughcast-work a stage,—
Exacts an architect, exacts an age:
No tables of the Mauritanian tree
For men whose maple log's their luxury!
That way was Rome built. 'Better' (say you) 'merge
'At once all workmen in the demiurge,
'All epochs in a lifetime, every task
'In one!' So should the sudden city bask
I' the day—while those we'd feast there, want the knack
Of keeping fresh-chalked gowns from speck and brack,
Distinguish not rare peacock from vile swan,
Nor Mareotic juice from Caecuban.
' Enough of Rome! 'Twas happy to conceive
•Rome on a sudden, nor shall fate bereave
'Me of that credit: for the rest, her spite
'Is an old story—serves my folly right
'By adding yet another to the dull
' List of abortions—things proved beautiful' Could they be done, Sordello cannot do."
He sat upon the terrace, plucked and threw
The powdery aloe-cusps away, saw shift
Rome's walls, and drop arch after arch, and drift
Mist-like afar those pillars of all stripe,
Mounds of all majesty. 'Thou archetype.
' Last of my dreams and loveliest, depart!
And then a low voice wound into his heart:
' Sordello!' (low as some old Pythoness
Conceding to a Lydian King's distress
The cause of his long error—one mistake
Of her past oracle) 'Sordello, wake!
' God has conceded two sights to a man—
' One, of men's whole work, time's completed plan,
'The other, of the minute's work, man's first
'Step to the plan's completeness: what's dispersed
'Save hope of that supreme step which, descried
' Earliest, was meant still to remain untried
'Only to give you heart to take your own
'Step, and there stay, leaving the rest alone?
'Where is the vanity? Why count as one
' The first step, with the last step ? What is gone
'Except Rome's aery magnificence,
'That last step you'd take first?—an evidence
'You were God: be man now! Let those glances fall!
'The basis, the beginning step of all,
'Which proves you just a man—is that gone too?
'Pity to discontent one versed as you
'In fate's ill-nature! but its full extent
'Eludes Sordello, even: the veil rent,
'Read the black writing—that collective man
'Outstrips the individual. Who began
' The acknowledged greatnesses ? Ay, your own art
' Shall serve us: put the poet's mimes apart—
'Close with the poet's self, and lo, a dim
' Yet too plain form divides itself from him!
' Alcamo's song enmeshes the lulled Isle,
' Woven into the echoes left erewhile
'By Nina, one soft web of song: no more
'Turning his name, then, flower-like o'er and o'er!
'An elder poet in the younger's place;
'Nina's the strength, but Alcamo's the grace:
'Each neutralizes each then! Search your fill;
'You get no whole and perfect Poet—still
'New Ninas, Alcamos, till time's midnight
"Shrouds all—or better say, the shutting light
' Of a forgotten yesterday. Dissect
'Every ideal workman—(to reject
' In favour of your fearful ignorance
'The thousand phantasms eager to advance,

'And point you but to those within your reach)—
'Were you the first who brought—(in modern speech)
'The Multitude to be materialized?
'That loose eternal unrest—who devised
'An apparition i' the midst? The rout
'Was checked, a breathless ring was formed about
'That sudden flower: get round at any risk
'The gold-rough pointel, silver-blazing disk
'O' the lily! Swords across it! Reign thy reign
'And serve thy frolic service, Charlemagne!
'—The very child of over-joyousness,
'Unfeeling thence, strong therefore: Strength by stress
'Of Strength comes of that forehead confident,
* Those widened eyes expecting heart's content,
'A calm as out of just-quelled noise; nor swerves
'For doubt, the ample cheek in gracious curves
'Abutting on the upthrust nether lip:
'He wills, how should he doubt then? Ages slip:
' Was it Sordello pried into the work
' So far accomplished, and discovered lurk
*A company amid the other clans,
'Only distinct in priests for castellans
'And popes for suzerains (their rule confessed
'Its rule, their interest its interest,
'Living for sake of living—there an end—
'Wrapt in itself, no energy to spend
•In making adversaries or allies)—
'Dived you into its capabilities
'And dared create, out of that sect, a soul
' Should turn a multitude, already whole,
'Into its body? Speak plainer I Is t so sure
'God's church lives by a King's investiture?
'Look to last step! A staggering—a shock—
'What's mere sand is demolished, while the rock
Endures: a column of black fiery dust
Blots heaven—that help was prematurely thrust
'Aside, perchance!—but air clears, nought's erased
'Of the true outline. Thus much being firm based,
'The other was a scaffold. See him stand
' Buttressed upon his mattock, Hildebrand
'Of the huge brain-mask welded ply o'er ply
'As in a forge; it buries either eye
' White and extinct, that stupid brow; teeth clenched,
'The neck tight-corded, too, the chin deep' trenched,
'As if a cloud enveloped him while fought
'Under its shade, grim prizers, thought with thought
'At dead-lock, agonizing he, until
'The victor thought leap radiant up, and Will,
'The slave with folded arms and drooping lids
'They fought for, lean forth flame-like as it bids.
'Call him no flower—a mandrake of the earth,
'Thwarted and dwarfed and blasted in its birth,
'Rather,—a fruit of suffering's excess,
'Thence feeling, therefore stronger: still by stress
' Of Strength, work Knowledge! Full three hundred years
'Have men to wear away in smiles and tears
'Between the two that nearly seemed to touch,
'Observe you! quit one workman and you clutch
'Another, letting both their trains go by—
'The actors-out of either*s policy,
'Heinrich, on this hand, Otho, Barbaross,
'Carry the three Imperial crowns across,
'Aix' Iron, Milan's Silver, and Rome's Gold—
'While Alexander, Innocent uphold
'On that, each Papal key—but, link on link,
'Why is it neither chain betrays a chink ?
' How coalesce the small and great ? Alack,
'For one thrust forward, fifty such fall back!
' Do the popes coupled there help Gregory
' Alone? Hark—from the hermit Peter's cry
'At Claremont, down to the first serf that says
'Friedrich's no liege of his while he delays
'Getting the Pope's curse off him! The Crusade—
'Or trick of breeding Strength by other aid
'Than Strength, is safe. Hark—from the wild harangue
' Of Vimmercato, to the carroch's clang
'Yonder! The League—or trick of turning Strength
'Against Pernicious Strength, is safe a length.
' Yet hark—from Mantuan Albert making cease
' The fierce ones, to Saint Francis preaching peace
' Yonder! God's Truce—or trick to supersede
'The very Use of Strength, is safe. Indeed

'We trench upon the future. Who is found
'To take next step, next age—trail o'er the ground—:
'Shall I say, gourd-like?—not the flower's display
'Nor the root's prowess, but the plenteous way
'O' the plant—produced by joy and sorrow, whence
'Unfeeling and yet feeling, strongest thence?
'Knowledge by stress of merely Knowledge? No—
'E'en were Sordello ready to forego
'His life for this, 'twere overleaping work
'Some one has first to do, howe'er it irk,
'Nor stray a foot's breadth from the beaten road.
'Who means to help must still support the load
'Hildebrand lifted—" why hast Thou," he groaned,
'"Imposed on me a burthen, Paul had moaned,
'"And Moses dropped beneath?" Much done—and yet
* Doubtless that grandest task God ever set
'One man, left much to do: at his arm's wrench,
'Charlemagne's scaffold fell; but pillars blench
'Merely, start back again—perchance have been
'Taken for buttresses: crash every screen,
'Hammer the tenons better, and engage
'A gang about your work, for the next age
'Or two, of Knowledge, part by Strength and part
'By Knowledge! Then, indeed, perchance may start
'Sordello on his race—would time divulge
'Such secrets! If one step's awry, one bulge
'Calls for correction by a step we thought
'Got over long since, why, till that is wrought,
'No progress! And the scaffold in its turn
'Becomes, its service o'er, a thing to spurn.
'Meanwhile, if your half-dozen years of life
'In store dispose you to forego the strife,
'Who takes exception? Only bear in mind
'Ferrara's reached, Goito's left behind:
'As you then were, as half yourself, desist!
'—The warrior-part of you may, an it list,
'Finding real faulchions difficult to poise,
'Fling them afar and taste the cream of joys
'By wielding such in fancy)—what is bard
'Of you may spurn the vehicle that marred
'Elys so much, and in free fancy glut
•His sense, yet write no verses—you have but
'To please yourself for law, and once could please
'What once appeared yourself, by dreaming these
'Rather than doing these, in days gone by.
'But all is changed the moment you descry
'Mankind as half yourself,—then, fancy's trade
'Ends once and always: how may half evade
'The other half? men are found half of you.
'Out of a thousand helps, just one or two
'Can be accomplished presently: but flinch
'From these (as from the faulchion, raised an inch,
'Elys, described a couplet) and make proof
'Of fancy,—then, while one half lolls aloof
'I' the vines, completing Rome to the tip-top—
'See if, for that, your other half will stop
'A tear, begin a smile! The rabble's woes,
'Ludicrous in their patience as they chose
'To sit about their town and quietly
'Be slaughtered, — the poor reckless soldiery,
'With their ignoble rhymes on Richard, how
'"Polt-foot," sang they, "was in a pitfall now,"
'Cheering each other from the engine-mounts,—
'That crippled spawling idiot who recounts
'How, lopped of limbs, he lay, stupid as stone,
'Till the pains crept from out him one by one,
'And wriggles round the archers on his head
'To earn a morsel of their chestnut bread,—
'And Cino, always in the self-same place
'Weeping; beside that other wretch's case,
'Eyepits to ear, one gangrene since he plied
'The engine in his coat of raw sheep's hide
'A double watch in the noon sun; and see
'Lucchino, beauty, with the favours free,
'Trim hacqueton, spruce beard and scented hair,
'Campaigning it for the first time—cut there
'In two already, boy enough to crawl
'For latter orpine round the southern wall,
'Toma, where Richard's kept, because that whore
'Marfisa, the fool never saw before,
'Sickened for flowers this wearisomest siege:
'And Tiso's wife—men liked their pretty liege,
'Cared for her least of whims once,—Berta, wed
'A twelvemonth gone, and, now poor Tiso's dead,

'Delivering herself of his first **child**
'On that chance heap of wet filth, reconciled
'To fifty gazers!'—(Here a wind below
Made moody music augural of woe
From the pine barrier)—' What if, now the scene
' Draws to a close, yourself have really been
'—You, plucking purples in Goito's moss
' Like edges of a trabea (not to cross
' Your consul-humour) or dry aloe-shafts
'For fasces, at Ferrara—he, fate wafts,
'This very age, her whole inheritance
' Of opportunities ? Yet you advance
' Upon the last! Since talking is your trade,
' There's Salinguerra left you to persuade:
'Fail! then'—-
'No—no—which latest chance secure!'
Leaped up and cried Sordello:' this made sure,
'The past were yet redeemable; its work
'Was—help the Guelfs, whom I, howe'er it irk,
'Thus help!' He shook the foolish aloe-haulm
Out of his doublet, paused, proceeded calm
To the appointed presence. The large head
Turned on its socket; 'And your spokesman,' said
The large voice,' is Elcorte's happy sprout ?
'Few such'—(so finishing a speech no doubt
Addressed to Palma, silent at his side)
'—My sober councils have diversified.
' Elcorte's son! good: forward as you may,
' Our lady's minstrel with so much to say!'
The hesitating sunset floated back,
Rosily traversed in the wonted track
The chamber, from the lattice o'er the girth
Of pines, to the huge eagle blacked in earth
Opposite,—outlined sudden, spur to crest,
That solid Salinguerra, and caressed
Palma's contour; 'twas day looped back night's pall;
Sordello had a chance left spite of all.
And much he made of the convincing speech
Meant to compensate for the past and reach
Through his youth's daybreak of unprofit, quite
To his noon's labour, so proceed till night
Leisurely! The great argument to bind
Taurello with the Guelf Cause, body and mind,
—Came the consummate rhetoric to that ?
Yet most Sordello's argument dropped flat
Through his accustomed fault of breaking yoke,
Disjoining **him** who **felt** from **him** who spoke.
Was't not a touching incident—so prompt
A rendering the world its just accompt,
Once proved its debtor ? Who'd suppose, before
This proof, that he, Goito's god of yore.
At duty's instance could demean himself
So memorably, dwindle to a Guelf?
Be sure, in such delicious flattery steeped,
His inmost self at the out-portion peeped,
Thus occupied; then stole a glance at those
Appealed to, curious if her colour rose
Or his lip moved, while he discreetly urged
The need of Lombardy becoming purged
At soonest of her barons; the poor part
Abandoned thus, missing the blood at heart
And spirit in brain, unseasonably off
Elsewhere! But, though his speech was worthy scoff,
Good-humoured Salinguerra, famed for tact
And tongue, who, careless of his phrase, ne'er lacked
The right phrase, and harangued Honorius dumb
At his accession.—looked as all fell plumb
To purpose and himself found interest
In every point his new instructor pressed
—Left playing with the rescript's white wax seal
To scrutinize Sordello head and heel.
He means to yield assent sure? No, alas!
All he replied was, 'What, it comes to pass
'That poesy, sooner than politics,
'Makes fade young hair?' To think such speech could fix
Taurello!
Then a flash of bitter truth:
So fantasies could break and fritter youth
That he had long ago lost earnestness,
Lost will to work, lost power to even express
The need of working! Earth was turned a grave:
No more occasions now, though he should crave
Just one, in right of superhuman toil,
To do what was undone, repair such spoil,
Alter the past—nothing would give the chance!
Not that he was to die; he saw askance
Protract the ignominious years beyond
To dream in—time to hope and time despond,
Remember and forget, be sad, rejoice
As saved a trouble; he might, at his choice,
One way or other, idle life out, drop
No few smooth verses by the way—for prop,
A thyrsus, these sad people, all the same,
Should pick up, and set store by,—far from blame.
Plant o'er his hearse, convinced his better part
Survived him. ' Rather tear men out the heart

'O' the truth!'—Sordello muttered, and renewed
His propositions for the Multitude.
But Salinguerra, who at this attack
Had thrown great breastandrufflingcorslet back
To hear the better, smilingly resumed
His task; beneath, the carroch's warning boomed;
He must decide with Tito; courteously
He turned then, even seeming to agree
With his admonisher—' Assist the Pope,
* Extend Guelf domination, fill the scope
' O' the Church, thus based on All, by All, for All—
'Change Secular to Evangelical'—
Echoing his very sentence: all seemed lost,
When suddenly he looked up, laughingly almost,
To Palma: 'This opinion of your friend's—
'For instance, would it answer Palma's ends?
'Best, were it not, turn Guelf, submit our Strength'—
(Here he drew out his baldric to its length)
—' To the Pope's Knowledge—let our captive slip,
'Wide to the walls throw ope our gates, equip
'Azzo with . . . what I hold here! Who'll subscribe
'To a trite censure of the minstrel tribe
'Henceforward? or pronounce, as Heinrich used,
'"Spear-heads for battle, burr-heads for the joust!"
*—When Constance, for his couplets, would promote
'Alcamo, from a parti-coloured coat,
'To holding her lord's stirrup in the wars.
'Not that I see where couplet-making jars
'With common sense: at Mantua I had borne
'This chanted, better than their most forlorn
'Of bull-baits,—that's indisputable!' Brave!
Whom vanity nigh slew, contempt shall save!
All's at an end: a Troubadour suppose
Mankind will class him with their friends or foes?
A puny uncouth ailing vassal think
The world and him bound in some special link?
Abrupt the visionary tether burst.
What were rewarded here, or what amerced
If a poor drudge, solicitous to dream
Deservingly, got tangled by his theme
So far as to conceit the knack or gift
Or whatsoe'er it be, of verse, might lift
The globe, a lever like the hand and head
Of—Men of Action,' as the Jongleurs said,
—' The Great Men,' in the people's dialect?
And not a moment did this scorn affect
Sordello: scorn the poet? They, for once,
Asking 'what was,' obtained a full response.
Bid Naddo think at Mantua—he had but
To look into his promptuary, put
Finger on a set thought in a set speech:
But was Sordello fitted thus for each
Conjecture? Nowise; since within his soul,
Perception brooded unexpressed and whole.
A healthy spirit like a healthy frame
Craves aliment in plenty—all the same,
Changes, assimilates its aliment.
Perceived Sordello, on a truth intent?
Next day no formularies more you saw
Than figs or olives in a sated maw.
'Tis Knowledge, whither such perceptions tend;
They lose themselves in that, means to an end,
The many old producing some one new,
A last unlike the first. If lies are true,
The Caliph's wheel-work man of brass receives
A meal, munched millet grains and lettuce leaves
Together in his stomach rattle loose;
You find them perfect next day to produce:
But ne'er expect the man, on strength of that,
Can roll an iron camel-collar flat
Like Haroun's self! I tell you, what was stored
Bit by bit through Sordello's life, outpoured
That eve, was, for that age, a novel thing:
And round those three the People formed a ring,
Of visionary judges whose award
He recognized in full—faces that barred
Henceforth return to the old careless life,
In whose great presence, therefore, his first strife
For their sake must not be ignobly fought;
All these, for once, approved of him, he thought,
Suspended their own vengeance, chose await
The issue of this strife to reinstate
Them in the right of taking it—in fact
He must be proved king ere they could exact
Vengeance for such king's defalcation. Last,
A reason why the phrases flowed so fast
Was in his quite forgetting for a time
Himself in his amazement that the rhyme
Disguised the royalty so much: he there—
And Salinguerra yet all-unaware
Who was the lord, who liegeman!
'Thus I lay
'On thine my spirit and compel obey

'His lord,—my liegeman,—impotent to build
'Another Rome, but hardly so unskilled
' In what such builder should have been, as brook
'One shame beyond the charge that I forsook
'His function! Free me from that shame, I bend
'A brow before, suppose new years to spend,—
' Allow each chance, nor fruitlessly, recur—
'Measure thee with the Minstrel, then, demur
• At any crown he claims! That I must cede
'Shamed now, my right to my especial meed—
'Confess thee fitter help the world than I
'Ordained its champion from eternity,
'Is much: but to behold thee scorn the post
'I quit in thy behalf—to hear thee boast
'What makes my own despair!' And while he rung
The changes on this theme, the roof upsprung,
The sad walls of the presence-chamber died
Into the distance, or embowering vied
With far-away Goito's vine-frontier;
And crowds of faces—(only keeping clear
The rose-light in the midst, his vantage-ground
To fight their battle from)—deep clustered round
Sordello, with good wishes no mere breath,
Kind prayers for him no vapour, since, come death,
Come life, he was fresh-sinewed every joint,
Each bone new-marrowed as whom gods anoint
Though mortal to their rescue. Now let sprawl
The snaky volumes hither! Is Typhon all
For Hercules to trample—good report
From Salinguerra only to extort?
'So was I' (closed he his inculcating
A poet must be earth's essential king)
'So was I, royal so, and if I fail,
"'Tis not the royalty, ye witness quail,
'But one deposed who, caring not exert
'Its proper essence, trifled malapert
' With accidents instead—good things assigned
'As heralds of a better thing behind—
' And, worthy through display of these, put forth
'Never the inmost all-surpassing worth
'That constitutes him king precisely since
'As yet no other spirit may evince
'Its like: the power he took most pride to test,
'Whereby all forms of life had been professed
At pleasure, forms already on the earth,
Was but a means to power beyond, whose birth
Should, in its novelty, be kingship's proof.
Now, whether he came near or kept aloof
The several forms he longed to imitate,
Not there the kingship lay, he sees too late.
Those forms, unalterable first as last,
Proved him her copier, not the protoplast
Of nature: what would come of being free,
By action to exhibit tree for tree,
Bird, beast, for beast and bird, or prove earth bore
One veritable man or woman more?
Means to an end, such proofs are: what the end?
Let essence, whatsoe'er it be, extend—
Never contract. Already you include
The multitude; then let the multitude
Include yourself; and the result were new:
Themselves before, the multitude turn you.
This were to live and move and have, in them,
Your being, and secure a diadem
You should transmit (because no cycle yearns
Beyond itself, but on itself returns)
When, the full sphere in wane, the world o'erlaid
Long since with you, shall have in turn obeyed
Some orb still prouder, some displayer, still
More potent than the last, of human will,
And some new king depose the old. Of such
Am I—whom pride of this elates too much?
Safe, rather say, 'mid troops of peers again;
I, with my words, hailed brother of the train
Deeds once sufficed: for, let the world roll back,
Who fails, through deeds howe'er diverse, retrack
My purpose still, my task? A teeming crust—
Air, flame, earth, wave at conflict! Then, needs must
Emerge some Calm embodied, these refer
The brawl to—yellow-bearded Jupiter?
No! Saturn; some existence like a pact
And protest against Chaos, some first fact
I' the faint of time. My deep of life, I know,
Is unavailing e'en to poorly show' . . .
(For here the Chief immeasurably yawned)
.. 'Deeds in their due gradation till Song dawned—
The fullest effluence of the finest mind,
All in degree, no way diverse in kind

'**From** minds about it, minds which, more or less,
'Lofty or low,' move seeking to impress
'Themselves on somewhat; but one mind has climbed
'Step after step, by just ascent sublimed.
'Thought is the soul of act, and, stage by stage,
'Soul is from body still to disengage
'As tending to a freedom which rejects
'Such help and incorporeally affects
'The world, producing deeds but not by deeds,
'Swaying, in others, frames itself exceeds,
'Assigning them the simpler tasks it used
'To patiently perform till Song produced
'Acts, by thoughts only, for the mind: divest
'Mind of e'en Thought, and, lo, God's unexpressed
'Will draws above us! All then is to win
'Save that. How much for me, then? where begin
'My work? About me, faces! and they flock,
'The earnest faces. What shall I unlock
'By song? behold me prompt, whate'er it be,
'To minister: how much can mortals see
'Of Life? No more than so? I take the task
'And marshal you Life's elemental masque,
'Show Men, on evil or on good lay stress,
'This light, this shade make prominent, suppress
* All ordinary hues that softening blend
'Such natures with the level. Apprehend
'Which sinner is, which saint, if I allot
'Hell, Purgatory, Heaven, a blaze or blot,
'To those you doubt concerning! I enwomb
'Some wretched Friedrich with his red-hot tomb;
* Some dubious spirit, Lombard Agilulph
* With the black chastening river I engulph!
'Some unapproached Matilda I enshrine
'With languors of the planet of decline—
'These, fail to recognize, to arbitrate
'Between henceforth, to rightly estimate
'Thus marshalled in the masque! Myself, the while,
'As one of you, am witness, shrink or smile
'At my own snowing! Next age—what's to do?
'The men and women stationed hitherto
'Will I unstation, good and bad, conduct
'Each nature to its farthest, or obstruct
'At soonest, in the world: light, thwarted, breaks
* A limpid purity to rainbow flakes,
'Or shadow, massed, freezes to gloom: behold
'How such, with fit assistance to unfold,
'Or obstacles to crush them, disengage
'Their forms, love, hate, hope, fear, peace make, war wage,
'In presence of you all! Myself, implied
'Superior now, as, by the platform's side,
'I bade them do and suffer,—would last content
'The world . . . no—that's too far! I circumvent
'A few, my masque contented, and to these
'Offer unveil the last of mysteries—
'Man's inmost life shall have yet freer play:
'Once more I cast external things away,
'And natures composite, so decompose
'That' .. . Why, he writes *Sordello!* 'How I rose,
'And how have you advanced! since evermore
'Yourselves effect what I was fain before
'Effect, what I supplied yourselves suggest,
'What I leave bare yourselves can now invest.
'How we attain to talk as brothers talk,
'In half-words, call things by half-names, no balk
'From discontinuing old aids. To-day
'Takes in account the work of Yesterday:
'Has not the world a Past now, its adept
'Consults ere he dispense with or accept
'New aids? a single touch more may enhance,
'A touch less turn to insignificance
'Those structures' symmetry the past has strewed
'The world with, once so bare. Leave the mere rude
'Explicit details! 'tis but brother's speech
'We need, speech where an accent's change gives each
'The other's soul—no speech to understand
'By former audience: need was then to expand,
'Expatiate—hardly were we brothers! true—
'Nor I lament my small remove from you,
'Nor reconstruct what stands already. Ends
'Accomplished turn to means: my art intends
'New structure from the ancient: as they changed
'The spoils of every clime at Venice, ranged
'The horned and snouted Libyan god, upright
'As in his desert, by some simple bright
'Clay cinerary pitcher—Thebes as Rome,
'Athens as Byzant rifled, till their Dome
'From earth's reputed consummations razed
'A seal, the all-transmuting Triad blazed

'Above. Ah, whose that fortune? Ne'ertheless
' E'en he must stoop contented to express
'No tithe of what's to say—the vehicle
'Never sufficient: but his work is still
'For faces like the faces that select
'The single service I am bound effect,—
'That bid me cast aside such fancies, bow
'Taurello to the Guelf cause, disallow
'The Kaiser's coming—which with heart, soul, strength,
'I labour for, this eve, who feel at length
[6] My past career's outrageous vanity,
'And would, as it amends, die, even die
'Now I first estimate the boon of life,
' If death might win compliance—sure, this strife
' Is right for once—the People my support.'
My poor Sordello! what may we extort
By this, I wonder? Palma's lighted eyes
Turned to Taurello who, long past surprise,
Began, 'You love him—what you'd say at large
'Let me say briefly. First, your father's charge
' To me, his friend, peruse: I guessed indeed
'You were no stranger to the course decreed.
'He bids me leave his children to the saints:
'As for a certain project, he acquaints
'The Pope with that, and offers him the best
'Of your possessions to permit the rest
'Go peaceably—to Ecelin, a stripe
'Of soil the cursed Vicentines will gripe,
'—To Alberic, a patch the Trevisan
'Clutches already; extricate, who can,
' Treville, Villarazzi, Puissolo,
'Loria and Cartiglione!—all must go,
'And with them go my hopes. 'Tis lost, then! Lost
'This eve, our crisis, and some pains it cost
' Procuring; thirty years—as good I'd spent
* Like our admonisher! But each his bent
'Pursues: no question, one might live absurd
'Oneself this while, by deed as he by word
' Persisting to obtrude an influence where
' 'Tis made account of, much as ... nay, you fare
'With twice the fortune, youngster!—I submit,
'Happy to parallel my waste of wit
' With the renowned Sordello's: you decide
'A course for me. Romano may abide
'Romano,—Bacchus! After all, what dearth
' Of Ecelins and Alberics on earth?
'Say there's a prize in prospect, must disgrace
' Betide competitors, unless they style
'Themselves Romano? Were it worth my while
' To try my own luck! But an obscure place
' Suits me—there wants a youth to bustle, stalk
'And attitudinize—some fight, more talk,
'Most flaunting badges—how, I might make clear
' Since Friedrich's very purposes lie here
*—Here, pity they are like to lie! For me,
' With station fixed unceremoniously
' Long since, small use contesting; I am but
'The liegeman—you are born the lieges: shut
'That gentle mouth now! or resume your kin
' In your sweet self; were Palma Ecelin
'For me to work with! Could that neck endure
'This bauble for a cumbrous garniture,
' She should ... or might one bear it for her? Stay—
'I have not been so flattered many a day
'As by your pale friend—Bacchus! The least help
'Would lick the hind's fawn to a lion's whelp:
' His neck is broad enough—a ready tongue
' Beside: too writhled—but, the main thing, young—
*I could ... why, look ye!'
And the badge was thrown
Across Sordello*s neck: 'This badge alone
'Makes you Romano's Head—becomes superb
' On your bare neck, which would, on mine, disturb
'The pauldron,' said Taurello. A mad act,
Nor dreamed about before—in fact,
Not when his sportive arm rose for the nonce—
But he had dallied overmuch, this once,
With power: the thing was done, and he, aware
The thing was done, proceeded to declare—
(So like a nature made to serve, excel
In serving, only feel by service well!)
—That he would make Sordello that and more.
[c] As good a scheme as any. What's to pore
'At in my face?' he asked—'ponder instead
'This piece of news; you are Romano's Head!
'One cannot slacken pace so near the goal,
'Suffer my Azzo to escape heart-whole
'This time! For you there's Palma to espouse—
'For me, one crowning trouble ere I house
'Like my compeer.'
On which ensued a strange
And solemn visitation; there came change
O'er every one of them; each looked on each:
Up in the midst a truth grew, without speech.

And when the giddiness sank and the haze
Subsided, they were sitting, no amaze,
Sordello with the baldric on, his sire
Silent, though his proportions seemed aspire
Momently; and, interpreting the thrill,—
Night at its ebb,—Palrna was found there still
Relating somewhat Adelaide confessed
A year ago, while dying on her breast,—
Of a contrivance, that Vicenza night
When Ecelin had birth. 'Their convoy's flight,
'Cut off a moment, coiled inside the flame
'That wallowed like a dragon at his game
'The toppling city through—San Biagio rocks!
* And wounded lies in her delicious locks
'Retrude, the frail mother, on her face,
'None of her wasted, just in one embrace
' Covering her child: when, as they lifted her,
'Cleaving the tumult, mighty, mightier
'And mightiest Taurello's cry outbroke,
' Leapt like a tongue of fire that cleaves the smoke,
'Midmost to cheer his Mantuans onward—drown
'His colleague Ecelin's clamour, up and down
'The disarray: failed Adelaide see then
' Who was the natural chief, the man of men?
'Outstripping time, her infant there burst swathe,
' Stood up with eyes haggard beyond the scathe
' From wandering after his heritage
'Lost once and lost for aye: and why that rage,
'That deprecating glance? A new shape leant
'On a familiar shape—gloatingly bent
'O'er his discomfiture; 'mid wreaths it wore,
' Still one outflamed the rest—her child's before
"'Twas Salinguerra's for his child: scorn, hate,
'Rage now might startle her when all too late!
'Then was the moment!—rival's foot had spurned
'Never that House to earth else! Sense returned—
'The act conceived, adventured and complete,
'They bore away to an obscure retreat
'Mother and child—Retrude's self not slain'
(Nor even here Taurello moved) 'though pain
'Was fled; and what assured them most 'twas fled,
'All pain, was, if they raised the pale hushed head
"'Twould turn this way and that, waver awhile,
'And only settle into its old smile—
'(Graceful as the disquieted water-flag
'Steadying itself, remarked they, in the quag
' On either side their path)—when suffered look
'Down on her child. They marched: no sign once shook
'The company's close litter of crossed spears
'Till, as they reached Goito, a few tears
'Slipped in the sunset from her long black lash,
' And she was gone. So far the action rash;
'No crime. They laid Retrude in the font,
'Taurello's very gift, her child was wont
'To sit beneath—constant as eve he came
'To sit by its attendant girls the same
'As one of them. For Palma, she would blend
'With this magnific spirit to the end,
'That ruled her first; but scarcely had she dared
'To disobey the Adelaide who scared
'Her into vowing never to disclose
'A secret to her husband, which so froze
' His blood at haif-recital, she contrived
'To hide from him Taurello's infant lived,
'Lest, by revealing that, himself should mar
'Romano's fortunes. And, a crime so far,
'Palma received that action: she was told
'Of Salinguerra's nature, of his cold
'Calm acquiescence in his lot! But free
'To impart the secret to Romano, she
'Engaged to repossess Sordello of
'His heritage, and hers, and that way doff
'Their mask, but after years, long years: while now,
'Was not Romano's sign-mark on that brow?'
Across Taurello's heart his arms were locked:
And when he did speak 'twas as if he mocked
The minstrel, 'who had not to move,' he said,
'Nor stir—should fate defraud him of a shred
'Of his son's infancy? much less his youth!'
(Laughingly all this)—'which to aid, in truth,
'Himself, reserved on purpose, had not grown
'Old, not too old—'twas best they kept alone

'Till now, and never idly met till now;'
—Then, in the same breath, told Sordello how
All intimations of this eve's event
Were lies, for Friedrich must advance to Trent,
Thence to Verona, then to Rome, there stop,
Tumble the Church down, institute a-top
The Alps a Prefecture of Lombardy:
—'That's now!—no prophesying what may be
* Anon, with a new monarch of the clime,
* Native of Gesi, passing his youth's prime
' At Naples. Tito bids my choice decide
'On whom . . .'
'Embrace him, madman!' Palma cried,
Who through the laugh saw sweat-drops burst apace,
And his lips blanching: he did not embrace
Sordello, but he laid Sordello's hand
On his own eyes, mouth, forehead. Understand,
This while Sordello was becoming flushed
Out of his whiteness; thoughts rushed, fancies rushed;
He pressed his hand upon his head and signed
Both should forbear him. ' Nay, the best's behind!'
Taurello laughed—not quite with the same laugh:
'The truth is, thus we scatter, ay, like chaff
'These Guelfs, a despicable monk recoils
'From: nor expect a fickle Kaiser spoils
'Our triumph!—Friedrich? Think you, I intend
' Friedrich shall reap the fruits of blood I spend
* And brain I waste ? Think you, the people clap
'Their hands at my out-hewing this wild gap
' For any Friedrich to fill up ? 'Tis mine—
'That's yours: I tell you, towards some such design
'Have I worked blindly, yes, and idly, yes,
' And for another, yes—but worked no less
'With instinct at my heart; I else had swerved,
'While now—look round! My cunning has preserved
'Samminiato—that's a central place
' Secures us Florence, bqy,—in Pisa's case.
'By land as she by sea; with Pisa ours,
'And Florence, and Pistoia, one devours
'The land at leisure! Gloriously dispersed—
'Brescia, observe, Milan, Piacenza first
' That flanked us (ah, you know not!) in the March;
'On these we pile, as keystone of our arch,
'Romagna and Bologna, whose first span
'Covered the Trentine and the Valsugan;
'Sofia's Egna by Bolgiano's sure!'...
So he proceeded: half of all this, pure
Delusion, doubtless, nor the rest too true,
But what was undone he felt sure to do,
As ring by ring he wrung off, flung away
The pauldron-rings to give his sword-arm play-
Need of the sword now! That would soon adjust
Aught wrong at present; to the sword intrust
Sordello's whiteness, undersize: 'twas plain
He hardly rendered right to his own brain—
Like a brave hound, men educate to pride
Himself on speed or scent nor aught beside,
As though he could not, gift by gift, match men!
Palma had listened patiently: but when
'Twas time expostulate, attempt withdraw
Taurello from his child, she, without awe
Took off his iron arms from, one by one,
Sordello's shrinking shoulders, and, that done,
Made him avert his visage and relieve
Sordello (you might see his corslet heave
The while) who, loose, rose—tried to speak, then sank:
They left him in the chamber. All was blank.
And even reeling down the narrow stair
Taurello kept up, as though unaware
Palma was by to guide him, the old device
—Something of Milan—'how we muster thrice
'The Torriani's strength there; all along
'Our own Visconfi cowed them'—thus the song
Continued even while she bade him stoop,
Thrid somehow, by some glimpse of arrow-loop,
The turnings to the gallery below,
Where he stopped short as Palma let him go.
When he had sat in silence long enough
Splintering the stone bench, braving a rebuff
She stopped the truncheon; only to commence
One of Sordello's poems, a pretence
For speaking, some poor rhyme of 'Elys' hair
'And head that's sharp and perfect like a pear,
'So smooth and close are laid the few fine locks
'Stained like pale honey oozed from topmost rocks
'Sun-blanched the livelong summer'—from his worst
Performance, the Goito, as his first:
And that at end, conceiving from the brow
And open mouth no silence would serve now,

Went on to say the whole world loved that man
And, for thatmatte'f, thought his face, tho' wan,
Eclipsed the Count's—he sucking in each phrase
As if an angel spoke. The foolish praise
Ended, he drew her on his mailed knees, made
Her face a framework with his hands, a shade,
A crown, an aureole: there must she remain
(Her little mouth compressed with smiling pain
As in his gloves she felt her tresses twitch)
To get the best look at, in fittest niche
Dispose his saint. That done, he kissed her brow,
—'Lauded her father for his treason now,'
He told her, * only, how could one suspect
'The wit in him?—whose clansman, re-collect,
' Was ever Salinguerra—she, the same,
' Romano and his lady—so, might claim
'To know all, as she should*—and thus begun
Schemes with a vengeance, schemes on schemes, 'not one
' Fit to be told that foolish boy,' he said,
' But only let Sordello Palma wed,
'—Then!'
'Twas a dim long narrow place at best:
Midway a sole grate showed the fiery West,
As shows its corpse the world's end some split tomb—
A gloom, a rift of fire, another gloom,
Faced Palma—but at length Taurello set
Her free; the grating held one ragged jet
Of fierce gold fire: he lifted her within
The hollow underneath—how else begin
Fate's second marvellous cycle, else renew
The ages than with Palma plain in view?
Then paced the passage, hands clenched, head erect,
Pursuing his discourse; a grand unchecked
Monotony made out from his quick talk
And the recurring noises of his walk;
—Somewhat too much like the o'er-charged assent
Of two resolved friends in one danger blent,
Who hearten each the other against heart;
Boasting there's nought to care for, when, apart
The boaster, all's to care for. He, beside
Some shape not visible, in power and pride
Approached, out of the dark, ginglingly near,
Nearer, passed close in the broad light, his ear
Crimson, eyeballs suffused, temples full-fraught,
Just a snatch of the rapid speech you caught,
And on he strode into the opposite dark,
Till presently the harsh heel's turn, a spark
I' the stone, and whirl of some loose em-bossed thong
That crashed against the angle aye so long
After the last, punctual to an amount
Of mailed great paces you could not but count,—
Prepared you for the pacing back again.
And by the snatches you might ascertain
That, Friedrich's Prefecture surmounted, left
By this alone in Italy, they cleft
Asunder, crushed together, at command
Of none, were free to break up Hildebrand,
Rebuild, he and Sordello, Charlemagne—
But garnished, Strength with Knowledge, 'if we deign
' Accept that compromise and stoop to give
' Rome law, the Caesar's Representative.'
Enough, that the illimitable flood
Of triumphs after triumphs, understood
In its faint reflux (you shall hear) sufficed
Young Ecelin for appanage, enticed
Him on till, these long quiet in their graves,
He found 'twas looked for that a whole life's braves
Should somehow be made good; so, weak and worn,
Must stagger up at Milan, one grey morn
Of the to-come, and fight his latest fight.
But, Salinguerra's prophecy at height—
He voluble with a raised arm and stiff,
A blaring voice, a blazing eye, as if
He had our very Italy to keep
Or cast away, or gather in a heap
To garrison the better—ay, his word
Was, ' run the cucumber into a gourd,
'Drive Trent upon Apulia'—at their pitch
Who spied the continents and islands which
Grew mulberry leaves and sickles, in the map—
(Strange that three such confessions so should hap
To Palma, Dante spoke with in the clear
Amorous silence of the Swooning-sphere,—
Cunizza, as he called her! Never ask
Of Palma more! She sat, knowing her task
Was done, the labour of it,—for, success
Concerned not Palma, passion's votaress.)
Triumph at height, and thus Sordello crowned—
Above the passage suddenly a sound
Stops speech, stops walk: back shrinks Taurello, bids
With large involuntary asking lids,
Palma interpret. "Tis his own foot-stamp—
'Your hand! His summons! Nay, this idle damp
'Befits not!' Out they two reeled dizzily.
'Visconti's strong at Milan,' resumed he,

In the old, somewhat insignhicant way—
(Was Palma wont, years afterward, to say)
As though the spirit's flight, sustained thus far,
Dropped at that very instant Gone they are—
Palma, Taurello; Eglamor anon,
Ecelin,—only Naddo's never gone!
—Labours, this moonrise, what the Master meant:
'Is Squarcialupo speckled?—purulent,
'I'd say, but when was Providence put out?
'He carries somehow handily about
'His spite nor fouls himself I' Goito's vines
Stand like a cheat detected—stark rough lines,
The moon breaks through, a grey mean scale against
The vault where, this eve's Maiden, thou remain'st
Like some fresh martyr, eyes fixed—who can tell?
As Heaven, now all's at end, did not so well,
Spite of the faith and victory, to leave
Its virgin quite to death in the lone eve.
While the persisting hermit-bee... ha! wait
No longer: these in compass, forward fate!

BOOK THE SIXTH

THE thought of Eglamor's least like a thought,
And yet a false one, was, 'Man shrinks to nought
'If matched with symbols of immensity;
*Must quail, forsooth, before a quiet sky
'Or sea, too little for their quietude:'
And, truly, somewhat in Sordello's mood
Confirmed its speciousness, while eve slow sank
Down the near terrace to the farther bank,
And only one spot left from out the night
Glimmered upon the river opposite—
A breadth of watery heaven like a bay,
A sky-like space of water, ray for ray,
And star for star, one richness where they mixed
As this and that wing of an angel, fixed,
Tumultuary splendours folded in
To die. Nor turned he till Ferrara's din
(Say, the monotonous speech from a man's lip
Who lets some first and eager purpose slip
In a new fancy's birth—the speech keeps on
Though elsewhere its informing soul be gone)
—Aroused him, surely offered succour. Fate
Paused with this eve; ere she precipitate
Herself,—best put off newstrange thoughts awhile,
That voice, those large hands, that portentous smile,—
What help to pierce the future as the past
Lay in the plaining city? And at last
The main discovery and prime concern,
All that just now imported him to learn,
Truth's self, like yonder slow moon to complete
Heaven, rose again, and, naked at his feet.
Lighted his old life's every shift and change,
Effort with counter-effort; nor the range
Of each looked wrong except wherein it checked,
Some other—which of these could he suspect,
Prying into them by the sudden blaze?
The real way seemed made up of all the ways—
Mood after mood of the one mind in him;
Tokens of the existence, bright or dim,
Of a transcendent all-embracing sense
Demanding only outward influence,
A soul, in Palma's phrase, above his soul,
Power to uplift his power,—such moon's control
Over such sea-depths,—and their mass had swept
Onward from the beginning and still kept
Its course: but years and years the sky above
Held none, and so, untasked of any love,
His sensitiveness idled, now amort,
Alive now, and, to sullenness or sport
Given wholly up, disposed itself anew
At every passing instigation, grew
And dwindled at caprice, in foam-showers spilt,
Wedge-like insisting, quivered now a gilt
Shield in the sunshine, now a blinding race
Of whitest ripples o'er the reef—found place
For much display; not gathered up end, hurled
Right from its heart, encompassing the world.
So had Sordello been, by consequence,
Without a function: others made pretence
To strength not half his own, yet had some core
Within, submitted to some moon, before
Them still, superior still whate'cr their force,—
Were able therefore to fulfil a course,
Nor missed life's crown, authentic attribute.
To each who lives must be a certain fruit
Of having lived in his degree,—a stage,
Earlier or later in men's pilgrimage,
To stop at; and to this the spirits tend
Who, still discovering beauty without end,

Amass the scintillations, make one star
—Something unlike them, self-sustained, afar,—
And meanwhile nurse the dream of being blest
By winning it to notice and invest
Their souls with alien glory, some one day
Whene'er the nucleus, gathering shape alway,
Round to the perfect circle—soon or late,
According as themselves are formed to wait,
Whether mere human beauty will suffice
—The yellow hair and the luxurious eyes,
Or human intellect seem best, or each
Combine in some ideal form past reach
On earth, or else some shade of these, some aim,
Some love, hate even, take their place, the same,
So to be served—all this they do not lose,
Waiting for death to live, nor idly choose
What must be Hell—a progress thus pursued
Through all existence, still above the food
That's offered them, still fain to reach beyond
The widened range, in virtue of their bond
Of sovereignty. Not that a Palma's Love,
A Salinguerra's Hate, would equal prove
To swaying all Sordello: but why doubt
Some love meet for such strength, some moon without
Would match his sea?—or tear, Good manifest,
Only the Best breaks faith?—Ah but the Best
Somehow eludes us ever, still might be
And is not! Crave we gems? No penury
Of their material round us! Pliant earth
And plastic flame—what balks the mage his birth
—Jacinth in balls or lodestone by the block?
Flinders enrich the strand, veins swell the rock;
Nought more! Seek creatures? Life's i' the tempest, thought
Clothes the keen hill-top, mid-day woods are fraught
With fervours: human forms are well enough!
But we had hoped, encouraged by the stuff
Profuse at nature's pleasure, men beyond
These actual men!—and thus are over-fond
In arguing, from Good—the Best, from force
Divided—force combined, an ocean's course
From this our sea whose mere intestine pants
Might seem at times sufficient to our wants.
External power! If none be adequate,
And he stand forth ordained (a prouder fate)
Himself a law to his own sphere? 'Remove
'All incompleteness!' for that law, that love?
Nay, if all other laws be feints,—truth veiled
Helpfully to weak vision that had failed
To grasp aught but its special want,—for lure,
Embodied? Stronger vision could endure
The unbodied want: no part—the whole of truth!
The People were himself; nor, by the ruth
At their condition, was he less impelled
To alter the discrepancy beheld,
Than if, from the sound whole, a sickly part
Subtracted were transformed, decked out with art,
Then palmed on him as alien woe—the Guelf
To succour, proud that he forsook himself.
All is himself; all service, therefore, rates
Alike, nor serving one part, immolates
The rest: but all in time! 'That lance of yours
'Makes havoc soon with Malek and his Moors,
'That buckler's lined with many a giant's beard
'Ere long, our champion, be the lance up-reared,
' The buckler wielded handsomely as now!
'But view your escort, bear in mind your vow,
'Count the pale tracts of sand to pass ere that,
'And, if you hope we struggle through the flat,
'Put lance and buckler by! Next half-month lacks
'Mere sturdy exercise of mace and axe
'To cleave this dismal brake of prickly-pear
' Which bristling holds Cydippe by the hair,,
' Lames barefoot Agathon: this felled, we'll try
'The picturesque achievements by and by—
'Next life!'
Ay, rally, mock, O People, urge
Your claims!—for thus he ventured, to the verge,
Push a vain mummery which perchance distrust
Of his fast-slipping resolution thrust
Likewise: accordingly the Crowd—(as yet
He had unconsciously contrived forget
I' the whole, to dwell o' the points... one might assuage
The signal horrors easier than engage
With a dim vulgar vast unobvious grief
Not to be fancied off, nor gained relief

In brilliant fits, cured by a happy quirk,
But by dim vulgar vast unobvious work
To correspond...) this Crowd then, forth they stood.
'And now content thy stronger vision, brood
' On thy bare want; uncovered, turf by turf,
'Study the corpse-face thro' the taint-worms' scurf!'
Down sank the People's Then; uprose their Now.
These sad ones render service to! And how
Piteously little must that service prove
—Had surely proved in any case! for, move
Each other obstacle away, let youth
Become aware it had surprised a truth
'Twere service to impart—can truth be seized,
Settled forthwith, and, of the captive eased,
Its captor find fresh prey, since this alit
So happily, no gesture luring it,
The earnest of a flock to follow ? Vain,
Most vain! a life to spend ere this he chain
To the poor crowd's complacence: ere the crowd
Pronounce it captured, he descries a cloud
Its kin of twice the plume; which he, in turn,
If he shall live as many lives, may learn
How to secure: not else. Then Mantua called
Back to his mind how certain bards were thralled
—Buds blasted, but of breath more like perfume
Than Naddo's staring nosegay's carrion bloom;
Some insane rose that burnt heart out in sweets,
A spendthrift in the spring, no summer greets;
Some Dularete, drunk with truths and wine,
Grown bestial, dreaming how become divine.
Yet to surmount this obstacle, commence
With the commencement, merits crowning! Hence
Must truth be casual truth, elicited
In sparks so mean, at intervals dispread
So rarely, that 'tis like at no one time
Of the world's story has not truth, the prime
Of truth, the very truth which, loosed, had hurled
The world's course right, been really in the world
—Content the while with some mean spark by dint
Of some chance-blow, the solitary hint
Of buried fire, which, rip earth's breast, would stream
Sky-ward 1
Sordello's miserable gleam
Was looked for at the moment: he would dash
This badge, and all it brought, to earth,—abash
Taurello thus, perhaps persuade him wrest
The Kaiser from his purpose,—would attest
His own belief, in any case. Before
He dashes it however, think once more!
For, were that little, truly service? ' Ay,
T the end, no doubt; but meantime? Plain you spy
'Its ultimate effect, but many flaws
'Of vision blur each intervening cause.
'Were the day's fraction clear as the life's sum
' Of service, Now as filled as teems To-come
'With evidence of good—nor too minute
'A share to vie with evil! No dispute,
' 'Twere fitliest maintain the Guelfs in rule:
'That makes your life's work: but you have to school
' Your day's work on these natures circumstanced
'Thus variously, which yet, as each advanced
'Or might impede the Guelf rule, must be moved
'Now, for the Then's sake,—hating what you loved,
* Loving old hatreds! Nor if one man bore
' Brand upon temples while his fellow wore
'The aureole, would it task you to decide:
'But, portioned duly out, the future vied
'Never with the unparcelled present! Smite
' Or spare so much on warrant all so slight ?
'The present's complete sympathies to break,
'Aversions bear with, for a future's sake
'So feeble? Tito ruined through one speck,
' The Legate saved by his sole lightish fleck ?
' This were work, true, but work performed at cost
'Of other work; aught gained here, elsewhere lost.
' For a new segment spoil an orb half-done ?
'Rise with the People one step, and sink—one?
'Were it but one step, less than the whole face
'Of things, your novel duty bids erase!
'Harms to abolish! What, the prophet saith,
'The minstrel singeth vainly then? Old faith,
'Old courage, only born because of harms,
'Were not, from highest to the lowest, charms ?
'Flame may persist; but is not glare as staunch ?
'Where the salt marshes stagnate, crystals branch:

'Blood dries to crimson: Evil's beautified
' In every shane. Thrust Beauty then aside
' And banish Evil! Wherefore? After all,
'Is Evil a result less natural
'Than Good? For overlook the seasons' strife
'With tree and flower,—ths hideous animal life,
'(Of which who seeks shall find a grinning taunt
'For his solution, and endure the vaunt
'Of nature's angel, as a child that knows
' Himself befooled, unable to propose
'Aught better than the fooling)—and but care
'For men, for the mere People then and there,—
' In these, could you but see that Good and 111
'Claimed you alike! Whence rose their claim but still
'From 111, as fruit of 111? What else could knit
' You theirs but Sorrow ? Any free from it
'Were also free from you! Whose happiness
'Could be distinguished in this morning's press
'Of miseries?—the fool's who passed a gibe
'"On thee," jeered he, "so wedded to thy tribe,
'"Thou earnest green and yellow tokens in
'"Thy very face that thou art Ghibellin!"
'Much hold on you that fool obtained! Nay mount
' Yet higher—and upon men's own account
' Must Evil stay: for, what is joy ?—to heave
' Up one obstruction more, and common leave
'What was peculiar, by such act destroy
' Itself; a partial death is every joy;
'The sensible escape, enfranchisement
'Of a sphere's essence: once the vexed—content,
' The cramped—at large, the growing circle—round,
'All's to begin again—some novel bound
'To break, some new enlargement to entreat;
'The sphere though larger is not more complete.
'Now for Mankind's experience: who alone
'Might style the unobstructed world his own?
'Whom palled Goito with its perfect things?
'Sordello's self: whereas for Mankind springs
'Salvation by each hindrance interposed.
'They climb; life's view is not at once disclosed
'To creatures caught up, on the summit left,
'Heaven plain above them, yet of wings bereft:
'But lower laid, as at the mountain's foot.
'So, range on range, the girdling forests shoot
"Twixt your plain prospect and the throngs who scale
'Height after height, and pierce mists, veil by veil,
'Heartened with each discovery; in their soul,
' The Whole they seek by Parts—but, found that Whole,
'Could they revert, enjoy past gains? The space
' Of time you judge so meagre to embrace
'The Parts were more than plenty, once attained
'The Whole, to quite exhaust it: nought were gained
'But leave to look—not leave to do: Beneath
'Soon sates the looker—look Above, and Death
'Tempts ere a tithe of Life be tasted. Live
'First, and die soon enough, Sordello! Give
'Body and spirit the first right they claim,
'And pasture soul on a voluptuous shame
'That you, a pageant-city's denizen,
'Are neither vilely lodged midst Lombard men—
'Can force joy out of sorrow, seem to truck
'Bright attributes away for sordid muck,
'Yet manage from that very muck educe
'Gold; then subject, nor scruple, to your cruce
'The world's discardings! Though real ingots pay
'Your pains, the clods that yielded them are clay
' To all beside,—would clay remain, though quenched
'Your purging-fire; who's robbed then? Had you wrenched
'An ampler treasure forth!—As 'tis, they crave
'A share that ruins you and wilI not save
'Them. Why should sympathy command you quit
'The course that makes your joy, nor will remit
'Their woe? Would all arrive at joy? Reverse
'The order (time instructs you) nor coerce
'Each unit till, some predetermined mode,
'The total be emancipate; men's road
'Is one, men's times of travel many; thwart
'No enterprising soul's precocious start
' Before the general march! If slow or fast
'AH straggle up to the same point at last,

'Why grudge your having gained, a month ago,
'The brakes at balm-shed, asphodels in blow,
'While they were landlocked ? Speed their Then, but how
'This badge would suffer you improve your Now!'
His time of action for, against, or with
Our world (I labour to extract the pith
Of this his problem) grew, that even-tide,
Gigantic with its power of joy, beside
The world's eternity of impotence
To profit though at his whole joy's expense.
'Make nothing of my day because so brief?'* Rather make more: instead of hoy, use
grief
'Before its novelty have time subside!
*Wait not for the late savour, leave untried
'Virtue, the creaming honey-wine, quick squeeze
'Vice like a biting spirit from the lees
'Of life! Together let wrath, hatred, lust,
'All tyrannies in every shape, be thrust
'Upon this Now, which time may reason out
'As mischiefs, far from benefits, no doubt;
'But long ere then Sordello will have slipt
'Away; you teach him at Goito's crypt,
'There's a blank issue to that fiery thrill.
'Stirring, the few cope with the many, still:
'So much of sand as, quiet, makes a mass
'Unable to produce three tufts of grass,
'Shall, troubled by the whirlwind, render void
'The whole calm glebe's endeavour: be employed!
'And e'en though somewhat smart the Crowd for this,
'Contribute each his pang to make your bliss,
''Tis but one pang—one blood-drop to the bowl
'Which brimful tempts the sluggish asp uncowl
'At last, stains ruddily the dull red cape,
'And, kindling orbs grey as the unripe grape
'Before, avails forthwith to disentrance
'The portent, soon to lead a mystic dance
'Among you! For, who sits alone in Rome?
'Have those great hands indeed hewn out a home,
'And set me there to live? Oh life, life-breath,
'Life-blood,—ere sleep, come travail, life ere death!
'This life stream on my soul, direct, oblique,
'But always streaming! Hindrances? They pique:
'Helps? such... but why repeat, my soul o'ertops
'Each height, then every depth profound-lier drops?
'Enough that I can live, and would live! Wait
'For some transcendent life reserved by Fate
'To follow this? Oh, never! Fate, I trust
'The same, my soul to; for, as who flings dust,
'Perchance (so facile was the deed) she chequed
'The void with these materials to affect
'My soul diversely: these consigned anew
'To nought by death, what marvel if she threw
'A second and superber spectacle
'Before me ? What may servefor sun, what still
'Wander a moon above me? What else wind
'About me like the pleasures left behind,
'And how shall some new flesh that is not flesh
'Cling to me? What's new laughter? Soothes the fresh
'Sleep like sleep? Fate's exhaustless for my sake
'In brave resource: but whether bids she slake
'My thirst at this first rivulet, or count
'No draught worth lip save from some rocky fount
'Above i' the clouds, while here she's provident
'Of pure loquacious pearl, the soft treetent
'Guards, with its face of reate and sedge, nor fail
'The silver globules and gold-sparkling grail
'At bottom? Oh, 'twere too absurd to slight
'For the hereafter the to-day's delight!
'Quench thirst at this, then seek next well-spring: wear
'Home-lilies ere strange lotus in my hair!
'Here is the Crowd, whom I with freest heart
'Offer to serve, contented for my part
'To give life up in service,—only grant
'That I do serve; if otherwise, why want
'Aught further of me? If men cannot choose
'But set aside life, why should I refuse
'The gift? I take it—I, for one, engage
'Never to falter through my pilgrimage—
'Nor end it howling that the stock or stone
'Were enviable, truly: I, for one,
'Will praise the world, you style mere ante-room
'To palace—be it so! shall I assume

'—My foot the courtly gait, my tongue the trope,
'My mouth the smirk, before the doors fly ope
'One moment? What? with guarders row on row,
'Gay swarms of varletry that come and go,
'Pages to dice with, waiting-girls unlace
'The plackets of, pert claimants help dis-place,
'Heart-heavy suitors get a rank for,—laugh
'At yon sleek parasite, break his own staff
''Cross Beetle-brows the Usher's shoulder, —why
'Admitted to the presence by and by,
'Should thought of having lost these make me grieve
'Among new joys I reach, for joys I leave?
'Cool citrine-crystals, fierce pyropus-stone,
'Are floor-work there! But do I let alone
'That black-eyed peasant in the vestibule
'Once and for ever?—Floor-work? No such fool!
'Rather, were heaven to forestall earth, I'd say
'I, is it, must be blest? Then, my own way
'Blessme! Givefirmerarmandfleeterfoot,
'I'll thank you: but to no mad wings transmute
'These limbs of mine—our greensward was *Go* soft!
'Nor camp I on the thunder-cloud aloft:
'We feel the bliss distinctlier, having thus
'Engines subservient, not mixed up with us.
'Better move palpably through heaven: nor, freed
'Of flesh forsooth, from space to space proceed
•'Mid flying synods of worlds! No: in heaven's marge
'Show Titan still, recumbent o'er his targe
'Solid with stars—the Centaur at his game,
'Made tremulously out in hoary flame!
'Life! Yet the very cup whose extreme dull
'Dregs, even, I would quaff, was dashed, at full,
'Aside so oft; the death I fly, revealed
'So oft a better life this life concealed,
'And which sage, champion, martyr, through each path
'Have hunted fearlessly—the horrid bath,
'The crippling-irons and the fiery chair.
''Twas well for them; let me become aware
'As they, and I relinquish life, too! Let
'What masters life disclose itself! Forget
'Vain ordinances, I have one appeal—
'I feel, am what I feel, know what I feel;
'So much is truth to me. What Is, then? Since
'One object, viewed diversely, may evince
'Beauty and ugliness—this way attract,
'That way repel,—why gloze upon the fact?
'Why must a single of the sides be right?
'What bids choose this and leave the op-posite?
'Where's abstract Right for me?- in youth endued
'With Right still present, still to be pur-sued,
'Thro' all the interchange of circles, rife
'Each with its proper law and mode of life,
'Each to be dwelt at ease in: where, to sway
'Absolute with the Kaiser, or obey
'Implicit with his serf of fluttering heart,
'Or, like a sudden thought of God's, to start
'Up, Brutus in the presence, then go shout
'That some should pick the unstrung jewels out—
'Each, well!'
And, as in moments when the past
Gave partially enfranchisement, he cast
Himself quite through mere secondary states
Of his soul's essence, little loves and hates,
Into the mid deep yearnings overlaid
By these; as who should pierce hill, plain, grove, glade,
And on into the very nucleus probe
That first determined there exist a globe.
As that were easiest, half the globe dis-solved,
So seemed Sordello's closing-truth evolved
By his flesh-half's break-up; the sudden swell
Of his expanding soul showed I11 and Well,
Sorrow and Joy, Beauty and Ugliness,
Virtue and Vice, the Larger and the Less,
All qualities, in fine, recorded here,
Might be but modes of Time and this one sphere,
Urgent on these, but not of force to bind
Eternity, as Time—as Matter—Mind,
If Mind, Eternity, should choose assert
Their attributes within a Life: thus girt
With circumstance, next change beholds them cinct
Quite otherwise—with Good and 111 dis-tinct,
Joys, sorrows, tending to a like result—
Contrived to render easy, difficult,
This or the other course of . . . what new bond
In place of flesh may stop their flight beyond
Its new sphere, as that course does harm or good
To its arrangements. Once this under-stood,
As suddenly he felt himself alone,
Quite out of Time and this world: all was known.
What made the secret of his past despair?
—Most imminent when he seemed most

Of his own self-sufficiency: made mad
By craving to expand the power he had,
And not new power to be expanded ?—just
This made it; Soul on Matter being thrust,
Joy comes when so much Soul is wreaked in Time
On Matter: let the Soul's attempt sublime
Matter beyond the scheme and so prevent
By more or less that deed's accomplishment,
And Sorrow follows: Sorrow how avoid?
Let the employer match the thing employed,
Fit to the finite his infinity,
And thus proceed for ever, in degree
Changed but in kind the same, still limited
To the appointed circumstance and dead
To all beyond. A sphere is but a sphere;
Small, Great, are merely terms we bandy here;
Since to the spirit's absoluteness all
Are like. Now,, of the present sphere we call
Life, are conditions; take but this among
Many; the body was to be so long
Youthful, no longer: but, since no control
Tied to that body's purposes his soul,
She chose to understand the body's trade
More than the body's self—had fain conveyed
Her boundless to the body's bounded lot.
Hence, the soul permanent, the body not,—
Scarcely its minute for enjoying here,—
The soul must needs instruct her weak compeer,
Run o'er its capabilities and wring
A joy thence, she held worth experiencing:
Which, far from half discovered even,—lo,
The minute gone, the body's power let go
Apportioned to that joy's acquirement! Broke
Morning o'er earth, he yearned for all it woke—
From the volcano's vapour-flag, winds hoist
Black o'er the spread of sea,—down to the moist
Dale's silken barley-spikes sullied with rain,
Swayed earthwards, heavily to rise again—
The Small, a sphere as perfect as the Great
To the soul's absoluteness. Meditate
Too long on such a morning's cluster-chord
And the whole music it was framed afford,—
The chord's might half discovered, what should pluck
One string, his finger, was found palsy-struck.
And then no marvel if the spirit, shown
A saddest sight—the body lost alone
Through her officious proffered help, deprived
Of this and that enjoyment Fate contrived,—
Virtue, Good, Beauty, each allowed slip hence,—
Vain-gloriously were fain, for recompense,
To stem the ruin even yet, protract
The body's term, supply the power it lacked
From her infinity, compel it learn
These qualities were only Time's concern,
And body may, with spirit helping, barred—
Advance the same, vanquished—obtain reward,
Reap joy where sorrow was intended grow,
Of Wrong make Right, and turn I11 Good below.
And the result is, the poor body soon
Sinks under what was meant a wondrous boon,
Leaving its bright accomplice all aghast.
So much was plain then, proper in the past;
To be complete for, satisfy the whole
Series of spheres—Eternity, his soul
Needs must exceed, prove incomplete for, each
Single sphere—Time. But does our knowledge reach
No farther? Is the cloud of hindrance broke
But by the failing of the fleshly yoke,
Its loves and hates, as now when death lets soar
Sordello, self-sufficient as before,
Though during the mere space that shall elapse
'Twixt his enthralment in new bonds perhaps?
Must life be ever just escaped, which should
Have been enjoyed?—nay, might have been and would,
Each purpose ordered right—the soul's no whit
Beyond the body's purpose under it.
Like yonder breadth of watery heaven, a bay,
And that sky-space of water, ray for ray
And star for star, one richness where they mixed
As this and that wing of an angel, fixed,
Tumultuary splendours folded in
To die—would soul, proportioned thus, begin
Exciting discontent, or surelier quell
The body if, aspiring, it rebel?
But how so order life? Still brutalize
The soul, the sad world's way, with muffled eyes
To all that was before, all that shall be
After this sphere—all and each quality

Save some sole and immutable Great, Good
And Beauteous' whither fate has loosed its hood
To follow? Never may some soul see All
—The Great Before and After, and the Small
Now, yet be saved by this the simplest lore,
And take the single course prescribed before,
As the king-bird with ages on his plumes
Travels to die in his ancestral glooms?
But where descry the Love that shall select
That course? Here is a soul whom, to affect,
Nature has plied with all her means, from trees
And flowers e'en to the Multitude!—and these,
Decides he save or no? One word to end!
Ah my Sordello, I this once befriend
And speak for you. Of a Power above you still
Which, utterly incomprehensible,
Is out of rivalry, which thus you can
Love, tho' unloving all conceived by man—
What need! And of—none the minutest duct
To that out-nature, nought that would instruct
And so let rivalry begin to live—
But of a Power its representative
Who, being for authority the same.
Communication different, should claim
A course, the first chose but this last revealed—
This Human clear, as that Divine concealed—
What utter need!
What has Sordello found?
Or can his spirit go the mighty round,
End where poor Eglamor begun? So, says
Old fable, the two eagles went two ways
About the world: where, in the midst, they met,
Though on a shifting waste of sand, men set
Jove's temple. Quick, what has Sordello found?
For they approach—approach—that foot's rebound...
Palma? No, Salinguerra though in mail;
They mount, have reached the threshold, dash the veil
Aside—and you divine who sat there dead,
Under his foot the badge: still, Palma said,
A triumph lingering in the wide eyes,
Wider than some spent swimmer's if he spies
Help from above in his extreme despair,
And, head far back on shoulder thrust, turns there
With short quick passionate cry: as Palma pressed
In one great kiss, her lips upon his breast,
It beat.
By this, the hermit-bee has stopped
His day's toil at Goito: the new-cropped
Dead vine-leaf answers, now 'tis eve, he bit,
Twirled so, and filed all day: the mansion 's fit,
God counselled for. As easy guess the word
That passed betwixt them, and become the third
To the soft small unfrighted bee, as tax
Him with one fault—so, no remembrance racks
Of the stone maidens and the font of stone
He, creeping through the crevice, leaves alone.
Alas, my friend, alas Sordello, whom
Anon they laid within that old font-tomb,
And, yet again, alas!
And now is't worth
Our while bring back to mind, much less set forth
How Salinguerra extricates himself
Without Sordello? Ghibellin and Guelf
May fight their fiercest out? If Richard sulked
In durance or the Marquis paid his mulct,
Who cares, Sordello gone? The upshot, sure,
Was peace; our chief made some frank overture
That prospered; compliment fell thick and fast
On its disposer, and Taurello passed
With foe and friend for an outstripping soul,
Nine days at least. Then,—fairly reached the goal,—
He, by one effort, blotted the great hope
Out of his mind, nor further tried to cope
With Este, that mad evening's style, but sent
Away the Legate and the League, content
No blame at least the brothers had incurred,
—Dispatched a message to the Monk, he heard
Patiently first to last, scarce shivered at,
Then curled his limbs up on his wolfskin mat
And ne'er spoke more,—informed the Ferrarese
He but retained their rule so long as these
Lingered in pupilage,—and last, no mode
Apparent else of keeping safe the road
From Germany direct to Lombardy
ForFriedrich,—none, that is, to guarantee
The faith and promptitude of who should next
Obtain Sofia's dowry,—sore perplexed—
(Sofia being youngest of the tribe
Of daughters, Ecelin was wont to bribe

The envious magnates with—nor, since he sent
Henry of Egna this fair child, had Trent
Once failed the Kaiser's purposes—'we lost
'Egna last year, and who takes Egna's post—
'Opens the Lombard gate if Friedrich knock?')
Himself espoused the Lady of the Rock
In pure necessity, and, so destroyed
His slender last of chances, quite made void
Old prophecy, and spite of all the schemes
Overt and covert, youth's deeds, age's dreams,
Was sucked into Romano. And so hushed
He up this evening's work that, when 'twas brushed
Somehow against by a blind chronicle
Which, chronicling whatever woe befell
Ferrara, noted this the obscure woe
Of 'Sahnguerra's sole son Giacomo
• Deceased, fatuous and doting, ere his sire,'
The townsfolk rubbed their eyes, could but admire
Which of Sofia's five was meant.
The chaps
Of earth's dead hope were tardy to collapse,
Obliterated not the beautiful
Distinctive features at a crash: but dull
And duller these, next year, as Guelfs withdrew
Each to his stronghold. Then (securely too
Ecelin at Campese slept; close by,
Who likes may see him in Solagna lie,
With cushioned head and gloved hand to denote
The cavalier he was)—then his heart smote
Young Ecelin at last: long since adult.
And, save Vicenza's business, what result
In blood and blaze? (So hard to intercept
Sordello till his plain withdrawal!) Stepped
Then its new lord on Lombardy. I' the nick
Of time when Ecelin and Alberic
Closed with Taurello, come precisely news
That in Verona half the souls refuse
Allegiance to the Marquis and the Count—
Have cast them from a throne they bid him mount,
Their Podesta, thro' his ancestral worth.
Ecelin flew there, and the town henceforth
Was wholly his—Taurello sinking back
From temporary station to a track
That suited. News received of this acquist,
Friedrich did come to Lombardy: who missed
Taurello then? Another year: they took
Vicenza, left the Marquis scarce a nook
For refuge, and, when hundreds two or three
Of Guelfs conspired to call themselves 'The Free,'
Opposing Alberic,—vile Bassanese,—
(Without Sordello!)—Ecelin at ease
Slaughtered them so observably, that oft
A little Salinguerra looked with soft
Blue eyes up, asked his sire the proper age
To get appomted his proud uncle's page.
More years passed, and that sire had dwindled down
To a mere showy turbulent soldier, grown
Better through age, his parts still in repute,
Subtle—how else?—but hardly so astute
As his contemporaneous friends professed;
Undoubtedly a brawler: for the rest,
Known by each neighbour, and allowed for, let
Keep his incorrigible ways, nor fret
Men who would miss their boyhood's bugbear: 'trap
'The ostrich, suffer our bald osprey flap
'A battered pinion!'—was the word. In fine,
One flap too much and Venice's marine
Was meddled with; no overlooking that!
She captured him in his Ferrara, fat
And florid at a banquet, more by fraud
Than force, to speak the truth; there's slender laud
Ascribed you for assisting eighty years
To pull his death on such a man; fate shears
The life-cord prompt enough whose last fine thread
You fritter: so, presiding his board-head,
The old smile, your assurance all went well
With Friedrich (as if he were like to tell!)
In rushed (a plan contrived before) our friends,
Made some pretence at fighting, some amends
For the shame done his eighty years—(apart
The principle, none found it in his heart
To be much angry with Taurello)—gained
Their galleys with the prize, and what remained
But carry him to Venice for a show?
—Set him, as 'twere, down gently—free to go
His gait, inspect **our** square, pretend observe
The swallows soaring their eternal curve
'Twixt Theodore and Mark, if citizens
Gathered importunately, fives and tens,
To point their children the Magnifico,
All but a monarch once in firm-land, go
His gait among them now—'it took, indeed,
'Fully this Ecelin to supersede
'That man,' remarked the seniors. Singular!
Sordello's inability to bar
Rivals the stage, that evening, mainly brought
About by his strange disbelief that augho

Was ever to be done,—this thrust the Twain .. .
Under Taurello's tutelage,—whom, brain
And heart and hand, he forthwith in one rod
Indissolubly bound to baffle God
Who loves the world—and thus allowed the thin
Grey wizened dwarfish devil Ecelin,
And massy-muscled big-boned Alberic
(Mere man, alas!) to put his problem quick
To demonstration—prove wherever's will
To do, there 's plenty to be done, or ill
Or good. Anointed, then, to rendand rip—
Kings of the gag and flesh-hook, screw and whip,
They plagued the world: a touch of Hildebrand
(So far from obsolete!) made Lombards band
Together, cross their coats as for Christ's cause,
And saving Milan win the world's applause.
Ecelin perished: and I think grass grew
Never so pleasant as in Valley Ru
By San Zenon where Alberic in turn
Saw his exasperated captors burn
Seven children and their mother; then, regaled
So far, tied on to a wild horse, was trailed
To death through raunce and bramble-bush. I take
God's part and testify that 'mid the brake
Wild o er his castle on the pleasant knoll,
You hear its one tower left, a belfry, toll—
The earthquake spared it last year, laying flat
The modern church beneath,—no harm in that!
Chirrups the contumacious grasshopper,
Rustles the lizard and the cushats chirre
Above the ravage: there, at deep of day
A week since, heard I the old Canon say
He saw with his own eyes a barrow burst
And Alberic's huge skeleton unhearsed
Only five years ago. He added, * June's
'The month for carding off our first cocoons
'The silkworms fabricate'—a double news,
Nor he nor I could tell the worthier. Choose!
And Naddo gone, all's gone; not Eglamor!
Believe, I knew the face I waited for,
A guest my spirit of the golden courts !
Oh strange to see how, despite ill-reports,
Disuse, some wear of years, that face retained
Its joyous look of love! Suns waxed and waned,
And still my spirit held an upward flight,
Spiral on spiral, gyres of life and light
More and more gorgeous—ever that face there
The last admitted! crossed, too, with some care
As perfect triumph were not sure for all,
But, on a few, enduring damp must fall,
—A transient struggle, haply a painful sense
Of the inferior nature's clinging—whence
Slight starting tears easily wiped away,
Fine jealousies soon stifled in the play
Of irrepressible admiration—not
Aspiring, all considered, to their lot
Who ever, just as they prepare ascend
Spiral on spiral, wish thee well, impend
Thy frank delight at their exclusive track,
That upturned fervid face and hair put back!
Is there no more to say? He of the rhymes—
Many a tale, of this retreat betimes,
Was born: Sordello die at once for men?
The Chroniclers of Mantua tired their pen
Telling how *Sordello Prince Visconti* saved
Mantua, and elsewhere notably behaved—
Who thus, by fortune ordering events,
Passed with posterity, to all intents,
For just the god he never could become.
As Knight, Bard, Gallant, men were never dumb
In praise of him: while what he should have been,
Could be, and was not—the one step too mean
For him to take,—we suffer at this day
Because of: Ecelin had pushed away
Its chance ere Dante could arrive and take
That step Sordello spurned, for the world's sake:
He did much—but Sordello's chance was gone.
Thus, had Sordello dared that step alone,
Apollo had been compassed: 'twas a fit
He wished should go to him, not he to it
—As one content to merely be supposed
Singing or fighting elsewhere, while he dozed
Really at home—one who was chiefly glad
To have achieved the few real deeds he had,
Because that way assured they were not worth
Doing, so spared from doing them henceforth—
A tree that covets fruitage and yet tastes
Never itself, itself. Had he embraced
Their cause then, men had plucked Hesperian fruit
And, praising that, just thrown him in to boot
All he was anxious to appear, but scarce
Solicitous to be. A sorry farce
Such life is, after all! Cannot I say
He lived for some one better thing? this way.—

Lo, on **a** heathy brown and nameless hill
By sparkling Asolo, in mist and chill,
Morning just up, higher and higher runs
A child barefoot and rosy. See! the sun's
On the square castle's inner-court's low wall
Like the chine of some extinct animal
Half turned to earth and flowers; and through the haze
(Save where some slender patches of grey maize
Are to be overleaped) that boy has crossed
The whole hill-side of dew and powder-frost
Matting the balm and mountain camomile.
Up and up goes he, singing all the while
Some unintelligible words to beat
The lark, God's poet, swooning at his feet,
So worsted is he at * the few fine locks
'Stained like pale honey oozed from topmost rocks
'Sun-blanched the livelong summer,'—**all** that's left
Of the Goitolay! And thus bereft,
Sleep and forget, Sordello! In effect
He sleeps, the feverish poet—I suspect
Not utterly companionless; but, friends,
Wake up I The ghost's gone, and the story ends
I'd fain hope, sweetly; seeing, peri or ghoul,
That spirits are conjectured fair or foul,
Evil or good, judicious authors think,
According as they vanish in a stink
Or in a perfume. Friends, be frank! ye snuff
Civet, I warrant. Really? Like enough!
Merely the savour's rareness; any nose
May ravage with impunity a rose:
Rifle a musk-pod and 'twill ache like yours!
I'd tell you that some pungency ensures
An after-gust, but that were overbold.
Who would has heard Sordello's story told.

PIPPA PASSES

A DRAMA

1841

I DEDICATE MY BEST INTENTIONS, IN THIS POEM,
ADMIRINGLY TO THE AUTHOR OF 'ION,'
AFFECTIONATELY TO MR. SERGEANT TALFOURD

R.B.

LONDON: 1841

PERSONS

PIPPA.
OTTIMA.
SEBALD.
Foreign Students,

GOTTLIEB.
SCHRAMM.
JULES.
PHENE.
Austrian Police.

BLUPHOCKS.
LUIGI *and his* Mother.
Poor Girls,
MONSIGNOR *and his Attendants.*

INTRODUCTION

NEW YEAR'S DAY AT ASOLO IN THE TREVISAN

SCENE.—*A large mean airy chamber. A girl,* PrppA,/r0m *the Silk-mills, spring-' ing out of bed.*

DAY!
Faster and more fast,
O'er night's brim, day boils at last:
Boils, pure gold, o'er the cloud-cup's brim
Where spurting and suppressed it lay,
For not a froth-flake touched the rim
Of yonder gap in the solid gray
Of the eastern cloud, an hour away;
But forth one wavelet, then another, curled,
Till the whole sunrise, not to be suppressed,
Rose, reddened, and its seething breast
Flickered in bounds, grew gold, then overflowed the world.

Oh, Day, if I squander a wavelet of thee,
A mite of my twelve hours' treasure,
The least of thy gazes or glances,
(Be they grants thou art bound to or gifts above measure)
One of thy choices or one of thy chances,
(Be they tasks God imposed thee or freaks at thy pleasure)
—My Day, if I squander such labour or leisure,
Then shame fall on Asolo, mischief on me!

Thy long blue solemn hours serenely flowing,
Whence earth, we feel, gets steady help and good—
Thy fitful sunshine-minutes, coming, going,
As if earth turned from work in gamesome mood—

All shall be mine! But thou must treat me not
As prosperous ones are treated, those who live
At hand here, and enjoy the higher lot,
In readiness to take what thou wilt give,
And free to let alone what thou refusest;
For, Day, my holiday, if thou ill-usest
Me, who am only Pippa,—old-year's sorrow,
Cast off last night, will come again to-morrow:
Whereas, if thou prove gentle, I shall borrow
Sufficient strength of thee for new-year's sorrow.
All other men and women that this earth
Belongs to, who all days alike possess,
Make general plenty cure particular dearth,
Get more joy one way, if another, less:
Thou art my single day, God lends to leaven
What were all earth else, with a feel of heaven,—
Sole light that helps me through the year, thy sun's!
Try now! Take Asolo's Four Happiest Ones—
And let thy morning rain on that superb
Great haughty Ottima; can rain disturb
Her Sebald's homage? All the while thy rain
Beats fiercest on her shrub-house window-pane,
He will but press the closer, breathe more warm
Against her cheek; how should she mind the storm?
And, morning past, if mid-day shed a gloom
O'er Jules and Phene,—what care bride and groom
Save for their dear selves? 'Tis their marriage-day;
And while they leave church and go home their way,
Hand clasping hand, within each breast would be
Sunbeams and pleasant weather spite of thee.
Then, for another trial, obscure thy eve
With mist,—will Luigi and his mother grieve—
The lady and her child, unmatched, forsooth,
She in her age, as Luigi in his youth,
For true content? The cheerful town, warm, close
And safe, the sooner that thou art morose,
Receives them. And yet once again, outbreak
In storm at night on Monsignor, they make
Such stir about,—whom they expect from Rome
To visit Asolo, his brother's home,
And say here masses proper to release
A soul from pain,—what storm dares hurt his peace?
Calm would he pray, with his own thoughts to ward
Thy thunder off, nor want the angels* guard.
But Pippa—just one such mischance would spoil
Her day that lightens the next twelvemonth's toil
At wearisome silk-winding, coil on coil!
And here I let time slip for nought!
Aha, you foolhardy sunbeam, caught
With a single splash from my ewer!
You that would mock the best pursuer,
Was my basin over-deep?
One splash of water ruins you asleep,
And up, up, fleet your brilliant bits
Wheeling and counterwheeling,
Reeling, broken beyond healing:
Now grow together on the ceiling!
That will task your wits.
Whoever it was quenched fire first, hoped to see
Morsel after morsel flee
As merrily, as giddily . . .
Meantime, what lights my sunbeam on,
Where settles by degrees the radiant cripple?
Oh, is it surely blown, my martagon?
New-blown and ruddy as St. Agnes' nipple,
Plump as the flesh-bunch on some Turk bird's poll!
Be sure if corals, branching 'neath the ripple
Of ocean, bud there,—fairies watch unroll
Such turban-flowers; I say, such lamps disperse
Thick red flame through that dusk green universe!
I am queen of thee, floweret!
And each fleshy blossom
Preserve I not—(safer
Than leaves that embower it,
Or shells that embosom)
—From weevil and chafer?
Laugh through my pane then; solicit the bee;
Gibe him, be sure; and, in midst of thy glee
Love thy queen, worship me!

—Worship whom else? For am I not, this day,
Whate'er I please? What shall I please to-day?
My morn, noon, eve and night—how spend my day?
To-morrow I must be Pippa who winds silk,

The whole year round, to earn just bread and milk:
But, this one day, I have leave to go,
And play out my fancy's fullest games;
I may fancy all day—and it shall be so—
That I taste of the pleasures, am called by the names
Of the Happiest Four in our Asolo!

See! Up the hill-side yonder, through the morning,
Some one shall love me, as the world calls love:
I am no less than Ottima, take warning!
The gardens, and the great stone house above,
And other house for shrubs, all glass in front,
Are mine; where Sebald steals, as he is wont,
To court me, while old Luca yet reposes:
And therefore, till the shrub-house door uncloses,
I . . . what now?—give abundant cause for prate
About me—Ottima, I mean—of late,
Too bold, too confident she'll still face down
The spitefullest of talkers in our town.
How we talk in the little town below!
But love, love, love—there's better love, I know!
This foolish love was only day's first offer;
I choose my next love to defy the scoffer:
For do not our Bride and Bridegroom sally
Out of Possagno church at noon?
Their house looks over Orcana valley:
Why should not I be the bride as soon
As Ottima? For I sawj beside,
Arrive last night that little bride—
Saw, if you call it seeing her. one flash
Of the pale snow-pure cheek and black bright tresses,
Blacker than all except the black eyelash;
I wonder she contrives those lids no dresses!
—So strict was she, the veil
Should cover close her pale
Pure cheeks—a bride to look at and scarce touch,
Scarce touch, remember, Jules! For are not such
Used to be tended, flower-like, every feature,
As if one's breath would fray the lily of a creature?
A soft and easy life these ladies lead:
Whiteness in us were wonderful indeed.
Oh, save that brow its virgin dimness,
Keep that foot its lady primness,
Let those ankles never swerve
From their exquisite reserve,
Yet have to trip along the streets like me,
All but naked to the knee!
How will she ever grant her Jules a bliss
So startling as her real first infant kiss?
Oh, no—not envy, this!

—Not envy, sure!—for if you gave me
Leave to take or to refuse,
In earnest, do you think I'd choose
That sort of new love to enslave me?
Mine should have lapped me round from the beginning;
As little fear of losing it as winning:
Lovers grow cold, men learn to hate their wives,
And only parents' love can last our lives.
At eve the Son and Mother, gentle pair,
Commune inside our turret: what prevents
My being Luigi? While that mossy lair
Of lizards through the winter-time is stirred
With each to each imparting sweet intents
For this new-year, as brooding bird to bird—
(For I observe of late, the evening walk
Of Luigi and his mother, always ends
Inside our ruined turret, where they talk,
Calmer than lovers, yet more kind than friends)
—Let me be cared about, kept out of harm,
And schemed for, safe in love as with a charm;
Let me be Luigi! If I only knew
What was my mother's face—my father, too!
Nay, if you come to that, best love of all
Is God's; then why not have God's love befall
Myself as, in the palace by the Dome,
Monsignor?—who to-night will bless the home
Of his dead brother; and God bless in turn
That heart which beats, those eyes which mildly burn
With love for all men! I, to-night at least,
Would be that holy ana beloved priest.

Now wait!—even I already seem to share
In God's love: what does New-year's hymn declare?
What other meaning do these verses bear?

All service ranks the same with God:
If now', as formerly he trod
Paradise, his presence fills
Our earth, each only as God wills
Can work—God's puppets, best and worst,
Are we; there is no last nor first.

Say not 'a small event!* Why 'small'?
Costs it more pain that this, ye call
A ' great event,* should come to pass,
Than that? Untwine me from the mass
Of deeds which make up life, one deed
Power shall fall short in or exceed!

And more of it. and more of it!—oh yes—
I will pass each, and see their happiness,

And envy none—being just as great, no doubt,
Useful to men, and dear to God, as they!
A pretty thing to care about
So mightily, this single holiday!
But let the sun shine! Wherefore repine?
—With thee to lead me, O Day of mine,
Down the grass path grey with dew,
Under the pine-wood, blind with boughs,
Where the swallow never flew
Nor yet cicala dared carouse—
No, dared carouse! *[She enters the street.*

I.—MORNING

SCENE.—*Up the Hill-side, inside the Shrub-house.* LUCA'S *wife,* OTTIMA, *and her paramour, the German* SEBALD.

Seb. [sings].
Let the watching lids wink!
Day 's a-blaze with eyes, think I
Deep into the night, drink!

Otti. Night? Such may be your Rhine-land nights perhaps;
But this blood-red beam through the shutter's chink
—We call such light, the morning: let us see!
Mind how you grope your way, though! How these tall
Naked geraniums straggle! Push the lattice
Behind that frame!—Nay, do I bid you?—Sebald,
It shakes the dust down on me! Why, of course
The slide-bolt catches. Well, are you content,
Or must I find you something else to spoil?
Kiss and be friends, my Sebald! Is't full morning?
Oh, don't speak then!

Seb. Ay, thus it used to be.
Ever your house was, I remember, shut
Till mid-day; I observed that, as I strolled
On mornings through the vale here; country girls
Were noisy, washing garments in the brook,
Hinds drove the slow white oxen up the hills:
But no, your house was mute, would ope no eye.
And wisely: you were plotting one thing there,
Nature, another outside. I looked up—
Rough white wood shutters, rusty iron bars,
Silent as death, blind in a flood of light.
Oh, I remember!—and the peasants laughed
And said, 'The old man sleeps with the young wife.'
This house was his, this chair, this window

Otti. Ah, the clear morning! I can see St Mark's;
That black streak is the belfry. Stop: Vicenza
Should lie... there's Padua, plain enough, that blue!
Look o'er my shoulder, follow my finger!

Seb. Morning?
It seems to me a night with a sun added.
Where's dew, where's freshness? That bruised plant, I bruised
In getting through the lattice yestereve,
Droops as it did. See, here's my elbow's mark
I' the dust o' the sill.

Otti. Oh, shut the lattice, pray

Seb. Let me lean out. I cannot scent blood here,
Foul as the morn may be.
There, shut the world out!
How do you feel now, Ottima? There, curse
The world and all outside! Let us throw off
This mask: how do you bear yourself? Let's out
With all of it.

Otti. Best never speak of it.

Seb. Best speak again and yet again of it.
Till words cease to be more than words. 'His blood,'
For instance—let those two words mean 'His blood'
And nothing more. Notice, I'll say them now,
'His blood.'

Otti. Assuredly if I repented
The deed—

Seb. Repent? Who should repent, or why?
What puts that in your head? Did I once say
That I repented?

Otti. No, I said the deed...

Seb. 'The deed' and 'the event'—just now it was
'Our passion's fruit'—the devil take such cant!
Say, once and always, Luca was a wittol,
I am his cut-throat, you are . . .

Otti. Here's the wine;
I brought it when we left the house above,
And glasses too—wine of both sorts. Black? White then?

Seb. But am not I his cut-throat? What are you?

Otti. There trudges on his business from the Duomo
Benet the Capuchin, with his brown hood
And bare feet; always in one place at church,
Close under the stone wall by the south entry
I used to take him for a brown cold piece

Of the wall's self, as out of it he rose
To let me pass—at first, I say, I used:
Now, so has that dumb figure fastened on me,
I rather should account the plastered wall
A piece of him, so chilly does it strike.
This, Sebald?
Seb. No, the white wine—the white wine!
Well, Ottima, I promised no new year
Should rise on us the ancient shameful way;
Nor does it rise. Pour on! To your black eyes!
Do you remember last damned New Year's day?
Otti. You brought those foreign prints. We looked at them
Over the wine and fruit. I had to scheme
To get him from the fire. Nothing but saying
His own set wants the proof-mark, roused him up
To hunt them out.
Seb. 'Faith, he is not alive
To fondle you before my face.
Otti. Do you
Fondle me then! Who means to take your life
For that, my Sebald?
Seb. Hark you, Ottima!
One thing to guard against. We'll not make much
One of the other—that is, not make more
Parade of warmth, childish officious coil,
Than yesterday: as if, sweet, I supposed
Proof upon proof were needed now, now first,
To show I love you—yes, still love you—love you
In spite of Luca and what's come to him
—Sure sign we had him ever in our thoughts,
White sneering old reproachful face and all!
We'll even quarrel, love, at times, as if
We still could lose each other, were not tied
By this: conceive you?
Otti. Love!
Seb. Not tied so sure.
Because though I was wrought upon, have struck
His insolence back into him—am I
So surely yours?—therefore forever yours?
Otti. Love, to be wise, (one counsel pays another)
Should we have—months ago, when first we loved,
For instance that May morning we two stole
Under the green ascent of sycamores—
If we had come upon a thing like that
Suddenly .. .
Seb. 'A thing'—there again—'a thing!'
Otti. Then, Venus' body, had we come upon
My husband Luca Gaddi's murdered corpse
Within there, at his couch-foot, covered close—
Would you have pored upon it? Why persist
In poring now upon it? For 'tis here
As much as there in the deserted house:
You cannot rid your eyes of it. For me,
Now he is dead I hate him worse: I hate...
Dare you stay here? I would go back and hold
His two dead hands, and say, 'I hate you worse,
'Luca, than . . .'
Seb. Off, off—take your hands off mine,
'Tis the hot evening—off! oh, morning is it?
Otti. There's one thing must be done; you know what thing.
Come in and help to carry. We may sleep
Anywhere in the whole wide house tonight.
Seb. What would come, think you, if we let him he
Just as he is? Let him lie there until
The angels take him! He is turned by this
Off from his face beside, as you will see.
Otti. This dusty pane might serve for looking glass.
Three, four—four grey hairs! Is it so you said
Aplait of hair should wave across my neck?
No—this way.
Seb. Ottima, I would give your neck,
Each splendid shoulder, both those breasts of yours,
That this were undone! Killing! Kill the world
So Luca fives again!—ay, lives to sputter
His fulsome dotage on you—yes, and feign
Surprise that I return at eve to sup,
When all themorning I was loitering here—
Bid me despatch my business and begone.
I would . ..
Otti. See!
Seb. No, I'll finish. Do you think
I fear to speak the bare truth once for all?
All we have talked of, is, at bottom, fine
To suffer; there's a recompense in guilt;
One must be venturous and fortunate:
What is one young for, else? In age **we'll** sigh
O'er the wild reckless wicked days flown over;
Still, we have lived: the vice was in its place.
But to have eaten Luca's bread, have worn
His clothes, have felt his money swell my purse—
Do lovers in romances sin that way?
Why, I was starving when I used to call

And teach you music, starving while you plucked me.
These flowers'to'smell!
Otti. My poor lost friend!
Seb. He gave me
Life, nothing less: what if he did reproach
My perfidy, and threaten, and do more—
Had he no right? What was to wonder at?
He sat by us at table quietly:
Why must you lean across till our cheeks touched?
Could he do less than make pretence to strike?
'Tis not the crime's sake—I'd commit ten crimes
Greater, to have this crime wiped out, undone!
And you—O how feel you? Feel you for me?
Otti. Well then, I love you better now than ever,
And best (look at me while I speak to you)—
Best for the crime; nor do I grieve, in truth,
This mask, this simulated ignorance,
This affectation of simplicity,
Falls off our crime; this naked crime of ours
May not now be looked over: look it down!
Great? let it be great; but the joys it brought,
Pay they or no its price? Come: they or it!
Speak not! The past, would you give up the past
Such as it is, pleasure and crime together?
Give up that noon I owned my love for you?
The garden's silence: even the single bee
Persisting in his toil, suddenly stopped,
And where he hid you only could surmise
By some campanula chalice set a-swing.
Who stammered—'Yes, I love you'?
Seb. And I drew
Back; put far back your face with both my hands
Lest you should grow too full of me—your face
So seemed athirst for my whole soul and body!
Otti. And when I ventured to receive you here,
Made you steal hither in the mornings—
Seb. When
I used to look up 'neath the shrub-house here,
Till the red fire on its glazed windows spread
To a yellow haze?
Otti. Ah—my sign was, the sun
Inflamed the sere side of yon chestnut-tree
Nipped by the first frost.
Seb. You would always laugh
At my wet boots: I had to stride thro' grass
Over my ankles.
Otti. Then our crowning night!
Seb. The July night?
Otti. The day of it too, Sebald!
When heaven's pillars seemed o'erbowed with heat,
Its black-blue canopy suffered descend
Close on us both, to weigh down each to each,
And smother up all life except our life.
So lay we till the storm came.
Seb. How it came!
Otti. Buried in woods we lay, you recollect;
Swift ran the searching tempest overhead;
And ever and anon some bright white shaft
Burned thro' the pine-tree roof, here burned and there,
As if God's messenger thro' the close wood screen
Plunged and replunged his weapon at a venture,
Feeling for guilty thee and me: then broke
The thunder like a whole sea overhead—
Seb. Yes!
Otti. —While I stretched myself upon you, hands
To hands, my mouth to your hot mouth, and shook
All my locks loose, and covered you with them—
You, Sebald, the same you!
Seb. Slower, Ottima!
Otti. And as we lay—
Seb. Less vehemently! Love me!
Forgive me! Take not words, mere words, to heart!
Your breath is worse than wine! Breathe slow, speak slow!
Do not lean on me!
Otti. Sebald, as we lay,
Rising and falling only with our pants,
Who said, 'Let death come now! 'Tis right to die!
'Right to be punished! Nought completes such bliss
'But woe!' Who said that?
Seb. How did we ever rise?
Was't that we slept? Why did it end?
Otti. I felt you
Taper into a point the ruffled ends
Of my loose locks 'twixt both your humid lips.
My hair is fallen now: knot it again!
Seb. I kiss you now, dear Ottima, now and now!
This way? Will you forgive me—be once more
My great queen?
Otti. Bind it thrice about my brow;
Crown me your queen, your spirit's arbitress,
Magnificent in sin. Say that!

Seb, I crown you
My great white queen, my spirit's arbitress,
Magnificent...

[From without is heard the voice* OF PIPPA, *singing—

The year's at the spring
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hillside's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn:
God's in his heaven-
All 's right with the world!

[PIPPA *passes,*

Seb, God's in his heaven I Do you hear that? Who spoke?
You, you spoke!
Otti. Oh—that little ragged girl!
She must have rested on the step: we give them
But this one holiday the whole year round.
Did you ever see our silk-mills—their inside?
There are ten silk-mills now belong to you.
She stoops to pick my double heartsease ... Sh!
She does not hear: call you out louder!
Seb. Leave me!
Go, get your clothes on—dress those shoulders!
Otti, Sebald?
Seb, Wipe off that paint! I hate you.
Otti. Miserable!
Seb. My God, and she is emptied of it now!
Outright now!—how miraculously gone
All of the grace—had she not strange grace once?
Why, the blank cheek hangs listless as it likes,
No purpose holds the features up together,
Only the cloven brow and puckered chin
Stay in their places: and the very hair,
That seemed to have a sort of life in it,
Drops, a dead web!
Otti. Speak to me—not of me!
Seb,—That round great full-orbed face, where not an angle
Broke the delicious indolence—all broken!
Otti, To me—not of me! Ungrateful, perjured cheat!
A coward too: but ingrate's worse than all.
Beggar—my slave—a fawning, cringing lie!
Leave me! Betray me! I can see your drift!
A lie that walks and eats and drinks!
Seb. My God!
Those morbid olive faultless shoulder-blades—
I should have known there was no blood beneath!
Otti, **You** hate me then? You hate **me** then?
Seb. To think
She would succeed in her absurd attempt,
And fascinate by sinning, show herself
Superior—guilt from its excess superior
To innocence! That little peasant s voice
Has righted all again. Though I be lost.
I know which is the better, never fear,
Of vice or virtue, purity or lust,
Nature or trick! I see what I have done,
Entirely now! Oh I am proud to feel
Such torments—let the world take credit thence—
I, having done my deed, pay too its price!
I hate, hate—curse you! God's in his heaven!
***Otti,* —Me!**
Me! no. no, Sebald, not yourself—kill me!
Mine is the whole crime. Do but kill me—then
Yourself—then—presently—first hear me speak!
I always meant to kill myself—wait, you!
Lean on my breast—not as a breast; don't love me
The more because you lean on me, my own
Heart's Sebald! There, there, both deaths presently!
Seb. My brain is drowned now—quite drowned: all I feel
Is . •. is, at swift-recurring intervals,
A hurry-down within me, as of waters
Loosened to smother up some ghastly pit:
There they go—whirls from a black fiery sea!
Otti. Not me—to him, O God, be merciful!

Talk by the way, while* PIPPA *is passing from the hill-side to Orcana. Foreign* Students *of painting and sculpture, from Venice, assembled opposite the house of* JULES, *a young French statuary, at Possagno.

1st Stud. Attention! My own post is beneath this window, but the pomegranate clump yonder will hide three or four of you with a little squeezing, and Schramm and his pipe must lie flat in the balcony. Four, five—who's a defaulter? We want everybody, for Jules must not be suffered to hurt his bride when the jest's found out.

2nd Stud, All here! Only our poet's away—never having much meant to be present, moonstrike him! The airs of that fellow, that Giovacchino! He was in violent love with himself, and had a fair prospect of thriving in his suit, so unmolested was it,—when suddenly a woman falls in love with him, too; and out of pure jealousy

he takes himself off to Trieste, immortal poem and all: whereto is this prophetical epitaph appended already, as Bluphocks assures me,—*'Here a mammoth-poem lies, Fouled to death by butterflies.'* His own fault, the simpleton! Instead of cramp couplets, each like a knife in your entrails, he should write, says Bluphocks, both classically and intelligibly.—*ALsculapius, an Epic. Catalogue of the drugs: Hebe's plaister—One strip Cools your lip. Phoebus' emulsion—One bottle Clears your throttle, Mercury's bolus—One box Cures* . . .

3rd Stud. Subside, my fine fellow! If the marriage was over by ten o'clock., Jules will certainly be here in a minute with his bride.

2nd Stud. Good!—only, so should the poet's muse have been universally acceptable, says Bluphocks, *et canibus nostris* . . . and Delia not better known to our literary dogs than the boy Giovacchino!

1st Stud. To the point, now. Where's Gottlieb, the new-comer? Oh,—listen, Gottlieb, to what has called down this piece of friendly vengeance on Jules, of which we now assemble to witness the winding-up. We are all agreed, all in a tale, observe, when Jules shall burst out on us in a fury by and by: I am spokesman —the verses that are to undeceive Jules bear my name of Lutwyche—but each professes himself alike insulted by this strutting stone-squarer, who came alone from Paris to Munich, and thence with a crowd of us to Venice and Possagno here, but proceeds in a day or two alone again —oh, alone indubitably!—to Rome and Florence. He, forsooth, take up his portion with these dissolute, brutalized, heartless bunglers!—so he was heard to call us all: now, is Schramm brutalized, I should like to know? Am I heartless?

Gott. Why, somewhat heartless; for, suppose Jules a coxcomb as much as you choose, still, for this mere coxcombry, you will have brushed off—what do folks style it ?—the bloom of his life. Is it too late to alter? These love-letters now, you call his —I can't laugh at them.

4th Stud. Because you never read the sham letters of our inditing which drew forth these.

Gott. His discovery of the truth will be frightful.

4th Stud. That's the joke. But you should have joined us at the beginning: there's no doubt he loves the girl—loves a model he might hire by the hour!

Gott. See here! 'He has been accus- 'tomed,' he writes, 'to have Canova's 'women about him, in stone, and the 'world's women beside him, in flesh; these 'being as much below, as those above, his 'soul's aspiration: but now he is to have 'the reality.' There you laugh again! I say, you wipe off the very dew of his youth,

1st Stud. Schramm! (Take the pipe out of his mouth, somebody!) Will Jules lose the bloom of his youth?

Schramm. Nothing worth keeping is ever lost in this world: look at a blossom— it drops presently, having done its service and lasted its time; but fruits succeed, and where would be the blossom's place could it continue? As well affirm that your eye is no longer in your body, because its earliest favourite, whatever it may have first loved to look on, is dead and done with— as that any affection is lost to the soul when its first object, whatever happened first to satisfy it, is superseded in due course, Keep but ever looking, whether with the body's eye or the mind's, and you will soon find something to look on! Has a man done wondering at women ?—there follow men, dead and alive, to wonder at. Has he done wondering at men?—there's God to wonder at: and the faculty of wonder may be, at the same time, old and tired enough with respect to its first object, and yet young and fresh sufficiently, so far as concerns its novel one. Thus . . .

1st Stud. Put Schramm's pipe into his mouth again! There, you see! Well, this Jules... a wretched fribble—oh, I watched his disportings at Possagno, the other day! Canova's gallery—you know: there he marches first resolvedly past great works by the dozen without vouchsafing an eye: all at once he stops full at the *Psiche-fanciulla*—cannot pass that old acquaintance without a nod of encouragement—' In your new place, beauty? Then behave yourself as well here as at Munich—I see you!' Next he posts himself deliberately before the unfinished *Pieta* for half an hour without moving, till up he starts of a sudden, and thrusts his very nose into— I say, into—the group; by which gesture you are informed that precisely the sole point he had not fully mastered in Canova's practice was a certain method of using the drill in the articulation of the knee-joint —and that, likewise, has he mastered at length! Good-bye, therefore, to poor Canova—whose gallery no longer needs detain his successor Jules, the predestinated novel thinker in marble!

5th Stud. Tell him about the women: go on to the women!

1st Stud. Why, on that matter he could never be supercilious enough. How should we be other (he said) than the poor devils you see, with those debasing habits we cherish? He was not to wallow in that mire, at least: he would wait, and love only at the proper time, and meanwhile put up

with the *Psiche-fanciulla.* Now, I happened to hear of a young Greek—real Greek girl at Malamocco; a true Islander, do you see, with Alciphron's 'hair like sea-moss'—Schramm knows!—white and quiet as an apparition, and fourteen years old at farthest,—a daughter of Natalia, so she swears—that hag Natalia, who helps us to models at three *lire* an hour. We selected this girl for the heroine of our jest. So first, Jules received a scented letter—somebody had seen his Tydeus at the Academy, and my picture was nothing to it: a profound admirer bade him persevere—would make herself known to him ere long. (Paolina, my little friend of the *Fenice,* transcribes divinely.) And in due time, the mysterious correspondent gave certain hints of her peculiar charms—the pale cheeks, the black hair—whatever, in short, had struck us in our Malamocco model: we retained her name, too—Phene, which is, by interpretation, sea-eagle. Now, think of Jules finding himself distinguished from the herd of us by such a creature! In his very first answer he proposed marrying his monitress: and fancy us over these letters, two, three times a day, to receive and despatch! I concocted the main of it: relations were in the way—secrecy must be observed—in fine, would he wed her on trust, and only speak to her when they were indissolubly united? St—st—Here they come!

6th Stud. Both of them! Heaven's love, speak softly, speak within yourselves!

5th Stud. Look at the bridegroom! Half his hair in storm and half in calm,—patted down over the left temple,—like a frothy cup one blows on to cool it: and the same old blouse that he murders the marble in.

2nd Stud. Not a rich vest like yours, Hannibal Scratchy!—rich, that your face may the better set it off.

6th Stud. And the bride! Yes, sure enough, our Phene! Should you have known her in her clothes? How magnificently pale!

Gott. She does not also take it for earnest, I hope?

1st Stud. Oh, Natalia's concern, that is! We settle with Natalia.

6th Stud. She does not speak—has evidently let out no word. The only thing is, will she equally remember the rest of her lesson, and repeat correctly all those verses which are to break the secret to Jules?

Gott. How he gazes on her! Pity—pity!

1st Stud. They go in: now, silence! You three,—not nearer the window, mind, than that pomegranate: just where the little girl, who a few minutes ago passed us singing, is seated!

II.—NOON

SCENE.—*Over Orcana. The house* OF JULES, *who crosses its threshold with* PHENE: *she is silent, on which* JULES *begins—*

Do not die, Phene! I am yours now, you
Are mine now; let fate reach me how she likes,
If you'll not die: so, never die! Sit here—
My work-room's single seat. I over-lean
This length of hair and lustrous front; they turn
Like an entire flower upward: eyes, lips, last
Your chin—no, last your throat turns: 'tis their scent
Pulls down my face upon you. Nay, look ever
This one way till I change, grow you—I could
Change into you, beloved!
You by me,
And I by you; this is your hand in mine,
And side by side we sit: all's true. Thank God!
I have spoken: speak you!
O my life to come!
My Tydeus must be carved that's there in clay;
Yet how be carved, with you about the room?
Where must I place you? When I think that once
Thisroom-fullofroughblock-workseemed my heaven
Without you! Shall I ever work again,
Get fairly into my old ways again,
Bid each conception stand while, trait by trait,
My hand transfers its lineaments to stone?
Will my mere fancies live near you, their truth—
The live truth, passing and repassing me,
Sitting beside me?
Now speak!
Only first,
See, all your letters! Was't not well contrived?
Their hiding-place is Psyche's robe; she keeps
Your letters next her skin: which drops out foremost?
Ah,—this that swam down like a first moonbeam
Into my world!
Again those eyes complete
Their melancholy siirvey, sweet and slow,
Of all my room holds; to return and rest
On me, with pity, yet some wonder too:
As if God bade some spirit plague a world,
And this were the one moment of surprise
And sorrow while she took her station, pausing
O'er what she sees, finds good, and must destroy!

What gaze you at? Those? Books, I told you of;
Let your first Word to me rejoice them, too:
This minion, a Coluthus, writ in red
Bistre and azure by Bessarion's scribe—
Read this line... no, shame—Homer's be the Greek
First breathed me from the lips of my Greek girl I
This Odyssey in coarse black vivid type
With faded yellow blossoms 'twixt page and page,
To mark great places with due gratitude;
'He said, and on Antinous directed
'A bitter shaft'... aflower blots out the rest
Again upon your search ? My statues, then!
—Ah, do not mind that—better that will look
When cast in bronze—an Almaign Kaiser, that,
Swart-green and gold, with truncheon based on hip.
This, rather, turn to! What, unrecognized?
I thought you would have seen that here you sit
As I imagined you,—Hippolyta,
Naked upon her bright Numidian horse.
Recall you this then? 'Carve in bold relief'—
So you commanded—'carve, against I come,
'A Greek, in Athens, as our fashion was,
'Feasting, bay-filleted and thunder-free,
' Who rises 'neath the lifted myrtle-branch.
' "Praise those who slewHipparchus!" cry the guests.
"'While o'er thy head the singer's myrtle waves
'"As erst above our champion: stand up, all!'"
See, I have laboured to express your thought.
Quite round, a cluster of mere hands and arms,
(Thrust in all senses, all ways, from all sides,
Only consenting at the branch's end
They strain toward) serves for frame to a sole face,
The Preiser's, in the centre: who with eyes
Sightless, so bend they back to light inside
His brain where visionary forms throng up,
Sings, minding not that palpitating arch
Of hands and arms, nor the quick drip of wine
From the drenched leaves o'erhead, nor crowns cast off,
Violet and parsley crowns to trample on—
Sings, pausing as the patron-ghosts approve,
Devoutly their unconquerable hymn.
But you must say a 'well to that—say 'well!'
Because you gaze—am I fantastic, sweet?
Gaze like my very life's-stuff, marble—marbly
Even to the silence! Why, before I found
The real flesh Phene, I inured myself
To see, throughout all nature, varied stuff
For better nature's birth by means of art:
With me, each substance tended to one form
Of beauty—to the human archetype.
On every side occurred suggestive germs
Of that—the tree, the flower—or take the fruit,—
Some rosy shape, continuing the peach,
Curved beewise o'er its bough; as rosy limbs,
Depending, nestled in the leaves; and just
From a cleft rose-peach the whole Dryad sprang.
But of the stuffs one can be master of,
How I divined their capabilities!
From the soft-rinded smoothening facile chalk
That yields your outline to the air's embrace,
Half-softened by a halo's pearly gloom;
Down to the crisp imperious steel, so sure
To cut its one confided thought clean out
Of all the world. But marble!—'neath my tools
More pliable than jelly—as it were
Some clear primordial creature dug from depths
In the earth's heart, where itself breeds itself,
And whence all baser substance may be worked;
Refine it off to air, you may,—condense it
Down to the diamond;—is not metal there,
Wheno'erthesuddenspeckmychiseltrips?
—Not flesh, as flake off flake I scale, approach,
Lay bare those bluish veins of blood asleep ?
Lurks flame in no strange windings where, surprised
By the swift implement sent home at once,
Flushes and glowings radiate and hover
About its track?
Phene? what—why is this?
That whitening cheek, those still dilating eyes!
Ah, you will die—I knew that you would die!

PHENE *begins, on his having long remained silent.*

Now the end's coming; to be sure, it must
Have ended sometime! Tush, why need I speak
Their foolish speech? I cannot bring to mind
One half of it, beside; and do not care
For old Natalia now, nor any of them.
Oh, you—what are you?—if I do not try
To say the words Natalia made me learn,

To please yourfriends,—it is to keep myself
Where your voice lifted me, by letting that
Proceed: but can it? Even you, perhaps,
Cannot take up, now you have once let fall,
The music's life, and me along with that—
No, or you would! We'll stay, then, as we are:
Above the world.
You creature with the eyes!
If I could look for ever up to them,
As now you let me,—I believe, all sin,
All memory of wrong done, suffering borne,
Would drop down, low and lower, to the earth
Whence all that's low comes, and there touch and stay
—Never to overtake the rest of me,
All that, unspotted, reaches up to you,
Drawn by those eyes! What rises is myself,
Not me the shame and suffering; but they sink,
Are left, I rise above them. Keep me so,
Above the world!
But you sink, for your eyes
Are altering—altered! Stay—'I love you, love'. . .
I could prevent it if I understood:
More of your words to me: was't in the tone
Or the words, your power?
Or stay—I will repeat
Their speech, if that contents you! Only change
No more, and I shall find it presently
Farbackhere,inthebrainyourselffilledup.
Natalia threatened me that harm should follow
Unless I spoke their lesson to the end,
But harm to me, I thought she meant, not you.
Your friends,—Natalia said they were your friends
And meant you well,—because, I doubted it,
Observing (what was very strange to see)
On every face, so different in all else,
The same smile girls like me are used to bear,
But never men, men cannot stoop so low;
Yet your friends, speaking of you, used that smile,
That hateful smirk of boundless self-conceit
Which seems to take possession of the world
And make of God a tame confederate,
Purveyor to their appetites... you know!
ButstillNataliasaidtheywereyourfriends,
And they assented though they smiled the more,
And all came round me,—that thin Englishman
With light lank hair seemed leader of the rest;
He held a paper—'What we want,' said he,
Ending some explanation to his friends—
'Is something slow, involved and mystical,
*To hold Jules long in doubt, yet take his taste
'And lure him on until, at innermost
'Where he seeks sweetness' soul, he may find—this!
*—As in the apple's core, the noisome fly:
'For insects on the rind are seen at once,
'And brushed aside as soon, but this is found
'Only when on the lips or loathing tongue.'
And so he read what I have got by heart:
I'll speak it,—'Do not die, love! I am yours.'
No—is not that, or like that, part of words
Yourself began by speaking ? Strange to lose
What cost such pains to learn! Is this more right?

I am a painter who cannot paint;
In my life, a devil rather than saint;
In my brain, as poor a creature too:
No end to all I cannot do !
Yet do one thing at least I can—
Love a man or hate a man
Supremely: thus my lore began.
Through the Valley of Love I went,
In the lovingest spot to abide,
And just on the verge where I pitched my tent,
I found Hate dwelling beside,
{Let the Bridegroom ask what the painter meant,
Of his Bride, of the peerless Bride!)
And further, I traversed Hate's grove,
In the hatefullest nook to dwell;
But lo, where I flung myself prone, couched Love
Where the shadow threefold fell.
{The meaning—those black bride's-eyes above.
Not a painter's lip should tell!)

'And here,' said he, 'Jules probably will ask,
'"You have black eyes, Love,—you are, sure enough,
*"My peerless bride,—then do you tell indeed
'"What needs some explanation! What means this?"'
—And I am to go on, without a word-

So, I grew wise in Love and Hate,
From simple that I was of late.
Once, when I loved, I would enlace
Breast, eyelids, hands, feet, form and face
Of her I loved, in one embrace—
As if by mere love I could love immensely!
Once, when I hated, I would plunge
My sword, and wipe with the first lunge
My foe's whole life out like a sponge—
As if by mere hate I could hate intensely !

But now I am wiser, know better the fashion
How passion seeks aid from its opposite passion:
And if I see cause to love more, hate more
Than ever man loved, ever hated before—
And seek in the Valley of Love,
The nest, or the nook in Haters Grove,
Where my soul may surely reach
The essence, nought less, of each,
The Hate of all Hates, the Love
Of all Loves, in the Valley or Grove,—
/ find them the very warders
Each of the other's borders.
When I love most, Love is disguised
In Hate; and when Hate is surprised
In Love, then I hate most: ask
How Love smiles through Hate's iron casque,
Hate grins through Love's rose-braided mask,—
And how, having hated thee,
I sought long and painfully
To reach thy heart, nor prick
The skin but pierce to the quick—
Ask this, my Jules, and be answered straight
By thy bride—how the painter Lutwyche can hate!

JULES *interposes.*

Lutwyche! Who else? But all of them, no doubt,
Hated me: they at Venice—presently
Their turn, however! You I shall not meet:
If I dreamed, saying this would wake me. Keep
What's here, the gold—we cannot meet again,
Consider! and the money was but meant
For two years' travel, which is over now,
All chance or hope or care or need of it.
This—and what comes from selling these, my casts
And books and medals, except... let them go
Together, so the produce keeps you safe
Out of Natalia's clutches! If by chance
(For all 's chance here) I should survive the gang
At Venice, root out all fifteen of them,
We might meet somewhere, since the world is wide.

[From without is heard the voice O/PIPPA, *singing—*

Give her but a least excuse to love me!
When—where—
How—can this arm establish her above me,
If fortune fixed her as my lady there,
There already, to eternally reprove me?
CHist!"—said Kate the Queen;
But 'Oh!'—cried the maiden, binding her tresses,
"Tis only a page that carols unseen,
' Crumbling your hounds their messes !')
Is she wronged?—To the rescue of her honour,
My heart!
Is she poor?—What costs it to be styled a donor?
Merely an earth to cleave, a sea to part.
But that fortune should have thrust all this upon her!
('Nay, list!'—bade Kate the Queen;
And still cried the maiden, binding her tresses,
''Tis only a page that carols unseen,
' Fitting your hawks their jesses!')

[PIPPA *passes,*

JULES *resumes.*

What name was that the little girl sang forth?
Kate? The Cornaro, doubtless, who renounced
The crown of Cyprus to be lady here
At Asolo, where still her memory stays,
And peasants sing how once a certain page
Pined for the grace of her so far above
His power of doing good to, 'Kate the Queen—
' She never could be wronged, be poor,' he sighed,
'Need him to help her!'
Yes, a bitter thing
To see our lady above all need of us;
Yet so we look ere we will love; not I,
But the world looks so. If whoever loves
Must be, in some sort, god or worshipper,
Theblessing or the blest one, queen or page,
Why should we always choose the page's part?
Here is a woman with utter need of me,—
I find myself queen here, it seems!
How strange!
Look at the woman here with the new soul,
Like my own Psyche,—fresh upon her lips
Alit, the visionary butterfly,
Waiting my word to enter and make bright,
Or flutter off and leave all blank as first.
This body had no soul before, but slept
Or stirred, was beauteous or ungainly, free
From taint or foul with stain, as outward things
Fastened their image on its passiveness:
Now, it will wake, feel, live—or die again!
Shall to produce form outof unshaped stuff
Be Art—and further, to evoke a soul
From form be nothing? This new soul is mine!

Now, to kill Lutwyche, what would that do ?—save
A wretched dauber, men will hoot to death
Without me, from their hooting. Oh, to hear
God's voice plain as I heard it first, before
They broke in with their laughter! I heard them
Henceforth, not God.

To Ancona—Greece—some isle!
I wanted silence only; there is clay
Everywhere. One may do whate'er one likes
In Art: the only thing is, to make sure
That one does like it—which takes pains to know.
Scatter all this, my Phene—this mad dream!
Who, what is Lutwyche, what Natalia's friends,
What the whole world except our love—my own,
Own Phene? But I told you, did I not,
Ere night we travel for your land—some isle
With the sea's silence on it? Stand aside—
I do but break these paltry models up
To begin Art afresh. Meet Lutwyche, I—
And save him from my statue meeting him?
Some unsuspected isle in the far seas!
Like a god going through his world, there stands
One mountain for a moment in the dusk,
Whole brotherhoods of cedars on its brow:
And you are ever by me while I gaze
—Are in my arms as now—as now—as now!
Some unsuspected isle in the far seas!
Some unsuspected isle in far-off seas!

Talk by the way, while* PIPPA *is passing from Orcana to the Turret. Two or three of the Austrian Police loitering with* BLUPHOCKS, *an English vagabond, just in view of the Turret,

Btuph.[1] So, that is your Pippa, the little girl who passed us singing? Well, your Bishop's Intendant's money shall be honestly earned:—now, don't make me that sour face because I bring the Bishop's name into the business; we know he can have nothing to do with such horrors: we know that he is a saint and all that a bishop should be, who is a great man beside. *Oh were* ***but every worm a maggot, Every fly a grig, Every bough a Christmas faggot, Every*** *tune a jig!* In fact, I have abjured all religions; but the last I inclined to, was the Armenian: for I have travelled, do you see, and at Koenigsberg, Prussia Improper (so styled because there's a sort of bleak hungry sun there), you might remark over a venerable house-porch, a certain Chaldee inscription; and brief as it is, a mere glance at it used absolutely to change the mood of every bearded passenger. In they turned, one and all; the young and lightsome, with no irreverent pause, the aged and decrepit, with a sensible alacrity: 'twas the Grand Rabbi's abode, in short. Struck with curiosity, I lost no time in learning Syriac —(these are vowels, you dogs,—follow my stick's end in the mud—*Celarent, Darii, Ferio!)* and one morning presented myself, spelling-book in hand, a, b, c,—I picked it out letter by letter, and what was the purport of this miraculous posy? Some cherished legend of the past, you'll say— ***'How Moses hocus-pocussed Egypt's land with fly and locust,'*—or,** ***'How to Jonah sounded harshish, Get thee up and go to Tarshish,'*—or,** ***'How the angel meeting Balaam, Straight his ass returned a salaam,'*** *** In no wise! '** ***Shackabrack—Boach—somebody or other—Isaach, Re-cei-ver, Pur-chaser and Ex-chan-ger of—Stolen Goods!'*** So, talk to me of the religion of a bishop! I have renounced all bishops save Bishop Beveridge—mean to live so—and die—*As* ***some Greek dog-sage, dead and merry, Hellward bound in Charon's wherry, With food for both worlds, under and upper, Lupine-seed and Hecate's supper, And never*** *an obolus* . . . (Though thanks to you, or this Intendant through you, or this Bishop through his Intendant—I possess a burning **pocketful of** ***zwanzigers),.. To pay the Stygian Ferry!***

1st Pol. There is the girl, then; go and deserve them the moment you have pointed out to us Signor Luigi and his mother. *[To the rest.]* I have been noticing a house yonder, this long while: not a shutter unclosed since morning!

2nd Pol. Old Luca Gaddi's, that owns the silk-mills here: he dozes by the hour, wakes up, sighs deeply, says he should like to be Prince Metternich, and then dozes again, after having bidden young Sebald, the foreigner, set his wife to playing draughts. Never molest such a household, they mean well.

Bluph. Only, cannot you tell me something of this little Pippa, I must have to do with? One could make something of that name. Pippa—that is, short for Fe-**lippa—rhyming to** ***Panurge consults Hertrippa — Believest thou, King Agrippa?*** Something might be done with that name.

2nd Pol. Put into rhyme that your head and a ripe musk-melon would not be dear at half a *zwanziger!* Leave this fooling, and look out; the afternoon's over or nearly so.

3rd Pol. Where in this passport of Signor Luigi does our Principal instruct you to watch him so narrowly? There? What's there beside a simple signature? (That English fool's busy watching.)

2nd Pol. Flourish all round—' Put all possible obstacles in his way;' oblong dot at the end—'Detain him till further advices reach you;' scratch at bottom—'Send him back on pretence of some informality in the above;' ink-spirt on right-hand side (which is the case here)—'Arrest

[1] 'He maketh his sun to rise on **the evil and** on **the good, and sendetb rain on the just and on the unjust.'**

him at once.' Why and wherefore, I
don't concern myself, but my instructions
amount to this: if Signor Luigi leaves
home to-night for Vienna—well and good,
the passport deposed with us for our *visa*
is really for his own use, they have mis-
informed the Office, and he mean3 well;
but let him stay over to-night—there has
been the pretence we suspect, the accounts
of his corresponding and holding intelli-
gence with the Carbonari are correct, we
arrest him at once, to-morrow comes
Venice, and presently Spielberg. Blu-
phocks makes the signal, sure enough I
That is he, entering the turret with his
mother, no doubt.

III.—EVENING

SCENE.—*Inside the Turret on the Hill above Asolo,* LUIGI *and his* Mother *entering.*

Mother. If there blew wind, you'd hear
a long sigh, easing
The utmost heaviness of music's heart.
Luigi. Here in the archway?
Mother. Oh no, no—in farther,
Where the echo is made, on the ridge.
Luigi. Here surely, then.
How plain the tap of my heel as I leaped up!
Hark—'Lucius Junius!' The very ghost
of a voice
Whose body is caught and kept by... what
are those?
Mere withered wallflowers, waving over-
head?
They seem an elvish group with thin
bleached hair
That lean out of their topmost fortress—
look
And listen, mountain men, to what we say,
Hand under chin of each grave earthy face.
Up and show faces all of you!—'All of
you!'
That's the king dwarf with the scarlet
comb; old Franz,
Come down and meet your fate? Hark—
'Meet your fate!'
Mother. Let him not meet it, my Luigi
—do not
Go to his City! Putting crime aside,
Half of these ills of Italy are feigned:
Your Pellicos and writers for effect,
Write for effect.
Luigi. Hush! Say A. writes, and B.
Mother. These A.s and B.s write for
effect, I say.
Then, evil is in its nature loud, while good
Is silent: you hear each petty injury,
None of his virtues: he Is old beside.
Quiet and kind, and densely stupid. Why
Do A. and B. not kill him themselves?
Luigi. They teach
Others to kill him—me—and, if I fail,
Others to succeed; now, if A. tried and
failed,
I could not teach that: mine's the lesser
task.
Mother, they visit night by night...
Mother. —You, Luigi?
Ah, will you let me tell you what you are?
Luigi. Why not? Oh, the one thing you
fear to hint,
You may assure yourself I say and say
Ever to myself! At times—nay, even as now
We sit—I think my mind is touched, suspect
All is not sound: but is not knowing that,
What constitutes one sane or otherwise?
I know I am thus—so, all is right again.
I laugh at myself as through the town I
walk,
And see men merry as if no Italy
Were suffering; then I ponder—'I am rich,
'Young, healthy; why should this fact
trouble me,
'More than it troubles these?' But it does
trouble.
No, trouble's a bad word: for as I walk
There's springing and melody and giddi-
ness,
And old quaint turns and passages of my
youth,
Dreams long forgotten, little in themselves,
Return to me—whatever may amuse me:
And earth seems in a truce with me, and
heaven
Accords with me, all things suspend their
strife,
The very cicala laughs 'There goes he, and
there!
'Feast him, the time is short; he is on his
way
'For the world's sake: feast him this once,
our friend!'
And in return for all this, I can trip
Cheerfully up the scaffold-steps. I go
This evening, mother!
Mother. But mistrust yourself—
Mistrust the judgment you pronounce on
him!
Luigi. Oh, there I feel—am sure that I
am right!
Mother. Mistrust your judgment then,
of the mere means
To this wild enterprise. Say, you arc
right,—
How should one in your state e'er bring to
pass
What would require a cool head, a cold
heart,
And a calm hand? You never will escape.
Luigi. Escape? To even wish that,
would spoil all.
The dying is best part of it. Too much
Have I enjoyed these fifteen years of mine,
To leave myself excuse for longer life:
Was not life pressed down, running o'er
with joy,
That I might finish with it ere my fellows
Who, sparelier feasted, make a longer stay?

I was put at the board-head, helped to all
At first; I rise up happy and content.
God must be glad one loves his world so much.
I can give news of earth to all the dead
Who ask me:—last year's sunsets, and great stars
Which had a right to come first and see ebb
The crimson wave that drifts the sun away—
Those crescent moons with notched and burning rims
That strengthened into sharp fire, and there stood,
Impatient of the azure—and that day
In March, a double rainbow stopped the storm—
May's warm slow yellow moonlit summer nights—
Gone are they, but I have them in my soul!

Mother. (He will not go!)

Luigi. You smile at me? 'Tis true -
Voluptuousness, grotesqueness, ghastliness,
Environ my devotedness as quaintly
As round about some antique altar wreathe
The rose festoons, goats' horns, and oxen's skulls.

Mother, See now: you reach the city, you must cross
His threshold—how?

Luigi. Oh, that's if we conspired!
Then would come pains in plenty, as you guess—
But guess not how the qualities most fit
For such an office, qualities I have,
Would little stead me, otherwise employed,
Yet prove of rarest merit only here.
Every one knows for what his excellence
Will serve, but no one ever will consider
For what his worst defect might serve: and yet
Have you not seen me range our coppice yonder
In search of a distorted ash?—I find
The wry spoilt branch a natural perfect bow.
Fancy the thrice-sage, thrice-precautioned man
Arriving at the palace on my errand!
No, no I I have a handsome dress packed up—
White satin here, to set off my black hair;
In I shall march—for you may watch your life out
Behind thick walls, make friends there to betray you;
More than one man spoils everything. March straight—
Only, no clumsy knife to fumble for.
Take the great gate and walk (not saunter)
Thro' guards and guards____1 have rehearsed it all
Inside the turret here a hundred times.
Don't ask the way of whom you meet, observe!
But where they cluster thickliest is the door
Of doors; they'll let you pass—they'll never blab
Each to the other, he knows not the favourite,
Whence he is bound and what's his business now.
Walk in—straight up to him; you have no knife:
Be prompt, how should he scream ? Then, out with you!
Italy. Italy, my Italy!
You're free, you're free! Oh mother, I could dream
They got about me—Andrea from his exile,
Pier from his dungeon, Gualtier from his grave!

Mother. Well, you shall go. Yet seems this patriotism
The easiest virtue for a selfish man
To acquire: he loves himself—and next, the world—
If he must love beyond,—but nought between:
As a short-sighted man sees nought midway
His body and the sun above. But you
Are my adored Luigi, ever obedient
To my least wish, and running o'er with love:
I could not call you cruel or unkind.
Once more, your ground for killing him! —then go!

Luigi. Now do you try me, or make sport of me?
How first the Austrians got these provinces . . .
(If that is all, I'll satisfy you soon)
—Never by conquest but by cunning, for
That treaty whereby . . .

Mother. Well?

Luigi. (Sure, he's arrived,
The tell-tale cuckoo: spring's his confidant,
And he lets out her April purposes!)
Or . . . better go at once to modern time,
He has . . . they have . . . in fact, I understand
But can't restate the matter; that's my boast:
Others could reason it out to you, and prove
Things they have made me feel.

Mother. Why go to-night?
Morn's for adventure. Jupiter is now
A morning-star. I cannot hear you, Luigi!

Luigi. 'I am the bright and morning-star,' saith God—

And, 'to such an one I give the **morning-**
star.'
Thegiftofthemornig-star! HavelGod's
gift
Of the morning-star?
Mother. Chiara will love to see
That Jupiter an evening-star next June.
Luigi. True, mother. Well for those
who live through June!
Great noontides, thunder-storms, all glar-
ing pomps
That triumph at the heels of June the god
Leading his revel through our leafy world.
Yes, Chiara will be here.
Mother. In June: remember,
Yourself appointed that month for her
coming.
Luigi. Was that low noise the echo?
Mother. The night-wind.
She must be grown—with her blue eyes
upturned
As if life were one long and sweet surprise:
In June she comes.
Luigi. We were to see together
The Titian at Treviso. There, again!
[From without is heard the voice* OF PIPPA, *singing—

A king lived long ago,
In the morning of the world,
When earth was nigher heaven than now:
And the king's locks curled,
Disparting o'er a forehead full
As the milk-white space 'twixt horn and
horn
Of some sacrificial bull—
Only calm as a babe new-born:
For he was got to a sleepy mood,
So safe from all decrepitude,
Age with its bane, so sure gone by,
(The gods so loved him while he dreamed)
That, having lived thus long, there seemed
No need the king should ever die.

Luigi. No need that sort of king should
ever die!

Among the rocks his city was:
Before his palace, in the sun,
He sat to see his people pass,
And judge them every one
From its threshold of smooth stone.
They haled him many a valley-thief
Caught in the sheep-pens, robber-chief
Swarthy and shameless, beggar-cheat,
Spy-prowler, or rough pirate found
On the sea-sand left aground;
And sometimes clung about his feet,
With bleeding lip and burning cheek,
A woman, bitterest wrong to speak
Of one with sullen thickset brows:
And sometimes from the prison-house
The angry priests a pale wretch brought,
Who through some chiik had pushed and
Dressed
On knees and elbows, belly and breast,
Worm-like into the temple,—caught
He was by the very god,
Who ever in the darkness strode
Backward and forward, keeping watch
O'er his brazen bowls, such rogues to catch !
These, all and every one,
The king judged, sitting in the sun.

Luigi. That king should still judge sit-
ting in the sun!

His councillors, on left and right,
Looked anxious up,—but no surprise
Disturbed the king's old smiling eyes
Where the very blue had turned to white.
' Tis said, a Python scared one day
The breathless city, till he came,
With forky tongue and eyes on flame,
Where the old king sat to judge alway;
But when he saw the sweepy hair
Girt with a crown of berries rare
Which the god will hardly give to wear
To the maiden who singeth, dancing bare
In the altar-smoke by the pine-torch lights,
At his wondrous forest rites,—
Seeing this, he did not dare
Approach that threshold in the sun,
Assault the old king smiling there.
Such grace had kings when the world
begun! [PIPPA *passes.*

Luigi. And such grace have they, now
that the world ends!
The Python at the city, on the throne,
And brave men, God would crown for
slaying him,
Lurk in bye-corners lest they fall his prey.
Are crowns yet to be won in this late time,
Which weakness makes me hesitate to
reach?
'Tis God's voice calls: how could I stay?
Farewell!

Talk by the way, while* PIPPA *is passing from the Turret to the Bishop's Brother's House, close to the Duomo S. Maria. Poor* Girls *sitting on the steps.

1st Girl. There goes a swallow to Venice
—the stout seafarer!
Seeing those birds fly, makes one wish for
wings.
Let us all wish; you wish first!
2nd Girl. I? This sunset
To finish.
3rd Girl. That old—somebody I know,
Greyer and older than my grandfather,
To give me the same treat he gave last
week—
Feeding me on his knee with fig-peckers,
Lampreys and red Breganze-wine, and
mumbling
The while some folly about how well I fare,
Let sit and eat my supper quietly:
Since had he not himself been late **this**
morning

Detained at—never mind where,—had he not...
'Eh, baggage, had I not!'—
2nd Girl. How she can lie!
3rd Girl. Look there—by the nails!
2nd Girl. **What** makes your fingers red!
3rd Girl. Dipping them into wine to write bad words with
On the bright table: how he laughed!
1st Girl. **My turn.**
Spring's come and summer's coming. I would wear
A long loose gown, down to the feet and hands,
With plaits here, close about the throat, all day;
And all night lie, the cool long nights, in bed;
And have new milk to drink, apples to eat,
Deuzans and junetings, leather-coats . .. ah, I should say,
This is away in the fields—miles!
3rd Girl. Say at once
You'd be at home: she'd always be at home!
Now comes the story of the farm among
The cherry orchards, and how April snowed
White blossoms on her as she ran. Why, fool,
They've rubbed the chalk-mark out, how tall you were,
Twisted your starling's neck, broken his cage,
Made a dung-hill of your garden!
1st Girl. They, destroy
My garden since I left them well?—perhaps!
I would have done so: so I hope they have!
A fig-tree curled out of our cottage wall;
They called it mine, I have forgotten why,
It must have been there long ere I was born:
Cric—cric—I think I hear the wasps o'er-head
Pricking the papers strung to flutter there
And keep off birds in fruit-time—coarse long papers,
And the wasps eat them, prick them through and through.
3rd Girl. How her mouth twitches! Where was I?—before
She broke in with her wishes and long gowns
And wasps—would I be such a fool!—Oh, here!
This is my way: I answer every one
Who asks me why I make so much of him—
(If you say, 'you love him'—straight 'he'll not be gulled!')
'He that seduced me when I was a girl
'Thus high—had eyes like yours, or hair like yours,
'Brown, red, white,'—as the case may be: that pleases!
See how that beetle burnishes in the path!
There sparkles he along the dust: and, there—
Your journey to that maize-tuft spoiled at least!
1 *st Girl.* When I was young, they said if you killed one
Of those sunshiny beetles, that his friend
Up there, would shine no more that day nor next.
2nd Girl. When you were young? Nor are you young, that's true.
How your plump arms, that were, have dropped away!
Why, I can span them. Cecco beats you still?
No matter, so you keep your curious hair.
I wish they'd find a way to dye our hair
Your colour—any lighter tint, indeed,
Than black: the men say they are sick of black,
Black eyes, black hair!
4th Girl. Sick of yours, like enough.
Do you pretend you ever tasted lampreys
And ortolans? Giovita, of the palace.
Engaged (but there's no trusting him) to slice me
Polenta with a knife that had cut up
An ortolan.
2nd Girl. Why, there! Is not that Pippa
We are to talk to, under the window,—quick,—
Where the lights are?
1st Girl. That she? No, or she would sing,
For the Intendant said ...
3rd Girl. Oh, you sing first!
Then, if she listens and comes close . . . I'll tell you,—
Sing that song the young English noble made,
Who took you for the purest of the pure,
And meant to leave the world for you—what fun!

2nd Girl [sings].

You'II love me yet!—and I can tarry
Your love's protracted growing:
June reared that bunch of flowers you carry,
From seeds of April's sowing.

I plant a heartful now: some seed
At least is sure to strike,
And yield—what you'll not pluck indeed,
Not love, but, may be, like.

You'll look at least on love's remains,
A grave's one violet:
Your look?—that pays a thousand pains.
What's death? You'll love me yet!

3rd Girl [to* PIPPA *who approaches]. **Oh,** you may come closer—we shall not eat you! Why, you seem the very person that the great rich handsome Englishman has fallen so violently in love with. I'll tell you all about it.

IV.—NIGHT

SCENE.—*Inside the Palace by the Duomo.* MONSIGNOR, *dismissing his* Attendants.

Mon. Thanks, friends, many thanks! I chiefly desire life now, that I may recompense every one of vou. Most I know something of already. What, a repast prepared? *Benedicto benedicatur.*. . ugh, ugh! WherewasI? Oh,asyouwereremarking, Ugo, the weather is mild, very unlike winter-weather: but I am a Sicilian, you know, and shiver in your Julys here. To be sure, when 'twas full summer at Messina, as we priests used to cross in procession the great square on Assumption Day, you might see our thickest yellow tapers twist suddenly in two, each like a falling star, or sink down on themselves in a gore of wax. But go, my friends, but go! *[To* Melntendant.J Notyou,Ugo! *[Theothers leave the apartment.]* I have long wanted to converse with you, Ugo.

Inten. Uguccio—

Mon....'guccio Stefani, man! of Ascoli, Fermo and Fossombruno;—what I do need instructing about, are these accounts of your administration of my poor brother's affairs. Ugh! I shall never get through a third part of your accounts: take some of these dainties before we attempt it, however. Are you bashful to that degree? For me, a crust and water suffice.

Inten. Do you choose this especial night to question me?

Mon. This night, Ugo. You have managed my late brother s affairs since the death of our elder brother: fourteen years and a month, all but three days. On the Third of December, I find him...

Inten. If you have so intimate an acquaintance with your brother's affairs, you will be tender of turning so far back: they will hardly bear looking into, so far back.

Mon. Ay, ay, ugh, ugh,—nothing but disappointments here below! I remark a considerable payment made to yourself on this Third of December. Talk of disappointments! There was a young fellow here, Jules, a foreign sculptor I did my utmost to advance, that the Church might be a gainer by us both: he was going on hopefully enough, and of a sudden he notifies to me some marvellous change that has happened in his notions of Art. Here's his letter,—'He never had a clearly conceived Ideal within his brain till to-day. Yet since his hand could manage a chisel, he has practised expressing other men's Ideals; and, in the very perfection he has attained to, he foresees an ultimate failure: his unconscious hand will pursue its prescribed course of old years, and will reproduce with a fatal expertness the ancient types, let the novel one appear never so palpably to his spirit. There is but one method of escape: confiding the virgin type to as chaste a hand, he will turn painter instead of sculptor, and paint, not carve, its characteristics,'—strike out, I dare say, a school like Correggio: how think you, Ugo?

Inten. Is Correggio a painter?

Mon. Foolish Jules! and yet. after all, why foolish? He may—probably will—fail egregiously; but if there should arise a new painter, will it not be in some such way, by a poet now, or a musician (spirits who have conceived and perfected an Ideal through some other channel), transferring it to this, and escaping our conventional roads by pure ignorance of them; eh, Ugo? If you have no appetite, talk at least, Ugo!

Inten. Sir, I can submit no longer to this course of yours. First, you select the group of which I formed one,—next you thin it gradually,—always retaining me with your smile,—and so do you proceed till you have fairly got me alone with you between four stone walls. And now then? Let this farce, this chatter end now: what is it you want with me?

Mon. Ugo!

Inten. From the instant you arrived. I felt your smile on me as you questioned me about this and the other article in those papers—why your brother should have given me this villa, that *podere*,—and your nod at the end meant,—what?

Mon. Possibly that I wished for no loud talk here. If once you set me coughing, Ugo!—

Inten. I have your brother's hand and seal to all I possess: now ask me what for! what service I did him—ask me!

Mon. I would better not: I should rip up old disgraces, let out my poor brother's weaknesses. By the way, Maffeo of Forli (which, I forgot to observe, is your true name), was the interdict ever taken offyou, for robbing that church at Cesena?

Inten. No, nor needs be: for when I murdered your brother's friend, Pasquale, for him ...

Mon. Ah, he employed you in that business, did he ? Well, I must let you keep, as you say. this villa and that podere, for fear the world should find out my relations were of so indifferent a stamp? Maffeo, my family is the oldest in Messina, and century after century have my progenitors gone on polluting themselves with every wickedness under heaven: my own father... rest his soul!—I have, I know, a chapel to support that it may rest: my dear two dead brothers were,—what you know tolerably well; I, the youngest, might have rivalled

them in vice, if not in wealth: but from my boyhood I came out from among them, and so am not partaker of their plagues. My glory springs from another source; or if from this, by contrast only,—for I, the bishop, am the brother of your employers, Ugo. I hope to repair some of their wrong, however; so far as my brother's ill-gotten treasure reverts to me, I can stop the consequences of his crime: and not one *soldo* shall escape me. Maffeo, the sword we quiet men spurn away, you shrewd knaves pick up and commit murders with; what opportunities the virtuous forego, the villanous seize. Because, to pleasure myself apart from other considerations, my food would be millet-cake, my dress sackcloth, and my couch straw,—am I therefore to let you, the offscouring of the earth, seduce the poor and ignorant by appropriating a pomp these will be sure to think lessens the abominations so unaccountably and exclusively associated with it? Must I let villas and *poderi* go to you, a murderer and thief, that you may beget by means of them other murderers and thieves? No—if my cough would but allow me to speak!

Inten. What am I to expect? You are going to punish me?

Mon. —Must punish you, Maffeo. I cannot afford to cast away a chance. I have whole centuries of sin to redeem, and only a month or two of life to do it in. How should I dare to say ...

Inten, 'Forgive us our trespasses'?

Mon. My friend, it is because I avow myself a very worm, sinful beyond measure, that I reject a line of conduct you would applaud perhaps. Shall I proceed, as it were, a-pardoning?—I?—who have no symptom of reason to assume that aught less than my strenuousest efforts will keep myself out of mortal sin, much less keep others out. No: I do trespass, but will not double that by allowing you to trespass.

Inten. And suppose the villas are not your brother's to give, nor yours to take? Oh, you are hasty enough just now!

Mon. 1,2—N° 3!—ay, can you read the substance of a letter, N° 3,1 have received from Rome? It is precisely on the ground there mentioned, of the suspicion I have that a certain child of my late elder brother, who would have succeeded to his estates, was murdered in infancy by you, Maffeo, at the instigation of my late younger brother—that the Pontiff enjoins on me not merely the bringing that Maffeo to condign punishment, but the taking all pains, as guardian of the infant's hentage for the Church, to recover it parcel by parcel, howsoever, whensoever, and wheresoever. While you are now gnawing those fingers, the police are engaged in sealing up your papers, Maffeo, and the mere raising my voice brings my people from the next room to dispose of yourself. But I want you to confess quietly, and save me raising my voice. Why, man, do I not know the old story? The heir between the succeeding heir, and this heir's ruffianly instrument, and their complot's effect, and the life of fear and bribes and ominous smiling silence? Did you throttle or stab my brother's infant? Come now!

Inten. So old a story, and tell it no better? When did such an instrument ever produce such an effect? Either the child smiles in his face; or, most likely, he is not fool enough to put himself in the employer's power so thoroughly: the child is always ready to produce—as you say—howsoever, wheresoever, and whensoever,

Mon. Liar!

Inten. Strike me? Ah, so might a father chastise! I shall sleep soundly to-night at least, though the gallows await me tomorrow; for what a life did I lead! Carlo of Cesena reminds me of his connivance, every time I pay his annuity; which happens commonly thrice a year. If I remonstrate, he will confess all to the good bishop —you!

Mon, I see through the trick, caitiff! I would you spoke truth for once. All shall be sifted, however—seven times sifted.

Inten. And how my absurd riches encumbered me! I dared not lay claim to above half my possessions. Let me but once unbosom myself, glorify Heaven, and die!

Sir, you are no brutal dastardly idiot like your brother I frightened to death: let us understand one another. Sir, I will make away with her for you—the girl—here close at hand; not the stupid obvious kind of killing; do not speak—know nothing of her nor of me! I see her every day—saw her this morning: of course there is to be no killing; but at Rome the courtesans perish off every three years, and I can entice her thither—have indeed begun operations already. There's a certain lusty blue-eyed florid-complexioned English knave, I and the Police employ occasionally. You assent, I perceive—no, that's not it—assent I do not say—but you will let me convert my present havings and holdings into cash, and give me time to cross the Alps? Tis but a little black-eyed pretty singing Felippa, gay silk-winding girl. I have kept her out of harm's way up to this present; for I always intended to make your life a plague to you with her. 'Tis as well settled once and for ever. Some women I have procured will pass Bluphocks, my handsome scoundrel, off

for somebody; and once Pippa entangled!
—you conceive? Through her singing?
Is it a bargain ?

[From without is heard the voice of PTPPA, *singing—*

Overhead the tree-tops meet,
Flowers and grass spring 'neath one' s feet;
There was nought above me, nought below,
My childhood had not learned to know:
For, what are the voices of birds
—Ay, and of beasts,—but words, our words,
Only so much more sweet?
The knowledge of that with my life begun.
But I had so near made out the sun,
And counted your stars, the seven and one,
Like the fingers of my hand:
Nay, I could all but understand
Wherefore through heaven the white moon ranges;
And just when out of her soft fifty changes
No unfamiliar face might overlook me—
Suddenly God took me.

[PIPPA *passes.*

Mon. [springing up]. My **people**—one and all—all—within there! Gag this villain—tie him hand and foot! He dares ... I know not half he dares—but remove him—quick! *Miserere mei, Domine!* **Quick,** I say!

SCENE.—PIPPA'S *chamber* ***again. She*** *enters it.*

The bee with his comb,
The mouse at her dray,
The grub in his tomb,
Wile winter away;

But the fire-fly and hedge-shrew and lob-worm, I pray,
How fare they?
Ha, ha, thanks for your counsel, my Zanze!
' Feast upon lampreys, quaff Breganze'—
The summer of life so easy to spend,
And care for to-morrow so soon put away!
But winter hastens at summer's end,
And fire-fly, hedge-shrew, lob-worm, pray,
How fare they?
No bidding me then to ... what did Zanze say?
'Pare your nails pearlwise, get your small feet shoes
'More like' . . . (what said she?)—'and less like canoes!'
How pert that girl was!—would I be those pert
Impudent staring women! It had done me,
However, surely no such mighty hurt
To learn his name who passed that jest upon me:
No foreigner, that I can recollect,
Came, as she says, a month since, to inspect
Our silk-mills—none with blue eyes and thick rings
Of raw-silk-coloured hair, at all events.
Well, if old Luca keep his good intents,
We shall do better, see what next year brings.
I may buy shoes, my Zanze, not appear
More destitute than you perhaps next year!
Bluph . . . something! I had caught the uncouth name
But for Monsignor's people's sudden clatter
Above us—bound to spoil such idle chatter
As ours: it were indeed a serious matter
If silly talk like ours should put to shame
The pious man, the man devoid of blame,
The ... ah but—ah but, all the same,
No mere mortal has a right
To carry that exalted air;
Best people are not angels quite:
While—not the worst of people's doings scare
The devil; so there's that proud look to spare!
Which is mere counsel to myself, mind! for
I have just been the holy Monsignor:
And I was you too, Luigi's gentle mother,
And you too, Luigi!—how that Luigi started
Out of the turret—doubtlessly departed
On some good errand or another,
For he passed just now in a traveller's trim,
And the sullen company that prowled
About his path, I noticed, scowled
As if they had lost a prey in him.
And I was Jules the sculptor's bride,
And I was Ottima beside,
And now what am I?—tired of fooling.
Day for folly, night for schooling!
New Year's day is over and spent,
I11 or well, I must be content.
Even my lily's asleep, I vow:
Wake up—here's a friend I've plucked you:
Call this flower a heart's-ease now!
Something rare, let me instruct you,
Is this, with petals triply swollen,
Three times spotted, thrice the pollen;
While the leaves and parts that witness
Old proportions and their fitness,
Here remain unchanged, unmoved now;
Call this pampered thing improved now!
Suppose there's a king of the flowers
And a girl-show held in his bowers—
'Look ye, buds, this growth of ours,'
Says he, 'Zanze from the Brenta,
'I have made her gorge polenta
'Till both cheeks are near as bouncing
'As her... name there's no pronouncing!
'See this heightened colour too,
'For she swilled Breganze wine
'Till her nose turned deep carmine;
"Twas but white when wild she grew.

'And only by this Zanze's eyes
'Of which we could not change the size,
'The magnitude of all achieved
'Otherwise, may be perceived.'

Oh what a drear dark close to my poor day!
How could that red sun drop in that black cloud?
Ah Pippa, morning's rule is moved away,
Dispensed with, never more to be allowed!
Day's turn is over, now arrives the night's.
Oh lark, be day's apostle
To mavis, merle and throstle,
Bid them their betters jostle
From day and its delights I
But at night, brother howlet, over the woods,
Toll the world to thy chantry;
Sing to the bats' sleek sisterhoods
Full complines with gallantry:
Then, owls and bats,
Cowls and twats,
Monks and nuns, in a cloister's moods,
Adjourn to the oak-stump pantry!
[After she has begun to undress herself.

Now, one thing I should like to really know:
How near I ever might approach all **these**
I only fancied being, this long day:
—Approach, I mean, so as to touch them, so
As to ... in some way... move them—if you please,
Do good or evil to them some slight way.
For instance, if I wind
Silk to-morrow, my silk may bind
[Sitting on the bedside.
And border Ottima's cloak's hem.
Ah me, and my important part with them,
This morning's hymn half promised when I rose!
True in some sense or other, I suppose.
[As she lies down.
God bless me! I can pray no more to-night.
No doubt, some way or other, hymns say right.

All service ranks the same with God—
With God, whose puppets, best and worst,
Are we: there is no last nor first.

[She sleeps.

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

A TRAGEDY

1842

NOTE

So far as I know, this Tragedy is the first artistic consequence of what Voltaire termed 'a terrible event without consequences;' and although it professes to be historical, I have taken more pains to arrive at the history than most readers would thank me for particularizing: since acquainted, as I will hope them to be, with the chief circumstances of Victor's remarkable European career—nor quite ignorant of the sad and surprising facts I am about to reproduce (a tolerable account of which is to be found, for instance, in Abbe Roman's *Ricit,* or even the fifth of Lord Orrery's Letters from Italy)—I cannot expect them to be versed, nor desirous of becoming so, in all the detail of the memoirs, correspondence, and relations of the time. From these only may be obtained a knowledge of the fiery and audacious temper, unscrupulous selfishness, profound dissimulation, and singular fertility in resources, of Victor—the extreme and painful sensibility, prolonged immaturity of powers, earnest good purpose and vacillating will of Charles—the noble and right woman's manliness of his wife—and the ill-considered rascality and subsequent better-advised rectitude of D'Ormea. When I say, therefore, that I cannot but believe my statement (combining as it does what appears correct in Voltaire and plausible in Condorcet) more true to person and thing than any it has hitherto been my fortune to meet with, no doubt my word will be taken, and my evidence spared as readily. R. B.

LONDON: 1842.

PERSONS

VICTOR AMADEUS, *first King of Sardinia.*
CHARLES EMMANUEL, *his son, Prince of Piedmont.*
POLYXENA, *wife of Charles.*
D'ORMEA, *minister.*

SCENE.—*The Council Chambers of Rivoli Palace, near Turin, communicating with a Hall at the back, an Apartment to the left, and another to the right of the stage.*

TIME, 1730-1731.

FIRST YEAR, 1730. KING VICTOR

PART I

CHARLES, POLYXENA,

Cha. You think so? Well, I do not.
Pol My beloved,
All must clear up; we shall be happy yet:
This cannot last for ever—oh, may change
To-day or any day!
Cha. —May change? Ah yes—May change!
Pol. Endure it, then.
Cha. No doubt, a life
Like this drags on, now better and now worse.

My father may... may take to loving me;
And he may take D'Qrmea closer yet
To counsel him-—may even cast off her
—That bad Sebastian; but he also may
... Or no, Polyxena, my only friend,
He may not force you from me?
Pol. Now, force me
From you!—me, close by you as if there gloomed
No Sebastians, no D'Ormeas on our path—
At Rivoli or Turin, still at hand,
Arch-counsellor, prime confidant... force me!
Cha. Because I felt as sure, as I feel sure
We clasp hands now, of being happy once.
Young was I, quite neglected, nor concerned
By the world's business that engrossed so much
My father and my brother: if I peered
From out my privacy,—amid the crash
And blaze of nations, domineered those two.
'Twas war, peace—France our foe, now—England, friend—
In love with Spain—at feud with Austria! Well—
I wondered, laughed a moment's laugh for pride
In the chivalrous couple, then let drop
My curtain—' I am out of it,' I said—
When...
Pol. You have told me, Charles.
Cha. Polyxena—
When suddenly,—a warm March day, just that!
Just so much sunshine as the cottage child
Basks in delighted, while the cottager
Takes off his bonnet, as he ceases work,
To catch the more of it—and it must fall
Heavily on my brother! Had you seen
Philip—the lion-featured! not like me!
Pot. I know—
Cha. And Philip's mouth yet fast to mine,
His dead cheek on my cheek, his arm still round
My neck,—they bade me rise,' for i was heir
'To the Duke,' they said, 'the right hand of the Duke:'
Till then he was my father, not the Duke.
So... let me finish ... the whole intricate
World's-business their dead boy was bora to, I
Must conquer,—ay, the brilliant thing he was,
I, of a sudden must be: my faults, my follies,
—All bitter truths were told me, all at once.
To end the sooner. What I simply styled
Their overlooking me, had been contempt:
How should the Duke employ himself, forsooth,
With such an one, while lordly Philip rode
By him their Turin through? But he was punished,
And must put up with—me I 'Twas sad enough
To learn my future portion and submit.
And then the wear and worry, blame on blame!
For, spring-sounds in my ears, spring-smells about,
How could I but grow dizzy in their pent
Dim palace-rooms at first? My mother's look
As they discussed my insignificance,
She and my father, and I sitting by,—
I bore; I knew how brave a son they missed:
Philip had gaily run state-papers through,
While Charles was spelling at them painfully!
But Victor was my father spite of that.
' Duke Victor's entire life has been,' I said,
'Innumerable efforts to one end;
'And on the point now of that end's success,
'Our Ducal turning to a Kingly crown,
' Where's time to be reminded 'tis his child
' He spurns ?' And so I suffered—scarcely suffered,
Since I had you at length!
Pol. —To serve in place
Of monarch, minister, and mistress, Charles.
Cha. But, once that crown obtained, then was't not like
Our lot would alter ? ' When he rests, takes breath,
'Glances around, sees who there's left to love—
'Now that my mother's dead, sees I am left—
'Is it not like he'll love me at the last?'
Well, Savoy turns Sardinia; the Duke's King:
Couldl—precisely then—could you expect
His harshness to redouble? These few months
Have been... have been... Polyxena, do you
And God conduct me, or I lose myself!
What would he have ? What is't they want with me?
Him with this mistress and this minister,
—You see me and you hear him; judge us both!
Pronounce what I should do, Polyxena!
Pol. Endure, endure, beloved! Say you not
He is your father? All's so incident
To novel sway! Beside, our life must change:
Or you'll acquire his kingcraft, or he'll find
Harshness a sorry way of teaching it.
I bear this—not that there's so much to bear.

Cha. You bear? Do not I know that you, tho' bound
To silence for my sake, are perishing
Piecemeal beside me ? And how otherwise
When every creephole from the hideous Court
Is stopped: the Minister to dog me, here—
The Mistress posted to entrap you, there!
And thus shall we grow old in such a life;
Not careless, never estranged,—but old: to alter
Our life, there is so much to alter!
Pol. Corne-
ls it agreed that we forego complaint
Even at Turin, yet complain we here
At Rivoli? 'Twere wiser you announced
Our presence to the King. What's now afoot,
I wonder? Not that any more's to dread
Than every day's embarrassment: but guess
For me, why train so fast succeeded train
Onthehigh-road,each gayer still than each!
I noticed your Archbishop's pursuivant,
The sable cloak and silver cross; such pomp
Bodes .. . what now, Charles? Can you conceive?
Cha. Not I.
Pol. A matter of some moment.
Cha. There's our life!
Which of the group of loiterers that stare
From the lime-avenue, divines that I—
About to figure presently, he thinks,
In face of all assembled—am the one
Who knows precisely least about it?
Pol Tush!
D'Ormea's contrivance!
Cha. Ay, how otherwise
Should the young Prince serve for the old King's foil?
—So that the simplest courtier may remark
'Twere idle raising parties for a Prince
Content to linger the Court's laughing-stock.
Something, 'tis like, about that weary business
[Pointing to papers he has laid down, and which POLYXENA *examines.*
—Not that I comprehend three words, of course,
After all last night's study.
Pol. The faint heart!
Why, as we rode and you rehearsed just now
Its substance... (that's the folded speech I mean,
Concerning the Reduction of the Fiefs)
—What would you have ?—I fancied while you spoke,
Some tones were just your father's.
Cha. Flattery!
Pol. I fancied so:—and here lurks, sure enough,
My note upon the Spanish Claims! **You've** mastered
The fief-speech thoroughly: this other, mind,
Is an opinion you deliver,—stay,
Best read it slowly over once to me;
Read—there's bare time; you read it firmly —loud
—Rather loud, looking in his face,—don't sink
Your eye once—ay, thus I ' If Spain claims ...' begin
—Just as you look at me!
Cha. At you! Oh truly,
You have I seen, say, marshalling your troops,
Dismissing councils, or, through doors ajar,
Head sunk on hand, devoured by slow chagrins
—Then radiant, for a crown had all at once
Seemed possible again! I can behold
Him, whose least whisper ties my spirit fast,
In this sweet brow, nought could divert me from
Save objects like Sebastian's shameless lip,
Or worse, the clipped grey hair and dead white face
And dwindling eye as if it ached with guile,
D'Ormea wears ...
[As he kisses her. enter from the KING'S *apartment* D'ORMEA.
I said he would divert
My kisses from your brow!
D'O. [aside]. Here! So, King Victor
Spoke truth for once: and who's ordained, but I
To make that memorable? Both in call,
As he declared. Were't better gnash the teeth,
Or laugh outright now?
Cha. [to POLYXENA*].* What's his visit for?
D'O. [aside]. I question if they even speak to me.
Pol. [to CHARLES*].* Face the man! He'll suppose you fear him, else.
[Aloud.] The Marquis bears the King's command, no doubt?
D'O.[aside]. Precisely!—If I threatened him, perhaps?
Well, this at least is punishment enough!
Men used to promise punishment would come.
Cha. Deliver the King's message, Marquis!
D'O. *[aside].* Ah—
So anxious for his fate? *[Aloud.]* A **word,** my Prince,
Before you see your father—just one **word**
Of counsel!
Cha. Oh, your counsel certainly!

Polyxena, the Marquis counsels us!
Weft, sir? Be brief, however!
D'O. What? You know
As much as I?—preceded me. most like,
In knowledge! So! (Tis in his eye, beside—
His voice: he knows it, and his heart's on flame
Already.) You surmise why you, myself,
Del Borgo, Spava, fifty nobles more,
Are summoned thus?
Cha. Is the Prince used to know,
At any time, the pleasure of the King,
Before his minister?—Polyxena,
Stay here till I conclude my task: I feel
Your presence (smile not) through the walls, and take
Fresh heart. The King's within that chamber?
D'O. [passing the table whereon a paper lies, exclaims, as he glances at it], 'Spain!'
Pol [aside to CHARLES!. Tarry awhile: what ails the minister?
D'O. Madam, I do not often trouble you.
The Prince loathes, and you scorn me—let that pass!
But since it touches him and you, not me,
Bid the Prince listen!
Pol. [to CHARLES]. Surely you will listen!
—Deceit ?—those fingers crumpling up his vest?
Cha. Deceitful to the very fingers' ends!
D'O. [who has approached them, overlooks the other paper CHARLES *continues to hold].* My project for the Fiefs! As I supposed!
Sir, I must give you light upon those measures
—For this is mine, and that I spied of Spain,
Mine too!
Cha. Release me! Do you gloze on me
Who bear in the world's face (that is, the world
You make for me at Turin) your contempt ?
—Your measures ?—When was not a hateful task
D'Ormea's imposition? Leave my robe!
What post can I bestow, what grant concede?
Or do you take me for the King?
D'O. Not I !
Not yet for King,—not for, as yet, thank God,
One who in . . . shall I say a year, a month?
Ay!—shall be wretcheder than e'er was slave
In his Sardinia.—Europe's spectacle
And the world's bye-word! What? The Prince aggrieved
That I excluded him our counsels? Here
[Touching the paper in CHARLES'S *hand.*
Accept a method of extorting gold
From Savoy's nobles, who must wring its worth
In silver first from tillers of the soil,
Whose hinds again have to contribute brass
To make up the amount: there's counsel, sir,
My counsel, one year old; and the fruit, this—
Savoy's become a mass of misery
And wrath, which one man has to meet—the King:
You're not the King! Another counsel, sir!
Spain entertains a project (here it lies)
Which, guessed, makes Austria offer that same King
Thus much to baffle Spain; he promises;
Then comes Spain, breathless lest she be forestalled,
Her offer follows; and he promises . . .
Cha. —Promises, sir, when he has just agreed
To Austria's offer?
D'O. That's a counsel, Prince!
But past our foresight, Spain and Austria (choosing
To make their quarrel up between themselves
Without the intervention of a friend)
Produce both treaties, andboth promises...
Cha. How?
D'O. Prince, a counsel! And the fruit of that?
Both parties covenant afresh, to fall
Together on their friend, blot out Ms name,
Abolish him from Europe. So, take note,
Here's Austria and here's Spain to fight against:
And what sustains the King but Savoy here,
A miserable people mad with wrongs?
You're not the King!
Cha. Polyxena, you said
All would clear up: all does clear up to me.
D'O. Clear up! 'Tis no such thing to envy, then?
You see the King's state in its length and breadth ?
You blame me now for keeping you aloof
From counsels and the fruit of counsels? Wait
Till I explain this morning's business!
Cha. [aside]. No—
Stoop to my father, yes,—D'Ormea, no:
—The King's son, not to the King's counsellor!
I will do something, but at least retain
The credit of my deed. *[Aloud.]* Then it is this
You now expressly come to tell me?
D'O. This
To tell! You apprehend me?
Cha. Perfectly.
Further. D'Ormea, you have shown yourself,

For the first time these many weeks and months,
Disposed to do my bidding?
D'O. From the heart!
Cha. Acquaint my father, first, I wait his pleasure:
Next... or, I'll tell you at a fitter time.
Acquaint the King!
D'O. [aside]. If I 'scape Victor yet!
First, to prevent this stroke at me: if not,—
Then, to avenge it! *[To* CHARLES.] Gracious sir, I go. *[Goes.*
Cha. God, I forbore! Which more offends, that man
Or that man's master? Is it come to this?
Have they supposed (the sharpest insult yet)
I needed e'en his intervention? No!
No—dull am I, conceded,—but so dull,
Scarcely! Their step decides me.
Pol. How decides?
Cha. You would be freed D'Ormea's eye and hers?
—Could fly the court with me and live content?
So, this it is for which the knights assemble!
The whispers and the closeting of late,
The savageness and insolence of old,
—For this!
Pol. What mean you?
Cha. How? You fail to catch
Their clever plot? I missed it, but could you?
These last two months of care to inculcate
How dull I am,—D'Ormea's present visit
To prove that, being dull, I might be worse
Were I a King—as wretched as now dull—
You recognize in it no winding up
Of a long plot?
Pol. Why should there be a plot?
Cha. The crown's secure now; I should shame the crown—
An old complaint; the point is, how to gain
My place for one, more fit in Victor's eyes,
His mistress the Sebastian's child.
Pol. In truth?
Cha. They dare not quite dethrone Sardinia's Prince:
But they may descant on my dulness till
They sting me into even praying them
Grant leave to hide my head, resign my state,
And end the coil. Not see now? In a word,
They'd have me tender them myself my rights
As one incapable;—some cause for that,
Since I delayed thus long to see their drift!
I shall apprise the King he may resume
My rights this moment.
Pol. Pause! I dare not think
So ill of Victor.
Cha. Think no ill of him!
Pol. —Nor think him, then, so shallow as to suffer
His purpose be divined thus easily.
And yet—you are the last of a great line;
There's a great heritage at stake; new days
Seemed to await this newest of the realms
Of Europe:—Charles, you must withstand this!
Cha. Ah—
You dare not then renounce the splendid Court
For one whom all the world despises? Speak!
Pol. My gentle husband, speak I will, and truth.
Were this as you believe, and I once sure
Your duty lay in so renouncing rule,
I could ... could? Oh what happiness it were—
To live, my Charles, and die, alone with you!
Cha. I grieve I asked you. To the presence, then!
By this, D'Ormea acquaints the King, no doubt,
He fears I am too simple for mere hints,
And that no less will serve than Victor's mouth
Demonstrating in council what I am.
I have not breathed, I think, these many years!
Pol. Why, it may be!—if he desire to wed
The woman, call legitimate her child.
Cha. You see as much? Oh, let his will have way!
You'll not repent confiding in me, love?
There's many a brighter spot in Piedmont, far,
Than Rivoli. I'll seek him: or, suppose
You hear first how I mean to speak my mind?
—Loudly and firmly both, this time, be sure!
lyetmay see your Rhine-land, who can tell?
Once away, even then away! I breathe.
Pol. And I too breathe.
Cha. Come, my Polyxena!

KING VICTOR

PARI II

Enter King VICTOR, *bearing the Regalia on a cushion, from his apartment. He calls loudly.*

Vic. D'Ormea!—for patience fails me, treading thus
Among the obscure trains I have laid,—my knights
Safe in the hall here—in that anteroom,
My son,—D'Ormea, where? Of this, one touch— *[Laying down the crown.*
This fireball to these mute black cold traiDs —then

Outbreak enough!
{Contemplating it.] To lose all, after all!
This, glancingo'er my house for ages—shaped,
Brave meteor, like the crown of Cyprus now,
Jerusalem, Spain, England, every change
The braver,—and when I have clutched a prize
My ancestry died wan with watching for,
To lose it!-—by a slip, a fault, a trick
Learnt to advantage once and not unlearned
When past the use,—'just this once more' (I thought)
' Use it with Spain and Austria happily,
' And then away with trick!' An oversight
I'd have repaired thrice over, any time
These fifty years, must happen now! There's peace
At length; and I, to make the most of peace,
Ventured my project on our people here,
As needing not their help: which Europe knows,
And means, cold-blooded, to dispose herself
(Apart from plausibilities of war)
To crush the new-made King—who ne'er till now
Feared her. As Duke, I lost each foot of earth
And laughed at her: my name was left, my sword
Left, all was left! But she can take, she knows,
This crown, herself conceded . .. That's to try,
Kind Europe! My career's not closed as yet!
This boy was ever subject to my will,
Timid and tame—the fitter! D'Ormea, too—
What if the sovereign also rid himself
Of thee, his prime of parasites?—I delay!
D'Ormea! *[As* D'ORMEA *enters, the* KINO *seats himself.*
My son, the Prince—attends he?
D'O. Sir,
He does attend. The crown prepared!—it seems
That you persist in your resolve.
Vic. Who's come?
The chancellor and the chamberlain? My knights?
D'0. The whole Annunziata. If, my liege,
Your fortune had not tottered worse than now...
Vic. Del Borgo has drawn up the schedules? mine—
My son's, too? Excellent! Only, beware
Of the least blunder, or we look but fools.
First, you read the Annulment of the Oaths;
Del Borgo follows... no, the Prince shall sign;
Then let Del Borgo read the Instrument:
On which, I enter.
D'O. Sir, this may be truth;
You, sir, may do as you affect—may break
Your engine, me, to pieces: try at least
If not a spring remain worth saving! Take
My counsel as I've counselled many times!
What if the Spaniard and the Austrian threat?
There's England, Holland, Venice—which ally
Select you?
Vic. Aha! Come, D'Ormea,—'truth'
Was on your lip a minute since. Allies?
I've broken faith with Venice, Holland, England
—As who knows if not you?
D'O. But why with me
Break faith—with one ally, your best, break faith?
Vic. When first I stumbled on you, Marquis—'twas
At Mondovi—a little lawyer's clerk .. .
D'O. Therefore your soul's all>'—who brought you through
Your quarrel with the Pope, at pains enough—
Who simply echoed you in these affairs—
On whom you cannot therefore visit these
Affairs' ill-fortune—whom you trust to guide
You safe (yes, on my soul) through these affairs!
Vic. I was about to notice, had you not
Prevented me, that since that great town kept
With its chicane D'Ormea's satchel stuffed
And D'Ormea's self sufficiently recluse,
He missed a sight,—my naval armament
When I burned Toulon. How the skiff exults
Upon the galliot's wave!—rises its height,
O'ertops it even; but the great wave bursts,
And hell-deep in the horrible profound
Buries itself the galliot: shall the skiff
Think to escape the sea's black trough in turn?
Apply this: you have been my minister
—Next me, above me possibly;—sad post,
Huge care, abundant lack of peace of mind;
Who would desiderate the eminence?
Who gave your soul to get it; you'd yet give
Your soul to keep it, as I mean you shall,
D'Ormea! What if the wave ebbed with me?
Whereas it cants you to another crest;
I toss you to my son; ride out your ride!
D'O. Ah, you so much despise me?

Vic. You, D'Ormea?
Nowise: and I'll inform you why. A king
Must in his time have many ministers,
And I've been rash enough to part with mine
When I thought proper. Of the tribe, not one
(... Or wait, did Pianezze?—ah, just the same!)
Not one of them, ere his remonstrance reached
The length of yours, but has assured me (commonly
Standing much as you stand,—or nearer, say,
The door to make his exit on his speech)
—I should repent of what I did. D'Ormea,
Be candid, you approached it when I bade you
Prepare the schedules ! But you stopped in time,
You have not so assured me: how should I
Despise you then?

Enter CHARLES.

Vic. [changing his tone]. Are you instructed? Do
My order, point by point! About it, sir!
D'O. You so despise me! *[Aside.]* One last stay remains—
The boy's discretion there.
[To CHARLES.] For your sake, Prince,
I pleaded, wholly in your interest,
To save you from this fate!
Cha. [aside]. Must I be told
The Prince was supplicated for—by him?
Vic. [to D'ORMEA], Apprise Del Borgo, Spava, and the rest,
Our son attends them; then return.
D'O. One word!
Cha. [aside], A moment's pause and they would drive me hence,
I do believe!
D'O. [aside]. Let but the boy be firm!
Vic. You disobey?
Cha. [to D'ORMEA]. You do not disobey
Me, at least ? Did you promise that or no ?
D'O. Sir, I am yours: what would you ? Yours am I!
Cha. When I have said what I shall say, 'tis like
Your face will ne'er again disgust me. Go!
Through you, as through a breast of glass, I see.
And for your conduct, from my youth till now,
Take my contempt! You might have spared me much,
Secured me somewhat, nor so harmed yourself:
That's over now. Go, ne'er to come again!
D'O. As son, the father—father as, the son!
My wits! My wits! *[Goes.*
Vic. [seated]. And you, what meant you, pray,
Speaking thus to D'Ormea?
Cha. Let us not
Waste words upon D'Ormea! Those I spent
Have half unsettled what I came to say.
His presence vexes to my very soul.
Vic. One called to manage a kingdom, Charles, needs heart
To bear up under worse annoyances
Than seems D'Ormea—to me, at least.
Cha. [aside]. Ah, good!
He keeps me to the point. Then be it so.
[Aloud.] Last night, sir, brought me certain papers—these—
To be reported on,—your way of late.
Is it last night's result that you demand?
Vic. For God's sake, what has night brought forth? Pronounce
The . . . what's your word?—result!
Cha. Sir, that had proved
Quite worthy of your sneer, no doubt:—a few
Lame thoughts, regard for you alone could wring,
Lame as they are, from brains like mine, believe!
As 'tis, sir, I am spared both toil and sneer.
These are the papers.
Vic. Well, sir? I suppose
You hardly burned them. Now for your result!
Cha. I never should have done great things of course,
But . . . oh my father, had you loved me more!
Vic. Loved? *[Aside.]* Has D'Ormea played me false, I wonder?
[Aloud.] Why, Charles, a king's love is diffused—yourself
May overlook, perchance, your part in it.
Our monarchy is absolutest now
In Europe, or my trouble's thrown away.
I love, my mode, that subjects each and all
May have the power of loving, all and each,
Their mode: I doubt not, many have their sons
To trifle with, talk soft to, all day long:
I have that crown, this chair, D'Ormea, Charles!
Cha. 'Tis well I am a subject then, not you.
Vic. [aside], D'Ormea has told him everything.
[Aloud.] Ahai
1 apprehend you: when all's said, you take
Your private station to be prized beyond
My own, for instance?
Cha. —Do and ever did
So take it: 'tis the method you pursue
That grieves . ..

Vic. These words! Let me express, my friend,
Your thoughts. You penetrate what I supposed
Secret. D'Ormea plies his trade betimes!
I purpose to resign my crown to you.
Cha. To me?
Vic. Now,—in that chamber.
Cha. You resign
The crown to me?
Vic. And time enough, Charles, sure?
Confess with me, at four-and-sixty years
A crown's a load. I covet quiet once
Before I die, and summoned you for that.
Cha. 'Tis I will speak: you ever hated me.
I bore it,—have insulted me, borne too—
Now you insult yourself; and I remember
What I believed you, what you really are,
And cannot bear it. What! My life has passed
Under your eye, tormented as you know,—
Your whole sagacities, one after one,
At leisure brought to play on me—to prove me
A fool, I thought and I submitted; now
You'd prove... what would you prove me?
Vic. This to me?
I hardly know you!
Cha. Know me? Oh indeed
You do not! Wait till I complain next time
Of my simplicity!—for here's a sage
Knows the world well, is not to be deceived,
And his experience and his Macchiavels,
D'Ormeas, teach him—what?—that I this while
Have envied him his crown! He has not smiled,
I warrant,—has not eaten, drunk, nor slept,
For I was plotting with my Princess yonder!
Who knows what we might do or might not do?
Go now, be politic, astound the world!
That sentry m the antechamber—nay,
The varlet who disposed this precious trap
[Pointing to the crown.
That was to take me—ask them if they think
Their own sons envy them their posts!—Know me!
Vic. But you know me, it seems: so, learn in brief,
My pleasure. This assembly is convened...
Cha. Tell me, that woman put it in your head!
You were not sole contriver of the scheme,
My father!
Vic. Now observe me, sir! I jest
Seldom—on these points, never. Here, I say,
The knights assemble to see me concede,
And you accept, Sardinia's crown.
Cha. Farewell!
'Twere vain to hope to change this: I can end it.
Not that I cease from being yours, when sunk
Into obscurity: I'll die for you,
But not annoy you with my presence. Sir,
Farewell! Farewell!

Enter D'ORMEA.

D'O. *[aside].* Ha, sure he's changed again—
Means not to fall into the cunning trap!
Then Victor, I shall yet escape you, Victor!
Vic. [suddenly placing the crown upon the head of CHARLES]. D'Ormea, your King!
[To CHARLES.] My son, obey me! Charles,
Your father, clearer-sighted than yourself,
Decides it must be so. 'Faith, this looks real!
My reasons after; reason upon reason
After: but now, obey me! Trust in me!
Be this, you save Sardinia, you save me!
Why, the boy swoons! *[To* D'ORMEA.] Come this side!
D'O. [as CHARLES *turns from him to* VICTOR]. YOU persist?
Vic. Yes. I conceive the gesture's meaning. 'Faith,
He almost seems to hate you: how is that?
Be re-assured, my Charles! Is't over now?
Then, Marquis, tell the new King what remains
To do! A moment's work. Del Borgo reads
The Act of Abdication out, you sign it,
Then I sign; after that, come back to me.
D'O. Sir, for the last time, pause!
Vic. Five minutes longer
I am your sovereign, Marquis. Hesitate—
And I'll so turn those minutes to account
That . . . Ay, you recollect me! *[Aside.]* Could I bring
My foolish mind to undergo the reading
That Act of Abdication!
[As CHARLES *motions* D'ORMEA *to precede him.*
Thanks, dear Charles!
[CHARLES *and* D'ORMEA *retire.*
Vic. A novel feature in the boy,—indeed
Just what I feared he wanted most. Quite right,
This earnest tone: your truth, now, for effect!
It answers every purpose: with that look,
That voice,—I hear him: 'I began no treaty,'
(He speaks to Spain), ' nor ever dreamed of this
'You show me: this I from my soul regret;
'But if my father signed it, bid not me
'Dishonour him—who gave me all, beside:'

And, 'True,' says Spain, "twere harsh to visit that
'Upon the Prince.' Then come the nobles trooping:
'I grieve at these exactions—I had cut
'This hand off ere impose them; but shall I
'Undo my father's deed?'—and they confer:
'Doubtless he was no party, after all;
'Give the Prince time!'
Ay, give us time, but time!
Only, he must not, when the dark day comes.
Refer our friends to me and frustrate all.
We'll have no child's play, no desponding fits,
No Charles at each cross turn entreating Victor
To take his crown again. Guard against that!

Enter D'ORMEA.

Long live King Charles!
No—Charles's counsellor!
Well, is it over, Marquis? Did I jest?
D'O. 'King Charles!' What then may you be?
Vic. Anything!
A country gentleman that, cured of bustle,
Now beats a quick retreat toward Chambery,
Would hunt and hawk and leave you noisy folk
To drive your trade without him. I'm Count Remont—
Count Tende—any little place's Count!
D'O. Then Victor, Captain against Catinat
At Staffarde, where the French beat you; and Duke
At Turin, where you beat the French; King late
Of Savoy. Piedmont, Montferrat, Sardinia,
—Now, 'any little place's Count'—
Vic. Proceed!
D'O. Breaker of vows to God, who crowned you first;
Breaker of vows to man, who kept you since;
Most profligate to me who outraged God
And man to serve you, and am made pay crimes
I was but privy to, by passing thus
To your imbecile son—who, well you know.
Must—(wnen the people here, and nations there,
Clamour for you the main delinquent, slipped
From King to—'Count of any little place')
Must needs surrender me, all in his reach,—
I, sir, forgive you: for I see the end—
Seeyouonyourreturn—(youwillreturn)—
To him you trust, a moment. . .
Vic. Trust him? How?
My poor man, merely a prime-minister,
Make me know where my trust errs!
D'O. In his fear.
His love, his____but discover for yourself
What you are weakest, trusting in!
Vic. Aha,
D'Ormea, not a shrewder scheme than this
In your repertory? You know old Victor—
Vain, choleric, inconstant, rash—(I've heard
Talkers who little thought the King s0 close)
Felicitous now, were't not, to provoke him
To clean forget, one minute afterward,
His solemn act, and call the nobles back
And pray them give again the very power
He has abjured?—for the dear sake of what?
Vengeance on you, D'Ormea! No: such am I,
Count Tende or Count anything you please,
—Only, the same that did the things you say,
And, among other things you say not, used
Your finest fibre, meanest muscle,—you
I used, and now, since you will have it so,
Leave to your fate—mere lumber in the midst,
You and your works. Why, what on earth beside
Are you made for, you sort of ministers?
D'O. Not left, though, to my fate! Your witless son
Has more wit than to load himself with lumber:
He foils you that way, and I follow you.
Vic. Stay with my son—protect the weaker side!
D'O. Ay, to be tossed the people like a rag,
And flung by them for Spain and Austria's sport,
Abolishing the record of your part
In all this perfidy!
Vic. Prevent, beside,
My own return!
D'O. That's half prevented now!
'Twill go hard but you find a wondrous charm
In exile, to discredit me. The Alps,
Silk-mills to watch, vines asking vigilance—
Hounds open for the stag, your hawk's a-wing—
Brave days that wait the Louis of the South,
Italy's Janus!
Vic. So, the lawyer's clerk
Won't tell me that I shall repent!
D'O. You give me
Full leave to ask if you repent?
Vic. Whene'er

Sufficient time's elapsed for that, you judge!
[Shouts inside 'King CHARLES!'
D'O. Do you repent?
Vic. [after a slight pause], .. . I've kept them waiting? Yes!
Come in, complete the Abdication, sir!
[They go out.

Enter POLYXENA.

Pol A shout! The sycophants are free of Charles!
Oh is not this like Italy? No fruit
Of his or my distempered fancy, this,
But just an ordinary fact! Beside,
Here they've set forms for such proceedings; Victor
Imprisoned his own mother: he should know,
If any, how a son's to be deprived
Of a son's right. Our duty's palpable.
Ne'er was my husband for the wily king
And the unworthy subjects: be it so!
Come you safe out of them, my Charles! Our life
Grows not the broad and dazzling life, I dreamed
Might prove your lot; for strength was shut in you
None guessed but I—strength which, untramelled once,
Had little shamed your vaunted ancestry—
Patience and self-devotion, fortitude,
Simplicity and utter truthfulness
—All which, they shout to lose! So, now my work
Begins—to save him from regret. Save Charles
Regret?—the noble nature! He's not made
Like these Italians: 'tis a German soul.

CHARLES *enters crowned.*

Oh, where's the King's heir? Gone!—the Crown Prince? Gone!—
Where's Savoy? Gone!—Sardinia? Gone! But Charles
Is left! And when my Rhine-land bowers arrive,
If he looked almost handsome yester-twilight
As his grey eyes seemed widening into black
Because I praised him, then how will he look?
Farewell, you stripped and whited mulberry-trees
Bound each to each by lazy ropes of vine!
Now I'll teach you my language: I'm not forced
To speak Italian now, Charles?
[She sees the crown.] What is this?
Answer me—who has done this? Answer!
Cha. He!
I am King now.
Pol Oh worst, worst, worst of all!
Tell me! What, Victor? He has made you King?
What's he then? What's to follow this? You, King?
Cha. Havel done wrong? Yes, for you were not by!
Pol. Tell me from first to last.
Cha. Hush—a new world
Brightens before me; he is moved away
—The dark form that eclipsed it, he subsides
Into a shape supporting me like you,
And I, alone, tend upward, more and more
Tend upward: I am grown Sardinia's King.
Pol. Now stop: was not this Victor, Duke of Savoy
At ten years old?
Cha. He was.
Pol And the Duke spent
Since then, just four-and-fifty years in toil
To be—what?
Cha. King.
Pol Then why unking himself?
Cha. Those years are cause enough.
Pol. The only cause?
Cha. Some new perplexities.
Pol. Which you can solve
Although he cannot?
Cha. He assures me so.
Pol. And this he means shall last—how long?
Cha. How long?
Think you I fear the perils I confront?
He's praising me before the people's face—
My people!
Pol Then he's changed—grown kind, the King?
Where can the trap be?
Cha. Heart and soul I pledge!
My father, could I guard the crown you gained,
Transmit as I received it,—all good else
Would I surrender!
Pol Ah, it opens then
Before you, all you dreaded formerly?
You are rejoiced to be a king, my Charles?
Cha. So much to dare? The better; —much to dread?
The better. I'll adventure though alone.
Triumph or die, there's Victor still to witness
Who dies or triumphs—either way, alone!
Pol. Once I had found my share in triumph, Charles,
Or death.
Cha. But you are I! But you I call
To take, Heaven's proxy, vows I tendered Heaven
A moment since. I will deserve the crown!
Pol. You will. *[Aside.]* No doubt it were a glorious thing
For any people, if a heart like his
Ruled over it. I would I saw the trap.

Enter VICTOR.

Tis he must show me.
Vic. So, the mask falls off
An old man's foolish love at last. Spare thanks!
I know you, and Polyxena I know.
Here's Charles—I am his guest now—does he bid me
Be seated ? And my light-haired blue-eyed child
Must not forget the old man far away
At Chambery, who dozes while she reigns.
Pol. Most grateful shall we now be, talking least
Of gratitude—indeed of anything
That hinders what yourself must need to say
To Charles.
Cha. Pray speak, sir I
Vic. 'Faith, not much to say:
Only what shows itself, you once i' the point
Of sight. You're now the King: you'll comprehend
Much you may oft have wondered at—the shifts,
Dissimulation, wiliness I showed.
For what's our post? Here's Savoy and here's Piedmont,
Here's Montferrat—a breadth here, a space there—
To o'ersweep all these, what's one weapon worth?
I often think of how they fought in Greece:
(Or Rome, which was it? You're the scholar, Charles!)
You made a front-thrust? But if your shield too
Were not adroitly planted, some shrewd knave
Reached you behind; and him foiled, straight if thong
And handle of that shield were not cast loose,
And you enabled to outstrip the wind,
Fresh foes assailed you, either side; 'scape these,
And reach your place of refuge—e'en then, odds
If the gate opened unless breath enough
Were left in you to make its lord a speech.
Oh, you will see!
Cha. No: straight on shall I go,
Truth helping; win with it or die with it.
Vic. 'Faith, Charles, you're not made Europe's fighting-man!
The barrier-guarder, if you please. You clutch
Hold and consolidate, with envious France
This side, with Austria that, the territory
I held—ay, and will hold . .. which *you* shall hold
Despite the couple! But I've surely earned
Exemption from these weary politics,
—The privilege to prattle with my son
And daughter here, though Europe wait the while.
Pol. Nay, sir,—at Chambery, away for ever,
As soon you will be, 'tis farewell we bid you:
Turn these few fleeting moments to account!
'Tis just as though it were a death.
Vic. Indeed!
Pol. [aside]. Is the trap there?
Cha. Ay, call this parting—death!
The sacreder your memory becomes.
If I misrule Sardinia, how bring back
My father?
Vic. I mean ...
Pol. [who watches VICTOR *narrowly this while].* Your father does not mean
You should be ruling for your father's sake:
It is your people must concern you wholly
Instead of him. You mean this, sir? (He drops
My hand!)
Cha. That people is now part of me.
Vic. About the people! I took certain measures
Some short time since... Oh, I know well, you know
But little of my measures! These affect
The nobles; we've resumed some grants, imposed
A tax or two: prepare yourself, in short,
For clamour on that score. Mark me: you yield
No jot of aught entrusted you!
Pol. No jot
You yield!
Cha. My father, when I took the oath.
Although my eye might stray in search of yours,
I heard it, understood it, promised God
What you require. Till from this eminence
He move me, here I keep, nor shall concede
The meanest of my rights.
Vic. [aside]. The boy's a fool!
—Or rather, I'm a fool: for, what's wrong here?
To-day the sweets of reigning: let to-morrow
Be ready with its bitters.

Enter D'ORMEA.

There's beside
Somewhat to press upon your notice first.
Cha. Then why delay it for an instant, sir?
That Spanish claim perchance ? And, now you speak,
—This morning, my opinion was mature,
Which, boy-like, I was bashful in producing

To one I ne'er am like to fear in future!
My thought informed upon that Spanish claim.
Vic, Betimes indeed. Not now, Charles! You require
A host of papers on it.
D'O. [coming forward]. Here they are.
[To CHARLES.] I, sir, was minister and much beside
Of the late monarch; to say little, him
I served: on you I have, to say e'en less,
No claim. This case contains those papers: with them
I tender you my office.
Vic, [hastily]. Keep him, Charles!
There's reason for it—many reasons: you
Distrust him, nor are so far wrong there, —but
He's mixed up in this matter—he'll desire
To quit you, for occasions known to me:
Do not accept those reasons: have him stay!
Pol, [aside]. His minister thrust on us!
Cha. [to D'ORMEA]. Sir, believe,
In justice to myself, you do not need
E'en this commending: howsoe'er might seem
My feelings toward you, as a private man,
They quit me in the vast and untried field
Of action. Though I shall myself (as late
In your own hearing I engaged to do)
Preside o'er my Sardinia, yet your help
Is necessary. Think the past forgotten
And serve me now!
D'O. I did not offer you
My service—would that I could serve you, sir!
As for the Spanish matter . . .
Vic, But despatch
At least the dead, in my good daughter's phrase,
Before the living! Help to house me safe
Ere with D'Ormea you set the world a-gape!
Here is a paper—will you overlook
What I propose reserving for my needs?
I get as far from you as possible:
Here's what I reckon my expenditure.
Cha, [reading], A miserable fifty thousand crowns—
Vic, Oh, quite enough for country gentlemen!
Beside the exchequer happens... but find out
All that, yourself!
Cha, [still reading], 'Count Tende'—what means this?
Vic, Me: you were but an infant when I burst
Through the defile of Tende upon France.
Had only my allies kept true to me!
No matter. Tende's, then, a name I take
Just as . . ,
D'O, —The Marchioness Sebastian takes
The name of Spigno.
Cha. How, sir?
Vic, [to D'ORMEA]. Fool! All that
Was for my own detailing. [*To* CHARLES.] That anon!
Cha. [to D'ORMEA]. Explain what you have said, sir!
D'O, I supposed
The marriage of the King to her I named,
Profoundly kept a secret these few weeks,
Was not to be one, now he's Count.
Pol, [aside]. With us
The minister—with him the mistress!
Cha, [to VICTOR]. NO—
Tell me you have not taken her—that woman
To live with, past recall!
Vic. And where's the crime...
Pol. [to CHARLES]. True, sir, this is a matter past recall
And past your cognizance. A day before,
And you had been compelled to note this: now,—
Why note it? The King saved his House from shame:
What the Count did, is no concern of yours.
Cha. [after a pause]. The Spanish claim, D'Ormea!
Vic, Why, my son,
I took some ill-advised ... one's age, in fact,
Spoils everything: though I was over-reached,
A younger brain, we'll trust, may extricate
Sardinia readily. To-morrow, D'Ormea,
Inform the King!
D'O, [without regarding VICTOR, *and leisurely].* Thus stands the case with Spain:
When first the Infant Carlos claimed his proper
Succession to the throne of Tuscany ...
Vic. I tell you, that stands over! Let that rest!
There is the policy!
Cha. [to D'ORMEA]. Thus much I know,
And more—too much: the remedy?
D'O, Of course!
No glimpse of one.
Vic, No remedy at all!
It makes the remedy itself—time makes it.
D'O. [to CHARLES], But if...
Vic, [still more hastily]. In fine, I shall take care of that:
And, with another project that I have ...
D'O, [turning on him.] Oh, since Count Tende means to take again
King Victor's crown!—
Pol, [throwing herself at VICTOR'S *feet].* E'en now retake it, sir!

Oh speak! We are your subjects both, once more!
Say it—a word effects it! You meant not,
Nor do mean now, to take it: but you must!
Tis in you—in your nature—and the shame's
Not half the shame 'twould grow to afterwards!
Cha. Polyxena!
Pol. A word recalls the knights—
Say it! What's promising and what's the past?
Say you are still King Victor!
D'O. Better say
The Count repents, in brief! [VICTOR *rises.*
Cha. With such a crime
I have not charged you, sir!
Pol. (Charles turns from me!)

SECOND YEAR, 1731.—KING CHARLES

PART I

Enter Queen POLYXENA *and* D'ORMEA.—*A pause.*

Pol. And now, sir, what have you to say?
D'O. Count Tende...
Pol. Affirm not I betrayed you; you resolve
On uttering this strange intelligence
—Nay, post yourself to find me ere I reach
The capital, because you know King Charles
Tarries a day or two at Evian baths
Behind me:—but take warning,—here and thus
[Seating herself in the royal seat.
1 listen, if I listen—not your friend.
Explicitly the statement, if you still
Persist to urge it on me, must proceed:
I am not made for aught else.
D'O. Good! Count Tende . . .
Pol. I, who mistrust you, shall acquaint King Charles
Who even more mistrusts you.
D'O. Does he so?
Pol. Why should he not?
D'O. Ay, why not? Motives, seek
You virtuous people, motives! Say, I serve
God at the devil's bidding—will that do?
I'm proud: our people have been pacified,
Really I know not how—
Pol. By truthfulness.
D'O. Exactly; that shows I had nought to do
With pacifying them. Our foreign perils
Also exceed my means to stay: but here
'Tis otherwise, and my pride's piqued. Count Tende
Completes a full year's absence: would you, madam,
Have the old monarch back, his mistress back,
His measures back? I pray you, act upon
My counsel, or they will be.
Pol. When?
D'O. Let's think.
Home-matters settled—Victor's coming now;
Let foreign matters settle—Victor's here
Unless I stop him; as I will, this **way.**
Pol. [reading the papers he presents]. If this should prove a plot 'twixt you and Victor?
You seek annoyances to give the pretext
For what you say you fear.
D'O. Oh, possibly!
I go for nothing. Only show King Charles
That thus Count Tende purposes return,
And style me his inviter, if you please!
Pol. Half of your tale is true; most like, the Count
Seeks to return: but why stay you with us?
To aid in such emergencies.
D'O. Keep safe
Those papers: or, to serve me, leave no proof
I thus have counselled! When the Count returns,
And the King abdicates, 'twill stead me little
To have thus counselled.
Pol. The King abdicate!
D'O. He's good, we knew long since—wise, we discover—
Firm, let us hope:—but I'd have gone to work
With him away. Well!
[CHARLES *without].* In the Council Chamber?
D'O. All's lost!
Pol. Oh, surely not **King** Charles! He's changed—
That's not this year's care-burthened voice and step:
'Tis last year's step, the Prince's voice!
D'O. I **know.**

[Enter CHARLES:—D'ORMEA *retiring a little.*
Cha. Now wish me joy, Polyxena! Wish it me
The old way! *[She embraces him.*
There was too much cause for that!
But I have found myself again. What news
At Turin? Oh, if you but felt the load
I'm free of—free! I said this year would end
Or it, or me—but I am free, thank God!
Pot. How, Charles?
Cha. You do not guess?
The day I found
Sardinia's hideous coil, at home, abroad,

And how my father was involved in it,—
Of course, I yawed to. rest and smile no more
Until I cleared his name from obloquy.
We did the people right—'twas much to gain
That point, redress our nobles' grievance, too—
But that took place here, was no crying shame:
All must be done abroad,—if I abroad
Appeased the justly-angered Powers, destroyed
The scandal, took down Victor's name at last
From a bad eminence, I then might breathe
And rest! No moment was to lose. Behold
The proud result—a Treaty, Austria, Spain
Agree to—

D'O. [aside]. I shall merely stipulate
For an experienced headsman.

Cha, Not a soul
Is compromised: the blotted past's a blank:
Even D'Ormea escapes unquestioned. See!
It reached me from Vienna; I remained
At Evian to despatch the Count his news;
*Tis gone to Chambery a week ago—
And here am I: do I deserve to feel
Your warm white arms around me?

D'O. [coming forward]. He knows that?

Cha. What, in Heaven's name, means this?

D'O. He knows that matters
Are settled at Vienna? Not too late!
Plainly, unless you post this very hour
Some man you trust (say, me) to Chambery
And take precautions I acquaint you with,
Your father will return here.

Cha, Are you crazed,
D'Ormea? Here? For what? As well return
To take his crown!

D'O. He will return for that.

Cha, [to POLYXENAJ. You have not listened to this man?

Pol, He spoke
About your safety—and I listened.

[He disengages himself from her arms.

Cha. [to D'ORMEA]. What
Apprised you of the Count's intentions?

D'O. Me?
His heart, sir; you may not be used to read
Such evidence however; therefore read

[Pointing to POLYXENA'S *papers.*
My evidence.

Cha. [to POLYXENAJ. Oh, worthy this of you!
And of your speech I never have forgotten,
Though I professed forgetfulness; which haunts me
As if I did not know how false it was;
Which made me toil unconsciously thus long
That there might be no least occasion left
For aught of its prediction coming true!
And now, when there is left no least occasion
To instigate my father to such crime—
When I might venture to forget (I hoped)
That speech and recognize Polyxena—
Oh worthy, to revive, and tenfold worse,
That plague! D'Ormea at your ear, his slanders
Still in your hand! Silent?

Pol. As the wronged are.

Cha. And you, D'Ormea, since when have you presumed
To spy upon my father ? I conceive
What that wise paper shows, and easily.
Since when?

D'O. The when and where and how belong
To me. 'Tis sad work, but I deal in such.
You ofttimes serve yourself; I'd serve you here:
Use makes me notso squeamish. In a word,
Since the first hour he went to Chambery,
Of his seven servants, five have I suborned.

Cha, You hate my father?

D'O. Oh, just as you will!

[Looking at POLYXENA.
A minute since, I loved him—hate him, now!
What matter?—if you ponder just one thing:
Has he that treaty?—he is setting forward
Already. Are your guards here ?

Cha. Well for you
They are not! *[To* POLYXENA!. Him I knew of old, but you—
To hear that pickthank, further his designs! *[To* D'ORMEA.
Guards?—were they here, I'd bid them, for your trouble,
Arrest you,

D'O. Guards you shall not want. I lived
The servant of your choice, not of your need.
You never greatly needed me till now
That you discard me. This is my arrest.
Again I tender you my charge—its duty
Would bid me press you read those documents.
Here, sir! *[Offering his badge of office.*

Cha. [taking it]. The papers also! Do you think
I dare not read them?

Pol. Read them, sir!

Cha, They prove,
My father, still a month within the year
Since he so solemnly consigned it me,
Means to resume his crown? They shall prove that,
Or my best dungeon . . .

D'O. Even say, Chambery!
'Tis vacant, I surmise, by this.
Cha. You prove
Your words or pay their forfeit, sir. Go there!
Polyxena, one chance to rend the veil
Thickening and blackening 'twixt us two! Do say,
You'll see the falsehood of the charges proved!
Do say, at least, you wish to see them proved
False charges—my heart's love of other times!
Pol. Ah, Charles!
Cha. [to D'ORMEA]. Precede me, sir!
D'O. And I'm at length
A martyr for the truth! No end, they say,
Of miracles. My conscious innocence!
*[As they go out, enter—by the middle door, at which he pauses—*VICTOR.
Vic. Sure I heard voices? No. Well, I do best
To make at once for this, the heart o' the place.
The old room! Nothing changed! So near my seat,
D'Ormea ? *[Pushing away the stool which is by the* KING'S *chair.*
I want that meeting over first,
I know not why. Tush, he, D'Ormea, slow
To hearten me, the supple knave? That burst
Of spite so eased him! He'll inform me... What?
Why come I hither ? All's in rough: let all
Remain rough. There's full time to draw back—nay,
There's nought to draw back from, as yet; whereas,
If reason should be, to arrest a course
Of error—reason good, to interpose
And save, as I have saved so many times,
Our House, admonish my son's giddy youth,
Relieve him of a weight that proves too much—
Now is the time,—or now, or never.
'Faith,
This kind of step is pitiful, not due
To Charles, this stealing back—hither, because
He's from his capital! Oh Victor! Victor!
But thus it is. The age of crafty men
Is loathsome; youth contrives to carry off
Dissimulation; we may intersperse
Extenuating passages of strength,
Ardour, vivacity, and wit—may turn
E'en guile into a voluntary grace:
But one's old age, when graces drop away
And leave guile the pure staple of our lives—
Ah, loathsome!
Not so—or why pause I? Turin
Is mine to have, were I so minded, for
The asking; all the army's mine—I've witnessed
Each private fight beneath me; all the Court's
Mine too; and, best of all, D'Ormea's still
D'Ormea and mine. There's some grace clinging yet.
Had I decided on this step, ere midnight
I'd take the crown.
No. Just this step to rise
Exhausts me. Here am I arrived: the rest
Must be done for me. Would I could sit here
And let things right themselves, the masque unmasque
Of the old King, crownless, grey hair and hot blood,—
The young King, crowned, but calm before his time,
They say,—the eager mistress with her taunts,—
And the sad earnest wife who motions me
Away—ay, there she knelt to me! E'en yet
I can return and sleep at Chambery
A dream out.
Rather shake it off at Turin,
King Victor! Say: to Turin—yes, or no?
'Tis this relentless noonday-lighted chamber,
Lighted like life but silent as the grave,
That disconcerts me. That's the change must strike.
No silence last year! Some one flung doors wide
(Those two great doors which scrutinize me now)
And out I went 'mid crowds of men—men talking,
Men watching if my lip fell or brow knit,
Men saw me safe forth, put me on my road:
That makes the misery of this return.
Oh had a battle done it! Had I dropped,
Haling some battle, three entire days old,
Hither and thither by the forehead-dropped
In Spain, in Austria, best of all, in France—
Spurned on its horns or underneath its hooves,
When the spent monster went upon its knees
To pad and pash the prostrate wretch—I, Victor,
Sole to have stood up against France, beat down
By inches, brayed to pieces finally
In some vast unimaginable charge,
A flying hell of horse and foot and guns
Over me, and all's lost, for ever lost,
There's no more Victor when the world wakes up!

Then silence, as of a raw battle-field,
Throughout the .world, Then after (as whole days
After, you catch at intervals faint noise
Through the stiff crust of frozen blood)—there creeps
A rumour forth, so faint, no noise at all,
That a strange old man, with face outworn for wounds,
Is stumbling on from frontier town to town,
Begging a pittance that may help him find
His Turin out; what scorn and laughter follow
The coin you fling into his cap! And last,
Some bright morn, how men crowd about the midst
O' the market-place, where takes the old king breath
Ere with his crutch he strike the palace-gate
Wide ope!
To Turin, yes or no—or no?

Re-enter CHARLES *with papers.*

Cha. Just as I thought! A miserable falsehood
Of hirelings discontented with their pay
And longing for enfranchisement! A few
Testy expressions of old age that thinks
To keep alive its dignity o er slaves
By means that suit their natures!
[Tearing them.] Thus they shake
My faith in Victor!
[Turning, he discovers VICTOR.
Vic. [after a pause]. Not at Evian, Charles?
What's this? Why do you run to close the doors?
No welcome for your father?
Cha. [aside]. Not his voice!
What would I give for one imperious tone
Of the old sort! That's gone for ever.
Vic. Must
I ask once more . . .
Cha. No—I concede it, sir!
You are returned for . . . true, your health declines;
True, Chambery's a bleak unkindly spot;
You'd choose one fitter for your final lodge—
Veneria, or Moncaglier—ay, that's close
And I concede it.
Vic. I received advices
Of the conclusion of the Spanish matter,
Dated from Evian Baths . ..
Cha. And you forbore
To visit me at Evian, satisfied
The work I had to do would fully task
The little wit I have, and that your presence
Would only disconcert me—
Vic. Charles?
Cha. —Me, set
For ever in a foreign course to 'ours,
And . . .
Sir, this way of wile were good to catch.
But I have not the sleight of it. The truth!
Though I sink under it! What brings you here?
Vic. Not hope of this reception, certainly,
From one who'd scarce assume a stranger mode
Of speech, did I return to bring about
Some awfulest calamity!
Cha. —You mean,
Did you require your crown again! Oh yes,
I should speak otherwise! But turn not that
To jesting! Sir, the truth! Your health declines?
Is aught deficient in your equipage?
Wisely you seek myself to make complaint,
And foil the malice of the world which laughs
At petty discontents; but I shall care
That not a soul knows of this visit. Speak!
Vic. [aside]. Here is the grateful much-professing son
Prepared to worship me, for whose sole sake
I think to waive my plans of public good!
[Aloud.] Nay, Charles, if I did seek to take once more
My crown, were so disposed to plague myself.
What would be warrant for this bitterness?
I gave it—grant I would resume it—well?
Cha. I should say simply—leaving out the why
And how—you made me swear to keep that crown:
And as you then intended . . .
Vic. Fool! What way
Could I intend or not intend? As man,
With a man's will, when I say 'I intend,*
I can intend up to a certain point,
No farther. I intended to preserve
The crown of Savoy and Sardinia whole:
And if events arise demonstrating
The way, I hoped should guard it, rather like
To lose it . . .
Cha. Keep within your sphere and mine!
It is God's province we usurp on, else.
Here, blindfold through the maze of things we walk
By a slight clue of false, true, right and wrong;
All else is rambling and presumption. I
Have sworn to keep this kingdom: there's my truth.
Vic. Truth, boy, is here, within my breast; and in
Your recognition of it, truth is, too;
And in the effect of all this tortuous dealing

With falsehood, used to carry out the truth,
— I n its success, this falsehood turns, again,
Truth for the world. But you are right: these themes
Are over-subtle. I should rather say
In such a case, frankly,—it fails, my scheme:
I hoped to see you bring about, yourself,
What I must bring about. I interpose
On your behalf—with my son's good in sight—
To hold what he is nearly letting go,
Confirm his title, add a grace perhaps.
There's Sicily, for instance,—granted me
And taken back, some years since: till I give
That island with the rest, my work's half done.
For his sake, therefore, as of those he rules . . .
Cha. Our sakes are one; and that, you could not say,
Because my answer would present itself
Forthwith:—a year has wrought an age's change.
This people 's not the people now, you once
Could benefit; nor is my policy
Your policy.
Vic. [with an outburst]. I know it! You undo
All I have done—my life of toil and care!
I left you this the absolutest rule
In Europe: do you think I sit and smile,
Bid you throw power to the populace—
See my Sardinia, that has kept apart.
Join in the mad and democratic whirl
Whereto I see all Europe haste full tide?
England casts offher kings; France mimics England:
This realm I hoped was safe. Yet here I talk,
When I can save it, not by force alone,
But bidding plagues, which follow sons like you,
Fasten upon my disobedient. . .
[Recollecting himself.] Surely
I could say this—if minded so—my son?
Cha. You could not. Bitterer curses than your curse
Have I long since denounced upon myself
If I misused my power. In fear of these
I entered on those measures—will abide
By them: so, I should say, Count Tende...
Vic. No!
But no! But if, my Charles, your—more than old—
Half-foolish father urged these arguments,
And then confessed them futile, but said plainly
That he forgot his promise, found his strength
Fail him, had thought at savage Chambery
Too much of brilliant Turin, Rivoli here,
And Susa, and Veneria, and Superga—
Pined for the pleasant places he had built
When he was fortunate and young—
Cha. My father!
Vic. Stay yet!—and if he said he could not die
Deprived of baubles he had put aside,
He deemed, for ever—of the Crown that binds
Your brain up, whole, sound and impregnable,
Creating kingliness—the Sceptre too,
Whose mere wind, should you wave it, back would beat
Invaders—and the golden Ball which throbs
As if you grasped the palpitating heart
Indeed o' the realm, to mould as choose you may!
— I f I must totter up and down the streets
My sires built, where myself have introduced
And fostered laws and letters, sciences,
The civil and the military arts!
Stay, Charles. I see you letting me pretend
To five my former self once more—King Victor,
The venturous yet politic: they style me
Again, the Father of the Prince: friends wink
Good-humouredly at the delusion you
So sedulously guard from all rough truths
That else would break upon my dotage!—You—
Whom now I see preventing my old shame—
I tell not, point by cruel point, my tale—
For is't not in your breast my brow is hid?
Is not your hand extended ? Say you not...

Enter D'ORMEA, *leading in* POLYXENA.

Pol. [advancing and withdra wing CHARLES *—to* VICTOR]. In this conjuncture even, he would say
(Though with a moistened eye and quivering lip)
The suppliant is my father. I must save
A great man from himself, nor see him fling
His well-earned fame away: there must not follow
Ruin so utter, a break-down of worth
So absolute: no enemy shall learn,
He thrust his child 'twixt danger and himself,
And, when that child somehow stood danger out,
Stole back with serpent wiles to ruin Charles

—Body, that's much,—and soul, that's more—and realm,
That 's most of all! No enemy shall say…
D'O. Do you repent, sir?
Vic. [resuming himself]. D'Ormea? This is well!
Worthily done, King Charles, craftily done!
Judiciously you post these, to o'erhear
The little your importunate father thrusts
Himself on you to say!—Ah, they'll correct
The amiable blind facility
You show in answering his peevish suit.
What can he need to sue for? Thanks, D'Ormea!
You have fulfilled your office: but for you,
The old Count might have drawn some few more livres
To swell his income! Had you, lady, missed
The moment, a permission might be granted
To buttress up my ruinous old pile!
But you remember properly the list
Of wise precautions I took when I gave
Nearly as much away—to reap the fruits
I should have looked for!
Cha. Thanks, sir: degrade me,
So you remain yourself! Adieu!
Vic. I'll not
Forget it for the future, nor presume
Next time to slight such mediators! Nay—
Had I first moved them both to intercede,
I might secure a chamber in Moncaglier
—Who knows?
Cha. Adieu!
Vic. You bid me this adieu
With the old spirit?
Cha. Adieu!
Vic. Charles—Charles!
Cha. Adieu!
[VICTOR *goes.*
Cha. You were mistaken, Marquis, as you hear.
'Twas for another purpose the Count came.
The Count desires Moncaglier. Give the order!
D'O. [leisurely]. Your minister has lost your confidence,
Asserting late, for his own purposes,
Count Tende would .. .
Cha. [flinging his badge back]. Be still the minister!
And give a loose to your insulting joy;
It irks me more thus stifled than expressed:
Loose it!
D'O. There's none to loose, alas! I

I never am to die a martyr.
Pol. Charles!
Cha. No praise, at least, Polyxena—no praise!

KING CHARLES

PART II

D'ORMEA, *seated, folding papers he has been examining.*

This at the last effects it: now, King Charles
Or else King Victor—that's a balance: but now,
D'Ormea the arch-culprit, either turn
O' the scale,—that's sure enough. A point to solve,
My masters, moralists, whate'er your style!
When you discover why I push myself
Into a pitfall you'd pass salely by,
Impart to me among the res ! No matter.
Prompt are the righteous ever with their rede
To us the wrongful; lesson them this once!
For safe among the wicked are you set,
D'Ormea! We lament life's brevity,
Yet quarter e'en the threescore years and ten,
Nor stick to call the quarter roundly 'life.'
D'Ormea was wicked, say, some twenty years;
A tree so long was stunted; afterward,
What if it grew, continued growing, till
No fellow of the forest equalled it?
'Twas a stump then; a stump it still must be:
While forward saplings, at the outset checked,
In virtue of that first sprout keep their style
Amid the forest's green fraternity.
Thus I shoot up to surely get lopped down
And bound up for the burning. Now for it!

Enter CHARLES *and* POLYXENA *with* Attendants.

D'O. irises]. Sir, in the due discharge of this my office—
This enforced summons of yourself from Turin,
And the disclosure I am bound to make
To-night,—there must already be, I feel,
So much that wounds . . .
Cha. Well, sir?
D'O. —That I, perchance,
May utter also what, another time,
Would irk much,—it may prove less irksome now.
Cha. What would you utter?
D'O. That I from my soul
Grieve at to-night's event: for you I grieve,
E'en grieve for . ..
Cha. Tush, another time for talk!
My kingdom is in imminent danger?
D'O. Let
The Count communicate with France—its King.
His grandson, will have Fleury's aid for this,
Though for no other war.

Cha. First for the levies:
What forces can I muster presently ?
[D'ORMEA *delivers papers which* CHARLES *inspects.*
Cha. Good—very good. Montorio...
how is this?
—Equips me double the old complement
Of soldiers?
D'O. Since his land has been relieved
From double imposts, this he manages:
But under the late monarch ...
Cha, Peace I I know.
Count Spava has omitted mentioning
What proxy is to head these troops of his.
D'O. Count Spava means to head his troops himself.
Something to fight for now; 'Whereas,' says he,
'Under the sovereign's father'...
Cha. It would seem
That all my people love me.
D'O. Yes.
[To POLYXENA *while* CHARLES *continues to inspect the papers.*
A temper
Like Victor's may avail to keep a state;
He terrifies men and they fall not off;
Good to restrain: best, if restraint were all.
But, with the silent circle round him, ends
Such sway: our King's begins precisely there.
For to suggest, impel and set at work,
Is quite another function. Men may slight,
In time of peace, the King who brought them peace:
In war,—his voice, his eyes, help more than fear.
They love you, sir!
Cha. [to Attendants]. Bring the regalia forth!
Quit the room! And now, Marquis, answer me!
Why should the King of France invade my realm?
D'O. Why? Did I not acquaint your Majesty
An hour ago?
Cha. I choose to hear again
What then I heard.
D'O. Because, sir, as I said,
Your father is resolved to have his crown
At any risk; and, as I judge, calls in
The foreigner to aid him.
Cha. And your reason
For saying this?
D'O. [aside]. Ay, just his father's way!
[To CHARLES.] The Count wrote yesterday to your forces' Chief,
Rhebinder—made demand of help—
Cha. To try
Rhebinder—he's of alien blood: aught else?
D'O. Receiving a refusal,—some hours after,
The Count called on Del Borgo to deliver
The Act of Abdication: he refusing,
Or hesitating, rather—
Cha. What ensued?
D'O. At midnight, only two hours since, at Turin,
He rode in person to the citadel
With one attendant, to Soccorso gate,
And bade the governor, San Remi, open—
Admit him.
Cha. For a purpose I divine.
These three were faithful, then?
D'O. They told it me.
And I —
Cha. Most faithful—
D'O. Tell it you—with this
Moreover of my own: if, an hour hence,
You have not interposed, the Count will be
O' the road to France for succour.
Cha, Very good!
You do your duty now to me your monarch
Fully, I warrant?—have, that is, your project
For saving both of us disgrace, no doubt?
D'O. I give my counsel,—and the only one.
A month since, I besought you to employ
Restraints which had prevented many a pang:
But now the harsher course must be pursued.
These papers, made for the emergency,
Will pain you to subscribe: this is a list
Of those suspected merely—men to watch;
This—of the few of the Count's very household
You must, however reluctantly, arrest;
While here's a method of remonstrance—sure
Not stronger than the case demands—to
With the Count's self.
Cha. Deliver those three papers.
Pol. [while CHARLES *inspects them—to* D'ORMEA]. Your measures are not over-harsh, sir: France
Will hardly be deterred from her intents
By these.
D'O. If who proposes might dispose,
I could soon satisfy you. Even these.
Hear what he'll say at my presenting!
Cha. [who has signed them). There!
About the warrants! You've my signature.
What turns you pale ? I do my duty by you
In acting boldly thus on your advice.
D'O. [reading them separately). Arrest the people I suspected merely?
Cha. Did you suspect them?
D'O. Doubtless: but—but—sir,
This Forquieri's governor of Turin,
And Rivarol and he have influence over
Half of the capital! Rabella, too?
Why, sir—
Cha. Oh, leave the fear to me!

D'O. [still reading]. You bid me
Incarcerate the-peopleon this list?
Sir—
Cha. But you never bade arrest those men,
So close related to my father too,
On trifling grounds?
D'O. Oh, as for that, St. George,
President of Chambery's senators,
Is hatching treason! still—
[More troubled.] Sir, Count Cumiane
Is brother to your father's wife! What's here?
Arrest the wife herself?
Cha. You seem to think
A venial crime this plot against me. Well?
D'O. [who has read the last paper]. Wherefore am I thus ruined? Why not take
My life at once? This poor formality
Is, let me say. unworthy you! Prevent it
You, madam! I have served you, am prepared
For all disgraces: only, let disgrace
Be plain, be proper—proper for the world
To pass its judgment on 'twixt you and me!
Take back your warrant, I will none of it!
Cha. Here is a man to talk of fickleness!
He stakes his life upon my father's falsehood;
I bid him . . ,
D'O. Not you! Were he trebly false,
You do not bid me . . .
Cha. Is't not written there?
I thought so: give—**I'll** set it right.
D'O. Is it there?
Oh yes, and plain—arrest him now—drag here
Your father! And were all six times as plain,
Do you suppose I trust it?
Cha. Just one word!
You bring him. taken in the act of flight,
Or else your lire is forfeit.
D'O. Ay, to Turin
I bring him, and to-morrow?
Cha. Here and now!
The whole thing is a lie, a hateful lie,
As I believed and as my father said.
I knew it from the first, but was compelled
To circumvent you; and the great D'Ormea,
That baffled Alberoni and tricked Coscia,
The miserable sower of such discord
Twixt sire and son, is in the toils at last.
Oh I see! you arrive—this plan of yours,
Weak as it is, torments sufficiently
A sick old peevish man—wrings hasty speech,
An ill-considered threat from him; that's noted;
Then out you ferret papers, his amusement
In lonely hours of lassitude—examine
The day-by-day report of your paid spies—
And back you come: all was not ripe, you find,
And, as you hope, may keep from ripening yet,
But you were in bare time! Only, 'twere best
I never saw my father—these old men
Are potent in excuses: and meanwhile,
D'Ormea's the man I cannot do without!
Pol Charles—
Cha. Ah, no question! You against me too!
You'd have me eat and drink and sleep, live, die
With this lie coiled about me, choking me!
No, no, D'Ormea! You venture life, you say,
Upon my father's perfidy: and I
Have, on the whole, no right to disregard
The chains of testimony you thus wind
About me; though 1 do—do from my soul
Discredit them: still I must authorize
These measures, and I will. Perugia!
[Many Officers *enter.]* Count—
You and Solar, with all the force you have,
Stand at the Marquis' orders: what he bids
Implicitly perform! You are to bring
A traitor here; the man that's likest one
At present, fronts me; you are at his beck
For a full hour! he undertakes to show
A fouler than himself,—but, failing that,
Return with him, and, as my father lives,
He dies this night! The clemency you blame
So oft, shall be revoked—rights exercised,
Too long abjured.
[To D'ORMEA.] NOW sir, about the work!
To save your king and country! Take the warrant!
D'O. You hear the sovereign's mandate, Count Perugia?
Obey me! As your diligence, expect
Reward! All follow to Moncaglier!
Cha. [in great anguish]. D'Ormea!
[D'ORMEA *goes.*
He goes, lit up with that appalling smile!
[To POLYXENA, *after a pause.*
At least you understand all this?
Pol. These means
Of our defence—these measures of precaution?
Cha. It must be the best way; I should have else
Withered beneath his scorn.
Pol. What would you say?
Cha. Why, do you think I mean to keep the crown,
Polyxena?
Pol. You then believe the story
In spite of all—that Victor comes?
Cha. Believe it?
I know that he is coming—feel the strength

That has upheld me leave me at his coming!
'Twas mine, and now he takes his own again.
Some kinds of strength are well enough to have;
But who's to have that strength? Let my crown go!
I meant to keep it; but I cannot—cannot!
Only, he shall not taunt me—he, the first . . .
See if he would not be the first to taunt me
With having left his kingdom at a word.
With letting it be conquered without stroke,
With . . . no—no—'tis no worse than when he left!
I've just to bid him take it, and, that over,
We'll fly away—fly, for I loathe this Turin,
This Rivoli, all titles loathe, all state.
We'd best go to your country—unless God
Send I die now!

PoL Charles, hear me!

Cha. And again
Shall you be my Polyxena—you'll take me
Out of this woe! Yes, do speak, and keep speaking!
I would not let you speak just now, for fear
You'd counsel me against him: but talk, now,
As we two used to talk in blessed times:
Bid me endure all his caprices; take me
From this mad post above him!

PoL I believe
We are undone, but from a different cause.
All your resources, down to the least guard,
Are at D'Ormea's beck. What if, the while,
He act in concert with your father? We
Indeed were lost. This lonely Rivoli—
Where find a better place for them?

Cha. [pacing the room]. And why
Does Victor come? To undo all that's done,
Restore the past, prevent the future! Seat
His mistress in your seat, and place in mine
. . . Oh, my own people, whom will you find there,
To ask of, to consult with, to care for,
To hold up with your hands? Whom? One that's false—
False—from the head's crown to the foot's sole, false!
The best is, that I knew it in my heart
From the beginning, and expected this,
And hated you, Polyxena, because
You saw thro' him, though I too saw thro' him,
Saw that he meant this while he crowned me, while
He prayed for me,—nay, while he kissed my brow,
I saw—

Pol But if your measures take effect,
D'Ormea true to you?

Cha. Then worst of all!
I shall have loosed that callous wretch on him!
Well may the woman taunt him with his child—
I, eating here his bread, clothed in his clothes,
Seated upon his seat, let slip D'Ormea
To outrage him! We talk—perchance he tears
My father from his bed; the old hands feel
For one who is not, but who should be there.
He finds D'Ormea! D'Ormea too finds him!
The crowded chamber when the lights go out—
Closed doors—the horrid scuffle in the dark—
The accursed prompting of the minute! My guards!
To horse—and after, with me—and prevent!

PoL [seizing his hand]. King Charles!
Pause here upon this strip of time
Allotted you out of eternity!
Crowns are from God: you in his name hold yours.
Your life's no least thing, were it fit your life
Should be abjured along with rule; but now,
Keep both! Your duty is to live and rule—
You, who would vulgarly look fine enough
In the world's eye, deserting your soul's charge,—
Ay, you would have men's praise, this Rivoli
Would be illumined! While, as 'tis, no doubt,
Something of stain will ever rest on you;
No one will rightly know why you refused
To abdicate; they'll talk of deeds you could
Have done, no doubt,—nor do I much expect
Future achievement will blot out the past,
Envelope it in haze—nor shall we two
Live happy any more. 'Twill be, I feel,
Only in moments that the duty's seen
As palpably as now: the months, the years
Of painful indistinctness are to come,
While daily must we tread these palace-rooms
Pregnant with memories of the past: your eye
May turn to mine and find no comfort there.
Through fancies that beset me, as yourself,
Of other courses, with far other issues,
We might have taken this great night: such bear,
As I will bear! What matters happiness?

Duty I There 's man's one moment: this is yours!

[Putting the crown on his head, and the sceptre in his hand, she places him on his seat: a long pause and silence.

Enter D'ORMEA *and* VICTOR, *with* Guards.

Vic. At last I speak; but once—that once, to you!
'Tis you I ask, not these your varletry,
Who's King of us?

Cha. [from his seat]. **Count Tende . ..**

Vic. What your spies
Assert I ponder in my soul, I say—
Here to your face, amid your guards! I choose
To take again the crown whose shadow I gave—
For still its potency surrounds the weak
White locks their felon hands have discomposed.
Or I'll not ask who's King, but simply, who
Withholds the crown I claim? Deliver it!
I have no friend in the wide world: nor France
Nor England cares for me: you sec the sum
Of what I can avail. Deliver it!

Cha. Take it, my father!
And now say in turn,
Was it done well, my father—sure not well,
To try me thus! I might have seen much cause
For keeping it—too easily seen cause!
But, from that moment, e'en more woefully
My life had pined away, than pine it will.
Already you have much to answer for.
My life to pine is nothing,—her sunk eyes
Were happy once! No doubt, my people think
T am their King still... but I cannot strive!
Take it!

Vic. [one hand on the crown **CHARLES** ***offers, the other on his neck].*** **So few** years give it quietly,
My son! It will drop from me. See you not?
A crown's unlike a sword to give away—
I hat, let a strong hand to a weak hand give!
But crowns should slip from palsied brows to heads
Young as this head: yet mine is weak enough,
E'en weaker than I knew. I seek for phrases
To vindicate my right. 'Tis of a piece!
All is alike gone by with me—who beat
Once D'Orleans in his lines—his very lines!
To have been Eugene's comrade, Louis's rival,
And now . ..

Cha. [putting the crown on him, to the rest]. The King speaks, yet none kneels, I think!

Vic. I am then King! As I became a King
Despite the nations, kept myself a King,
So I die King, with Kingship dying too
Around me. I have lasted Europe's time.
What wants my story of completion? Where
Must needs the damning break show? Who mistrusts
My children here—tell they of any break
'Twixt my day's sunrise and its fiery fall?
And who were by me when I died but they?
D'Ormea there!

Cha. What means he?

Vic. Ever there!
Charles—how to save your story! Mine must go.
Say—say that you refused the crown to me!
Charles, yours shall be my story! You immured
Me, say, at Rivoli. A single year
I spend without a sight of you, then die.
That will serve every purpose—tell that tale
The world!

Cha. Mistrust me? Help!

Vic. Past help, past reach!
Tis in the heart—you cannot reach the heart:
This broke mine, that I did believe, you, Charles,
Would have denied me and disgraced me.

Pol. Charles
Has never ceased to be your subject, sir!
He reigned at first through setting up yourself
As pattern: if he e'er seemed harsh to you,
'Twas from a too intense appreciation
Of your own character: he acted you—
Ne'er for an instant did I think it real,
Nor look for any other than this end.
I hold him worlds the worse on that account;
But so it was.

Cha. [to POLYXENA*].* I love you now indeed.
[To VICTOR.*}* You never knew me.

Vic. Hardly till this moment,
When I seem learning many other things
Because the time for using them is past.
If 'twere to do again! That's idly wished.
Truthfulness might prove policy as good
As guile. Is this my daughter's forehead? Yes:
I've made it fitter now to be a queen's
Than formerly: I've ploughed the deep lines there
Which keep too well a crown from slipping off.
No matter. Guile has made me King again.

Louis—'twas in King Victor's time:—long since,
When Louis reigned and, also, Victor reigned.

How the world talks already of us two!
God of eclipse and each discoloured star,
Why do I linger then?
Ha! Where lurks he?
D'Ormea! Nearer to your King! Now stand!
[Collecting his strength as D'ORMEA *approaches.*
You lied, D'Ormea! I do not repent.
[Dies.

DRAMATIC LYRICS

184- 185-

CAVALIER TUNES

I

MARCHING ALONG

KENTISH Sir Byng stood for his King,
Bidding the crop-headed Parliament swing:
And, pressing a troop unable to stoop
And see the rogues flourish and honest folk droop,
Marched them along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

II

God for King Charles! Pym and such carles
To the Devil that prompts 'em their treasonous paries!
Cavaliers, up! Lips from the cup,
Hands from the pasty, nor bite take nor sup
Till you're—
CHORUS.—*Marching along, fifty-score strong,*
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

III

Hampden to hell, and his obsequies' knell
Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young Harry as well!
England, good cheer! Rupert is near!
Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here
CHORUS.—*Marching along, fifty-score strong,*
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song?

IV

Then, God for King Charles! Pym and his snarls
To the Devil that pricks on such pestilent carles!
Hold by the right, you double your might;
So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the fight,
CHORUS.—*March we along, fifty-score strong,*
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song!

II

GIVE A ROUSE

King Charles, and who'll do him right now?
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?
Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now,
King Charles!

II

Who gave me the goods that went since?
Who raised me the house that sank once?
Who helped me to gold I spent since?
Who found me in wine you drank once?
CHORUS.—*King Charles, and who'll do him right now?*
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?
Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now.
King Charles!

III

To whom used my boy George quaff else,
By the old fool's side that begot him?
For whom did he cheer and laugh else,
While Noll's damned troopers shot him?
CHORUS.—*King Charles, and who'll do him right now?*
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?
Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now.
King Charles!

III

BOOT AND SADDLE

I

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!
Rescue my castle before the hot day
Brightens to blue from its silvery grey,
CHORUS.—*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*

II

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you'd say:
Many's the friend there, will listen and pray
'God's luck to gallants that strike up the lay—
CHORUS.—*'Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*

III

Forty miles off like a roebuck at bay,
Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Round-heads ' array:
Who laughs, 'Good fellows ere this, by my fay,
CHORUS.—*'Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!'*

IV

Who? My wife Gertrude; that, honest and gay,
Laughs when you talk of surrendering, 'Nay!
' I've better counsellors; what counsel they?
CHORUS.—*'Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!'*

THE LOST LEADER

I

JUST for a handful of silver he left us,
Just for a riband to stick in his coat—
Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,
Lost all the others she lets us devote;
They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver,
So much was theirs who so little allowed:
How all our copper had gone for his service!
Rags—were they purple, his heart had been proud!
We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured him,
Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,
Made him our pattern to live and to die!
Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,
Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they watch from their graves!
He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,
—He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves!

II

We shall march prospering,—not thro' his presence;
Songs may inspirit us,—not from his lyre;
Deeds will be done,—while he boasts his quiescence,
Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire:
Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,
One task more declined, one more foot-path untrod,
One more devils'-triumph and sorrow for angels,
One wrong more to man, one more insult to God!
Life's night begins: let him never come back to us!
There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,
Forced praise on our part—the glimmer of twilight,
Never glad confident morning again!
Best fight on well, for we taught him—strike gallantly,
Menace our heart ere we master his own;
Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us.
Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne!

'HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX'

[16-1

I

I SPRANG to the stirrup, and Joris, and he;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three;
' Good speed!' cried the watch, as the gate-bolts undrew;
'Speed!' echoed the wall to us galloping through;
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,
Andinto themidnightwegallopedabreast.

III

Not a word to each other; we kept the great pace
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our place;
I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,
Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique right,
Rebuckled thecheek-strap, chainedslacker the bit,
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

III

'Twas moonset at starting; but while we drew near
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear;
At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see;
At Diiffeld, 'twas morning as plain as could be;
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-chime,
So, Joris broke silence with, 'Yet there is time!'

Iv

At Aershot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,
And against him the cattle stood black every one,

To stare thro' the mist at us galloping past,
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,
With resolute shoulders, each butting away
The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray:

v

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent back
For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track:
And one eye s black intelligence,—ever that glance
O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance!
And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and anon
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on.

VI

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned; and cried Joris, 'Stay spur!
'Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's not in her,
'We'll remember at Aix'—for one heard the quick wheeze
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering knees,
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

vII

So, we were left galloping, Joris and I,
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky;
The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,
'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like chaff;
Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,
And 'Gallop,' gasped Joris, 'for Aix is in sight I'

vIII

'How they'll greet us!'—and all in a moment his roan
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone;
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate.
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

Then I cast loose my buflfcoat, each holster let fall,
Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all,
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,
Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse without peer;
Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or good,
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

And all I remember is—friends flocking round
As I sat with his head 'twixt my knees on the ground;
And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,
As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,
Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)
Was no more than his due who brought good news from Ghent.

THROUGH THE METIDJA TO ABD-EL-KADR

As I ride, as I ride,
With a full heart for my guide,
So its tide rocks my side,
As I ride, as I ride,
That, as I were double-eyed,
He, in whom our Tribes confide,
Is descried, ways untried
As I ride, as I ride.

As I ride, as I ride
To our Chief and his Allied,
Who dares chide my heart's pride
As I ride, as I ride?
Or are witnesses denied—
Through the desert waste and wide
Do I glide unespied
As I ride, as I ride?

As I ride, as I ride,
When an inner voice has cried,
The sands slide, nor abide
(As I ride, as I ride)
O'er each visioned homicide
That came vaunting (has he lied?)
To reside—where he died,
As I ride, as I ride.

As I ride, as I ride,
Ne'er has spur my swift horse plied,
Yet his hide, streaked and pied,
As I ride, as I ride,

Shows where sweat has sprung and dried..
—Zebra-footed, ostrich-thighed—
How has vied stride with stride
As I ride, as I ride!

As I ride, as I ride,
Could I loose what Fate has tied,
Ere I pried, she should hide
(As I ride, as I ride)
All that's meant me—satisfied
When the Prophet and the Bride
Stops veins I'd have subside
As I ride, as I ride!

NATIONALITY IN DRINKS

I

MY heart sank with our Claret-flask,
Just now. beneath the heavy sedges
That serve this pond's black face for mask;
And still at yonder broken edges
O' the hole, where up the bubbles glisten,
After my heart I look and listen.

Our laughing little flask, compelled
Thro' depth to depth more bleak and shady;
As when, both arms beside her held,
Feet straightened out, some gay French lady
Is caught up from life's light and motion,
And dropped into death's silent ocean!

Up jumped Tokay on our table,
Like a pygmy castle-warder,
Dwarfish to see, but stout and able,
Arms and accoutrements all in order;
And fierce he looked North, then, wheeling South,
Blew with his bugle a challenge to Drouth,
Cocked his flap-hat with the tosspot-feather,
Twisted his thumb in his red moustache,
Jingled his huge brass spurs together,
Tightened his waist with its Buda sash,
And then, with an impudence nought could abash,
Shrugged his hump-shoulder, to tell the beholder,
For twenty such knaves he should laugh but the bolder:
And so, with his sword-hilt gallantly jutting,
And dexter-hand on his haunch abutting,
Went the little man, Sir Ausbruch, strutting!

Here's to Nelson's memory!
'Tis the second time that I, at sea,
Right off Cape Trafalgar here,
Have drunk it deep in British Beer.
Nelson for ever—any time
Am I his to command in prose or rhyme!
Give me of Nelson only a touch,
And I save it, be it little or much:
Here's one our Captain gives, and so
Down at the word, by George, shall it go!
He says that at Greenwich they point the beholder
To Nelson's coat, 'still with tar on the shoulder:
'For he used to lean with one shoulder digging,
•Jigging, as it were, and zig-zag-zigging
'Up against the mizen-rigging!'

GARDEN FANCIES

I

THE FLOWER'S NAME

I

HERE'S the garden she walked across,
Arm in my arm, such a short while since:
Hark, now I push its wicket, the moss
Hinders the hinges and makes them wince!
She must have reached this shrub ere she turned,
As back with that murmur the wicket swung;
For she laid the poor snail, my chance foot spurned,
To feed and forget it the leaves among.

Down this side of the gravel-walk
She went while her robe's edge brushed the box:
And here she paused in her gracious talk
To point me a moth on the milk-white phlox.
Roses, ranged in valiant row,
I will never think that she passed you by!
She loves you noble roses, I know;
But yonder, see, where the rock-plants lie!

III

This flower she stopped at, finger on lip,
Stooped over, in doubt, as settling its claim;
Till she gave me, with pride to make no slip,
Its soft meandering Spanish name:
What a name! Was it love or praise?
Speech half-asleep or song half-awake?
I must learn Spanish, one of these days,
Only for that slow sweet name's sake.

Iv

Roses, if I live and do well,
I may bring her, one of these days,
To fix you fast with as fine a spell.
Fit you each with his Spanish phrase;
But do not detain me now; for she lingers
There, like sunshine over the ground,
And ever I see her soft white fingers
Searching after the bud she found.

Flower, **you** Spaniard, look that you grow not,
Stay as you are and be loved for ever!
Bud, if I kiss you 'tis that you blow not:
Mind, the snut pink mouth opens never!
For while it pouts, her fingers wrestle,
Twinkling the audacious leaves between,
Till round they turn and down they nestle—
Is not the dear mark still to be seen?

Where I find her not, beauties vanish;
Whither I follow her, beauties flee;
Is there no method to tell her in Spanish
June's twice June since she breathed it with me?
Come, bud, show me the least of her traces,
Treasure my lady's lightest footfall!
—Ah, you may flout and turn up your faces—
Roses, you are not so fair after all!

II

SIBRANDUS SCHAFNABURGENSIS

I

Plague take all your pedants, say I!
lie who wrote what I hold in my hand,
Centuries back was so good as to die,
Leaving this rubbish to cumber the land;
This, that was a book in its time.
Printed on paper and bound in leather,
Last month in the white of a matin-prime
Just when the birds sang all together.

Into the garden I brought it to read,
And under the arbute and laurustine
Read it, so help me grace in my need,
From title-page to closing line.
Chapter on chapter did I count,
As a curious traveller counts Stonehenge;
Added up the mortal amount;
And then proceeded to my revenge.

Yonder's a plum-tree with a crevice
An owl would build in, were he but sage;
For a lap of moss, like a fine pont-levis
In a castle of the Middle Age,
Joins to a lip of gum, pure amber ;
When he'd be private, there might he spend
Hours alone in his lady's chamber:
Into this crevice I dropped our friend.

Iv

Splash, went he, as under he ducked,
—At the bottom, I knew, rain-drippings stagnate:
Next, a handful of blossoms I plucked
To bury him with, my bookshelf's magnate;
Then I went in-doors, brought out a loaf,
Haifa cheese, and a bottle of Chablis;
Lay on the grass and forgot the oaf
Over a jolly chapter of Rabelais.

v

Now, this morning, betwixt the moss
And gum that locked our friend in limbo.,
A spider had spun his web across,
And sat in the midst with arms akimbo.
So, I took pity, for learning's sake.
And, *de profundis, accentibus Iætis, Cantate!* quoth I, as I got a rake;
And up I fished his delectable treatise.

Here you have it, dry in the sun,
With all the binding all of a blister,
And great blue spots where the ink has run,
And reddish streaks that wink and glister
O'er the page so beautifully yellow:
Oh, well have the droppings played their tricks!
Did he guess how toadstools grow, this fellow?
Here's one stuck in his chapter six!

vII

How did he like it when the live creatures
Tickled and toused and browsed him all over,
And worm, slug, eft, with serious features,
Came in, each one, for his right of trover?
—When the water-beetle with great blind deaf face
Made of her eggs the stately deposit,
And the newt borrowed just so much of the preface
As tiled in the top of his black wife's closet?

vIII

All that life and fun and romping,
All that frisking and twisting and coupling,
While slowly our poor friend's leaves were swamping
And clasps were cracking and covers suppling I
As if you had carried sour John Knox
To the play-house at Paris, Vienna or Munich,
Fastened him into a front-row box,
And danced off the ballet with trousers and tunic.

Come, old martyr! What, torment enough is it?
Back to my room shall you take your sweet self.
Good-bye, mother-beetle; husband-eft, *sufficit!*
See the snug niche I have made on my shelf!

GARDEN FANCIES

A.'s book shall prop you up, B.'s shall
cover yoU,.
Here's C. to be grave with, or D. to be
gay,
And with E. on each side, and F. right over
you,
Dry-rot at ease till the Judgment-day!

SOLILOQUY OF THE SPANISH CLOISTER

GR-R-R—there go, my heart's abhorrence!
Water your damned flower-pots, do!
If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,
God's blood, would not mine kill you!
What? your myrtle-bush wants trimming?
Oh, that rose has prior claims—
Needs its leaden vase filled brimming?
Hell dry you up with its flames!

At the meal we sit together:
Salve tibi! I must hear
Wise talk of the kind of weather,
Sort of season, time of year:
Not a plenteous cork-crop: scarcely
Dare we hope oak-galls, I doubt:
What's the Latin name for ' parsley?*
What's the Greek name for Swine's
Snout?

Whew! We'll have our platter burnished,
Laid with care on our own shelf!
With a fire-new spoon we're furnished,
And a goblet for ourself,
Rinsed like something sacrificial
Ere 'tis fit to touch our chaps—
Marked with L. for our initial!
(He-he! There his lily snaps!)

Saint, forsooth! While brown Dolores
Squats outside the Convent bank
With Sanchicha, telling stories,
Steeping tresses in the tank,
Blue-black, lustrous, thick like horsehairs,
—Can't I see his dead eye glow,
Bright as 'twere a Barbary corsair's?
(That is, if he'd let it show!)

When he finishes refection,
Knife and fork he never lays
Cross-wise, to my recollection,
As do I, in Jesu's praise.
I the Trinity illustrate,
Drinking watered orange-pulp—
In three sips the Arian frustrate;
While he drains his at one gulp.

Oh, those melons? If he's able
We're to have a feast! so nice!
One goes to the Abbot's table,
All of us get each a slice.
How go on your flowers? None double?
Not one fruit-sort can you spy?
Strange!—And I, too, at such trouble,
Keep them close-nipped on the sly!

VII

There's a great text in Galatians,
Once you trip on it, entails
Twenty-nine distinct damnations,
One sure, if another fails:
If I trip him just a-dying,
Sure of heaven as sure can be,
Spin him round and send him flying
Off to hell, a Manichee?

Or, my scrofulous French novel
On grey paper with blunt type!
Simply glance at it, you grovel
Hand and foot in Belial's gripe:
If I double down its pages
At the woeful sixteenth print,
When he gathers his greengages,
Ope a sieve and slip it in't?

IX

Or, there's Satan!—one might venture
Pledge one's soul to him, yet leave
Such a flaw in the indenture
As he'd miss till, past retrieve,
Blasted lay that rose-acacia
We're so proud of! *Hy, Zy, Hine* . . .
'St, there's Vespers! *Plena gratia*
Ave, Virgo ! Gr-r-r—you swine!

THE LABORATORY

ANCIEN REGIME

I

Now that I, tying thy glass mask tightly,
May gaze thro' these faint smokes curling
whitely,
As thou pliest thy trade in this devil's-
smithy—
Which is the poison to poison her, prithee ?

II

He is with her, and they know that I know
Where they are, what they do: they believe
my tears flow
While they laugh, laugh at me, at me fled
to the drear
Empty church, to pray God in, for them I
—I am here.

III

Grind away, moisten and mash up thy
paste,
Pound at thy powder,—I am not in haste I

Better sit thus, and observe thy strange things,
Than go where men wait me and dance at the King's.

Iv

That in the mortar—you call it a gum?
Ah, the brave tree whence such gold oozings come!
And yonder soft phial, the exquisite blue,
Sure to taste sweetly,—is that poison too?

v

Had I but all of them, thee and thy treasures.
What a wild crowd of invisible pleasures!
To carry pure death in an earring, a casket,
A signet, a fan-mount, a filigree basket!

VI

Soon, at the King's, a mere lozenge to give,
And Pauline should have just thirty minutes to live!
But to light a pastile, and Elise, with her head
And her breast and her arms and her hands, should drop dead!

vII

Quick—is it finished? The colour's too grim!
Why not soft like the phial's, enticing and dim?
Let it brighten her drink, let her turn it and stir,
And try it and taste, ere she fix and prefer!

What a drop! She's not little, no minion like me!
That's why she ensnared him: this never will free
The soul from those masculine eyes,—say, 'no!'
To that pulse's magnificent come-and-go.

IX

For only last night, as they whispered, I brought
My own eyes to bear on her so, that I thought
Could I keep them one half minute fixed, she would fall
Shrivelled; she fell not; yet this does it all!

Not that I bid you spare her the pain;
Let death be felt and the proof remain:
Brand, burn up, bite into its grace—
He is sure to remember her dying face!

XI

Is it done? Take my mask off! Nay, be not morose;
It kills her, and this prevents seeing it close:
The delicate droplet, my whole fortune's fee!
If it hurts her, beside, can it ever hurt me?

XII

Now, take all my jewels, gorge gold to your fill,
You may kiss me, old man, on my mouth if you will!
But brush this dust off me, lest horror it brings
Ere I know it—next moment I dance at the King's!

THE CONFESSIONAL

[SPAIN]

I

IT is a lie—their Priests, their Pope,
Their Saints, their... all they fear or hope
Are lies, and lies—there! through my door
And celling, there! and walls and floor,
There, lies, they lie—shall still be hurled
Till spite of them I reach the world!

You think Priests just and holy men!
Before they put me in this den
I was a human creature too,
With flesh and blood like one of you,
A girl that laughed in beauty's pride
Like lilies in your world outside.

I had a lover—shame avaunt!
This poor wrenched body, grim and gaunt,
Was kissed all over till it burned,
By lips the truest, love e'er turned
His heart's own tint: one night they kissed
My soul out in a burning mist.

Iv

So, next day when the accustomed train
Of things grew round my sense again,
'That is a sin,' I said: and slow
With downcast eyes to church I go,
And pass to the confession-chair,
And tell the old mild father there.

But when I falter Beltran's name,
'Ha?' quoth the father; 'much I blame
'The sin; yet wherefore idly grieve?
'Despair not—strenuously retrieve!
'Nay, I will turn this love of thine
'To lawful love, almost divine;

VI

'For he is young, and led astray,
'This Beltran, and he schemes, men say,
'To change the laws of church and state;
'So. thine shall be an angel's fate,
'Who, ere the thunder breaks, should roll
'Its cloud away and save his soul.

vII

'For, when holies upon thy breast,
"Thou mayst demand and be possessed
' Of all his plans, and next day steal
'To me, and all those plans reveal,
'That I and every priest, to purge
'His soul, may fast and use the scourge.'

That father's beard was long and white,
With love and truth his brow seemed bright;
I went back, all on fire with joy,
And, that same evening, bade the boy
Tell me, as lovers should, heart-free,
Something to prove his love of me.

Ix

He told me what he would not tell
For hope of heaven or fear of hell;
And I lay listening in such pride!
And, soon as he had left my side,
Tripped to the church by morning-light
To save his soul in his despite.

I told the father all his schemes,
Who werehiscomrades.whattheir dreams;
'And now make haste, I said,' to pray
' The one spot from his soul away;
'To-night he comes, but not the same
'Will look!' At night he never came.

Nor next night: on the after-morn,
I went forth with a strength new-born.
The church was empty; something drew
My steps into the street; I knew
It led me to the market-place:
Where, lo, on high, the father's face!

That horrible black scaffold dressed,
That stapled block... God sink the rest!
That head strapped back, that blinding vest,
Those knotted hands and naked breast,
Till near one busy hangman pressed,
And, on the neck these arms caressed ...

xIII

No part in aught they hope or fear!
No heaven with them, no hell!—and here,
No earth, not so much space as pens
My body in their worst of dens
But shall bear God and man my cry,
Lies—lies, again—and still, they lie!

CRISTINA

SHE should never have looked at me
If she meant I should not love her!
There are plenty . . . men, you call such,
I suppose ... she may discover
All her soul to, if she pleases,
And yet leave much as she found them:
But I'm not so. and she knew it
When she fixed me, glancing round them.

II

What? To fix me thus meant nothing?
But I can't tell (there's my weakness)
What her look said I—no vile cant, sure,
About 'need to strew the bleakness
'Of some lone shore with its pearl-seed.
' That the sea feels'—no' strange yearning
'That such souls have, most to lavish
'Where there's chance of least returning.'

Oh, we're sunk enough here, God knows!
But not quite so sunk that moments,
Sure tho' seldom, are denied us,
When the spirit's true endowments
Stand out plainly from its false ones,
And apprise it if pursuing
Or the right way or the wrong way,
To its triumph or undoing.

There are flashes struck from midnights,
There are fire-flames noondays kindle,
Whereby piled-up honours perish,
Whereby swollen ambitions dwindle,
While just this or that poor impulse,
Which for once had play unstifled,
Seems the sole work of a life-time
That away the rest have trifled.

Doubt you if, in some such moment,
As she fixed me, she felt clearly,
Ages past the soul existed,
Here an age 'tis resting merely,
And hence fleets again for ages,
While the true end, sole and single,
It stops here for is, this love-way,
With some other soul to mingle?

Else it loses what it lived for,
And eternally must lose it;
Better ends may be in prospect,
Deeper blisses (if you choose it),
But this life's end and this love-buss
Have been lost here. Doubt you whether
This she felt as, looking at me,
Mine and her souls rushed together?

Oh, observe! Of course, next moment,
The world's honours, in derision,
Trampled out the light for ever:
Never fear but there's provision

Of the devil's to quench knowledge
Lest we walk the earth in rapture!
—Making those who catch God's secret
Just so much more prize their capture!

vIII

Such am I: the secret's mine now!
She has lost me, I have gained her;
Her soul's mine: and thus, grown perfect,
I shall pass my life's remainder.
Life will just hold out the proving
Both our powers, alone and blended:
And then, come next life quickly!
This world's use will have been ended.

THE LOST MISTRESS

ALL'S over, then: does truth sound bitter
As one at first believes?
Hark, 'tis the sparrows' good-night twitter
About your cottage eaves!

And the leaf-buds on the vine are woolly,
I noticed that, to-day;
One day more bursts them open fully
—You know the red turns grey.

III

To-morrow we meet the same then, dearest?
May I take your hand in mine?
Mere friends are we,—well, friends the merest
Keep much that I resign:

IV

For each glance of the eye so bright and black,
Though I keep with heart' sendeavour,—
Your voice, when you wish the snowdrops back,
Though it stay in my soul for ever!—

Yet I will but say what mere friends say,
Or only a thought stronger;
I will hold your hand but as long as all may,
Or so very little longer!

EARTH'S IMMORTALITIES

SEE, as the prettiest graves will do in time,
Our poet's wants the freshness of its prime;
Spite of the sexton's browsing horse, the sods
Have struggled through its binding osier rods;
Headstone and half-sunk footstone lean awry,
Wanting the brick-work promised by-and-by;
How the minute grey lichens, plate o'er plate,
Have softened down the crisp-cut name and date!

LOVE

So. the year's done with!
(Love me for ever!)
All March begun with,
April's endeavour;
May-wreaths that bound me
June needs must sever;
Now snows fall round me,
Quenching June's fever—
(Love me for ever!)

MEETING AT NIGHT

I

THE grey sea and the long black land;
And the yellow half-moon large and low;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;
Three fields to cross till a farm appears;
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match,
And a voice less loud, thro' its joys and fears,
Than the two hearts beating each to each!

PARTING AT MORNING

ROUND the cape of a sudden came the sea,
And the sun looked over the mountain's rim:
And straight was a path of gold for him,
And the need of a world of men for me.

SONG

NAY but you, who do not love her,
Is she not pure gold, my mistress?
Holds earth aught—speak truth—above her?
Aught like this tress, see, and this tress,
And this last fairest tress of all,
So fair, see, ere I let it fall?

II

Because, you spend your lives in praising:
To praise, you search the wide world over:
Then why not witness, calmly gazing,
If earth holds aught—speak truth-above her?
Above this tress, and this, I touch
But cannot praise, I love so much!

A WOMAN'S LAST WORD

LET'S contend no more, Love,
Strive nor weep:
All be as before, Love,
—Only sleep!

II

What so wild as words are?
I and thou
In debate, as birds are,
Hawk on bough!

See the creature stalking
While we speak!
Hush and hide the talking,
Cheek on cheek!

IV

What so false as truth is,
False to thee ?
Where the serpent's tooth is
Shun the tree—

Where the apple reddens
Never pry—
Lest we lose our Edens,
Eve and I.

VI

Be a god and hold me
With a charm!
Be a man and fold me
With thine arm!

vII

Teach me, only teach, Love!
As I ought
I will speak thy speech, Love,
Think thy thought—

vIII

Meet, if thou require it,
Both demands,
Laying flesh and spirit
In thy hands.

IX

That shall be to-morrow
Not to-night:
I must bury sorrow
Out of sight:

—Must a little weep, Love,
(Foolish me!)
And so fall asleep, Love,
Loved by thee.

EVELYN HOPE

BEAUTIFUL Evelyn Hope is dead!
Sit and watch by her side an hour.
That is her book-shelf, this her bed;
She plucked that piece of geranium-flower,
Beginning to die too, in the glass;
Little has yet been changed, I think:
The shutters are shut, no light may pass
Save two long rays thro' the hinge's chink.

II

Sixteen years old when she died!
Perhaps she had scarcely heard my name;
It was not her time to love; beside,
Her life had many a hope and aim,
Duties enough and little cares,
And now was quiet, now astir,
Till God's hand beckoned unawares,—
And the sweet white brow is all of her.

Is it too late then, Evelyn Hope?
What, your soul was pure and true,
The good stars met in your horoscope,
Made you of spirit, fire and dew—
And, just because I was thrice as old
And our paths in the world diverged so wide,
Each was nought to each, must I be told?
We were fellow mortals, nought beside?

No, indeed! for God above
Is great to grant, as mighty to make,
And creates the love to reward the love:
I claim you still, for my own love's sake!
Delayed it may be for more lives yet,
Through worlds I shall traverse, not a few:
Much is to learn, much to forget
Ere the time be come for taking you.

But the time will come,—at last it will,
When, Evelyn Hope, what meant (I shall say)
In the lower earth, in the years long still,
That body and soul so pure and gay?
Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,
And your mouth of your own geranium's red—
And what you would do with me, in fine,
In the new life come in the old one's stead.

VI

I have lived (I shall say) so much since then,
Given up myself so many times,
Gained me the gains of various men,
Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes;

Yet one thing, one, in my soul's full scope,
Either I missed or itself missed me:
And I want and find you, Evelyn
What is the issue? let us see!

vII

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while.
My heart seemed full as it could hold?
There was place and to spare for the frank
young smile,
And the red young mouth, and the hair's
young gold.
So, hush,—I will give you this leaf to keep:
See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand!
There, that is our secret: go to sleep!
You will wake, and remember, and understand.

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS

I

WHERE the quiet-coloured end of evening smiles,
Miles and miles
On the solitary pastures where our sheep
Tinkle homeward thro' the twilight, stray or stop
As they crop—
Was the site of a city great and gay,
(So they say)
Of our country's very capital, its prince
Ages since
Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far
Peace or war.

II

Now,—the country does not even boast a tree,
As you see,
To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills
From the hills
Intersect and give a name to, (else they run
Into one)
Where the domed and daring palace shot its spires
Up like fires
O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall
Bounding all,
Made of marble, men might march on nor be pressed,
Twelve abreast.

III

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass
Never was!
Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'er-spreads
And embeds
Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,
Stock or stone—
Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe
Hope I Long ago;
Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread of shame
Struck them tame;
And that glory and that shame alike, the gold
Bought and sold.

Iv

Now,—the single little turret that remains
On the plains,
By the caper overrooted, by the gourd
Overscored,
While the patching houseleek's head of blossom winks
Through the chinks—
Marks the basement whence a tower in ancient time
Sprang sublime,
And a burning ring, all round, the chariots
Traced as they raced,
And the monarch and his minions and his
Half-asleep
Viewed the games
viewed the games,

v

And I know, while thus the quiet-coloured eve
Smiles to leave
To their folding, all our many-tinkling fleece
In such peace,
And the slopes and rills in undistinguished grey
Melt away—
That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair
Waits me there
In the turret whence the charioteers caught soul
For the goal,
When the king looked, where she looks now, breathless, dumb
Till I come.

vI

But he looked upon the city, every side,
Far and wide,
All the mountains topped with temples, all the glades'
All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts,—and then,
All the men!
When I do come, she will speak not, she will stand,
Either hand
On my shoulder, give her eyes the first embrace
Of my face,
Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech
Each on each.

vII

In one year they sent a million fighters forth
South and North,
And they built their gods a brazen pillar high
As the sky,
Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force—
Gold, of course.
Oh heart! oh blood that freezes, blood that burns!
Earth's returns
For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin!
Shut them in,
With their triumphs and their glories and the rest!
Love is best.

A LOVERS' QUARREL

I

O H, what a dawn of day!
How the March sun feels like May!
All is blue again
After last night's rain,
And the South dries the hawthorn-spray.
Only, my Love's away!
I'd as lief that the blue were grey.

II

Runnels, which rillets swell,
Must be dancing down the dell,
With a foaming head
On the beryl bed
Paven smooth as a hermit's cell;
Each with a tale to tell,
Could my Love but attend as well.

III

Dearest, three months ago!
When we lived blocked-up with snow,
When the wind would edge
In and in his wedge,
In, as far as the point could g o -
Not to our ingle, though,
Where we loved each the other so!

Iv

Laughs with so little cause!
We devised games out of straws.
We would try and trace
One another s face
In the ash, as an artist draws;
Free on each other's flaws,
How we chattered like two church daws!

What's in the ' Times'?—a scold
At the Emperor deep and cold;
He has taken a bride
To his gruesome side,
That's as fair as himself is bold:
There they sit ermine-stoled,
And she powders her hair with gold.

VI

Fancy the Pampas* sheen!
Miles and miles of gold and green
Where the sunflowers blow
In a solid glow,
And—to break now and then the screen-
Black neck and eyeballs keen,
Up a wild horse leaps between!

vII

Try, will our table turn?
Lay your hands there light, and yearn
Till the yearning slips
Thro' the finger-tips
In a fire which a few discern,
And a very few feel burn,
And the rest, they may live and learn I

Then we would up and pace,
For a change, about the place,
Each with arm o'er neck:
'Tis our quarter-deck,
We are seamen in woeful case.
Help in the ocean-space!
Or, if no help, we'll embrace.

See, how she looks now, dressed
In a sledging-cap and vest!
'Tis a huge fur cloak—
Like a reindeer's yoke
Falls the lappet along the breast:
Sleeves for her arms to rest,
Or to hang, as my Love likes best.

Teach me to flirt a fan
As the Spanish ladies can,
Or I tint your lip
With a burnt stick's tip
And you turn into such a man!
Just the two spots that span
Half the bill of the young male swan.

Dearest, three months ago
When the mesmerizer Snow
With his hand's first sweep
Put the earth to sleep:
'Twas a time when the heart could show
All—how was earth to know,
'Neath the mute hand's to-and-fro?

Dearest, three months ago
When we loved each other so,
Lived and loved the same
Till an evening came
When a shaft from the devil's bow
Pierced to our ingle-glow,
And the friends were friend and foe!

XIII

Not from the heart beneath—
'Twas a bubble born of breath,
Neither sneer nor vaunt,
Nor reproach nor taunt.
See a word, how it severeth!
Oh, power of life and death
In the tongue, as the Preacher saith!

Woman, and will you cast
For a word, quite off at last
Me, your own, your You,—
Since, as truth is true,
I was You all the happy past—
Me do you leave aghast
With the memories We amassed?

XV

Love, if you knew the light
That your soul casts in my sight,
How I look to you
For the pure and true
And the beauteous and the right,—
Bear with a moment's spite
When a mere mote threats the white I

XVI

What of a hasty word?
Is the fleshly heart not stirred
By a worm's pin-prick
Where its roots are quick?
See the eye, by a fly's foot blurred—
Ear, when a straw is heard
Scratch the brain's coat of curd!

XVII

Foul be the world or fair
More or less, how can I care?
'Tis the world the same
For my praise or blame,
And endurance is easy there.
Wrong in the one thing rare—
Oh, it is hard to bear!

XVIII

Here's the spring back or close,
When the almond-blossom blows:
We shall have the word
In a minor third
There is none but the cuckoo knows:
Heaps of the guelder-rose!
I must bear with it, I suppose.

XIX

Could but November come,
Were the noisy birds struck dumb
At the warning slash
Of his driver's-lash—
I would laugh like the valiant Thumb
Facing the castle glum
And the giantis fee-faw-fum!

XX

Then, were the world well stripped
Of the gear wherein equipped
We can stand apart,
Heart dispense with heart
In the sun, with the flowers unnipped,—
Oh, the world's hangings ripped,
We were both in a bare-walled crypt!

Each in the crypt would cry
'But one freezes here! and why?
'When a heart, as chill,
'At my own would thrill
'Back to life, and its fires out-fly?
'Heart, shall we live or die?
'The rest, . . . settle by-and-byl'

XXII

So, she'd efface the score,
And forgive me as before.
It is twelve o'clock:
I shall hear her knock
In the worst of a storm's uproar,
I shall pull her through the door,
I shall have her for evermore !

UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY

(AS DISTINGUISHED BY AN ITALIAN PERSON OF QUALITY)

I

HAD I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare,
The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the city-square;
All, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the window there!

Something to see, by Bacchus, something to hear, at least!
There, the whole day long, one's life is a perfect feast;
While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it, no more than a beast.

III

Well now, look at our villa! stuck like the horn of a bull
Just on a mountain-edge as bare as the creature's skull.
Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf to pull!
—I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if the hair's turned wool.

Iv

But the city, oh the city-—the square with the houses! Why?
They are stone-faced, white as a curd, there's something to take the eye!

UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY

Houses in four straight lines, not a single
front awry;
You watch who crosses and gossips, who
saunters, who hurries by:
Green blinds, as a matter or course, to
draw when the sun gets high;
And the shops with fanciful signs which
are painted properly.

v

What of a villa? Though winter be over
in March by rights,
'Tis May perhaps ere the snow shall have
withered well off the heights:
You've the brown ploughed land before,
where the oxen steam and wheeze,
And the hills over-smoked behind by the
faint grey olive-trees.

VI

Is it better in May, I ask you? You've
summer all at once;
In a day he leaps complete with a few
strong April suns.
'Mid the sharp short emerald wheat, scarce
risen three fingers well,
The wild tulip, at end of its tube, blows out
its great red bell
Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for the
children to pick and sell.

vII

Is it ever hot in the square? There's a
fountain to spout and splash!
In the shade it sings and springs; in the
shine such foam-bows flash
On the horses with curling fish-tails, that
prance and paddle and pash
Round the lady atop in her conch—fifty
gazers do not abash,
Though all that she wears is some weeds
round her waist in a sort of sash.

vIII

All the year long at the villa, nothing to see
though you linger,
Except yon cypress that points like death's
lean lifted forefinger.
Some think fireflies pretty, when they mix
i' the corn and mingle,
Or thrid the stinking hemp till the stalks
of it seem a-tingle.
Late August or early September, the stun-
ning cicala is shrill.
And the bees keep their tiresome whine
round the resinous firs on the hill.
Enough of the seasons,—I spare you the
months of the fever and chill.

Ix

Ere you open your eyes in the city, the
blessed church-bells begin:
No sooner the bells leave off than the dili-
gence rattles in:
You get the pick of the news, and it costs
you never a pin.
By-and-by there's the travelling doctor
gives pills, lets blood, draws teeth;
Or the Pulcinello-trumpet breaks up the
market beneath.
At the post-office such a scene-picture—
the new play, piping hot!
And a notice how, only this morning, three
liberal thieves were shot.
Above it, behold the Archbishop's most
fatherly of rebukes,
And beneath, with his crown and his lion,
some little new law of the Duke's!
Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the
Reverend Don So-and-so
Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca, Saint
Jerome and Cicero,
'And moreover,' (the sonnet goes rhym-
ing,) 'the skirts of Saint Paul has
reached,
'Having preached us those six Lent-lec-
tures more unctuous than ever he
preached.'
Noon strikes,—here sweeps the proces-
sion! our Lady borne smiling and
smart
With a pink gauze gown all spangles, and
seven swords stuck in her heart!
Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *toot-
te-tootle* the fife;
No keeping one's haunches still: it's the
greatest pleasure in life.

But bless you, it's dear—it's dear! fowls,
wins, at double the rate.
They have clapped a new tax upon salt,
and what oil pays passing the gate
It's a horror to think of. And so, the villa
for me, not the city!
Beggars can scarcely be choosers: but still
—ah, the pity, the pity!
Look, two and two go the priests, then the
monks with cowls and sandals,
And the penitents dressed in white shirts,
a-holding the yellow candles;
One, he carries a flag up straight, and an-
other a cross with handles,
And the Duke's guard brings up the rear,
for the better prevention of scandals:
Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *toot-
te-tootle* the fife.
Oh, a day in the city-square, there is no
such pleasure in life!

A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S

I

OH Galuppi, Baldassaro, this is very sad
to find!
I can hardly misconceive you; it would
prove me deaf and blind;
But although I take your meaning, 'tis
with such a heavy mind!

II

Here you come with your old music, and here's all the good it brings.
What, they lived once thus at Venice where the merchants were the kings,
Where Saint Mark's is, where the Doges used to wed the sea with rings?

Ay, because the sea's the street there; and 'tis arched by ... what you call
... Shylock's bridge with houses on it, where they kept the carnival:
I was never out of England—it's as if I saw it all.

Did young people take their pleasure when the sea was warm in May?
Balls and masks begun at midnight, burning ever to mid-day,
When they made up fresh adventures for the morrow, do you say?

Was a lady such a lady, cheeks so round and lips so red,—
On her neck the small face buoyant, like a bell-flower on its bed,
O'er the breast's superb abundance where a man might base his head?

Well, and it was graceful of them—they'd break talk off and afford
—She, to bite her mask's black velvet—he, to finger on his sword,
While you sat and played Toccatas, stately at the clavichord?

vII

What? Those lesser thirds so plaintive, sixths diminished, sigh on sigh,
Told them something? Those suspensions, those solutions—'Must we die?'
Those commiserating sevenths — 'Life might last! we can but try!'

vIII

'Were you happy?'—'Yes.'—'And are you still as happy?'—'Yes. And you?'
—'Then, more kisses!'—'Did I stop them, when a million seemed so few?'
Hark, the dominant's persistence till it must be answered to!

Ix

So, an octave struck the answer. Oh, they praised you, I dare say!
'Brave Galuppi! that was music! good alike at grave and gay!
'I can always leave off talking when I hear a master play!'

x

Then they left you for their pleasure: till in due time, one by one,
Some with lives that came to nothing, some with deeds as well undone,
Death stepped tacitly and took them where they never see the sun.

XI

But when I sit down to reason, think to take my stand nor swerve,
While I triumph o'er a secret wrung from nature's close reserve,
In you come with your cold music till I creep thro' every nerve.

xII

Yes, you, like a ghostly cricket, creaking where a house was burned:
'Dust and ashes, dead and done with, Venice spent what Venice earned.
'The soul, doubtless, is immortal—where a soul can be discerned.

'Yours for instance: you know physics, something of geology,
'Mathematics are your pastime; souls shall rise in their degree;
'Butterflies may dread extinction,—you'll not die, it cannot be!

XIV

'As for Venice and her people, merely born to bloom and drop,
'Here on earth they bore their fruitage, mirth and folly were the crop:
'What of soul was left, I wonder, when the kissing had to stop?

'Dust and ashes!' So you creak it, and I want the heart to scold.
Dear dead women, with such hair, too—what's become of all the gold
Used to hang and brush their bosoms? I feel chilly and grown old.

OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE

THE morn when first it thunders in March,
The eel in the pond gives a leap, they say:
As I leaned and looked over the aloed arch
Of the villa-gate this warm March day,
No flash snapped, no dumb thunder rolled
In the valley beneath where, white and wide
And washed by the morning water-gold,
Florence lay out on the mountain-side.

II

River and bridge and street and square
Lay mine, as much at my beck and call,
Through the live translucent bath of air,
As the sights in a magic crystal ball.
And of all I saw and of all I praised,
The most to praise and the best to see
Was the startling bell-tower Giotto raised:
But why did it more than startle me?

Giotto, how, with that soul of yours,
Could you play me false who loved you so?
Some slights if a certain heart endures
Yet it feels, I would have your fellows know!
I' faith, I perceive not why I should care
To break a silence that suits them best,
But the thing grows somewhat hard to bear
When I find a Giotto join the rest.

Iv

On the arch where olives overhead
Print the blue sky with twig and leaf,
(That sharp-curled leaf which they never shed)
'Twixt the aloes, I used to lean in chief,
And mark through the winter afternoons,
By a gift God grants me now and then,
In the mild decline of those suns like moons,
Who walked in Florence, besides her men.

They might chirp and chaffer, come and go
For pleasure or profit, her men alive—
My business was hardly with them, I trow,
But with empty cells of the human hive;
—With the chapter-room, the cloister-porch,
The church's apsis, aisle or nave,
Its :crypt, one fingers along with a torch,
Its face set full for the sun to shave.

Wherever *a* fresco peels and drops,
Wherever an outline weakens and wanes
Till the latest life in the painting stops,
Stands One whom each fainter pulse-tick pains:
One, wishful each scrap should clutch the brick,
Each tinge not wholly escape the plaster,
—A lion who dies of an ass's kick,
The wronged great soul of an ancient Master.

vII

For oh, this world and the wrong it does!
They are safe in heaven with their backs to it.
The Michaels and Rafaels, you hum and buzz
Round the works of, you of the little wit!
Do their eyes contract to the earth's old scope,
Now that they see God face to face,
And have all attained to be poets, I hope?
'Tis their holiday now, in any case.

vIII

Much they reck of your praise and you!
But the wronged great souls—can they be quit
Of a world where their work is all to do,
Where you style them, you of little wit,
Old Master This and Early the Other,
Not dreaming that Old and New are fellows:
A younger succeeds to an elder brother,
Da Vincis derive in good time from Dellos.

Ix

And here where your praise might yield returns,
And a handsome word or two give help,
Here, after your kind, the mastiff girns
And the puppy pack of poodles yelp.
What, not a word for Stefano there,
Of brow once prominent and starry,
Called Nature's Ape and the world's despair
For his peerless painting? (See Vasari.)

There stands the Master. Study, my friends,
What a man's work comes to! So he plans it,
Performs it, perfects it, makes amends
For the toiling and moiling, and then, *sic transit!*
Happier the thrifty blind-folk labour,
With upturned eye while the hand is busy,
Not sidling a glance at the coin of their neighbour!
'Tis looking downward that makes one dizzy.

'I f you knew their work you would deal your dole.'
May I take upon me to instruct you?
When Greek Art ran and reached the goal,
Thus much had the world to boast *in fructu—*
The Truth of Man, as by God first spoken,
Which the actual generations garble,
Was re-uttered, and Soul (which Limbs betoken)
And Limbs (Soul informs) made new in marble.

xII

So, you saw yourself as you wished you were,
As you might have been, as you cannot be;
Earth here, rebuked by Olympus there:
And grew content in your poor degree
With your little power, by those statues' godhead,
And your little scope, by their eyes'full sway,
And your little grace, by their grace embodied,
And your little date, by their forms that stay.

xIII

You would fain be kinglier, say, than I am?
Even so, you will not sit like Theseus.
You would prove a model? The Son of Priam
Has yet the advantage in arms' and knees' use.
You're wroth—can you slay your snake like Apollo?
You're grieved — still Niobe's the grander!
You live—there's the Racers' frieze to follow:
You die—there's the dying Alexander.

XIV

So, testing your weakness by their strength,
Your meagre charms by their rounded beauty.
Measured by Art in your breadth and length,
You learned—to submit is a mortal's duty.
—When I say' you' 'tis the common soul,
The collective, I mean: the race of Man
That receives life in parts to live in a whole,
And grow here according to God s clear plan.

xv

Growth came when, looking your last on them all,
You turned your eyes inwardly one day
And cried with a start—What if we so small
Be greater and grander the while than they?
Are they perfect of lineament, perfect of stature?
In both, of such lower types are we
Precisely because of our wider nature;
For time, theirs—ours, for eternity.

xvi

To-day's brief passion limits their range:
It seethes with the morrow for us ana more.
They are perfect—how else? they shall never change:
We are faulty—why not? we have time in store.
The Artificer's hand is not arrested
With us; we are rough-hewn, nowise polished:
They stand for our copy, and, once invested
With all they can teach, we shall see them abolished.

xvll

'Tis a life-long toil till our lump be leaven—
The better! What's come to perfection perishes.
Things learned on earth, we shall practise in heaven:
Works done least rapidly, Art most cherishes.
Thyself shalt afford the example, Giotto!
Thy one work, not to decrease or diminish,
Done at a stroke, was just (was it not?)
' O!'
Thy great Campanile is still to finish.

xvlll

Is it true that we are now, and shall be hereafter,
But what and where depend on life's minute?
Hails heavenly cheer or infernal laughter
Our first step out of the gulf or in it?
Shall Man, such step within his endeavour,
Man's face, have no more play and action
Than joy which is crystallized for ever,
Or grief, an eternal petrifaction?

xIX

On which I conclude, that the early painters,
To cries of 'Greek Art and what more fine wish you ?—
Replied, 'To become now self-acquainters,
'And paint man man, whatever the issue!
'Make new hopes shine through the flesh they fray,
'New fears aggrandize the rags and tatters:
'To bring the invisible full into play!
'Let the visible go to the dogs—what matters?'

Give these, I exhort you, their guerdon **and** glory
For daring so much, before they well did it.
The first of the new, in our race's story,
Beats the last of the old; 'tis no idle quiddit.
The worthies began a revolution,
Which if on earth you intend to acknowledge,
Why, honour them now! (ends my allocution)
Nor confer your degree when the folk leave college.

XXI

There's a fancy some lean to and others hate-
That, when this life is ended, begins
New work for the soul in another state,
Where it strives and gets weary, loses and wins:
Where the strong and the weak, this world's congeries,
Repeat in large what they practised in small,
Through life after life in unlimited series;
Only the scale's to be changed, that's

xxII

Yet I hardly know. When a soul has seen
By the means of Evil that Good is best,
And, through earth and its noise, what is heaven s serene,—
When our faith in the same has stood the test—
Why, the child grown man, you burn the rod,
The uses of labour are surely done;
There remaineth a rest for the people of God:
And I have had troubles enough, for one.

xxIII

But at any rate I have loved the season
Of Art's spring-birth so dim and dewy;
My sculptor is Nicolo the Pisan,
My painter—who but Cimabue?
Nor ever was man of them all indeed.
From these to Ghiberti and Ghirlandajo,
Could say that he missed my critic-meed.
So. now to my special grievance—heigh hoi

xxIv

Their ghosts still stand, as I said before,
Watching each fresco flaked and rasped,
Blocked up, knocked out, or whitewashed o'er:
—No getting again what the church has grasped 1
The works on the wall must take their chance;
' Works never conceded to England's thick clime!'
(I hope they prefer their inheritance
Of a bucketful of Italian quick-lime.)

XXV

When they go at length, with such a shaking
Of heads o'er the old delusion, sadly
Each master his way through the black streets taking,
Where many a lost work breathes though badly—
Why don't they bethink them of who has merited?
Why not reveal, while their pictures dree
Such doom, how a captive might be outferreted?
Why is it they never remember me?

Not that I expect the great Bigordi,
Nor Sandro to hear me, chivalric, bellicose;
Nor the wronged Lippino; and not a word I
Say of a scrap of Fra Angelico's:
But are you too fine, Taddco Gaddi,
To grant me a taste of your intonaco,
Some Jerome that seeks the heaven with a sad eye?
Not a churlish saint, Lorenzo Monaco?

xxvII

Could not the ghost with the close red cap,
My Pollajolo, the twice a craftsman,
Save me a sample, give me the hap
Of a muscular Christ that shows the draughtsman?
No Virgin by him the somewhat petty,
Of finical touch and tempera crumbly—
Could not Alesso Baldovinetti
Contribute so much, I ask him humbly ?

xxvIII

Margheritone of Arezzo,
With the grave-clothes garb and swaddling barret
(Why purse up mouth and beak in a pet so,
You bald old saturnine poll-clawed parrot?)
Not a poor glimmering Crucifixion,
Where in the foreground kneels *the* donor?
If such remain, as is my conviction,
The hoarding it does you but little honour.

XXIX

They pass; for them the panels may thrill,
The tempera grow alive and tinglish;
Their pictures arc left to the mercies still
Of dealers and stealers, Jews and the English,

Who, seeing mere money's worth in their prize,
Will sell it to somebody calm as Zeno
At naked High Art, and in ecstasies
Before some clay-cold vile Carlinol

No matter for these! But Giotto, you,
Have you allowed, as the town-tongues babble it,—
Oh, never! it shall not be counted true—
That a certain precious little tablet
Which Buonarroti eyed like a lover,—
Was buried so long in oblivion's womb
And, left for another than I to discover,
Turns up at last! and to whom?—to whom?

XXXI

I, that have haunted the dim San Spirito,
(Or was it rather the Ognissanti?)
Patient on altar-step planting a weary toe!
Nay, I shall have it yet! *Detur amanti!*
My Koh-i-noor—or (if that's a platitude)
Jewel of Giamschid, the Persian Soft's eye;
So, in anticipative gratitude,
What if I take up my hope and prophesy?

XXXII

When the hour grows ripe, and a certain dotard
Is pitched, no parcel that needs invoicing,
To the worse side of the Mont Saint Gothard,
We shall begin by way of rejoicing;
None of that shooting the sky (blank cartridge),
Nor a civic guard, all plumes and lacquer.
Hunting Radetzky's soul like a partridge
Over Morello with squib and cracker.

XXXIII

This time we'll shoot better game and bag 'em hot—
No mere display at the stone of Dante,
But a kind of sober Witanagemot
(Ex: 'Casa Guidi,' *quod videas ante)*
Shall ponder, once Freedom restored to Florence,
How Art may return that departed with her.
Go, hated house, go each trace of the Loraine's,
And bring us the days of Orgagna hither!

XXXIV

How we shall prologize, how we shall perorate,
Utter fit things upon art and history,
Feel truth at blood-heat and falsehood at zero rate,
Make of the want of the age no mystery;
Contrast the fructuous and sterile eras,
Show—monarchy ever its uncouth cub licks
Out of the bear's shape into Chimaera's,
While Pure Art's birth is still the republic's.

XXXV

Then one shall propose in a speech (curt Tuscan,
Expurgate and sober, with scarcely an *'issimo,')*
To end now our half-told tale of Cambuscan,
And turn the bell-tower's *alt* to *altissimo:*
And fine as the beak of a young beccaccia
The Campanile, the Duomo's fit ally,
Shall soar up in gold full fifty braccia,
Completing Florence, as Florence Italy.

XXXVI

Shall I be alive that morning the scaffold
Is broken away, and the long-pent fire,
Like the golden hope of the world, unbaffled
Springs from its sleep, and up goes the spire
While 'God and the People' plain for its motto,
Thence the new tricolour flaps at the sky?
At least to foresee that glory of Giotto
And Florence together, the first am I!

'DE GUSTIBUS_____'

YOUR ghost will walk, you lover of trees,
(If our loves remain)
In an English lane,
By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.
Hark, those two in the hazel coppice—
A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,
Making love, say,—
The happier they!
Draw yourself up from the light of the moon,
And let them pass, as they will too soon,
With the bean-flowers' boon,
And the blackbird's tune,
And May, and June!

II

What I love best in all the world
Is a castle, precipice-encurled,
In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine.
Or look for me, old fellow of mine,
(If I get my head from out the mouth
O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands,
And come again to the land of lands)—
In a sea-side house to the farther South,
Where the baked cicala dies of drouth,
And one sharp tree—'tis a cypress—stands,

'DE **GUSTIBUS_____**'

By the many hundred years red-rusted,
Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'ercrusted,
My sentinel to guard the sands
To the water's edge. For, what expands
Before the house, but the great opaque
Blue-breadth of sea without a break?
While, in the house, for ever crumbles
Some fragment of the frescoed walls,
From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.
A girl bare-footed brings, and tumbles
Down on the pavement, green-fleshmelons,
And says there's news to-day—the king
Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing,
Goes with his Bourbon arm in a sling:
—She hopes they have not caught the felons.
Italy, my Italy!
Queen Mary's saying serves for me—
(When fortune's malice
Lost her—Calais)—
Open my heart and you will see
Graved inside of it, 'Italy.'
Such lovers old are I and she:
So it always was, so shall ever be !

HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD

OH, to be in England
Now that April's there,
And whoever wakes in England
Sees, some morning, unaware,
That the lowest boughs and the brush-wood sheaf
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
In England—now!

And after April, when May follows.
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows!
Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's edge—
That's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over,
Lest you should think he never could recapture
The first fine careless rapture!
And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew
The buttercups, the little children's dower
—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower I

HOME-THOUGHTS, **FROM** THE SEA

NOBLY, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the North-west died away;
Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into Cadiz Bay;
Bluish 'mid the burning water, full in face Trafalgar lay;
In the dimmest North-east distance dawned Gibraltar grand and gray:
'Here and here did England help me: how can I help England?'—say,
Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God to praise and pray,
While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent over Africa.

SAUL

SAID Abner, 'At last thou art come! Ere I tell, ere thou speak,
'Kiss my cheek, wish me well!' Then I wished it, and did kiss his cheek.
And he, 'Since the King, O my friend, for thy countenance sent,
'Neither drunken nor eaten have we; nor until from his tent
'Thou return with the joyful assurance the King liveth yet,
'Shall our lip with the honey be bright, with the water be wet.
'**For** out of the black mid-tent's silence, a space of three days,
'Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants, of prayer nor of praise,
'To betoken that Saul and the Spirit have ended their strife,
'And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch sinks back upon life.

'Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved! God's child with his dew
'On thy gracious gold hair, and those lilies still living and blue
'Just broken to twine round thy harp-strings, as if no wild heat
'Were now raging to torture the desert !'

III

Then I, as was meet,
Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and rose on my feet,
And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder. The tent was unlooped;
I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and under I stooped;
Hands and knees on the slippery grass-patch, all withered and gone,
That extends to the second enclosure, I groped my way on

Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open.
Then once more I prayed,
And opened the foldskirts and entered, and was not afraid
But spoke, 'Here is David, thy servant!' And no voice replied.
At the first I saw nought but the blackness; but soon I descried
A something more black than the blackness—the vast, the upright
Main prop which sustains the pavilion: and slow into sight
Grew a figure against it, gigantic and blackest of all.
Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the tent-roof, showed Saul.

Iv

He stood as erect as that tent-prop, both arms stretched out wide
On the great cross-support in the centre, that goes to each side;
He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there as, caught in his pangs
And waiting his change, the king-serpent all heavily hangs,
Far away from his kind, in the pine, till deliverance come
With the spring-time,—so agonized Saul, drear and stark, blind and dumb.

Then I tuned my harp,—took off the lilies we twine round its chords
Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noon-tide—those sunbeams like swords!
And I first played the tune all our sheep know, as, one after one,
So docile they come to the pen-door till folding be done.
They are white and untorn by the bushes, for lo, they have fed
Where the long grasses stifle the water within the stream's bed;
And now one after one seeks its lodging, as star follows star
Into eve and the blue far above us,—so blue and so far!

VI

—Then the tunc, for whIch quails on the cornland will each leave his mate
To fly after the player; then, what makes the crickets elate
Till for boldness they fight one another: and then, what has weight
To set the quick jerboa a-musing outside his sand house- -
There are none such as he for a wonder, half bird and half mouse!
God made all the creatures and gave them our love and our fear,
To give sign, we and they are his children, one family here.

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers, their wine-song, when hand
Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good friendship, and great hearts expand
And §row one in the sense of this world's life.—And then, the last song
When the dead man is praised on his journey—'Bear, bear him along
'With his few faults shut up like dead flowerets! Are balm-seeds not here
'To console us? The land has none left such as he on the bier.
'Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother!'—And then, the glad chaunt
Of the marriage,—first go the young maidens, next, she whom we vaunt
As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling.—And then, the great march
Wherein man runs to man to assist him and buttress an arch
Nought can break; who shall harm them, our friends?—Then, the chorus intoned
As the Levites go up to the altar in glory enthroned.
But I stopped here: for here in the darkness Saul groaned.

vIII

And I paused, held my breath in such silence, and listened apart:
And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered: and sparkles 'gan dart
From the jewels that woke in his turban, at once with a start.
All its lordly male-sappnires, and rubies courageous at heart.
So the head: but the body still moved not, still hung there erect.
And I bent once again to my playing, pursued it unchecked,
As I sang,—

DC

'Oh, our manhood's prime vigour! No spirit feels waste,
'Not a muscle is stopped in its playing nor sinew unbraced.
'Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock up to rock,
'The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree, the cool silver shock
'Of the plunge in a pool's living water, the hunt of the bear,
'And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his lair.
'And the meal, the rich dates yellowed over with gold dust divine.
'And the locust-flesh steeped in the pitcher, the full draught of wine,
•And the sleep in the dried river-channel where bulrushes tell
•That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and well.

'How good is man's life, the mere living! how lit to employ
'All the heart and the soul and the senses for ever in joy!
'Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father, whose sword thou didst guard
'When he trusted thee forth with the armies, for glorious reward?
'Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother, held up as men sung
'The low song of the nearly-departed, and hear her faint tongue
'Joining in while it could to the witness, "Let one more attest,
' " I have lived, seen God's hand thro' a lifetime, and all was for best"?
'Then they sung thro' their tears in strong triumph, not much, but the rest.
'And thy brothers, the help and the contest, the working whence grew
'Such result as, from seething grape-bundlesj the spirit strained true:
'And the friends of thy boyhood—that boyhood of wonder and hope,
' Present promise and wealth of the future beyond the eye's scope,—
'Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch; a people is thine;
'And all gifts, which the world offers singly, on one head combine!
'On one head, all the beauty and strength, love and rage (like the throe
'That, a-work in the rock, helps its labour and lets the gold go)
'High ambition and deeds which surpass it, fame crowning them,—all
'Brought to blaze on the head of one creature—King Saul!'

And lo, with that leap of my spirit,—heart, hand, harp and voice,
Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow, each bidding rejoice
Saul's fame in the light it was made for—as when, dare I say,
The Lord's army, in rapture of service, strains through its array,
And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot—'Saul!' cried I, and stopped.
And waited the thing that should follow. Then Saul, who hung propped
By the tent's cross-support in the centre, was struck by his name.
Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy summoiis goes right to the aim,
And some mountain, the last to withstand her. that held (he alone,
While the vale laughed in freedom and flowers) on a broad bust of stone
A year's snow bound about for a breast-plate,—leaves grasp of the sheet?
Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunderously down to his feet,
And there fronts you, stark, black, but alive yet, your mountain of old,
With his rents, the successive bequeathings of ages untold—
Yea, each harm got in fighting your battles, each furrow and scar
Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the tempest—all hail, there they are!
—Now again to be softened with verdure, again hold the nest
Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young to the green on his crest
For their food in the ardours of summer. One long shudder thrilled
All the tent till the very air tingled, then sank and was stilled
At the King's self left standing before me, released and aware.
What was gone, what remained? All to traverse, 'twixt hope and despair;
Death was past, life not come: so he waited. Awhile his right hand
Held the brow, helped the eyes left too vacant forthwith to remand
To their place what new objects should enter: 'twas Saul as before.
I looked up and dared gaze at those eyes, nor was hurt any more
Than by slow pallid sunsets in autumn, ye watch from the shore,
At their sad level gaze o'er the ocean—a sun's slow decline
Over hills which, resolved in stern silence, o'erlap and entwine
Base with base to knit strength more intensely: so, arm folded arm
O'er the chest whose slow heavings subsided.

XI

What spell or what charm,
(For, awhile there was trouble within me) what next should I urge
To sustain him where song had restored him?—Song filled to the verge
His cup with the wine of this life, pressing all that it yields
Of mere fruitage, the strength and the beauty: beyond, on what fields,
Glean a vintage more potent and perfect to brighten the eye
And bring blood to the lip, and commend them the cup they put by?
He saith, 'It is good;' still he drinks not: he lets me praise life,
Gives assent, yet would die for his own part.

Then fancies grew rife
Which had come long ago on the pasture, when round me the sheep
Fed in silence—above, the one eagle wheeled slow as in sleep;

And I lay in my hollow and mused on the world that might lie
'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip 'twixt the hill and the sky:
And I laughed—' Since my days are ordained to be passed with my flocks,
'Let me people at least, with my fancies, the plains and the rocks,
'Dream the life I am never to mix with, and image the show
'Of mankind as they live in those fashions I hardly shall know!
'Schemes of life, its best rules and right uses, the courage that gains,
'And the prudence that keeps what men strive for/ And now these old trains
Of vague thought came again; I grew surer; so, once more the string
Of my harp made response to my spirit, as thus—

'Yea, my King,'
I began—'thou dost well in rejecting mere comforts that spring
'From the mere mortal life held in common by man and by brute:
'In our flesh grows the branch of this life, in our soul it bears fruit.
'Thou hast marked the slow rise of the tree,—how its stem trembled first
'Till it passed the kid's Up, the stag's antler; then safely outburst
'The fan-branches all round; and thou mindest when these too, in turn
'Broke a-bloom and the palm-tree seemed perfect: yet more was to learn,
'E'en the good that comes in with the palm-fruit. Our dates shall we slight,
'When their juice brings a cure for all sorrow? or care for the plight
'Of the palm's self whose slow growth produced them? Not so! stem and branch
'Shall decay, nor be known in their place, while the palm-wine shall staunch
'Every wound of man's spirit in winter. I pour thee such wine.
'Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit for! the spirit be thine!
'By the spirit, when age shall o'ercome thee, thou still shalt enjoy
'More indeed, than at first when inconscious, the life of a boy.
'Crush that life, and behold its wine running! Each deed thou hast done
'Dies, revives, goes to work in the world; until e'en as the sun
' Looking down on the earth, though clouds spoil him, though tempests efface,
'Can find nothing his own deed produced not, must everywhere trace
'The results of his past summer-prime,—so, each ray of thy will,
'Every flash of thy passion and prowess, long over, shall thrill
'Thy whole people, the countless, with ardour, till they too give forth
'A like cheer to their sons, who in turn, fill the South and the North
'With the radiance thy deed was the germ of. Carouse in the past!
'But the license of age has its limit; thou diest at last:
'As the lion when age dims his eyeball, the rose at her height,
'So with man—so his power and his beauty for ever take flight.
'No! Again a long draught of my soul-wine! Look forth o'er the years!
'Thou hast done now with eyes for the actual; begin with the seer's I
'Is Saul dead? In the depth of the vale make his tomb—bid arise
'A grey mountain of marble heaped four-square, till, built to the skies,
'Let it mark where the great First King slumbers: whose fame would ye know?
'Up above see the rock's naked face, where the record shall go
'In great characters cut by the scribe,—Such was Saul, so he did;
'With the sages directing the **work,** by the populace chid,—
'For not half they'll affirm, is comprised there! Which fault to amend,
'In the grove with his kind grows the cedar, whereon they shall spend
'(See, in tablets 'tis level before them) their praise, and record
'With the gold of the graver, Saul's story,—the statesman's great word
'Side by side with the poet's sweet comment. The river's a-wave
'With smooth paper-reeds grazing each other when prophet-winds rave:
'So the pen gives unborn generations their due and their part
'In thy being! Then, first of the mighty, thank God that thou art!'

xlv

And behold while I sang... but O Thou who didst grant me that day,
And before it not seldom hast granted thy help to essay,
Carry on and complete an adventure,—my shield and my sword
In that act where my soul was thy servant, thy word was my word,—
Still be with me, who then at the summit of human endeavour
And scaling the highest, man's thought could, gazed hopeless as ever

On the new stretch of heaven above me—
till, mighty to save,
Just one lift of-thy hand cleared that distance—God's throne from man's grave!
Let me tell out my tale to its ending—my voice to my heart
Which can scarce dare believe in what marvels last night I took part,
As this morning I gather the fragments, alone with my sheep,
And still fear lest the terrible glory evanish like sleep!
For I wake in the grey dewy covert, while Hebron upheaves
The dawn struggling with night on his shoulder, and Kidron retrieves
Slow the damage of yesterday's sunshine.

XV

I say then,—my song
While I sang thus, assuring the monarch, and ever more strong
Made a proffer of good to console him—he slowly resumed
His old motions and habitudes kingly. The right-hand replumed
His black locks to their wonted composure, adjusted the swathes
Of his turban, and see—the huge sweat that his countenance bathes,
He wipes off with the robe; and he girds now his loins as of yore,
And feels slow for the armlets of price, with the clasp set before.
He is Saul, ye remember in glory,—ere error had bent
The broad brow from the daily communion ; and still, though much spent
Be the life and the bearing that front you, the same, God did choose,
To receive what a man may waste, desecrate, never quite lose.
So sank he along by the tent-prop till, stayed by the pile
Of his armour and war-cloak and garments, he leaned there awhile,
And sat out my singing,—one arm round the tent-prop, to raise
His bent head, and the other hung slack—till I touched on the praise
I foresaw from all men in all time, to the man patient there;
And thus ended, the harp falling forward. Then first I was 'ware
That he sat, as I say, with my head just above his vast knees
Which were thrust out on each side around me, like oak-roots which please
To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I looked up to know
If the best I could do had brought solace: he spoke not, but slow
Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he laid it with care
Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on my brow: thro' my hair
The large fingers were pushed, and he bent back my head, with kind power—
All my face back, intent to peruse it, as men do a flower.
Thus held he me there with his great eyes that scrutinized mine—
And oh, all my heart how it loved him! but where was the sign?
I yearned—' Could I help thee, my father, inventing a bliss,
'I would add, to that life of the past, both the future and this;
'I would give thee new life altogether, as good, ages hence,
'As this moment,—had love but the warrant, love's heart to dispense![5]

XVI

Then the truth came upon me. No harp more—no song more! outbroke—

'I have gone the whole round of creation: I saw and I spoke:
' I , a work of God's hand for that purpose, received in my brain
'And pronounced on the rest of his handwork—returned him again
'His creation's approval or censure: I spoke as I saw:
'I report, as a man may of God's work—all's love, yet all's law.
'Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me. Each faculty tasked
'To perceive him, has gained an abyss, where a dewdrop was asked.
' Have I knowledge ? confounded it shrivels at Wisdom laid bare.
'Have I forethought? how purblind, how blank, to the Infinite Care!
'Do I task any faculty highest, to image success?
'I but open my eyes,—and perfection, no more and no less,
'In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and God is seen God
'In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and the clod.
'And thus looking within and around me, I ever renew
'(With that stoop of the soul which in bending upraises it too)
'The submission of man's nothing-perfect to God's all-complete,
'As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to his feet.

•Yet with all this abounding experience, this deity known,
'I shall dare to discover some province, some gift of my own.
'There's a faculty pleasant to exercise, hard to hoodwink,
'I am fain to keep still in abeyance, (I laugh as I think)
'Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it, wot ye, I worst
'E'en the Giver in one gift.—Behold, I could love if I durst!
' But J sink the pretension as fearing a man may o'ertake
•God's own speed in the one way of love: I abstain for love's sake.
'—What, my soul? see thus far and no farther? when doors great and small,
'Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch, should the hundredth appal?
' In the least things have faith, yet distrust in the greatest of all?
' Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,
'That I doubt his own love can compete with it? Here, the parts shift?
'Here, the creature surpass the Creator,—the end, what Began?
'Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this man,
'And dare doubt he alone shall not help him. who yet alone can?
'Would it ever have entered my mind, the bare will, much less power,
'To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the marvellous dower
' Of the life he was gifted and filled with? to make such a soul,
'Such a body, and then such an earth for insphenng the whole?
'And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm tears attest)
'These good things being given, to go on, and give one more, the best?
'Ay, to save and redeem and restore him, maintain at the height
'This perfection,—succeed with life's day-spring, death's minute of night?
'Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul the mistake,
'Saul the failure, the ruin he seems now, —and bid him awake
'From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to find himself set
' Clear and safe in new light and new life, —a new harmony yet
'To be run, and continued, and ended—who knows?—or endure!
'The man taught enough, by life's dream, of the rest to make sure;
" By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning intensified bliss,
'And the next world's reward and repose, by the struggles in this.
'I believe it! 'Tis thou, God, that givest, 'tis I who receive:
'In the first is the last, in thy will is my power to believe.
'All's one gift: thou canst grant it moreover, as prompt to my prayer
'As I breathe out this breath, as I open these arms to the air.
'From thy will, stream the worlds, life and nature, thy dread Sabaoth:
'/will?—the mere atoms despise me! Why am I not loth
'To look that, even that in the face too? Why is it I dare
'Think but lightly of such impuissance? What stops my despair?
'This;—'tis not what man Does which exalts him, but what man Would do!
'See the King—I would help him but cannot, the wishes fall through.
'Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to enrich,
'To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would—knowing which,
'I know that my service is perfect. Oh, speak through me now!
'Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst thou—so wilt thou!
'So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost crown—
'And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down
'One spot for the creature to stand in! It is by no breath,
'Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins issue with death!
'As thy Love is discovered almighty, al mighty be proved
'Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being Beloved!
'He who did most, shall bear most; the strongest shall stand the most weak.
"Tis the weakness in strength, that I cry for! my flesh, that I seek
'In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be
'A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me,
'Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever: a Hand like this hand
'Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!'

xIx

I know not too well how I found my way home in the night.
There were witnesses, cohorts about me, to left and to right,
Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen, the alive, the aware:
1 repressed, I got through them as hardly, as strugglingly there,

As a runner beset by the populace famished for news—
Life or death; The whole earth was awakened, hell loosed with her crews;
And the stars of night beat with emotion, and tingled and shot
Out in fire the strong pain of pent knowledge: but I fainted not,
For the Hand still impelled me at once and supported, suppressed
All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet, and holy behest,
Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the earth sank to rest.
Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had withered from earth—
Not so much, but I saw it die out in the day's tender birth;
In the gathered intensity brought to the grey of the hills;
In the shuddering forests' held breath; in the sudden wind-thrills;
In the startled wild beasts that bore off, each with eye sidling still
Though averted with wonder and dread; in the birds stiff and chill
That rose heavily, as I approached them, made stupid with awe:
E'en the serpent that slid away silent,—he felt the new law.
The same stared in the white humid faces upturned by the flowers;
The same worked in the heart of the cedar and moved the vine-bowers:
And the little brooks witnessing murmured, persistent and low,
With their obstinate, all but hushed voices —'E'en so, it is so!'

MY STAR

ALL that I know
Of a certain star
Is, it can throw
(Like the angled spar)
Now a dart of red,
Now a dart of blue;
Till my friends have said
They would fain see, too,
My star that dartles the red and the blue!
Then it stops like a bird; like a flower, hangs furled:
They must solace themselves with the Saturn above it.
What matter to me if their star is a world?
Mine has opened its soul to me; therefore I love it.

BY THE FIRE-SIDE

How well I know what I mean to do
When the long dark autumn-evenings come:
And where, my soul, is thy pleasant hue?
With the music of all thy voices, dumb
In life's November too!

I shall be found by the fire, suppose,
O'er a great wise book as beseemeth age,
While the shutters flap as the cross-wind blows
And I turn the page, and I turn the page,
Not verse now, only prose I

Till the young ones whisper, finger on lip*
'There he is at it, deep in Greek:
'Now then, or never, out we slip
'To cut from the hazels by the creek
'A mainmast for our ship!'

Iv

I shall be at it indeed, my friends:
Greek puts already on either side
Such a branch-work forth as soon extends
To a vista opening far and wide,
And I pass out where it ends.

The outside-frame, like your hazel-trees:
But the inside-archway widens fast,
And a rarer sort succeeds to these,
And we slope to Italy at last
And youth, by green degrees.

I follow wherever I am led,
Knowing so well the leader's hand:
Oh woman-country, wooed not wed,
Loved all the more by earth's male-lands,
Laid to their hearts instead!

Look at the ruined chapel again
Half-way up in the Alpine gorge!
Is that a tower, I point you plain,
Or is it a mill, or an iron-forge
Breaks solitude in vain?

A turn, and we stand in the heart of things:
The woods are round us, heaped and dim;
From slab to slab how it slips and springs,
The thread of water single and slim,
Through the ravage some torrent brings

Ix

Does it feed the little lake below?
That speck of white just on its marge
Is Pella; see, in the evening-glow.
How sharp the silver spear-heads charge
When Alp meets heaven in snow!

On our other side is the straight-up rock;
And a path is kept 'twixt the gorge and it
By boulder-stones where lichens mock
The marks on a moth, and small ferns fit
Their teeth to the polished block.

Oh the sense of the yellow mountain-flowers,
And thorny balls, each three in one,
The chestnuts throw on our path in showers!
For the drop of the woodland fruit's begun,
These early November hours,

That crimson the creeper's leaf across
Like a splash of blood, intense, abrupt,
O'er a shield else gold from rim to boss.
And lay it for show on the fairy-cupped
Elf-needled mat of moss,

xIII

By the rose-flesh mushrooms, undivulged
Last evening—nay, in to-day's first dew
Yon sudden coral nipple bulged,
Where a freaked fawn-coloured flaky crew
Of toadstools peep indulged.

xIv

And yonder, at foot of the fronting ridge
That takes the turn to a range beyond,
Is the chapel reached by the one-arched bridge
Where the water is stopped in a stagnant pond
Danced over by the midge.

The chapel and bridge are of stone alike,
Blackish-grey and mostly wet;
Cut hemp-stalks steep in the narrow dyke.
See here again, how the lichens fret
And the roots of the ivy strike!

XVI

Poor little place, where its one priest comes
On a festa-day, if he comes at all,
To the dozen folk from their scattered homes,
Gathered within that precinct **small**
By the dozen **ways one roams**—

xvII

To drop from the charcoal-burners' huts,
Or climb from the hemp-dressers' low shed,
Leave the grange where the woodman stores his nuts,
Or the wattled cote where the fowlers spread
Their gear on the rock's bare juts.

It has some pretension too, this front,
With its bit of fresco half-moon-wise
Set over the porch, Art's early wont:
'Tis John in the Desert, I surmise,
But has borne the weather's brunt—

XIX

Not from the fault of the builder, though,
For a pent-house properly projects
Where three carved beams make a certain show,
Dating—good thought of our architect's—
'Five, six, nine, he lets you know.

XX

And all day long a bird sings there,
And a stray sheep drinks at the pond at times;
The place is silent and aware;
It has had its scenes, its joys and crimes,
But that is its own affair.

XXI

My perfect wife, my Leonor,
Oh heart, my own, oh eyes, mine too,
Whom else could I dare look backward for,
With whom beside should I dare pursue
The path grey heads abhor?

xxII

For *it* leads to a crag's sheer edge with them;
Youth, flowery all the way, there stops—
Not they; age threatens and they contemn,
Till they reach the gulf wherein youth drops,
One inch from life's safe hem!

With me, youth led... I will speak now,
No longer watch you as you sit
Reading by fire-light, that great brow
And the spirit-small hand propping it,
Mutely, my heart knows how—

When, if I think; but deep enough,
You are wont to answer, prompt as rhyme;
And you, too, find without rebuff
Response your soul seeks many a time
Piercing its fine flesh-stuff.

My own, confirm me! If I tread
This path back, *is* it not in pride
To think how little I dreamed it led
To an age so blest that, by its side,
Youth seems the waste instead?

My own, see where the years conduct!
At first, 'twas something our two souls
Should mix as mists do; each is sucked
In each now: on, the new stream rolls,
Whatever rocks obstruct.

XXVII

Think, when our one soul understands
The great Word which makes all things new,
When earth breaks up and heaven expands,
How will the change strike me and you
In the house not made with hands?

XXVIII

Oh I must feel your brain prompt mine,
Your heart anticipate my heart,
You must be just before, in fine,
See and make me see, for your part,
New depths of the divine!

XXIX

But who could have expected this
When we two drew together first
Just for the obvious human bliss,
To satisfy life's daily thirst
With a thing men seldom miss?

XXX

Come back with me to the first of all,
Let us lean and love it over again,
Let us now forget and now recall,
Break the rosary in a pearly rain,
And gather what we let fall!

XXXI

What did I say?—that a small bird sings
All day long, save when a brown pair
Of hawks from the wood float with wide wings
Strained to a bell: 'gainst noon-day glare
You count the streaks and rings.

But at afternoon or almost eve
'Tis better; then the silence grows
To that degree, you half believe
It must get rid of what it knows,
Its bosom does so heave.

Hither we walked then, side by side,
Arm in arm and cheek to cheek,
And still I questioned or replied,
While my heart, convulsed to really speak,
Lay choking in its pride.

Silent the crumbling bridge we cross,
And pity and praise the chapel sweet,
And care about the fresco's loss,
And wish for our souls a like retreat,
And wonder at the moss.

Stoop and kneel on the settle under,
Look through the window's grated square:
Nothing to see! For fear of plunder,
The cross is down and the altar bare,
As if thieves don't fear thunder.

We stoop and look in through the grate,
See the little porch and rustic door,
Read duly the dead builder's date;
Then cross the bridge that we crossed before,
Take the path again—but wait!

Oh moment, one and infinite!
The water slips o'er stock and stone;
The West is tender, hardly bright:
How grey at once is the evening grown—
One star, its chrysolite!

XXXVIII

We two stood there with never a third,
But each by each, as each knew well:
The sights we saw and the sounds we heard,
The lights and the shades made up a spell
Till the trouble grew and stirred.

XXXIX

Oh, the little more, and how much it is!
And the little less, and what worlds away!
How a sound shall quicken content to bliss,
Or a breath suspend the blood's best play,
And life be a proof of this!

Had she willed it, still had stood the screen
So slight, so sure, 'twixt my love and her:
I could fix her face with a guard between,
And find her soul as when friends confer,
Friends—lovers that might have been.

XLI

For my heart had a touch of the woodland-time,
Wanting to sleep now over its best.
Shake the whole tree in the summer-prime,
But bring to the last leaf no such test!
'Hold the last fasti' runs the rhyme.

For a chance to make your little much,
To gain a lover and lose a friend,
Venture the tree and a myriad such,
When nothing you mar but the year can mend:
But a last leaf—fear to touch!

XLIII

Yet should it unfasten itself and fall
Eddying down till it find your face
At some slight wind—best chance of all!
Be your heart henceforth its dwelling-place
You trembled to forestall!

Worth how well, those dark grey eyes,
That hair so dark and dear, how worth
That a man should strive and agonize,
And taste a veriest hell on earth
For the hope of such a prize!

You might have turned and tried a man,
Set him a space to weary and wear.
And prove which suited more your plan,
His best of hope or his worst despair,
Yet end as he began.

XLVI

But you spared me this, like the heart you are,
And filled my empty heart at a word.
If two lives join, there is oft a scar,
They are one and one, with a shadowy third;
One near one is too far.

A moment after, and hands unseen
Were hanging the night around us fast;
But we knew that a bar was broken between
Life and life: we were mixed at last
In spite of the mortal screen.

XLVIII

The forests had done it; there they stood;
We caught for a moment the powers at play:
They had mingled us so, for once and good,
Their work was done—we might go or stay,
They relapsed to their ancient mood.

How the world is made for each of us!
How all we perceive and know in it
Tends to some moment's product thus,
When a soul declares itself—to wit,
By its fruit, the thing it does!

Be hate that fruit or love that fruit,
It forwards the general deed of man,
And each of the Many helps to recruit
The life of the race by a general plan;
Each living his own, to boot.

LI

I am named and known by that moment's feat;
There took my station and degree;
So grew my own small life complete,
As nature obtained her best of me—
One born to love you, sweet!

And to watch you sink by the fire-side now
Back again, as you mutely sit
Musing by fire-light, that great brow
And the spirit-small hand propping it,
Yonder, my heart knows how!

So, earth has gained by one man the more,
And the gain of earth must be heaven's gain too;
And the whole is well worth thinking o'er
When autumn comes: which I mean to do
One day, as I said before.

ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND

MY love, this is the bitterest, that thou
Who art all truth, and who dost love me now
As thine eyes say, as thy voice breaks to say—
Shouldst love so truly, and couldst love me still
A whole long life through, had but love its will,
Would death that leads me from thee brook delay.

I have but tojb^by thee, and thy hand
Will never let mine go, nor heart withstand
The beating of my heart to reach its place.
When shall I look for thee and feel thee gone?
When cry for the old comfort and find none?
Never, I know! Thy soul is in thy face.

III

Oh, I should fade—'tis willed so! Might I save,
Gladly I would, whatever beauty gave
Joy to thy sense, for that was precious too.
It is not to be granted. But the soul
Whence the love comes, all ravage leaves that whole;
Vainly the flesh fades; soul makes all things new.

Iv

It would not be because my eye grew dim
Thou couldst not find the love there, thanks to Him
Who never is dishonoured in the spark
He gave us from his fire of fires, and bade
Remember whence it sprang, nor be afraid
While that burns on, though all the rest grow dark.

v

So, how thou wouldst be perfect, white and clean
Outside as inside, soul and soul's demesne
Alike, this body given to show it by!
Oh, three-parts through the worst of life's abyss,
What plaudits from the next world after this,
Couldst thou repeat a stroke and gain the sky!

VI

And is it not the bitterer to think
That, disengage our hands and thou wilt sink
Although thy love was love in very deed?
I know that nature! Pass a festive day,
Thou dost not throw its relic-flower away
Nor bid its music's loitering echo speed.

Thou let'st the stranger's glove lie where it fell;
If old things remain old things all is well,
For thou art grateful as becomes man best:
And hadst thou only heard me play one tune,
Or viewed me from a window, not'so soon
With thee would such things fade as with the rest

vIII

I seem to see! We meet and part; 'tis brief;
The book I opened keeps a folded leaf,
The very chair I sat on, breaks the rank;
That is a portrait of me on the wall—
Three lines, my face comes at so slight a call:
And for all this, one little hour to thank!

But now, because the hour through years was fixed,
Because our inmost beings met and mixed,
Because thou once hast loved me—wilt thou dare
Say to thy soul and Who may list beside,
'Therefore she is immortally my bride;
'Chance cannot change my love, nor time impair.

x

'So, what if in the dusk of life that's left,
' I , a tired traveller of my sun bereft,
'Look from my path when, mimicking the same,
'The fire-fly glimpses past me, come and gone?
'—Where was it till the sunset? where anon
'It will be at the sunrise! What's to blame?'

XI

Is it so helpful to thee? Canst thou take
The mimic up, nor, for the true thing's sake,
Put gently by such efforts at a beam?
Is the remainder of the way so long,
Thou need'st the little solace, thou the strong?
Watch out thy watch, let weak ones doze and dream!

—Ah, but the fresher faces! 'Is it true,'
Thou'lt ask, 'some eyes are beautiful and new?
'Some hair,—how can one choose but grasp such wealth ?
'And if a man would press his lips to lips
'Fresh as the wilding hedge-rose-cup there

'The dew-drop out of, must it be by stealth?

xIII

'It cannot change the love still kept for Her,
'More than if such a picture I prefer
'Passing a day with, to a room's bare side:
The painted form takes nothing she possessed,
Yet, while the Titian's Venus lies at rest,
A man looks. Once more, what is there to chide?'

XIV

So must I see, from where I sit and watch,
My own self sell myself, my hand attach
Its warrant to the very thefts from me—
Thy singleness of soul that made me proud,
Thy purity of heart I loved aloud,
Thy man's-truth I was bold to bid God see!

XV

Love so, then, if thou wilt! Give all thou canst
Away to the new faces—disentranced,
(Say it and think it) obdurate no more:
Re-issue looks and words from the old mint,
Pass them afresh, no matter whose the print
Image and superscription once they bore I

XVI

Re-coin thyself and give it them to spend,—
It all comes to the same thing at the end,
Since mine thou wast, mine art and mine shalt be.
Faithful or faithless, sealing up the sum
Or lavish of my treasure, thou must come
Back to the heart's place here I keep for thee!

Only, why should it be with stain at all?
Why must I, 'twixt the leaves of coronal,
Put any kiss of pardon on thy brow?
Why need the other women know so much,
And talk together, 'Such the look and such
'The smile he used to love with, then as now!'

XVIII

Might I die last and show thee! Should I find
Such hardship in the few years left behind,
If free to take and light my lamp, and go
Into thy tomb, and shut the door and sit,
Seeing thy face on those four sides of it
The better that they are so blank, I know!

XIX

Why, time was what I wanted, to turn o'er
Within my mind each look, get more and more
By heart each word, too much to learn at first;
And join thee all the fitter for the pause
'Neath the low doorway's lintel. That were cause
For lingering, though thou calledst, if I durst!

And yet thou art the nobler of us two:
What dare I dream of, that thou canst not do,
Outstripping my ten small steps with one stride?
I'll say then, here's a trial and a task—
.Is it to bear?—if easy, I'll not ask:
Though love fail, I can trust on in thy pride.

Pride?—when those eyes forestall the life behind
The death I have to go through!—when I find,
Now that I want thy help most, all of thee!
What did I fear? Thy love shall hold me fast
Until the little minute's sleep is past
And I wake saved.—And yet it will not be!

TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA

I WONDER do you feel to-day
As I have felt since, hand in hand,
We sat down on the grass, to stray
In spirit better through the land,
This morn of Rome and May?

For me, I touched a thought, I know,
Has tantalized me many times,
(Like turns of thread the spiders throw
Mocking across our path) for rhymes
To catch at and let go.

III

Help me to hold it! First it left
The yellowing fennel, run to seed
There, branching from the brickwork's cleft,
Some old tomb's ruin: yonder weed
Took up the floating weft,

XV

Where one small orange cup amassed
Five beetles,—blind and green they grope
Among the honey-meal: and last,
Everywhere on the grassy slope
I traced it. Hold it fast!

The champaign with its endless fleece
Of feathery grasses everywhere!
Silence and passion, joy and peace,
An everlasting; wash of air—
Rome's ghost since her decease.

Such life here, through such lengths of hours,
Such miracles performed in play,
Such primal naked forms of flowers,
Such letting nature have her way
While heaven looks from its towers!

VII

How say you? Let us, O my dove,
Let us be unashamed of soul,
As earth lies bare to heaven above!
How is it under our control
To love or not to love?

VIII

I would that you were all to me,
You that are just so much, no more.
Nor yours nor mine, nor slave nor free!
Where does the fault lie? What the core
O' the wound, since wound must be?

IX

I would I could adopt your will,
See with your eyes, and set my heart
Beating by yours, and drink my fill
At your soul's springs,—your part my part
In life, for good and ill.

No. I yearn upward, touch you close,
Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,
Catch your soul's warmth,—I pluck the rose
And love it more than tongue can speak—
Then the good minute goes.

XI

Already how am I so far
Out of that minute? Must I go
Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,
Onward, whenever light winds blow,
Fixed by no friendly star?

XII

Just when I seemed about to learn!
Where is the thread now? Off again!
The old trick! Only I discern—
Infinite passion, and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn.

MISCONCEPTIONS

THIS is a spray the Bird clung to,
Making it blossom with pleasure,
Ere the high tree-top she sprung to,
Fit for her nest and her treasure.
Oh, what a hope beyond measure
Was the poor spray's, which the flying feet hung to,—
So to be singled out, built in, and sung to!

This is a heart the Queen leant on,
Thrilled in a minute erratic,
Ere the true bosom she bent on,
Meet for love's regal dalmatic.
Oh, what a fancy ecstatic
Was the poor heart's, ere the wanderer went on—
Love to be saved for it, proffered to, spent on!

A SERENADE AT THE VILLA

THAT was I, you heard last night,
When there rose no moon at all,
Nor, to pierce the strained and tight
Tent of heaven, a planet small:
Life was dead and so was light.

II

Not a twinkle from the fly,
Not a glimmer from the worm;
When the crickets stopped their cry,
When the owls forbore a term,
You heard music; that was I.

III

Earth turned in her sleep with pain,
Sultrily suspired for proof:
In at heaven and out again
Lightning!—where it broke the roof,
Bloodlike, some few drops of rain.

IV

What they could my words expressed,
O my love, my all, my one!
Singing helped the verses best,
And when singing's best was done,
To my lute I left the rest.

So wore the night; the East was gray,
White the broad-faced hemlock-flowers:
There would be another day;
Ere its first of heavy hours
Found me, I had passed away.

What became of all the hopes,
Words and song and lute as well?
Say, this struck you—'When life gropes
'Feebly for the path where fell
'Light last on the evening slopes,

VII

'One friend in that path shall be,
'To secure my step from wrong;
'One to count night day for me,
'Patient through the watches long,
'Serving most with none to see.'

vIII

Never say—as something bodes—
'So, the worst has yet a worse!
'When life halts 'neath double loads,
'Better the taskmaster's curse
'Than such music on the roads!

'When no moon succeeds the sun,
'Nor can pierce the midnight's tent
'Any star, the smallest one,
'While some drops, where lightning rent,
'Show the final storm begun—

'When the fire-fly hides its spot,
'When the garden-voices fail
'In the darkness thick and hot,—
'Shall another voice avail,
'That shape be where these are not?

'Has some plague a longer lease,
'Proffering its help uncouth?
'Can't one even die in peace?
'As one shuts one's eyes on youth,
'Is that face the last one sees?'

xII

Oh how dark your villa was,
Windows fast and obdurate!
How the garden grudged me grass
Where I stood—the iron gate
Ground its teeth to let me pass!

ONE WAY OF LOVE

A L L June I bound the rose in sheaves.
Now, rose by rose. I strip the leaves
And strew them where Pauline may pass.
She will not turn aside? Alas!
Let them lie. Suppose they die?
The chance was they might take her eye.

How many a month I strove to suit
These stubborn fingers to the lute!
To-day I venture all I know.
She will not hear my music? So!
Break the string; fold music's wing:
Suppose Pauline had bade me sing!

III

My whole life long I learned to love.
This hour my utmost art I prove
And speak my passion—heaven or hell?
She will not give me heaven? 'Tis well!
Lose who may—I still can say,
Those who win heaven, blest are they!

ANOTHER WAY OF LOVE

JUNE was not over
Though past the **full,**
And the best of her roses
Had yet to blow,
When a man I know
(But shall not discover,
Since ears are dull,
And time discloses)
Turned him and said with a man's true air,
Half sighing a smile in a yawn, as 'twere,—
'If I tire of your June, will she greatly care?'

Well, dear, in-doors with you!
True! serene deadness
Tries a man's temper.
What's in the blossom
June wears on her bosom?
Can it clear scores with you?
Sweetness and redness.
Eadem semper!
Go, let me care for it greatly or slightly!
If June mend her bower now, your hand left unsightly
By plucking the roses,—my June will do rightly.

III

And after, for pastime,
If June be refulgent
With flowers in completeness,
All petals, no prickles,
Delicious as trickles
Of wine poured at mass-time,—
And choose One indulgent
To redness and sweetness:
Or if, with experience of man and of spider,
June use my June-lightning, the strong insect-ridder,
And stop the fresh film-work,—why, June will consider.

A PRETTY WOMAN

THAT fawn-skin-dappled hair of hers,
And the blue eye
Dear and dewy,
And that infantine fresh air of hers!

To think men cannot take you, Sweet,
And enfold you,
Ay, and hold you,
And so keep you what they make you, Sweet!

III

You like us for a glance, you know—
For a words sake
Or a sword's sake,
All's the same, whate'er the chance, you know.

And in turn we make you ours, we say—
You and youth too,
Eyes and mouth too,
All the face composed of flowers, we say.

All's our own, to make the most of, Sweet—
Sing and say for,
Watch and pray for,
Keep a secret or go boast of, Sweet!

But for loving, why, you would not, Sweet,
Though we prayed you,
Paid you, brayed you
In **a** mortar—for you could not, Sweet!

So, we leave the sweet face fondly there:
Be its beauty
Its sole duty!
Let all hope of grace beyond, lie there!

vIII

And while the face lies quiet there,
Who shall wonder
That I ponder
A conclusion? I will try it there.

Ix

As,—why must one, for the love foregone,
Scout mere liking?
Thunder-striking
Earth,—the heaven, we looked above for, gone!

Why, with beauty, needs there money be,
Love with liking?
Crush the fly-king
In his gauze, because no honey-bee?

XI

May not liking be so simple-sweet,
If love grew there
'Twould undo there
All that breaks the cheek to dimples sweet?

xII

Is the creature too Imperfect, say?
Would you mend it
And so end it?
Since not all addition perfects aye!

xIII

Or is it of its kind, perhaps,
Just perfection—
Whence, rejection
Of a grace not to its mind, perhaps?

xIv

Shall we burn up, tread that face at once
Into tinder,
And so hinder
Sparks from kindling all the place at once?

xv

Or else kiss away one's soul on her?
Your love-fancies!
—A sick man sees
Truer, when his hot eyes roll on her!

Thus the craftsman thinks to grace the rose,—
Plucks a mould-flower
For his gold flower,
Uses fine things that efface the rose:

Rosy rubies make its cup more rose,
Precious metals
Ape the petals,—
Last, some old king locks it up, morose!

xvIII

Then how grace a rose? I know a way!
Leave it, rather.
Must you gather?
Smell, kiss, wear it—at last, throw away!

RESPECTABILITY

I

DEAR, had the world in its caprice
Deigned to proclaim 'I know you both,
'Have recognized your plighted troth,
'Am sponsor for you: live in peace!'—
How many precious months and years
Of youth had passed, that speed so fast,
Before we found it out at last,
The world, and what it fears?

How much of priceless life were spent
With men that every virtue decks,
And women models of their sex,
Society's true ornament,—
Ere we dared wander, nights like this,
Thro' wind and rain, and watch the Seine,
And feel the Boulevart break **again**
To warmth **and** light and bliss?

III

I know! the world proscribes not love;
Allows my ringer to caress
Your lips' contour and downiness,
Provided it supply a glove.
The world's good word!—the Institute!
Guizot receives Montalembert!
Eh? Down the court three lampions flare:
Put forward your best foot!

LOVE IN A LIFE

ROOM after room,
I hunt the house through
We inhabit together.
Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou shalt find her—
Next time, herself!—not the trouble behind her
Left in the curtain, the couch's perfume!
As she brushed it, the cornice-wreath blossomed anew:
Yon looking-glass gleamed at the wave of her feather.

Yet the day wears,
And door succeeds door;
I try the fresh fortune—
Range the wide house from the wing to the centre.
Still the same chance! she goes out as I enter.
Spend my whole day in the quest,—who cares?
But 'tis twilight, you see,—with such suites to explore,
Such closets to search, such alcoves to importune!

LIFE IN A LOVE

ESCAPE me?
Never—
Beloved!
While I am I, and you are you,
So long as the world contains us both,
Me the loving and you the loth,
While the one eludes, must the other pursue.
My life is a fault at last, I fear:
It seems too much like a fate, indeed!
Though I do my best I shall scarce succeed.
But what if I fail of my purpose here?
It is but to keep the nerves at strain.
To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,
And, baffled, get up and begin again,—
So the chace takes up one's life, that's all.

While, look but once from your farthest bound
At me so deep in the dust and dark,
No sooner the old hope goes to ground
Than a new one, straight to the self-same mark,
I shape me—
Ever
Removed!

IN THREE DAYS

I

So, I shall see her in three days
And just one night, but nights are short,
Then two long hours, and that is morn.
See how I come, unchanged, unworn!
Feel, where my life broke off from thine,
How fresh the splinters keep and fine,—
Only a touch and we combine!

Too long, this time of year, the days!
But nights, at least the nights are short.
As night shows where her one moon is,
A hand's-breadth of pure light and bliss,
So life's night gives my lady birth
And my eyes hold her! What is worth
The rest of heaven, the rest of earth?

O loaded curls, release your store
Of warmth and scent, as once before
The tingling hair did, lights and darks
Outbreaking into fairy sparks,
When under curl and curl I pried
After the warmth and scent inside,
Thro' lights and darks how manifold—
The dark inspired, the light controlled!
As early Art embrowns the gold.

Iv

What great fear, should one say, 'Three days
'That change the world might change as well
'Your fortune; and if joy delays,
'Be happy that no worse befell!'
What small fear, if another says,
'Three days and one short night beside
'May throw no shadow on your ways;
'But years must teem with change untried,
'With chance not easily defied,
'With an end somewhere undescried.'
No fear!—or if a fear be born
This minute, it dies out in scorn.
Fear? I shall see her in three days
And one night, now the nights are **short***
Then just two hours, and that is **morn.**

IN A YEAR

NEVER any more,
While I live,
Need I hope to see his face
As before.
Once his love grown chill,
Mine may strive:
Bitterly we re-embrace,
Single still.

Was it something said,
Something done,
Vexed him? was it touch of hand,
Turn of head?
Strange! that very way
Love begun:
I as little understand
Love's decay.

When I sewed or drew,
I recall
How he looked as if I sung,
—Sweetly too.
If I spoke a word,
First of all
Up his cheek the colour sprung,
Then he heard.

Iv

Sitting by my side,
At my feet,
So he breathed but air I breathed,
Satisfied!
I, too, at love's brim
Touched the sweet:
I would die if death bequeathed
Sweet to him.

'Speak, I love thee best!'
He exclaimed:
"Let thy love my own foretell!'
I confessed:
* Clasp my heart on thine
'Now unblamed,
' Since upon thy soul as well
'Hangeth mine!'

VI

Was it wrong to own,
Being truth?
Why should all the giving prove
His alone?
I had wealth and ease,
Beauty, youth:
;Since my lover gave me love,
I gave these.

That was all I meant,
—To be just,
And the passion I had raised,
To content.
Since he chose to change
Gold for dust,
If I gave him what he praised
Was it strange?

Would he loved me yet,
On and on,
While I found some way undreamed
—Paid my debt!
Gave more life and more,
Till, all gone,
He should smile 'She never seemed
'Mine before.

'What, she felt the while,
'Must I think?
'Love's so different with us men!'
He should smile:
'Dying for my sake—
*White and pink!
'Can't we touch these bubbles then
'But they break?'

Dear, the pang is brief,
Do thy part,
Have thy pleasure! How perplexed
Grows belief!
Well, this cold clay clod
Was man's heart:
Crumble it, and what comes next?
Is it God?

WOMEN AND ROSES

I DREAM of a red-rose tree.
And which of its roses three
Is the dearest rose to me?

Round and round, like a dance of snow
In a dazzling drift, as its guardians, go
Floating the women faded for ages,
Sculptured in stone, on the poet's pages.
Then follow women fresh and gay,
Living and loving and loved to-day.
Last, in the rear, flee the multitude of maidens,
Beauties yet unborn. And all, to one cadence,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

Dear rose, thy term is reached,
Thy leaf hangs loose and bleached:
Bees pass it unimpeached.

Iv

Stay then, stoop, since I cannot climb.
You, great shapes of the antique time!
How shall I fix you, fire you, freeze you,
Break my heart at your feet to please you?
Oh, to possess and be possessed!
Hearts that beat 'neath each pallid breast!
Once but of love, the poesy, the passion,
Drink but once and die!—In vain, the same fashion,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

Dear rose, thy joy's undimmed,
Thy cup is ruby-rimmed,
Thy cup's heart nectar-brimmed.

VI

Deep, as drops from a statue's plinth
The bee sucked in by the hyacinth,
So will I bury me while burning,
Quench like him at a plunge my yearning,
Eyes in your eyes, lips on your lips!
Fold me fast where the cincture slips,
Prison all my soul in eternities of pleasure.
Girdle me for once! But no—the old measure,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

Dear rose without a thorn,
Thy bud's the babe unborn:
First streak of a new morn.

Wings, lend wings for the cold, the clear!
What is far conquers what is near.
Roses will bloom nor want beholders,
Sprung from the dust where our flesh moulders.
what shall arrive with the cycle's change?
A novel grace and a beauty strange.
I will make an Eve, be the artist that began her,
Shaped her to his mind!—Alas! in like manner
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

BEFORE

LET them fight it out, friend! things have gone too far.
God must judge the couple: leave them as they are
—Whichever one's the guiltless, to his glory.
And whichever one the guilt's with, to my story!

Why, you would not bid men, sunk in such a slough,
Strike no arm out further, stick and stink as now,
Leaving right and wrong to settle the embroilment,
Heaven with snaky hell, in torture and entailment?

III

Who's the culprit of them ? How must he conceive
God—the queen he caps to, laughing in his sleeve,
' 'Tis but decent to profess oneself beneath her:
' Still, one must not be too much in earnest, either!'

Better sin the whole sin, sure that God observes;
Then go live his life out! Life will try his nerves,
When the sky, which noticed all, makes no disclosure,
And the earth keeps up her terrible composure.

Let him pace at pleasure, past the walls of rose,
Pluck their fruits when grape-trees graze him as he goes!
For he 'gins to guess the purpose of the garden,
With the sly mute thing, beside there, for a warden.

What's the leopard-dog-thing, constant at his side,
A leer and lie in every eye of its obsequious hide?
When will come an end to all the mock obeisance,
And the price appear that pays for the misfeasance?

vII

So much for the culprit. Who's the martyred man?
Let him bear one stroke more, for be sure he can!
He that strove thus evil's lump with good to leaven.
Let him give his blood at last and get his heaven!

All or nothing, stake it! Trusts he God or no?
Thus far and no farther ? farther? be it so!

BEFORE

Now, enough of your chicane of prudent pauses,
Sage provisos-, sub-intents and saving-clauses!

IX

Ah, 'forgive' you bid him? While God's champion lives,
Wrong shall be resisted: dead, why, he forgives.
But you must not end my friend ere you begin him;
Evil stands not crowned on earth, while breath is in him.

X

Once more—Will the wronger, at this last of all,
Dare to say, 'I did wrong,' rising in his fall?
No?—Let go, then! Both the fighters to their places!
While I count three, step you back as many paces!

AFTER

TAKE the cloak from his face, and at *first*
Let the corpse do its worst!

How he lies in his rights of a man!
Death has done all death can.
And, absorbed in the new life he leads,
He recks not, he heeds
Nor his wrong nor my vengeance; both strike
On his senses alike,
And are lost in the solemn and strange
Surprise of the change.
Ha, what avails death to erase
His offence, my disgrace?
I would we were boys as of old
In the field, by the fold:
His outrage, God's patience, man's scorn
Were so easily borne!

I stand here now, he lies in his place:
Cover the face!

THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL

A PICTURE AT FANO

I

DEAR and great Angel, wouldst thou only leave
That child, when thou hast done with him, for me!
Let me sit all the day here, that when eve
Shall find performed thy special ministry,
And time come for departure, thou, suspending
Thy flight, mayst see another child for tending,
Another still, to quiet and retrieve.

II

Then I shall feel thee step one step, no more,
From where thou standest now, to where I gaze,
—And suddenly my head is covered o'er
With those wings, white above the child who prays
Now on that tomb—and I shall feel thee guarding
Me, out of all the world; for me, discarding
Yon heaven thy home, that waits and opes its door.

III

I would not look up thither past thy head
Because the door opes, like that child, I know,
For I should have thy gracious face instead.
Thou bird of God! And wilt thou bend me low
Like him, and lay, like his, my hands together,
And lift them up to pray, and gently tether
Me, as thy lamb there, with thy garment's spread?

IV

If this was ever granted, I would rest
My head beneath thine, while thy healing hands
Close-covered both my eyes beside thy breast,
Pressing the brain, which too much thought expands,
Back to its proper size again, and smoothing
Distortion down till every nerve had soothing,
And all lay quiet, happy and suppressed.

V

How soon all worldly wrong would be repaired!
I think how I should view the earth and skies
And sea, when once again my brow was bared
After thy healing, with such different eyes.
O world, as God has made it! All is beauty:
And knowing this, is love, and love is duty.
What further may be sought for or declared?

VI

Guercino drew this angel I saw teach
(Alfred, dear friend!)—that little child to pray,
Holding the little hands up, each to each
Pressed gently,—with his own head turned away

Over the earth where so much lay before him
Of work to do, though heaven was opening o'er him.
And he was left at Fano by the beach.

VII

We were at Fano, and three times we went
To sit and see him in his chapel there,
And drink his beauty to our soul's content
—My angel with me too: and since I care
For dear Guercino's fame (to which in power
And glory comes this picture for a dower,
Fraught with a pathos so magnificent)—

VIII

And since he did not work thus earnestly
At all times, and has else endured some wrong—
I took one thought his picture struck from me,
And spread it out, translating it to song.
My love is here. Where are you, dear old friend?
How rolls the Wairoa at your world's far end?
This is Ancona, yonder is the sea.

MEMORABILIA

I

Ah, did you once see Shelley plain,
And did he stop and speak to you,
And did you speak to him again?
How strange it seems and new!

II

But you were living before that,
And also you are living after;
And the memory I started at—
My starting moves your laughter.

III

I crossed a moor, with a name of its own
And a certain use in the world no doubt,
Yet a hand's-breadth of it shines alone
'Mid the blank miles round about:

IV

For there I picked up on the heather
And there I put inside my breast
A moulted feather, an eagle-feather!
Well, I forget the rest.

POPULARITY

I

STAND still, true poet that you are!
I know you; let me try and draw you.
Some night you'll fail us: when afar
You rise, remember one man saw you,
Knew you, and named a star!
My star, God's glow-worm! Why extend
That loving hand of his which leads you
Yet locks you safe from end to end
Of this dark world, unless he needs you,
Just saves your light to spend?

III

His clenched hand shall unclose at last,
I know, and let out all the beauty:
My poet holds the future fast,
Accepts the coming ages' duty,
Their present for this past.

IV

That day, the earth's feast-master's brow
Shall clear, to God the chalice raising;
'Others give best at first, but thou
'Forever set'st our table praising,
'Keep'st the good wine till now!'

Meantime, I'll draw you as you stand,
With few or none to watch and wonder:
I'll say—a fisher, on the sand
By Tyre the old, with ocean-plunder,
A netful, brought to land.

VI

Who has not heard how Tyrian shells
Enclosed the blue, that dye of dyes
Whereof one drop worked miracles,
And coloured like Astarte's eyes
Raw silk the merchant sells?

And each bystander of them all
Could criticize, and quote tradition
How depths of blue sublimed some pall
—To get which, pricked a king's ambition;
Worth sceptre, crown and ball.

VIII

Yet there's the dye, in that rough mesh,
The sea has only just o'erwhispered!
Live whelks, each lip's beard dripping fresh,
As if they still the water's lisp heard
Through foam the rock-weeds thresh.

IX

Enough to furnish Solomon
Such hangings for his cedar-house,
That, when gold-robed he took the throne
In that abyss of blue, the Spouse
Might swear his presence shone

Most like the centre-spike of gold
Which burns deep in the blue-bell's womb,
What time, with ardours manifold,
The bee goes singing to her groom,
Drunken and overbold.

Mere conchsLnot fit for warp or woof!
Till cunning come to pound and squeeze
And clarify,—refine to proof
The liquor filtered by degrees,
While the world stands aloof.

And there's the extract, flasked and fine,
And priced and saleable at last!
And Hobbs, Nobbs, Stokes and Nokes combine
To paint the future from the past,
Put blue into their line.

Hobbs hints blue.—straight he turtle eats:
Nobbs prints blue,—claret crowns his cup:
Nokes outdares Stokes in azure feats,—
Both gorge. Who fished the murex up?
What porridge had John Keats?

MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE-GOTHA

HIST, but a word, fair and soft!
Forth and be judged, Master Hugues!
Answer the question I've put you so oft:
What do you mean by your mountainous fugues?
See, we're alone in the loft,—

I, the poor organist here,
Hugues, the composer of note,
Dead though, and done with, this many a year:
Let's have a colloquy, something to quote,
Make the world prick up its ear!

III

See, the church empties apace:
Fast they extinguish the lights.
Hallo there, sacristan! Five minutes' grace!
Here's a crank pedal wants setting to rights,
Baulks one of holding the base.

Iv

See, our huge house of the sounds,
Hushing its hundreds at once,
Bids the last loiterer back to his bounds!
you may challenge them, not a response
Get the church-saints on their rounds!

(Saints go their rounds, who shall doubt?
—March, with the moon to admire,
Up nave, down chancel, turn transept about,
Supervise all betwixt pavement and spire,
Put rats and mice to the rout—

Aloys and Jurien and Just—
Order things back to their place,
Have a sharp eye lest the candlesticks rust,
Rub the church-plate, darn the sacrament-lace,
Clear the desk-velvet of dust.)

Here's your book, younger folks shelve!
Played I not off-hand and runningly,
Just now, your masterpiece, hard number twelve?
Here's what should strike, could one handle it cunningly:
Help the axe, give it a helve!

Page after page as I played,
Every bar's rest, where one wipes
Sweat from one's brow, I looked up and surveyed,
O'er my three claviers, yon forest of pipes
Whence you still peeped in the shade.

IX

Sure you were wishful to speak?
You, with brow ruled like a score,
Yes, and eyes buried in pits on each cheek,
Like two great breves, as they wrote them of yore,
Each side that bar, your straight beak!

Sure you said—'Good, the mere notes!
'Still, couldst thou take my intent,
'Know what procured me our Company's votes—
'A master were lauded and sciolists shent,
'Parted the sheep from the goats!'

Well then, speak up, never flinch!
Quick, ere my candle's a snuff
—Burnt, do you see? to its uttermost inch—
/believe in you, but that's not enough:
Give my conviction a clinch!

First you deliver your phrase
—Nothing propound, that I see,
Fit in itself for much blame or much praise—
Answered no less, where no answer needs be:
Off start the Two on their ways.

Straight must a Third interpose,
Volunteer needlessly help;
In strikes a Fourth, a Fifth thrusts in his nose,
So the cry's open, the kennel's a-yelp,
Argument's hot to the close.

One dissertates, he is candid;
Two must discept,—has distinguished;
Three helps the couple, if ever yet man did;
Four protests; Five makes a dart at the thing wished:
Back to One, goes the case bandied.

XV

One says his say with a difference;
More of expounding, explaining!
All now is wrangle, abuse, and vociferance;
Now there's a truce, all's subdued, self-restraining:
Five, though, stands out all the stiffer hence.

XVI

One is incisive, corrosive;
Two retorts, nettled, curt, crepitant;
Three makes rejoinder, expansive, explosive;
Four overbears them all, strident and strepitant:
Five ... O Danaides, O Sieve!

Now, they ply axes and crowbars;
Now, they prick pins at a tissue
Fine as a skein of the casuist Escobar's
Worked on the bone of a lie. To what issue?
Where is our gain at the Two-bars?

XVIII

Est fuga, volvitur rota.
On we drift: where looms the dim port?
One, Two, Three, Four, Five, contribute their quota;
Something is gained, if one caught but the import—
Show it us, Hugues of Saxe-Gotha!

XIX

What with affirming, denying,
Holding, risposting, subjoining,
All's like ... it's like ... for an instance
I'm trying ...
There! See our roof, its gilt moulding and groining
Under those spider-webs lying!

So your fugue broadens and thickens,
Greatens and deepens and lengthens,
Till we exclaim—'But where's music, the dickens?
*Blot ye the gold, while your spider-web strengthens
'—Blacked to the stoutest of tickens?'

XXI

I for man's effort am zealous:
Prove me such censure unfounded!
Seems it surprising a lover grows jealous-
Hopes 'twas for something, his orgas-pipes sounded,
Tiring three boys at the bellows?

XXII

Is it your moral of Life?
Such a web, simple and subtle,
Weave we on earth here in impotent strife,
Backward and forward each throwing his shuttle,
Death ending all with a knife?

XXIII

Over our heads truth and nature—
Still our life's zigzags and dodges,
Ins and outs, weaving a new legislature—
God's gold just shining its last where that lodges,
Palled beneath man's usurpature.

XXIV

So we o'ershroud stars and roses,
Cherub and trophy and garland;
Nothings grow something which quietly closes
Heaven's earnest eye: not a glimpse of the far land
Gets through our comments and glozes.

XXV

Ah but traditions, inventions,
(Say we and make up a visage)
So many men with such various intentions,
Down the past ages, must know more than this age!
Leave we the web its dimensions!

XXVI

Who thinks Hugues wrote for the deaf,
Proved a mere mountain in labour?
Better submit; try again: what's the clef?
'Faith, 'tis no trifle for pipe and for tabor—
Four flats, the minor in F.

Friend, your, fugue taxes the finger:
Learning it once, who would lose it?
Yet all the while a misgiving will linger,
Truth's golden o'er us although we refuse it—
Nature, thro' cobwebs we string her.

XXVIII

Hugues! I advise *mea pœna*
("Counterpoint glares like a Gorgon)
Bid One, Two, Three, Four, Five, clear the arena!
Say the word, straight I unstop the full-organ,
Blare out the *mode Palestrina.*

XXIX

While in the roof, if I'm right there,
. .. Lo you, the wick in the socket!
Hallo, you sacristan, show us a light there!
Down it dips, gone like a rocket.
What, you want, do you, to come unawares,
Sweeping the church up for first morning-prayers,
And find a poor devil has ended his cares
At the foot of your rotten-runged rat-riddled stairs?
Do I carry the moon in my pocket?

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

A TRAGEDY
1843

The Grand-Master's Prefect.
The Patriarch's Nuncio.
The Republic's Admiral.
LOYS DE DREUX. *Knight-Novice*

Initiated Druses—DJABAL, KHALIL, ANAEL, MAANI, KARSHOOK, RAGHIB, AYOOB, *and others.*
Uninitiated Druses.
Prefect's Guard. Nuncio's Attendants. Admiral's Force.

TIME, 14—

PLACE.—*An Islet of the Southern Sporades, colonized by Druses of Lebanon, and garrisoned by the Knights-Hospitallers of Rhodes.*

SCENE.—*A Hall in the Prefect's Palace.*

ACT I

Enter stealthily KARSHOOK, RAGHIB, AYOOB *and other initiated* Druses, *each as he enters casting off a robe that conceals his distinctive black vest and white turban; then, as giving a loose to exultation,—*

Kar. The moon is carried off in purple fire:
Day breaks at last! Break glory, with the day,
On Djabal's dread incarnate mystery
Now ready to resume its pristine shape
Of Hakeem, as the Khalif vanished erst
In what seemed death to uninstructed eyes,
On red Mokattam's verge—our Founder's flesh,
As he resumes our Founder's function!
Ragh. —Death
Sweep to the Christian Prefect that enslaved
So long us sad Druse exiles o'er the sea!
Ay. Most joy be thine, O Mother-mount! Thy brood
Returns to thee, no outcasts as we left,
But thus—but thus! Behind, our Prefect's corse;
Before, a presence like the morning—thine.
Absolute Djabal late,—God Hakeem now
That day breaks!
Kar. *Off* then, with disguise at last!
As from our forms this hateful garb we strip,
Lose every tongue its glozing accent too,
Discard each limb the ignoble gesture! Cry,
'Tis the Druse Nation, warders on our Mount
Of the world's secret, since the birth of time,
—No kindred slips, no offsets from thy stock,
No spawn of Christians are we, Prefect, we
Who rise ...
Ay. Who shout...
Ragh. Who seize, a first-fruits, ha—
Spoil of the spoiler! Brave!
[They begin to tear down, and to dispute for, the decorations of the hall.

Kar. Hold!
Ay. —Mine, I say;
And mine shall it continue!
Kar. Just this fringe!
Take anything beside! Lo, spire on spire,
Curl serpentwise wreathed columns to the top
O' the roof, and hide themselves mysteriously
Among the twinkling lights and darks that haunt
Yon cornice! Where the huge veil, they suspend
Before the Prefect's chamber of delight,
Floats wide, then falls again as if its slave,
The scented air, took heart now, and anon
Lost hearts to buoy its breadths of gorgeousness
Above the gloom they droop in—all the porch
Is jewelled o'er with frostwork charactery;
And, see, yon eight-point cross of white flame, winking
Hoar-silvery like some fresh-broke marble stone:
Raze out the Rhodian cross there, so thou leav'st me
This single fringe!
Ay. Ha, wouldst thou, dog-fox? Help!
—Three hand-breadths of gold fringe, my son was set
To twist, the night he died!
Kar. Nay, hear the knave!
And I could witness my one daughter borne,
A week since, to the Prefect's couch, yet fold
These arms, be mute, lest word of mine should mar
Our Master's work, delay the Prefect here
A day, prevent his sailing hence for Rhodes—
How know I else?—Hear me denied my right
By such a knave!
Ragh. [interposing). Each ravage for himself!
Booty enough! On, Druses! Be there found
Blood and a heap behind us; with us, Djabal
Turned Hakeem; and before us, Lebanon!
Yields the porch? Spare not! There his minions dragged
Thy daughter, Karshook, to the Prefect's couch!
Ayoob! Thy son, to soothe the Prefect's pride,
Bent o'er that task, the death-sweat on his brow,
Carving the spice-tree's heart in scroll-work there!
Onward in Djabal's name!

As the tumult is at height, enter KHALIL. *A pause and silence.*

Kha. Was it for this,
Djabal hath summoned you? Deserve you thus
A portion in to-day's event? What, here—
When most behoves your feet fall soft, your eyes
Sink low, your tongues lie still,—at Djabal's side,
Close in his very hearing, who, perchance,
Assumes e'en now God Hakeem's dreaded shape,—
Dispute you for these gauds?
Ay. How say'st thou, Khalil?
Doubtless our Master prompts thee! Take the fringe,
Old Karshook! I supposed it was a day…
Kha. For pillage?
Kar. Hearken, Khalil! Never spoke
A boy so like a song-bird; we avouch thee
Prettiest of all our Master's instruments
Except thy bright twin-sister; thou and Anael
Challenge his prime regard: but we may crave
(Such nothings as we be) a portion too
Of Djabal's favour; in him we believed,
His bound ourselves, him moon by moon obeyed,
Kept silence till this daybreak—so, may claim
Reward: who grudges me my claim?
Ay. To-day
Is not as yesterday!
Ragh. Stand off!
Kha. Rebel you?
Must I, the delegate of Djabal, draw
His wrath on you, the day of our Return?
Other Druses. Wrench from their grasp the fringe! Hounds! must the earth
Vomit her plagues on us thro' thee?—and thee?
Plague me not, Khalil, for their fault!
Kha. Oh, shame!
Thus breaks to-day on you, the mystic tribe
Who, flying the approach of Osman, bore
Our faith, a merest spark, from Syria's ridge
Its birthplace, hither! 'Let the sea divide
'These hunters from their prey,' you said; 'and safe
'In this dim islet's virgin solitude
'Tend we our faith, the spark, till happier time
'Fan it to fire; till Hakeem rise again,
'According to his word that, in the flesh
'Which faded on Mokattam ages since,
'He, at our extreme need, would interpose,
'And, reinstating all in power and bliss,
'Lead us himself to Lebanon once more'
Was't not thus you departed years ago,

Ere I was born ?
Druses. 'Twas even thus, years ago.
Kha. And did you call—(according to old laws
Which bid us, lest the sacred grow profane,
Assimilate ourselves in outward rites
With strangers fortune makes our lords, and live
As Christian with the Christian, Jew with Jew,
Druse only with the Druses)—did you call
Or no, to stand 'twixt you and Osman's rage
(Mad to pursue e'en hither thro' the sea
The remnant of our tribe), a race self-vowed
To endless warfare with his hordes and him.
The White-cross Knights of the adjacent Isle?
Kar. And why else rend we down, wrench up, rase out?
These Knights of Rhodes we thus solicited
For help, bestowed on us a fiercer pest
Than aught we fled—their Prefect; who began
His promised mere paternal governance
By a prompt massacre of all our Sheikhs
Able to thwart the Order in its scheme
Of crushing, with our nation's memory,
Each chance of our return, and taming us
Bondslaves to Rhodes for ever—all, he thinks
To end by this day's treason,
Kha. Say I not?
You, fitted to the Order's purposes,
Your Sheikhs cut off, your rites, your garb proscribed,
Must yet receive one degradation more;
The Knights at last throw off the mask-transfer,
As tributary now and appanage,
This islet they are but protectors of,
To their own ever-craving liege, the Church,
Who licenses all crimes that pay her thus.
You, from their Prefect, were to be consigned
(Pursuant of I know not what vile pact)
To the Knights' Patriarch, ardent to outvie
His predecessor in all wickedness.
When suddenly rose Djabal in the midst,
Djabal, the man in semblance, but our God
Confessed by signs and portents. Ye saw fire
Bicker round Djabal, heard strange music flit
Bird-like about his brow?
Druses. We saw—we heard!
Djabal is Hakeem, the incarnate Dread,
The phantasm Khalif, King of Prodigies!
Kha. And as he said has not our Khalif done,
And so disposed events (from land to land
Passing invisibly) that when, this morn,
The pact of villany complete, there comes
This Patriarch's Nuncio with this Master's Prefect
Their treason to consummate,—each will face
For a crouching handful, an uplifted nation:
For simulated Christians, confessed Druses:
And, for slaves past hope of the Mother-mount,
Freedmen returning there 'neath Venice' flag;
That Venice which, the Hospitallers' foe,
Grants us from Candia escort home at price
Of our relinquished isle, Rhodes counts her own—
Venice, whose promised argosies should stand
Toward harbour: is it now that you, and you,
And you, selected from the rest to bear
The burthen of the Khalif's secret, further
To-day's event, entitled by your wrongs,
And witness in the Prefect's hall his fate—
That you dare clutch these gauds? Ay, drop them!
Kar. True,
Most true, all this; and yet, may one dare hint,
Thou art the youngest of us?—though employed
Abundantly as Djabal's confidant,
Transmitter of his mandates, even now.
Much less, whene'er beside him Anael graces
The cedar throne, his queen-bride, art thou like
To occupy its lowest step that day!
Now, Khalil, wert thou checked as thou aspirest,
Forbidden such or such an honour,—say,
Would silence serve so amply?
Kha. Karshook thinks
I covet honours? Well, nor idly thinks.
Honours? I have demanded of them all
The greatest.
Kar. I supposed so.
Kha, Judge, yourselves!
Turn, thus: 'tis in the alcove at the back
Of yonder columned porch, whose entrance now
The veil hides, that our Prefect holds his state,
Receives the Nuncio, when the one, from Rhodes,
The other lands from Syria; there they meet.
Now. I have sued with earnest prayers.. •

Kar. For what
Shall the Bride's brother vainly sue?
Kha. That mine—
Avenging in one blow a myriad wrongs
—Might be the hand to slay the Prefect there!
Djabal reserves that office for himself.
[A silence.
Thus far, as youngest of you all. I speak
—Scarce more enlightened than yourselves; since, near
As I approach him, nearer as I trust
Soon to approach our Master, he reveals
Only the God's power, not the glory yet.
Therefore I reasoned with you: now. as servant
To Djabal, bearing his authority,
Hear me appoint your several posts! Till noon
None see him save myself and Anael: once
The deed achieved, our Khalif, casting off
The embodied Awe's tremendous mystery,
The weakness of the flesh disguise, resumes
His proper glory, ne'er to fade again.

Enter a Druse.

The Druse. Our Prefect lands from Rhodes!—without a sign
That he suspects aught since he left our Isle;
Nor in his train a single guard beyond
The few he sailed with hence: so have we learned
From Loys.
Kar. Loys? Is not Loys gone
For ever?
Ay. Loys, the Frank Knight, returned?
The Druse. Loys, the boy, stood on the leading prow
Conspicuous in his gay attire, and leapt
Into the surf the foremost. Since day-dawn
I kept watch to the Northward; take but note
Of my poor vigilance to Djabal!
Kha. Peace!
Thou, Karshook, with thy company, receive
The Prefect as appointed: see, all keep
The wonted show of servitude: announce
Ilis entry here by the accustomed peal
Of trumpets, then await the further pleasure
Of Djabal! (Loys back, whom Djabal sent
To Rhodes that we might spare the single Knight
Worth sparing!)

Enter a second Druse.

The Druse. I espied it first! Say. I
First spied the Nuncio's galley from the South!
Said'st thou a Crossed-keys' flag would flap the mast?
It nears apace! One galley and no more.
If Djabal chance to ask who spied the flag,
Forget not, I it was!
Kha. Thou, Ayoob, bring
The Nuncio and his followers hither! Break
One rule prescribed, ye wither in your blood,
Die at your fault!

Enter a third Druse.

The Druse. I shall see home, see home!
—Shall banquet in the sombre groves again!
Hail to thee, Khalil! Venice looms afar;
The argosies of Venice, like a cloud,
Bear up from Candia in the distance!
Kha. Joy!
Summon our people, Raghib! Bid all forth!
Tell them the long-kept secret, old and young!
Set free the captive, let the trampled raise
Their faces from the dust, because at length
The cycle is complete, God Hakeem's reign
Begins anew! Say, Venice for our guard,
Ere night we steer for Syria! Hear you, Druses?
Hear you this crowning witness to the claims
Of Djabal? Oh, I spoke of hope and fear,
Reward and punishment, because he bade
Who has the right; for me, what should I say
But, mar not those imperial lineaments,
No majesty of all that rapt regard
Vex by the least omission! Let him rise
Without a check from you!
Druses. Let Djabal rise!

Enter LOYS.—*The* Druses *are silent.*

Loys. Who speaks of Djabal?—for I seek him, friends!
[Aside.] Tu Dieul 'Tis as our Isle broke out in song
For joy, its Prefect-incubus drops off
To-day, and I succeed him in his rule!
But no—they cannot dream of their good fortune!
[Aloud.] Peace to you, Druses! I have tidings for you,
But first for Djabal: where's your tall bewitcher,
With that small Arab thin-lipped silver-mouth?
Kha. [aside to KARSHOOK]. Loys, in truth! Yet Djabal cannot err!
Kar. [to KHALIL]. And who takes charge of Loys? That's forgotten,
Despite thy wariness! Will Loys stand

And see his comrades slaughtered?
Loys [aside]. How they shrink
And whisper-with "those rapid faces! What?
The sight of me in their oppressors' garb
Strikes terror to the simple tribe? God's shame
On those that bring our Order ill repute!
But all's at end now; better days begin
For these mild mountaineers from oversea:
The timidest shall have in me no Prefect
To cower at thus! *[Aloud.]* I asked for Djabal—
Kar. [aside]. Better
One lured him. ere he can suspect, inside
The corridor; twere easy to despatch
A youngster. *[To* LOYS.] Djabal passed some minutes since
Thro' yonder porch, and •, .
Kha. [aside]. Hold! What, him despatch?
The only Christian of them all we charge
No tyranny upon? Who,—noblest Knight
Of all that learned from time to time their trade
Of lust and cruelty among us,—heir
To Europe's pomp, a truest child of **pride.—**
Yet stooa between the Prefect and ourselves
From the beginning? Loys, Djabal makes
Account of, and precisely sent to Rhodes
For safety? I take charge of him!
[7b LOYS.] Sir Loys,—
Loys, There, cousins! Does Sir Loys strike you dead?
Kha, [advancing], Djabal has intercourse with few or ncne
Till noontide: but, your pleasure?
Loys, 'Intercourse
•With few or none?'—(Ah, Khalil, when you spoke
I saw not your smooth face! All health!—and health
To Anael! How fares Anael?)—'Intercourse
'With few or none?' Forget you, I've been friendly
With Djabal long ere you or any Druse?
—Enough of him at Rennes, I think, beneath
The Duke my father's roof! He'd tell by the hour,
With fixed white eyes beneath his swarthy brow,
Plausiblest stories . ..
Kha. Stories, say you?—Ah, The quaint attire!
toys. My dress for the last time!
How sad I cannot make you understand,
This ermine, o'er a shield, betokens me
Of Bretagne, ancientest of provinces
And noblest; and, what's best and oldest there,
See, Dreux', our house's blazon, which the Nuncio
Tacks to an Hospitaller's vest to-day!
Kha. The Nuncio we await? What brings you back
From Rhodes, Sir Loys?
Loys. How you island-tribe
Forget the world's awake while here you drowse!
What brings me back? What should not bring me, rather!
Our Patriarch's Nuncio visits you to-day—
Is not my year's probation out? I come
To take the knightly vows.
Kha. What's that you wear?
Loys. This Rhodian cross? The cross your Prefect wore.
You should have seen, as I saw, the full Chapter
Rise, to a man, while they transferred this cross
From that unworthy Prefect's neck to . . . (fool—
My secret will escape me!) In a word,
My year's probation passed, a Knight ere eve
Am I; bound like the rest, to yield my wealth
To the common stock, to live in chastity,
(We Knights espouse alone our Order's fame)
—Change this gay weed for the black white-crossed gown,
And fight to death against the Infidel
—Not, therefore, against you, you Christians with
Such partial difference only as befits
The peacefullest of tribes. But Khalil, prithee,
Is not the Isle brighter than wont to-day?
Kha, Ah, the new sword!
Loys, See now! You handle sword
As'twere a camel-staff. Pull! That's my motto,
Annealed *'Pro fide,'* on the blade in blue.
Kha, No curve in it? Surely a blade should curve.
Loys. Straight from the wrist! Loose—it should poise itself!
Kha, [waving with irrepressible exultation the sword]. We are a nation, Loys, of old fame
Among the mountains! Rights have we to keep
With the sword too!
[Remembering himself.] But I forget—you bid me
Seek Djabal?
Loys. What! A sword's sight scares you not?
(The People I will make of him and them!

Oh let my Prefect-sway begin at once!)
Bring Djabal—say, indeed, that come he must!
Kha. At noon seek Djabal in the Prefect's Chamber,
And find . . . *[Aside.]* Nay, 'tis thy cursed race's token,
Frank pride, no special insolence of thine!
[Aloud.] Tarry, and I will do your bidding, Loys!
[To the rest aside.] Now, forth you! I proceed to Djabal straight.
Leave this poor boy, who knows not what he says!
Oh will it not add joy to even thy joy,
Djabal, that I report all friends were true?
[KHALIL *goes, followed by the* Druses.
Loys. Tu Dieu! How happy I shall make these Druses!
Was't not surpassingly contrived of me
To get the long list of their wrongs by heart,
Then take the first pretence for stealing off
From these poor islanders, present myself
Sudden at Rhodes before the noble Chapter,
And (as best proof of ardour in its cause
Which ere to-night will have become, too, mine)
Acquaint it with this plague-sore in its body,
This Prefect and his villanous career?
The princely Synod! All I dared request
Was his dismissal; and they graciously
Consigned his very office to myself—
Myself may cure the Isle diseased!
And well
For them, they did so! Since I never felt
How lone a lot, tho' brilliant, I embrace,
Till now that, past retrieval, it is mine.
To live thus, and thus die! Yet, as I leapt
On shore, so home a feeling greeted me
That I could half believe in Djabal's story,
He used to tempt my father with, at Rennes—
And me, too, since the story brought me here—
Of some Count Dreux and ancestor of ours
Who, sick of wandering from Bouillon's war,
Left his old name in Lebanon.
Long days
At least to spend in the Isle! and, my news known
An hour hence, what if Anael turn on me
The great black eyes I must forget?
Why, fool,
Recall them, then? My business is with Djabal,
Not Anael! Djabal tarries: if I seek him?—
The Isle is brighter than its wont to-day.

ACT II

Enter DJABAL.

Dja. That a strong man should think himself a God!
I—Hakeem? To have wandered through the world,
Sown falsehood, and thence reaped now scorn, now faith,
For my one chant with many a change, my tale
Of outrage, and my prayer for vengeance—this
Required, forsooth, no mere man's faculty,
Nought less than Hakeem's? The persuading Loys
To pass probation here; the getting access
By Loys to the Prefect; worst of all,
The gaining my tribe's confidence by fraud
That would disgrace the very Frank,—a few
Of Europe's secrets which subdue the flame,
The wave,—to ply a simple tribe with these,
Took Hakeem?
And I feel this first to-day!
Does the day break, is the hour imminent
When one deed, when my whole life's deed, my deed
Must be accomplished? Hakeem? Why the God?
Shout, rather, 'Djabal, Youssof's child, thought slain
'With his whole race, the Druses' Sheikhs, this Prefect
'Endeavoured to extirpate—saved, a child,
'Returns from traversing the world, a man,
'Able to take revenge, lead back the march
'To Lebanon'—so snout, and who gainsays?
But now, because delusion mixed itself
Insensibly with this career, all's changed!
Have I brought Venice to afford us convoy?
'True—but my jugglings wrought that!' Put I heart
Into our people where no heart lurked?—'Ah,
'What cannot an impostor do!'
Not this!
Not do this which I do! Not bid avaunt
Falsehood! Thou shalt not keep thy hold on me!
—Nor even get a hold on me! 'Tis now—
This day—hour—minute—'tis as here I stand
On the accursed threshold of the Prefect.
That I am found deceiving and deceived!
And now what do I?—hasten to the few

Deceived, ere they deceive the many—shout,
'As I professed;'I did believe myself!
'Say, Druses, had you seen a butchery—
' If Ayoob, Karshook saw—Maani there
'Must tell you how I saw my father sink;
'My mother's arms twine still about my neck;
'I hear my brother shriek, here's yet the scar
'Of what was meant for my own death-blow—say,
' I f you had woke like me, grown year by year
"Out of the tumult in a far-off clime,
'Would it be wondrous such delusion grew?
'I walked the world, asked help at every hand;
'Came help or no? Not this and this? Which helps
'When I returned with, found the Prefect here,
"The Druses here, all here but Hakeem's self,
'The Khalif of the thousand prophecies,
•Reserved for such a juncture,—could I call
'My mission aught but Hakeem's? Promised Hakeem
'More than performs the Djabal—you absolve?
'—Me, you will never shame before the crowd
' Yet happily ignorant?—Me, both throngs surround,
'The few deceived, the many unabused,
'—Who, thus surrounded, slay for you and them
'The Prefect, lead to Lebanon? No Khalif.
'But Sheikn once more! Mere Djabal—not'.,.

Enter KHALIL *hastily,*

Kha. —God Hakeem!
'Tis told! The whole Druse nation knows thee, Hakeem,
As we! and mothers lift on high their babes
Who seem aware, so glisten their great eyes,
Thou hast not failed us; ancient brows are proud;
Our elders could not earlier die, it seems,
Than at thy coming! The Druse heart is thine!
Take it! my lord and theirs, be thou adored!
Dja. [aside]. Adored!—but I renounce it utterly!
Kha, Already are they instituting choirs
And Dances to the Khalif, as of old
Tis chronicled thou bad'st them.
Dja, [aside], I abjure it!
'Tis not mine—not for me!
Kha, Why pour they wine
Flavoured like honey and bruised mountain-herbs,
Or wear those strings of sun-dried cedar-fruit?
Oh, let me tell thee—Esaad, we supposed
Doting, is carried forth, eager to see
The last sun rise on the Isle: he can see now!
The shamed Druse women never wept before:
They can look up when we reach home, they say.
Smell!—sweet cane, saved in Lilith's breast thus long-
Sweet !—it grows wild in Lebanon. And I
Alone do nothing for thee! 'Tis my office
Just to announce what well thou know'st —but thus
Thou bidst me. At this self-same moment tend
The Prefect, Nuncio and the Admiral
Hither by their three sea-paths: nor forget
Who were the trusty watchers!—thou forget?
Like me, who do forget that Anael bade.. •
Dja, [aside]. Ay, Anael, Anael—is that said at last?
Louder than all, that would be said, I knew!
What does abjuring mean, confessing mean,
To the people? Till that woman crossed my path,
On went I, solely for my people's sake:
I saw her. and I then first saw myself,
And slackened pace: 'if *I* should prove indeed
'Hakeem—with Anael by!'
Kha, [aside]. Ah, he is rapt !
Dare I at such a moment break on him
Even to do my sister's bidding? Yes:
The eyes are Djabal's and not Hakeem's; yet,
Though but till I have spoken this, perchance.
Dja, [aside]. To yearn to tell her; and, yet have no one
Great heart's word that will tell her! It could gasp
Doubtless one such word out, and die.
[Aloud.] You saidt
That Anael...
Kha, ... Fain wouldlsee thee,, speak with thee,
Before you change, discard this; Djabal's shape
She knows, for Hakeem's snaps she is to know.
Something to say that will not from her mind!
I know not what—'Let him but come!" she said.

Dja. [half-apart]. My nation—all my Druses—how fare they?
Those I must save, and suffer thus to save,
Hold they their posts? Wait they their Khalif too?
Kha. All at the signal pant to flock around
That banner of a brow!
Dja. [aside]. And when they flock,
Confess them this: and after, for reward,
Be chased with howlings to her feet perchance!
—Have the poor outraged Druses, deaf and blind,
Precede me there, forestall my story there,
Tell it in mocks and jeers!
I lose myself.
Who needs a Hakeem to direct him now?
I need the veriest child—why not this child?
[Turning abruptly to KHALIL.
You are a Druse too, Khalil; you were nourished
Like Anael with our mysteries: if she
Could vow, so nourished, to love only one
Who should avenge the Druses, whence proceeds
Your silence? Wherefore made you no essay,
Who thus implicitly can execute
My bidding? What have I done, you could not?
Who, knowing more than Anael the prostration
Of our once lofty tribe, the daily life
Of this detested . . .
Does he come, you say,
This Prefect? All's in readiness?
Kha. The sword,
The sacred robe, the Khalif 's mystic tiar,
Laid up so long, are all disposed beside
The Prefect's chamber.
Dja. —Why did you despair?
Kha. I know our nation's state? Too surely know,
As thou who speak'st to prove me! Wrongs like burs
Should wake revenge: but when I sought the wronged
And spoke,—'The Prefect stabbed your son—arise!
'Your daughter, while you starve, eats shameless bread
'In his pavilion—then arise!'—my speech
Fell idly: 'twas, 'Be silent, or worse fare!
Endure till time's slow cycle prove complete!
' Who mayst thou be that takest on thee to thrust
' Into this peril—art thou Hakeem ?' No!
Only a mission like thy mission renders
All these obedient at a breath, subdues
Their private passions, brings their wills to one.
Dja. You think so?
Kha. Even now—when they have witnessed
Thy miracles—had I not threatened all
With Hakeem's vengeance, they would mar the work,
And couch ere this, each with his special prize,
Safe in his dwelling, leaving our main hope
To perish. No! When these have kissed thy feet
At Lebanon, the past purged off, the present
Clear,—for the future, even Hakeem's mission
May end, and I perchance, or any youth,
Shall rule them thus renewed.—I tutor thee!
Dja. And wisely. (He is Anael's brother, pure
As Anael's self.) Go say, I come to her.
Haste! I will follow you. [KHALIL *goes.*
Oh, not confess
To these, the blinded multitude—confess,
Before at least the fortune of my deed
Half-authorize its means! Only to her
Let me confess my fault, who in my path
Curled up like incense from a Mage-king's tomb
When he would have the wayfarer descend
Through the earth's rift and bear hid treasure forth!
How should child's-carelessness prove manhood's crime
Till now that I, whose lone youth hurried past,
Letting each joy 'scape for the Druses* sake,
At length recover in one Druse all joy?
Were her brow brighter, her eyes richer. still
Would I confess. On the gulf's verge I pause.
How could I slay the Prefect, thus and thus?
Anael, be mine to guard me, not destroy!
[Goes.

Enter ANAEL, *and* MAANI *who is assisting to array her in the ancient dress of the Druses.*

An. Those saffron vestures of the tabret-girls!
Comes Djabal, think you?
Maa. Doubtless Djabal comes.
An. Dost thou snow-swathe thee kinglier, Lebanon,
Than in my dreams?—Nay all the tresses off
My forehead! Look I lovely so? He says
That I am lovely.
Maa. Lovely! nay, that hangs Awry.
An. You tell me how a khandjar hangs ?

The sharp side, thus, along the heart, see, marks
The maiden of our class. Are you content
For Djabal as for me?
Maa. Content, my child.
An. Oh mother, tell me more of him! He comes
Even now—tell more, fill up my soul with him!
Maa. And did I not... yes, surely . •. tell you all?
An. What will be changed in Djabal when the Change
Arrives? Which feature? Not his eyes!
Maa. 'Tis writ
Our Hakeem's eyes rolled fire and clove the dark
Superbly.
An. Not his eyes! His voice perhaps?
Yet that's no change; for a grave current lived
—Grandly beneath the surface ever lived,
That, scattering, broke as in live silver spray
While ... ah, the bliss... he would discourse to me
In that enforced still fashion, word on word!
Tis the old current which must swell thro* that,
For what least tone, Maani, could I lose?
'Tis surely not his voice will change!
—If Hakeem
Only stood by! If Djabal, somehow, passed
Out of the radiance as from out a robe;
Possessed, but was not *itl*
He lived with you?
Well—and that morning Djabal saw me first
And heard me vow never to wed but one
Who saved my People—on that day ... proceed!
Maa. Once more, then: from the time of his return
In secret, changed so since he left the Isle
That I, who screened our Emir's last of sons.
This Djabal, from the Prefect's massacre
—Who bade him ne'er forget the child he was,
—Who dreamed so long the youth he might become—
I knew not in the man that child; the man
Who spoke alone of hope to save our tribe,
How he had gone from land to land to save
Our tribe—allies were sure, nor foes to dread.
And much he mused, days, nights, alone he mused:
But never till that day when, pale and worn
As by a persevering woe, he cried
'Is there not one Druse left me?'—and I showed
The way to Khalil's and your hiding-place
From the abhorred eye of the Prefect here,
So that he saw you, heard you speak—till then,
Never did he announce—(how the moon seemed
To ope and shut, the while, above us both!)
—His mission was the mission promised us;
The cycle had revolved; all things renewing,
He was lost Hakeem clothed in flesh to lead
His children home anon, now veiled to work
Great purposes: the Druses now would change!
An. And they have changed! And obstacles did sink,
And furtherances rose! And round his form
Played fire, and music beat her angel wings!
My people, let me more rejoice, oh more
For you than for myself I Did I but watch
Afar the pageant, feel our Khalif pass.
One of the throng, how proud were I—tho' ne'er
Singled by Djabal's glance! But to be chosen
His own from all, the most his own of all,
To be exalted with him, side by side,
Lead the exulting Druses, meet... ah, how
Worthily meet the maidens who await
Ever beneath the cedars—how deserve
This honour, in their eyes? So bright are they
Who saffron-vested sound the tabret there.
The girls who throng there in my dream! One hour
And all is over: how shall I do aught
That may deserve next hour's exalting?—How?— *[Suddenly to* MAANI.
Mother, I am not worthy him! I read it
Still in his eyes! He stands as if to tell me
I am not, yet forbears. Why else revert
To one theme ever?—how mere human gifts
Suffice him in myself—whose worship fades,
Whose awe goes ever off at his approach,
As now, who when he comes ...
[DJABAL *enters.]* Oh why is it
I cannot kneel to you?
Dja. Rather, 'tis I
Should kneel to you, my Anael!
An. Even sol

For never seem you—shall I speak the truth?—
Never a God to me! 'Tis the Man's hand,
Eye, voice! Oh do you veil these to our people,
Or but to me? To them, I think, to them!
And brightness is their veil, shadow—my truth!
You mean that I should never kneel to you
—So, thus I kneel!
Dja. [preventing her]. No—no!
[Feeling the khandjar as he raises her. Ha, have you chosen . . .
An, The khandjar with our ancient garb. But, Djabal,
Change not, be not exalted yet! Give time
That I may plan more, perfect more! My blood
Beats, beats!
[Aside.] Oh must I then—since Loys leaves us
Vever to come again, renew in me
These doubts so near effaced already—must
I needs confess them now to Djabal?—own
That when I saw that stranger, heard his voice,
My faith fell, and the woeful thought flashed first
That each effect of Djabal's presence, taken
For proof of more than human attributes
In him, by me whose heart at his approach
Beat fast, whose brain while he was by swam round,
Whose soul at his departure died away,
—That every such effect might have been wrought
In other frames, tho' not in mine, by Loys
Or any merely mortal presence? Doubt
Is fading fast; shall I reveal it now?
How shall I meet the rapture presently,
With doubt unexpiated, undisclosed?
Dja. [aside]. Avow the truth? I cannot! In what words
Avow that all she loved in me was false?
—Which yet has served that flower-like love of hers
To climb by, like the clinging gourd, and clasp
With its divinest wealth of leaf and bloom.
Could I take down the prop-work, in itself
So vile, yet interlaced and overlaid
With painted cups and fruitage—might these still
Bask in the sun, unconscious their own strength
Of matted stalk and tendril had replaced
The old support thus silently withdrawn!
But no; the beauteous fabric crushes too.
'Tis not for my sake but for Anael's sake
I leave her soul this Hakeem where it leans.
Oh could I vanish from her, quit the Isle!
And yet—a thought comes: here my work is done
At every point; the Druses must return—
Have convoy to their birth-place back, whoe'er
The leader be, myself or any Druse—
Venice is pledged to that: 'tis for myself,
For my own vengeance in the Prefect's death,
I stay now, not for them: to slay or spare
The Prefect, whom imports it save myself?
He cannot bar their passage from the Isle;
What would his death be but my own reward?
Then, mine I will forego. It is foregone!
Let him escape with all my House's blood!
Ere he can reach land, Djabal disappears,
And Hakeem, Anael loved, shall, fresh as first,
Live in her memory, keeping her sublime
Above the world. She cannot touch that world
By ever knowing what I truly am,
Since Loys,—of mankind the only one
Able to link my present with my past,
My life in Europe with my Island life.
Thence, able to unmask me,—I've disposed
Safely at last at Rhodes, and

Enter KHALIL.

Kha. Loys greets thee!
Dja, Loys? To drag me back? It cannot be!
An. [aside], Loys! Ah, doubt may not be stifled so!
Kha. Can I have erred that thou so gazest? Yes,
I told thee not in the glad press of tidings
Of higher import, Loys is returned
Before the Prefect, with, if possible,
Twice the light-heartedness of old. As though
On some inauguration he expects,
To-day, the world's fate hung!
Dja. —And asks for me?
Kha. Thou knowest all things. Thee in chief he greets,
But every Druse of us is to be happy
At his arrival, he declares: were Loys
Thou, Master, he could have no wider soul
To take us in with. How I love that Loys!
Dja. [aside]. Shame winds me with her tether round and round.

An. [aside], Loys? I take the trial! it is meet, —:
The little I can do, be done; that faith,
All I can offer, want no perfecting
Which my own act may compass. Ay, this way
All may go well, nor that ignoble doubt
Be chased by other aid than mine. Advance
Close to my fear, weigh Loys with my Lord,
The mortal with the more than mortal gifts!
Dja. [aside]. Before, there were so few deceived! and now
There's doubtless not one least Druse in the Isle
But, having learned my superhuman claims,
And calling me his Khalif-God, will clash
The whole truth out from Loys at first word!
While Loys, for his part, will hold me up,
With a Frank's unimaginable scorn
Of such imposture, to my people's eyes!
Could I but keep him longer yet awhile
From them, amuse him here until I plan
How he and I at once may leave the Isle!
Khalil I cannot part with from my side—
My only help in this emergency:
There's Anael!
An. Please you?
Dja. Anael—none but she!
[To ANAEL.} I pass some minutes in the chamber there,
Ere I see Loys: you shall speak with him
Until I join you. Khalil follows me.
An. [aside]. As I divined: he bids me save myself,
Offers me a probation—I accept.
Let me see Loys!
Loys [without], Djabal!
An. [aside], 'Tis his voice.
The smooth Frank trifler with our people's wrongs,
The self-complacent boy-inquirer, loud
On this and that inflicted tyranny,
—Aught serving to parade an ignorance
Of how wrong feels, inflicted! Let me close
With what I viewed at distance: let myself
Probe this delusion to the core!
Dja. He comes.
Khalil, along with me! while Anael waits
Till I return once more—and but once more.

ACT III

ANAEL *and* LOYS.

An. Here leave me! Here I wait another. Twas
For no mad protestation of a love
Like this you say possesses you, I came.
Loys. Love? how protest a love I dare not feel?
Mad words may doubtless have escaped me: you
Are here—I only feel you here!
An. No more!
Loys. But once again, whom could you love? I dare,
Alas, say nothing of myself, who am
A Knight now, for when Knighthood we embrace.
Love we abjure: so, speak on safely: speak,
Lest I speak, and betray my faith! And yet
To say your breathing passes through me, changes
My blood to spirit, and my spirit to you,
As Heaven the sacrificer's wine to it—
This is not to protest my love! You said
You could love one . . .
An. One only! We are bent
To earth—who raises up my tribe, I love;
The Prefect bows us—who removes him; we
Have ancient rights—who gives them back to us,
Hove. Forbear me! Let my hand go!
Loys. Him
You could love only? Where is Djabal? Stay!
[Aside.] Yet wherefore stay? Who does this but myself?
Had I apprised her that I come to do
Just this, what more could she acknowledge? No,
She sees into my heart's core! What is it
Feeds either cheek with red, as June some rose?
Why turns she from me? Ah fool, overfond
To dream I could call up . ..
.. . What never dream
Yet feigned! 'Tis love! Oh Anael, speak to me!
Djabal—
An. Seek Djabal by the Prefect's chamber
At noon! *[She paces the room.*
Loys [aside]. And am I not the Prefect now?
Is it my fate to be the only one
Able to win her love, the only one
Unable to accept her love? The past
Breaks up beneath my footing: came I here
This morn as to a slave, to set her free
And take her thanks, and then spend day by day
Content beside her in the Isle? What works
This knowledge in me now? Her eye has broken
The faint disguise away: for Anael's sake

I left the Isle, for her espoused the cause
Of the Druses, all for her I thought, till now,
To live without!
—As I must live! To-day
Ordains me Knight, forbids me . . . never shall
Forbid me to profess myself, heart, arm,
Thy soldier!
An, Djabal you demanded, comes.
Loys [aside]. What wouldst thou, Loys? See him? Nought beside
Is wanting: I have felt his voice a spell
From first to last. He brought me here, made known
The Druses to me, drove me hence to seek
Redress for them; and shall I meet him now,
When nought is wanting but a word of his,
To—what?—induce me to spurn hope, faith, pride,
Honour away,—to cast my lot among
His tribe, become a proverb in men's mouths,
Breaking my high pact of companionship
With those who graciously bestowed on me
The very opportunities I turn
Against them! Let me not see Djabal now!
An, The Prefect also comes,
Loys [aside]. Him let me see,
Not Djabal! Him, degraded at a word,
To soothe me,—to attest belief in me—
And after, Djabal! Yes, ere I return
To her, the Nuncio's vow shall have destroyed
This heart's rebellion, and coerced this will
For ever.
Anael, not before the vows
Irrecoverably fix me . . .
Let me fly!
The Prefect, or I lose myself for ever!
[Goes,
An. Yes, I am calm now; just one way remains—
One, to attest my faith in him: for, see,
I were quite lost else: Loys, Djabal, stand
On either side—two men! I balance looks
And words, give Djabal a man's preference,
No more. In Djabal, Hakeem Is absorbed!
And for a love like this, the God who saves
My race, selects me for his bride? One way!

Enter DJABAL.

Dja. [to himself]. No moment is to waste then; 'tis resolved.
If Khalil may be trusted to lead back
My Druses, and if Loys can be lured
Out of the Isle—if I procure his silence,
Or promise never to return at least,—
All's over. Even now my bark awaits:
I reach the next wild islet and the next,
And lose myself beneath the sun for ever.
And now, to Anael!
An, Djabal, I am thine!
Dja, Mine? Djabal's?—As if Hakeem had not been?
An, Not Djabal's? Say first, do you read my thought?
Why need I speak, if you can read my thought?
Dja, I do not, I have said a thousand times.
An, (My secret's safe, I shall surprise him yet!)
Djabal, I knew your secret from the first:
Djabal, when first I saw you . . . (by our porch
You leant, and pressed the tinkling veil away,
And one fringe fell behind your neck—I see!)
. . . I knew you were not human, for I said
'This dim secluded house where the sea beats
'Is heaven to me—my people's huts are hell
'To them* this august form will follow me,
'Mix with the waves his voice will,—I have him;
'And they, the Prefect! Oh, my happiness
'Rounds to the full whether I choose or no!
'His eyes met mine, he was about to speak,
'His hand grew damp—surely he meant to say
'He let me love him: in that moment's bliss
'I shall forget my people pine for home—
'They pass and they repass with pallid eyes!'
I vowed at once a certain vow; this vow—
Not to embrace you till my tribe was saved.
Embrace me!
Dja. [apart]. And she loved me! Nought remained
But that! Nay, Anael, is the Prefect dead?
An, Ah, you reproach me! True, his death crowns all,
I know—or should know: and I would do much,
Believe! but, death! Oh, you, who have known death,
Would never doom the Prefect, were death fearful
As we report!
Death!—a fire curls within us
From the foot's palm, and fills up to the brain,

Up, out, then shatters the whole bubble-shell
Of flesh, perchance!
Death!—witness, I would die,
Whate'er death be, would venture now to die
For Khalil, for Maani—what for thee?
Nay but embrace me, Djabal, in assurance
My vow will not be broken, for I must
Do something to attest my faith in you,
Be worthy you!
Dja. [avoiding her], I come for that—to say
Such an occasion is at hand: 'tis like
I leave you—that we part, my Anael,—part
For ever!
An. We part? Just so! I have succumbed,—
I am. he thinks, unworthy—and nought less
Will serve than such approval of my faith.
Then, we part not! Remains there no way short
Of that? Oh not that!
Death!—yet a hurt bird
Died in my hands; its eyes filmed—'Nay, it sleeps,'
I said, 'will wake to-morrow well:' 'twas dead.
Dja. I stand here and time fleets. Anael —I come
To bid a last farewell to you: perhaps
We never meet again. But, ere the Prefect Arrive...

Enter KHALIL, *breathlessly.*

Kha. He's here! The Prefect! Twenty guards,
No more: no sign he dreams of danger. All
Awaits thee only. Ayoob, Karshook, keep
Their posts—wait but the deed's accomplishment
To join us with thy Druses to a man.
Still holds his course the Nuncio—near and near
The fleet from Candia steering.
Dja. [aside]. All is lost! —Or won?
Kha. And I have laid the sacred robe,
The sword, the head-tiar, at the porch—the place
Commanded. Thou wilt hear the Prefect's trumpet.
Dja. Then I keep Anael,—him then, past recall,
I slay—'tis forced on me. As I began
I must conclude—so be it!
Kha. For the rest,
Save Loys, our foe's solitary sword,
All is so safe that... I will ne'er entreat
Thy post again of thee: tho' danger none,
There must be glory only meet for thee
In slaying the Prefect.
An. [aside]. And 'tis now that Djabal
Would leave me!—in the glory meet for him!
Dja. As glory, I would yield the deed to you
Or any Druse; what peril there may be,
I keep. *[Aside.]* All things conspire to hound me on.
Not now, my soul, draw back, at least! Not now!
The course is plain, howe'er obscure all else.
Once offer this tremendous sacrifice,
Prevent what else will be irreparable,
Secure these transcendental helps, regain
The Cedars—then let all dark clear itself!
I slay him!
Kha. Anael, and no part for us!
[To DJABAL.J Hast thou possessed her with ...
Dja, [to ANAEL]. Whom speak you to?
What is it you behold there? Nay, this smile
Turns stranger. Shudder you? The man must die,
As thousands of our race have died thro' him.
One blow, and I discharge his weary soul
From the flesh that pollutes it! *Let* him fill
Straight some new expiatory form, of earth
Or sea, the reptile or some aery thing:
What is there in his death?
An, My brother said,
Is there no part in it for us?
Dja. For Khalil,—
The trumpet will announce the Nuncio's entry;
Here, I shall find the Prefect hastening
In the Pavilion to receive him—here
I slay the Prefect; meanwhile Ayoob leads
The Nuncio with his guards within: once these
Secured in the outer hall, bid Ayoob bar
Entry or egress till I give the sign
Which waits the landing of the argosies
You will announce to me: this double sign
That justice is performed and help arrived,
When Ayoob shall receive, but not before,
Let him throw ope the palace doors, admit
The Druses to behold their tyrant, ere
We leave for ever this detested spot.
Go, Khalil, hurry all! No pause, no pause!
Whirl on the dream, secure to wake anon!
Kha. What sign? and who the bearer?
Dja. Who shall show

My ring, admit to Ayoob. How she stands!
Have I not... I must have some task for her.
Anael, not that way! 'Tis the Prefect's chamber!
Anael, keep you the ring—give you the sign!
(It holds her safe amid the stir.) You will
Be faithful?
An. [taking the ring], I would fain be worthy. Hark! *[Trumpet without.*
Khal. He comes.
Dja. And I too come.
An. One word, but one!
Say, shall you be exalted at the deed?
Then? On the instant?
Dja. I exalted? What?
He, there—we, thus—our wrongs revenged, our tribe
Set free ? On, then shall I, assure yourself,
Shall you, shall each of us, be in his death
Exalted!
Kha. He is here.
Dja. Away—away! *[They go.*

Enter the PREFECT *with* Guards, *and* XOYS.

The Prefect [to Guards]. Back, I say, to the galley every guard!
That's my sole care now; see each bench retains
Its complement of rowers; I embark
O* the instant, since this Knight will have it so.
Alas me! Could you have the heart, my Loys!
[To a Guard *who whispers.]* Oh. bring the holy Nuncio here forthwith!
[The Guards *go.*
Loys, a rueful sight, confess, to see
The grey discarded Prefect leave his post,
With tears i' the eye! So, you are Prefect now?
You depose me—you succeed me? Ha, ha!
Loys. And dare you laugh, whom laughter less becomes
Than yesterday's forced meekness we beheld ...
Pref. —When you so eloquently pleaded, Loys,
For my dismissal from the post? Ah, meek
With cause enough, consult the Nuncio else!
And wish him the like meekness: for so staunch
A servant of the Church can scarce have bought
His share in the Isle, and paid for it, hard pieces!
You've my successor to condole with, Nuncio!
I shall be safe by then i' the galley, Loys!
Loys. You make as you would tell me you rejoice
To leave your scene of...
Pref. Trade in the dear Druses?
Blood and sweat traffic? Spare what yesterday
We heard enough of! Drove I in the Isle
A profitable game? Learn wit, my son,
Which you'll need shortly! Did it never breed
Suspicion in you, all was not pure profit,
When I, the insatiate . . . and so forth—was bent
On having a partaker in my rule?
Why did I yield this Nuncio half the gain,
If not that I might also shift—what on him?
Half of the peril, Loys!
Loys. Peril?
Pref. Hark you!
I'd love you if you'd let me—this for reason,
You save my life at price of... well, say risk
At least, of yours. I came a long time since
To tho Isle; our Hospitallers bade me tame
These savage wizards, and reward myself—
Loys. The Knights who so repudiate your crime?
Pref. Loys, the Knights! we doubtless understood
Each other; as for trusting to reward
From any friend beside myself... no, no!
I clutched mine on the spot, when it was sweet,
And I had taste for it. I felt these wizards
Alive—was sure they were not on me, only
When I was on them: but with age comes caution:
And stinging pleasures please less and sting more.
Year by year, fear by fear! The girls were brighter
Than ever ('faith, there's yet one Anael left,
I set my heart upon—Oh, prithee, let
That brave new sword lie still!)—These joys looked brighter,
But silenter the town, too, as I passed.
With this alcove's delicious memories
Began to mingle visions of gaunt fathers,
Quick-eyed sons, fugitives from the mine, the oar,
Stealing to catch me. Brief, when I began
To quake with fear—(I think I hear the Chapter
Solicited to let me leave, now all
Worth staying for was gained and gone!) – I say,

Just when, for the remainder of my life,
All methods of escape, seemed lost—that then
Up should a young hot-headed Loys spring,
Talk very long and loud,—in fine, compel
The Knights to break their whole arrangement, have me
Home for pure shame—from this safe-hold or mine
Where but ten thousand Druses seek my life,
To my wild place of banishment, San Gines
By Murcia, where my three fat manors lying,
Purchased by gains here and the Nuncio's gold,
Are all I have to guard me,—that such fortune
Should fall to me, I hardly could expect.
Therefore I say, I'd love you.
Loys. Can it be?
I play into your hands then? Oh no, no!
The Venerable Chapter, the Great Order
Sunk o' the sudden into fiends of the fit?
I will back—will yet unveil you!
Pref. Me?
To whom?—perhaps Sir Galeas, who in Chapter
Shook his white head thrice—and some dozen times
My hand next morning shook, for value paid!
To that Italian saint, Sir Cosimo?—
Indignant at my wringing year by year
A thousand bezants from the coral-divers,
As you recounted; felt the saint aggrieved?
Well might he—I allowed for his half-share
Merely one hundred. To Sir ...
Loys. See! you dare
Inculpate the whole Order; yet should I,
A youth, a sole voice, have the power to change
Their evil way, had they been firm in it?
Answer me!
Pref. Oh, the son of Bretagne's Duke,
And that son's wealth, the father's influence, too,
And the young arm, we'll even say, my Loys,
—The fear of losing or diverting these
Into another channel, by gainsaying
A novice too abruptly, could not influence
The Order! You might join, for aught they cared,
Their red-cross rivals of the Temple! Well,
I thank you for my part, at all events.
Stay here till they withdraw you! You'll inhabit
My palace—sleep, perchance, in **the** alcove
Whither I go to meet our holy friend.
Good! and now disbelieve me if you can.—
This is the first time for long years I enter
Thus *[lifts the arras]* without feeling just as if I lifted
The lid up of my tomb.
Loys. They share his crime!
God's punishment will overtake you yet.
Pref. Thank you it does not! Pardon this last flash:
I bear a sober visage presently
With the disinherited Nuncio here—
His purchase-money safe at Murcia, too!
Let me repeat—for the first time, no draught
Coming as from a sepulchre salutes me.
When we next meet, this folly may have passed,
We'll hope. Ha, ha!
[Goes through the arras.
Loys. Assure me but... he's gone!
He could not lie. Then what have I escaped,
L who had so nigh given up happiness
For ever, to be linked with him and them!
Oh, opportunest of discoveries! I
Their Knight? I utterly renounce them all!
Hark! What, he meets by this the Nuncio? Yes,
The same hyaena groan-like laughter! Quick—
To Djabal! I am one of them at last,
These simple-hearted Druses—AnaePs tribe!
Djabal! She's mine at last. Djabal, I say!
[Goes.

ACT IV

Enter DJABAL.

Dja. Let me but slay the Prefect. The end now!
To-morrow will be time enough to pry
Into the means I took: suffice, they served,
Ignoble as they were, to hurl revenge
True to its object.
[Seeing the robe, etc. disposed.
Mine should never so
Have hurried to accomplishment! Thee, Djabal,
Far other mood befitted! Calm the Robe
Should clothe this doom's awarder!
[Taking the robe.] Shall I dare
Assume my nation's Robe? I am at least
A Druse again, chill Europe's policy
Drops from me: I dare take the Robe. Why not
The Tiar? I rule the Druses, and what more

Betokens it than rule?—yet—yet—
[Lays down the tiar.
[Footsteps in the alcove.] He comes!
[Taking the sword.
If the Sword serve, let the Tiar lie! So, feet
Clogged with the blood of twenty years can fall
Thus lightly! Round me, all ye ghosts! He'll lift...
Which arm to push the arras wide?—or both?
Stab from the neck down to the heart—there stay!
Near he comes—nearer—the next footstep! Now!
[As he dashes aside the arras, ANAEL *is discovered.*
Ha! Anael! Nay, my Anael, can it be?
Heard you the trumpet? I must slay him here,
And here you ruin all. Why speak you not?
Anael, the Prefect comes! [ANAEL *screams.]* So slow to feel
'Tis not a sight for you to look upon?
A moment's work—but such work! Till you go,
I must be idle—idle, I risk all!
[Pointing to her hair.
Those locks are well, and you are beauteous thus,
But with the dagger 'tis, I have to do!
An. With mine!
Dja. Blood—Anael?
An. Djabal, 'tis thy deed!
It must be! I had hoped to claim it mine—
Be worthy thee—but I must needs confess
'Twas not I, but thyself... not I have... Djabal!
Speak to me!
Dja. Oh, my punishment!
An. Speak to me
While I can speak! touch me, despite the blood!
When the command passed from thy soul to mine,
I went, fire leading me, muttering of thee,
And the approaching exaltation,—'make 'One sacrifice!' I said,—and he sat there,
Bade me approach; and, as I did approach,
Thy fire with music burst into my brain.
Twas but a moment's work, thou saidst—perchance
It may have been so! Well, it is thy deed.
Dja. It is my deed.
An. His blood all this!
—this! and . •.
And more! Sustain me, Djabal! Wait not—now
Let flash thy glory! Change thyself and me!
It must be! Ere the Druses flock to us!
At least confirm me! Djabal, blood gushed forth—
He was our tyrant—but I looked he'd fall
Prone as asleep—why else is death called sleep?
Sleep? He bent o'er his breast! 'Tis sin, I know,—
Punish me, Djabal, but wilt thou let him?
Be it thou that punishest, not he—who creeps
On his red breast—is here! Tis the small groan
Of a child—no worse! Bestow the new life, then!
Too swift it cannot be, too strange, surpassing!
[Following him as he retreats.
Now! Change us both! Change me and change thou!
Dja. [sinks on his knees]. Thus!
Behold my change! You have done nobly.

An. Can Hakeem kneel?
Dja. No Hakeem, and scarce Djabal!
I have dealt falsely, and this woe is come.
No—hear me ere scorn blast me! Once and ever.
The deed is mine. Oh think upon the past!
An. [to herself]. Did I strike once, or twice, or many times?
Dja. I came to lead my tribe where, bathed in glooms,
Doth Bahumid the Renovator sleep:
Anael, I saw my tribe: I said, 'Without
'A miracle this cannot be*—I said
'Be there a miracle!'—for I saw you.
An. His head lies south the portal.
Dja. —Weighed with this
The general good, how could I choose my own?
What matter was my purity of soul?
Little by little I engaged myself—
Heaven would accept me for its instrument,
I hoped: I said Heaven had accepted me.
An. Is it this blood breeds dreams in me? Who said
You were not Hakeem? And your miracles—
The fire that plays innocuous round your form?
[Again changing her whole manner.
Ah, thou wouldst try me—thou art Hakeem still!
Dja. Woe—woe! As if the Druses of the Mount
(Scarce Arabs, even there, but here, in the Isle,
Beneath their former selves) should comprehend
The subtle lore of Europe! A few secrets
That would not easily affect the meanest

Of the crowd there, could wholly subjugate
The best of our poor tribe. Again that eye?
An. [after a pause springs to his neck], Djabal, in this there can be no deceit!
Why, Djabal, were you human only,—think,
Maani is but human, Khalil human,
Loys is human even—did their words
Haunt me, their looks pursue me ? Shame on you
So to have tried me! Rather, shame on me
So to need trying! Could I, with the Prefect
And the blood, there—could I see only you?
—Hang by your neck over this gulf of blood?
Speak, I am saved! Speak, Djabal! Am I saved?
[As DJABAL *slowly unclasps her arms, and puts her silently from him.*
Hakeem would save me. Thou art Djabal. Crouch!
Bow to the dust, thou basest of our kind!
The pile of thee, I reared up to the cloud—
Full, midway, of our fathers' trophied tombs,
Based on the living rock, devoured not by
The unstable desert's jaws of sand,—falls prone.
Fire, music, quenched: and now thou liest there
A ruin, obscene creatures will moan through.
—Let us come, Djabal!
Dja. Whither come?
An. At once—
Lest so it grow intolerable. Come!
Will I not share it with thee ? Best at once!
So, feel less pain! Let them deride,—thy tribe
Now trusting in thee.—Loys shall deride!
Come to them, hand in hand, with me!
Dja. Where come?
An. Where?—to the Druses thou hast wronged! Confess,
Now that the end is gained—(I love thee now—)
That thou hast so deceived them—(perchance love thee
Better than ever.) Come, receive their doom
Of infamy! O, best of all I love thee!
Shame with the man, no triumph with the God,
Be mine! Come!
Dja. Never! More shame yet? and why?
Why? You have called this deed mine—it is mine!
And with it I accept its circumstance.
How can I longer strive with fate? The past
Is past: my false life shall henceforth show true.
Hear me! The argosies touch land by this;
They bear us to fresh scenes and happier skies.
What if we reign together?—if we keep
Our secret for the Druses' good?—by means
Of even their superstition, plant in them
New life? I learn from Europe: all who seek
Man's good must awe man, by such means as these.
We two will be divine to them—we are!
All great works in this world spring from the ruins
Of greater projects—ever, on our earth,
Babels men block out, Babylons they build.
I wrest the weapon from your hand! I claim
The deed! Retire! You have my ring—you bar
All access to the Nuncio till the forces
From Venice land.
An. Thou wilt feign Hakeem then?
Dja. [putting the Tiara of Hakeem on his head]. And from this moment that I dare ope wide
Eyes that till now refused to see, begins
My true dominion: for I know myself,
And what am I to personate. No word?
[ANAEL *goes.*
'Tis come on me at last! His blood on her——
What memories will follow that! Her eye,
Her fierce distorted lip and ploughed black brow!
Ah, fool! Has Europe then so poorly tamed
The Syrian blood from out thee? Thou, presume
To work in this foul earth by means not foul?
Scheme, as for heaven,—but, on the earth. be glad
If a least ray like heaven's be left thee! Thus
I shall be calm—in readiness—no way
Surprised. *[A noise without.*
This should be Khalil and my Druses.
Venice is come then! Thus I grasp thee, sword!
Druses, 'tis Hakeem saves you! In! Behold
Your Prefect!

Enter LOYS. DJABAL *hides the khandjar in his robe.*

Loys. Oh, well found, Djabal!—but no time for words.

You know who waits there?
[Pointing to the alcove.
Well!—and that 'tis there
He meets the Nuncio? Well? Now, a surprise—
He there—
Dja. I know—
Loys. _____is now no mortal's lord,
Is absolutely powerless—call him, dead—
He is no longer Prefect—you are Prefect!
Oh, shrink not! I do nothing in the dark,
Nothing unworthy Breton blood, believe!
I understand at once your urgency
That I should leave this isle for Rhodes; I felt
What you were loath to speak—your need of help.
I have fulfilled the task, that earnestness
Imposed on me: have, face to face, confronted
The Prefect in full Chapter, charged on him
The enormities of his long rule; he stood
Mute, offered no defence, no crime denied.
On which, I spoke of you, and of your tribe,
Your faith so like our own, and all you urged
Of old to me: I spoke, too, of your goodness,
Your patience—brief, I hold henceforth the Isle
In charge, am nominally lord,—but you,
You are associated in my rule—
Are the true Prefect! Ay, such faith had they
In my assurance of your loyalty
(For who insults an imbecile old man?)
That we assume the Prefecture this hour.
You gaze at me? Hear greater wonders yet—
I cast down all the fabric I have built.
These Knights, I was prepared to worship . . . but
Of that another time; what's now to say,
Is—I shall never be a Knight! Oh, Djabal,
Here first I throw all prejudice aside,
And callyou brother! I am Druse likeyou:
My wealth, my friends, my power, are wholly yours,
Your people's, which is now my people: for
There is a maiden of your tribe, I love—
She loves me—Khalil's sister___
Dja. Anael?
Loys. Start you?
Seems what I say, unknightly? Thus it chanced:
When first I came, a novice, to the isle...

Enter one of the NUNCIO'S Guards *from the alcove.*

Guard. Oh horrible! Sir Loys! Here is Loys!
And here— *[Others enter from the alcove. [Pointing to* DJABAL.] Secure him, bind him—this is he!
[They surround DJABAL.
Loys. Madmen—what is't you do? Stand from my friend,
And tell me!
Guard. Thou canst have no part in this—
Surely no part! But slay him not! The Nuncio
Commanded, slay him not!
Loys. Speak, or . . .
Guard. The Prefect
Lies murdered there by him thou dost embrace.
Loys. By Djabal? Miserable fools! How Djabal?
[A Guard lifts DJABAL'S *robe;* DJABAL *flings down the khandjar.*
Loys [after a pause]. Thou hast received some insult worse than all,
Some outrage not to be endured—
[To the Guards.] Stand back!
He is my friend—more than my friend. Thou hast
Slain him upon that provocation.
Guard. No!
No provocation! 'Tis a long devised
Conspiracy: the whole tribe is involved.
He is their Khalif—'tis on that pretence—
Their mighty Khalif who died long ago,
And now comes back to life and light again!
All is just now revealed, I know not how,
By one of his confederates—who, struck
With horror at this murder, first apprised
The Nuncio. As 'twas said, we find this Djabal
Here where we take him.
Dja. [aside]. Who broke faith with me ?
Loys [to DJABAL], Hear'st thou ? Speak! Till thou speak, I keep off these,
Or die with thee. Deny this story! Thou
A Khalif, an impostor? Thou, my friend,
Whose tale was of an inoffensive tribe,
With . . . but thou know'st—on that tale's truth I pledged
My faith before the Chapter: what art thou?
Dja. Loys, I am as thou hast heard. All's true.
No more concealment! As these tell thee, all
Was long since planned. Our Druses are enough
To crush this handful: the Venetians land
Even now in our behalf. Loys, we part.
Thou, serving much, wouldst fain have served me more;
It might not be. I thank thee. As thou hearest,
We are a separated tribe: farewell!

Loys. Oh where will truth be found now? Canst thou so
Belie the Druses? Do they share thy crime?
Those thou professest of our Breton stock,
Are partners with thee? Why, I saw but now
Khalil, my friend: he spoke with me—no word
Of this! and Anael—whom I love, and who
Loves me—she spoke no word of this.
Dja. Poor boy!
Anael, who loves thee? Khalil, fast thy friend?
We, offsets from a wandering Count of Dreux?
No: older than the oldest, princelier
Than Europe's princeliest race, our tribe: enough
For thee, that on our simple faith we found
A monarchy to shame your monarchies
At their own trick and secret of success.
The child of this our tribe shall laugh upon
The palace-step of him whose life ere night
Is forfeit, as that child shall know, and yet
Shall laugh there! What, we Druses wait forsooth
The kind interposition of a boy
—Can only save ourselves if thou concede:
—Khalil admire thee? He is my right-hand,
My delegate!—Anael accept thy love?
She is my bride!
Loys. Thy bride? She one of them?
Dja. My bride!
Loys. And she retains her glorious eyes!
She, with those eyes, has shared this miscreant's guilt!
Ah—who but she directed me to find
Djabal within the Prefect's chamber? Khalil
Bade me seek Djabal there, too. All is truth.
What spoke the Prefect worse of them than this?
Did the Church ill to institute long since
Perpetual warfare with such serpentry?
And I—have I desired to shift my part,
Evade my share in her design? 'Tis well.
Dja. Loys, I wronged thee—but unwittingly:
I never thought there was in thee a virtue
That could attach itself to what thou deemest
A race below thine own. I wronged thee, Loys.
But that is over: all is over now,
Save the protection I ensure against
My people's anger. By their Khalif's side,
Thou art secure and mayst depart: so, come!
Loys. Thy side? I take protection at thy hand?

Enter other Guards.

Guards. Fly with him! Fly, Sir Loys! 'Tis too true:
And only by his side thou mayst escape.
The whole tribe is in full revolt: they flock
About the palace—will be here—on thee—
And there are twenty of us, we the Guards
O' the Nuncio, to withstand them! Even we
Had stayed to meet our death in ignorance,
But that one Druse, a single faithful Druse,
Made known the horror to the Nuncio. Fly!
The Nuncio stands aghast. At least let us
Escape thy wrath, O Hakeem! We are nought
In thy tribe's persecution! *[To* LOYS.} Keep by him!
They hail him Hakeem, their dead Prince returned:
He is their God, they shout, and at his beck
Are life and death!
Loys [springing at the khandjar DJABAL *had thrown down, seizes him by the throat].*
Thus by his side am I!
Thus I resume my knighthood and its warfare,
Thus end thee, miscreant, in thy pride of place!
Thus art thou caught. Without, thy dupes may cluster:
Friends aid thee, foes avoid thee,—thou art Hakeem,
How say they?—God art thou! but also here
Is the least, youngest, meanest the Church calls
Her servant, and his single arm avails
To aid her as she lists. I rise, and thou
Art crushed. Hordes of thy Druses flock without:
Here thou hast me, who represent the Cross,
Honour and Faith, 'gainst Hell, Mahound and thee.
Die! [DJABAL *remains calm.]* Implore my mercy, Hakeem, that my scorn
May help me! Nay, I cannot ply thy trade;
I am no Druse, no stabber: and thine eye,
Thy form, are too much as they were—my friend
Had such. Speak! Beg for mercy at my foot! [DJABAL *still silent*

Heaven could not ask so much of me—not, sure,
So much. I cannot kill him so.
[After a pause.,] Thou art
Strong in thy cause, then—dost outbrave us, then.
Heardst thou that one of thine accomplices,
Thy very people, has accused thee? Meet
His charge! Thou hast not even slain the Prefect
As thy own vile creed warrants. Meet that Druse!
Come with me and disprove him—be thou tried
By him, nor seek appeal! Promise me this,
Or I will do God's office. What, shalt thou
Boast of assassins at thy beck, yet truth
Want even an executioner? Consent,
Or I will strike—look in my face—I will!
Dja. Give me again my khandjar, if thou darest! [LOY *gives it.*
Let but one Druse accuse me, and I plunge
This home. A Druse betray me? Let us go!
[Aside.] Who has betrayed me?
[Shouts without.
Hearest thou? I hear
No plainer than long years ago I heard
That shout—but in no dream now. They return!
Wilt thou be leader with me, Loys? Well.

ACT V

The Uninitiated Druses, *filling the hall tumultously, and speaking together.*

Here flock we. obeying the summons. Lo, Hakeem hatn appeared, and the Prefect is dead, and we return to Lebanon! My manufacture of goats' fleece must, I doubt, soon fall away there. Come, old Nasif—link thine arm in mine—we fight, if needs be. Come, what is a great fight-word?—'Lebanon?' (My daughter—my daughter!)—But is Khalil to have the office of Hamza?—Nay, rather, if he be wise, the monopoly of henna and cloves. Where is Hakeem ?—The only prophet I ever saw, prophesied at Cairo once, in my youth: a little black Copht, dressed all in black too, with a great stripe of yellow cloth flapping down behind him like the back-fin of a water-serpent. Is this he? Biamrallah! Biamreh! HAKEEM!

Enter the NUNCIO, *with* Guards.
Nuncio [to his Attendants]. Hold both, the sorcerer and this accomplice
Ye talk of, that accuseth him! And tell
Sir Loys he is mine, the Church's hope:
Bid him approve himself our Knight indeed!
Lo, this black disemboguing of the Isle!
[*To the* Druses.] Ah children, what a sight for these old eyes
That kept themselves alive this voyage through
To smile their very last on you! I came
To gather one and all you wandering sheep
Into my fold, as though a father came...
As though, in coming, a father should...
[To his Guards.] (Ten, twelve,
—Twelve guards of you, and not an outlet? None?
The wizards stop each avenue? Keep close!)
[To the Druses.] As if one came to a son's house, I say,
So did I come—no guard with me—to find . ..
Alas—alas!
A Druse. Who is the old man?
Another. Oh, ye are to shout!
Children, he styles you.
Druses. Ay, the Prefect's slain!
Glory to the Khalif, our Father!
Nuncio. Even so
I find, (ye prompt aright) your father slain.
While most he plotted for your good, that father
(Alas, how kind, ye never knew)—lies slain.
[Aside.] (And hell's worm gnaw the glozing knave—with me,
For being duped by his cajoleries!
Are these the Christians ? These the docile crew
My bezants went to make me Bishop o'er?)
[To his Attendants, *who whisper.]* What say ye does this wizard style himself?
Hakeem? Biamrallah? The third Fatemite?
What is this jargon? He—the insane Khalif,
Dead near three hundred years ago, come back
In flesh and blood again?
Druses. He mutters! Hear ye?
He is blaspheming Hakeem. The old man
Is our dead Prefect's friend. Tear him!
Nuncio. Ye dare not.
I stand here with my five-and-seventy years,
The Patriarch's power behind me, God's above.
Those years have witnessed sin enough; ere now
Misguided men arose against their lords.
And found excuse; but ye, to be enslaved
By sorceries, cheats—alas! the same tricks, tried
On my **poor** children in this **nook** o' the earth,

Could triumph, that have been successively
Exploded, laughed to scorn, all nations through:
'Romaioi, Ioudaioite kai proselutoi,
'Cretes and Arabians'—you are duped the last.
Said I, refrain from tearing me ? I pray ye
Tear me! Shall I return to tell the Patriarch
That so much love was wasted—every gift
Rejected, from his benison I brought,
Down to the galley-full of bezants, sunk
An hour since at the harbour's mouth, by that...
That... never will I speak his hated name!
[To his Servants.] What was the name his fellow slip-fetter
Called their arch-wizard by ? *[They whisper.]* Oh, Djabal was't?
Druses. But how a sorcerer? false wherein?
Nuncio. (Ay, Djabal!)
How false ? Ye know not, Djabal has confessed . . .
Nay, that by tokens found on him we learn...
What I sailed hither solely to divulge—
How by his spells the demons were allured
To seize you: not that these be aught save lies
And mere illusions. Is this clear? I say,
By measures such as these, he would have led you
Into a monstrous ruin: follow ye?
Say, shall ye perish for his sake, my sons?
Druses, Hark ye!
Nuncio —Be of one privilege amerced ?
No! Infinite the Patriarch's mercies are!
No! With the Patriarch's licence, still I bid
Tear him to pieces who misled you! Haste!
Druses. The old man's beard shakes, and his eyes are white fire! After all, I know nothing of Djabal beyond what Karshook says; he knows but what Khalil says, who knows just what Djabal says himself. Now, the little Copht Prophet, I saw at Cairo in my youth, began by promising each bystander three full measures of wheat...

Enter KHALIL *and the initiated* DRUSES.

Kha. Venice and her deliverance are at hand:
Their fleet stands through the harbour. Hath he slain
The Prefect yet ? Is Djabal's change come yet?
Nuncio [to Attendantsl. What's this of Venice? Who's this boy?
[Attendants *whisper.]* One Khalil?
Djabal's accomplice, Loyscalled, but now,
The only Druse, save Djabal's self, to fear?
[To the Druses.] I cannot hear ye with these aged ears:
Is it so? Ye would have my troops assist?
Doth he abet him in his sorceries?
Down with the cheat, guards, as my children bid!
[They spring at KHALIL ; *as he beats them back,*
Stay! No more bloodshed! Spare deluded youth!
Whom seek'st thou? (I will teach him)—whom, my child?
Thou know'st not what these know, what these declare.
I am an old man as thou seest—have don
With life; and what should move me but the truth?
Art thou the only fond one of thy tribe?
'Tis I interpret for thy tribe.
Kha. Oh, this
Is the expected Nuncio! Druses, hear—
Endure ye this? Unworthy to partake
The glory Hakeem gains you! While I speak,
The ships touch land: who makes for Lebanon?
They plant the winged lion in these halls!
Nuncio [aside]. If it be true! Venice? Oh, never true!
Yet Venice would so gladly thwart our Knights,
So fain get footing here, stand close by Rhodes!
Oh, to be duped this way!
Kha. Ere he appear
And lead you gloriously, repent, I say!
Nuncio [aside]. Nor any way to stretch the arch-wizard stark
Ere the Venetians come ? Cut off the head,
The trunk were easily stilled. *[To the* Druses.] He? Bring him forth!
Since so you needs will have it, I assent.
You'd judge him, say you, on the spot—confound
The sorcerer in his very circle? W^here's
Our short black-bearded sallow friend who swore
He'd earn the Patriarch's guerdon by one stab?
Bring Djabal forth at once!
Druses, Ay, bring him forth!
The Patriarch drives a trade in oil and silk,
And we're the Patriarch's children—true men, we!
Where is the glory ? Show us all the glory!
Kha. You dare not so insult him! Wliat, not see .. •
(I tell thee. Nuncio, these are uninstructed,
Untrusted: they know nothing of our Khalif!)
—Not see that if he lets a doubt arise

'Tis but to give yourselves the chance of seeming
To have some influence in your own Return!
That all may say ye would have trusted him
Without the all-convincing glory—ay,
And did! Embrace the occasion, friends! For, think—
What wonder when his change takes place? But now
For your sakes, he should not reveal himself.
No: could I ask and have, I would not ask
The change yet!

Enter DJABAL *and* LOYS.

Spite of all, reveal thyself!
I had said, pardon them for me—for Anael—
For our sakes pardon these besotted men—
Ay, for thine own—they hurt not thee! Yet now
One thought swells in me and keeps down all else.
This Nuncio couples shame with thee, has called
Imposture thy whole course, all bitter things
Has said: he is but an old fretful man!
Hakeem—nay, I must call thee Hakeem now—
Reveal thyself! See! Where is Anael? See!

Loys [to DJABAL], Here are thy people. Keep thy word to me!

Dja. Who of my people hath accused me?

Nuncio. So!
So this is Djabal, Hakeem, and what not?
A fit deed, Loys, for thy first Knight's day!
May it be augury of thy after-life!
Ever prove truncheon of the Church as now
That, Nuncio of the Patriarch, having charge
Of the Isle here, I claim thee *[turning to* DJABAL] as these bid me,
Forfeit for murder done thy lawful prince,
Thou conjurer that peep'st and mutterest!
Why should I hold thee from their hands? (Spells, children?
But hear how I dispose of all his spells!)
Thou art a prophet?—wouldst entice thy tribe
From me?—thou workest miracles? (Attend!
Let him but move me with his spells!) I, Nuncio . ..

Dja.... Which how thou earnest to be, I say not now,
Though I have also been at Stamboul, Luke!
Ply thee with spells, forsooth! What need of spells?
If Venice, in her Admiral's person, stoop
To ratify thy compact with her foe.
The Hospitallers, for this Isle—withdraw
Her warrant of the deed which reinstates
My people in their freedom, tricked away
By him I slew,—refuse to convoy us
To Lebanon and keep the Isle we leave-
Then will be time to try what spells can do!
Dost thou dispute the Republic's power?

Nuncio. Lo ye!
He tempts me too, the wily exorcist!
No! The renowned Republic was and is
The Patriarch's friend: tis not for courting Venice
That I—that these implore thy blood of me.
Lo ye, the subtle miscreant! Ha, so subtle?
Ye, Druses, hear him. Will ye be deceived?
How he evades me! Where's the miracle
He works ? I bid him to the proof—fish up
Your galley-full of bezants that he sank!
That were a miracle! One miracle!
Enough of triflingjfor it chafes my years.
I am the Nuncio, Druses! I stand forth
To save you from the good Republic's rage
When she shall find her fleet was summoned here
To aid the mummeries of a knave like this.

[As the Druses *hesitate, his* Attendants *whisper.*

Ah, well suggested! Why, we hold the while
One who, his close confederate till now,
Confesses Djabal at the last a cheat,
And every miracle a cheat. Who throws me
His head? I make three offers, once I offer,—
And twice . . .

Dja. Let who moves perish at my foot!

Kha. Thanks, Hakeem, thanks! Oh, Anael, Maani,
Why tarry they?

Druses [to each other]. He can! He can! Live fire—

[To the NUNCIO.] I say he can, old man! Thou know'st him not.
Live fire like that thou seest now in his eyes,
Plays fawning round him. See! The change begins.
All the brow lightens as he lifts his arm.
Look not at me! It was not I!

Dja. What Druse
Accused me, as he saith? I bid each bone
Crumble within that Druse! None, Loys, none
Of my own people, as thou said'st, have raised

A voice against me.
Nuncio[aside], Venice to come! Death!
Dja. [continuing]. Confess and go unscathed, however false !
Seest thou my Druses, Luke? I would submit
To thy pure malice did one Druse confess!
How said I, Loys?
Nuncio [to his Attendants *who whisper].* Ah, ye counsel so?
[Aloud.] Bring in the witness, then, who, first of all,
Disposed the treason! Now I have thee wizard!
Ye hear that? If one speaks, he bids you tear him
Joint after joint: well then, one does speak! One,
Befooled by Djabal, even as yourselves,
But who hath voluntarily proposed
To expiate, by confessing thus, the fault
Of having trusted him.
[They bring in a veiled Druse.
Loys. Now. Djabal, now!
Nuncio. Friend, Djabal fronts thee! Make a ring, sons. Speak!
Expose this Djabal—what he was, and how:
The wiles he used, the aims he cherished: all,
Explicitly as late 'twas spoken to these
My servants: I absolve and pardon thee.
Loys. Thou hast the dagger ready, Djabal?
Dja. Speak,
Recreant!
Druses. Stand back, fool! farther! Suddenly
You shall see some huge serpent glide from under
The empty vest, or down will thunder crash!
Back, Khalil!
Kha. I go bad;? Thus go I back!
[To ANAEL.] Unveil! Nay, thou shalt face the Khalif! Thus!
[He tears away ANAEL'S *veil;* DJABAL *folds his arms and bows his head; the* Druses *fall back;* LOYS *springs from the side of* DJABAL *and the* NUNCIO.
Loys. Then she was true—she only of them all!
True to her eyes—may keep those glorious eyes,
And now be mine, once again mine! Oh, Anael!
Dared I think thee a partner in his crime—
That blood could soil that hand? nay, 'tis mine—Anael,
—Not mine?—who offer thee before all these
My heart, my sword, my name—so thou wilt say
That Djabal, who affirms thou art his bride,
Lies—say but that he lies!
Dfa. Thou, Anael?
Loys. Nay, Djabal, nay, one chance for me—the last!
Thou hast had every other; thou hast spoken
Days, nights, what falsehood listed thee —let me
Speak first now; I will speak now!
Nuncio. Loys, pause!
Thou art the Duke's son, Bretagne's choicest stock,
Loys of Dreux, God's sepulchre's first sword:
This wilt thou spit on, this degrade, 'his trample
To earth?
Loys [to ANAEL]. Who had foreseen that one day Loys
Would stake these gifts against some other good
In the whole world? I give them thee! I would
My strong will might bestow real shape on them,
That I might see, with my own eyes, thy foot
Tread on their very neck! 'Tis not by gifts
I put aside this Djabal: we will stand—
We do stand, see, two men! Djabal, stand forth!
Who's worth her, I or thou? I—who for Anael
Uprightly, purely kept my way, the long
True way—left thee each by-path, boJdly lived
Without the lies and blood,—or thou, or thou?
Me! love me, Anael! Leave the blood and him!
[To DJABAL.} NOW speak—now, quick on this that I have said,—
Thou with the blood, speak if thou art a man!
Dja. [to ANAEL]. And was it thou betrayedst me? Tis well!
I have deserved this of thee and submit.
Nor 'tis much evil thou infictest: life
Ends here. The cedars shall not wave for us:
For there was crime, and must be punishment.
See fate! By thee I was seduced, by thee
I perish: yet do I—can I repent?
I with my Arab instinct, thwarted ever
By my Frank policy,—and with, in turn,
My Frank brain, thwarted by my Arab heart—
While these remained in equipoise, I lived
—Nothing; had either been predominant,
As a Frank schemer or an Arab mystic,
I had been something;—now, each has destroyed

The other—and behold, from out their crash,
A third and better nature rises up—
My mere man's-nature! And I yield to it:
I love thee, I who did not love before!
An. Djabal!
Dja. It seemed love, but it was not love:
How could I love while thou adoredst me?
Now thou despisest, art above me so
Immeasurably! Thou, no other, doomest
My death now; this my steel shall execute
Thy judgment; I shall feel thy hand in it.
Oh luxury to worship, to submit,
Transcended, doomed to death by thee!
An. My Djabal!
Dja. Dost hesitate? I force thee then. Approach,
Druses! for I am out of reach of fate;
No further evil waits me. Speak the doom!
Hear, Druses, and hear, Nuncio, and hear, Loys!
An. HAKEEM! *[She falls dead.*
[The Druses *scream, grovelling before him.*
Druses. Ah Hakeem!—not on me thy wrath!
Biamrallah, pardon! never doubted I!
Ha, dog, how sayest thou?
[They surround and seize the NUNCIO *and his* Guards. LOYS *flings himself upon the body of* ANAEL, *on which* DJABAL *continues to gaze as stupefied.*
Nuncio. Caitiffs! Have ye eyes?
Whips, racks should teach you! What, his fools? his dupes?
Leave me! Unhand me!
Kha. [approaching DJABAL *timidly].* Save her for my sake!
She was already thine; she would have shared
To-day thine exaltation: think, this day
Her hair was plaited thus because of thee!
Yes, feel the soft bright hair—feel!
Nuncio [struggling with those who have seized him]. What, because
His leman dies for him? You think it hard
To die? Oh, would you were at Rhodes, and choice
Of deaths should suit you!
Kha. [bending over ANAEL'S *body].* Just restore her life!
So little does it! there—the eyelids tremble!
'Twas not my breath that made them: and the lips
Move of themselves. I could restore her life!
Hakeem, we have forgotten—have presumed
On our free converse: we are better taught.
See, I kiss—how I kiss thy garment's hem
For her! She kisses it—Oh, take her deed
In mine! Thou dost believe now, Anael?—See,
She smiles! Were her lips open o'er the teeth
Thus, when I spoke first? She believes in thee!
Go not without her to the cedars, lord!
Or leave us both—I cannot go alone!
I have obeyed thee, if I dare so speak:
Hath Hakeem thus forgot all Djabal knew?
Thou feelest then my tears fall hot and fast
Upon thy hand, and yet thou speakest not?
Ere the Venetian trumpet sound—ere thou
Exalt thyself, O Hakeem! save thou her!
Nuncio. And the accursed Republic will arrive
And find me in their toils—dead, very like,
Under their feet!
What way—not one way yet
To foil them? None?
[Observing DJABAL'S *face.*
What ails the Khalif? Ah,
That ghastly face! A way to foil them yet!
[To the Druses.*]* Look to your Khalif, Druses! Is that face
God Hakeem's? Where is triumph,—where is . . . what
Said he of exaltation—hath he promised
So much to-day? Why then, exalt thyself!
Cast off that husk, thy form, set free thy soul
In splendour! Now, bear witness! here I stand—
I challenge him exalt himself, and I
Become, for that, a Druse like all of you!
The Druses. Exalt thyself! Exalt thyself) O Hakeem!
Dja. [advances]. I can confess now all from first to last.
There is no longer shame for me. I am . . .
[Here the Venetian trumpet sounds: the Druses *shout,* DJABAL'S *eye catches the expression of those about him, and, as the old dream comes back, he is again confident and inspired.*
—Am I not Hakeem? And ye would have crawled
But yesterday within these impure courts
Where now ye stand erect! Not grand enough?
—What more could be conceded to such beasts
As all of you, so sunk and base as you,
Than a mere man? A man among such beasts
Was miracle enough: yet him you doubt,
Him you forsake, him fain would you destroy—
With the Venetians at your gate, the Nuncio
Thus—(see the baffled hypocrite!) and, best,

The Prefect there!
Druses. No, Hakeem, ever thine I
Nuncio. He lies—and twice he lies—and thrice he lies!
Exalt thyself, Mahound! Exalt thyself!
Dja. Druses! we shall henceforth be far away—
Out of mere mortal ken—above the cedars—
But we shall see ye go, hear ye return,
Repeopling the old solitudes,—through thee,
My Khafil! Thou art full of mc: I fill
Thee full—my hands thus fill thee! Yestereve,
—Nay, but this morn, I deemed thee ignorant
Of all to do, requiring word of mine
To teach it: now, thou hast all gifts in one,
With truth and purity go other gifts,
All gifts come clustering to that. Go, lead
My people home whate'er betide!
[Turning to the Druses. 1 Ye take
This Khalil for my delegate? To him
Bow as to me? He leads to Lebanon—
Ye follow?
Druses. We follow! Now exalt thyself!
Dja. [raises LOYSI. Then to thee, Loys!
How I wronged thee, Loys!
Yet, wronged, no less thou shalt have full revenge,
Fit for thy noble self, revenge—and thus.
Thou, loaded with such wrongs, the princely soul,
The first sword of Christ's sepulchre—thou shalt
Guard Khalil and my Druses home again!
Justice no less, God's justice and no more,
For those I leave! To seeking this, devote
Some few days out of thy Knight's brilliant life:
And, this obtained them, leave their Lebanon,
My Druses' blessing in thine ears—(they shall
Bless thee with blessing sure to have its way)
—One cedar-blossom in thy ducal cap,
One thought of Anael in thy heart,—perchance,
One thought of him who thus, to bid thee speed,
His last word to the living speaks! This done,
Resume thy course, and, first amidst the first
In Europe, take my heart along with thee!
Go boldly, go serenely, go augustly—
What shall withstand thee then?
[He bends over ANAEL.] And last to thee!
Ah, did I dream I was to have, this day,
Exalted thee? A vain dream: hast thou not
Won greater exaltation? What remains
But press to thee, exalt myself to thee?
Thus I exalt myself, set free my soul!
[He stabs himself. As he falls, supported** by* KHALIL *and* LOYS, *the* Venetians ***enter; the* ADMIRAL *advances.
Admiral. God and St. Mark for Venice! Plant the Lion!
[At the clash of the planted standard, the* Druses *shout and move tumultuously forward,* LOYS *drawing his sword.
Dja. [leading them a few steps between KHALIL *and* LOYS]. On to the Mountain! At the Mountain, Druses!
[Dies.

A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

A TRAGEDY

1843

PERSONS

MILDRED TRESHAM.
GUENDOLEN TRESHAM.
THOROLD, Earl Tresham.
AUSTIN TRESHAM.
HENRY, Earl Mertoun.
GERARD, *and other retainers of* Lord Tresham,

TIME, 17—

ACT I

SCENE I.—***The interior of a lodge in*** LORD TRESHAM'S *park. Many* Retainers ***crowded at the window, supposed to command a view of the entrance to his mansion.*** **GERARD**, ***the warrener, his back to a table on which are flagons, etc.***

1st Ret. Ay, do! push, friends, and then **you'll push** down me!
—What for? Does any hear a runner's foot
Or a steed's trample or a coach-wheel's cry?
Is the Earl come or his least poursuivant?
But there's no breeding in a man of you
Save Gerard yonder: here's a half-place yet,
Old Gerard!
Ger. Save your courtesies, my friend. Here is my place.

2nd Ret. Now, Gerard, out with it!
What makes you sullen, this of all the days
I' the year? To-day that young rich bountiful
Handsome Earl Mertoun, whom alone they match
With our Lord Tresham through the country-side,
Is coming here in utmost bravery
To ask our master's sister's hand?
Ger. What then?
2nd Ret. What then? Why, you, she speaks to, if she meets
Your worship, smiles on as you hold apart
The boughs to let her through her forest walks,
You, always favourite for your no-deserts,
You've heard, these three days, how Earl Mertoun sues
To lay his heart and house and broad lands too
At Lady Mildred's feet: and while we squeeze
Ourselves into a mousehole lest we miss
One congee of the least page in his train.
You sit o' one side—there's the Earl, say I—
'What then?' say you!
3rd Ret. I'll wager he has let
Both swans he tamed for Lady Mildred swim
Over the falls and gain the river!
Ger. Ralph,
Is not to-morrow my inspecting-day
For you and for your hawks?
4th Ret. Let Gerard be!
He's coarse-grained, like his carved black cross-bow stock.
Ha, look now. while we squabble with him, look!
Well done, now—is not this beginning, now,
To purpose?
1st Ret. Our retainers look as fine-
That's comfort. Lord, how Richard holds himself
With his white staff! Will not a knave behind
Prick him upright?
4th Ret. He's only bowing, fool!
The Earl's man bent us lower by this much.
1st Ret. That's comfort. Here's a very cavalcade!
3rd Ret. I don't see wherefore Richard, and his troop
Of silk and silver varlets there, should find
Their perfumed selves so indispensable
On high days, holidays! Would it so disgrace
Our family, if I, for instance, stood—
In my right hand a cast of Swedish hawks,
A leash of greyhounds in my left?—
Ger. —With Hugh
The logman for supporter, in his right
The bill-hook, in his left the brushwood-shears!
3rd Ret. Out on you, crab! What next, what next? The Earl!
1st Ret. Oh Walter, groom, our horses, do they match
The Earl's? Alas, that first pair of the six—
They paw the ground—Ah Walter! and that brute
Just on his haunches by the wheel!
6th Ret. Ay—ay!
You, Philip, are a special hand, I hear,
At soups and sauces: what's a horse to you?
D'ye mark that beast they've slid into the midst
So cunningly?—then, Philip, mark this further;
No leg has he to stand on!
1st Ret. No? That's comfort.
2nd Ret. Peace, Cook! The Earl descends. Well, Gerard, see
The Earl at least! Come, there's a proper man,
I hope! Why, Ralph, no falcon, Pole or Swede,
Has got a starrier eye.
3rd Ret. His eyes are blue:
But leave my hawks alone!
4th Ret. So young, and yet
So tall and shapely!
5th Ret. Here's Lord Tresham's self!
There now—there's what a nobleman should be!
He's older, graver, loftier, he's more like
A House's head.
2nd Ret. But you'd not have a boy
—And what's the Earl beside?—possess too soon
That stateliness?
1st Ret. Our master takes his hand—
Richard and his white staff are on the move—
Back fall our people—(tsh!—there's Timothy
Sure to get tangled in his ribbon-ties,
And Peter's cursed rosette's a-coming off!)
—At last I see our lord's back and his friend's;
And the whole beautiful bright company
Close round them—in they go! *[Jumping down from the window-bench, and making for the table and its jugs.]*
Good health, long life,
Great joy to our Lord Tresham and his House!
6th Ret. My father drove his father first to court,
After his marriage-day—ay, did he!
2nd Ret. God bless

Lord Tresham, Lady Mildred, and the Earl! . . . . . .
Here, Gerard,'reach your beaker!
Ger. Drink, my boys!
Don't mind me—all's not right about me—drink!
2nd Ret. [aside]. He's vexed, now, that he let the show escape!
[To GERARD.] Remember that the Earl returns this way.
Ger. That way?
2nd Ret. Just so.
Ger. Then my way's here. *[Goes,*
2nd Ret. Old Gerard
Will die soon—mind, I said it! He was used
To care about the pitifullest thing
That touched the House's honour, not an eye
But his could see wherein: and on a cause
Of scarce a quarter this importance, Gerard
Fairly had fretted flesh and bone away
In cares that this was right, nor that was wrong,
Such point decorous, and such square by rule—
He knew such niceties, no herald more:
And now—you see his humour: die he will!
2nd Ret. God help him! Who's for the great servants'-hall
To hear what's going on inside? They'd follow
Lord Tresham into the saloon.
3rd Ret. I ! —
4th Ret. I ! —
Leave Frank alone for catching, at the door,
Some hint of how the parley goes inside!
Prosperity to the great House once more!
Here's the last drop!
1st Ret. Have at you! Boys, hurrah!

SCENE IE.—*A Saloon in the Mansion.*

Enter LORD TRESHAM, LORD MERTOUN, AUSTIN, *and* GUENDOLEN.

Tresh. I welcome you, Lord Mertoun, yet once more,
To this ancestral roof of mine. Your name
—Noble among the noblest in itself,
Yet taking in your person, fame avers,
New price and lustre,—(as that gem you wear,
Transmitted from a hundred knightly breasts,
Fresh chased and set and fixed by its last lord,
Seems to re-kindle at the core)—your name
Would win you welcome!—
Mer. Thanks!
Tresh. —But add to that,
The worthiness and grace and dignity
Of your proposal for uniting both
Our Houses even closer than respect
Unites them now—add these, and you must grant
One favour more, nor that the least,—to think
The welcome 1 should give;—'tis given! My lord,
My only brother, Austin: he's the king's.
Our cousin, Lady Guendolen—betrothed
To Austin: all are yours.
Mer. I thank you—less
For the expressed commendings which your seal,
And only that, authenticates—forbids
My putting from me . . . to my heart I take
Your praise . . . but praise less claims my gratitude,
Than the indulgent insight it implies
Of what must needs be uppermost with one
Who comes, like me, with the bare leave to ask,
In weighed and measured unimpassioned wordSj
A gift, which, if as calmly 'tis denied,
He must withdraw, content upon his cheek.
Despair within his soul. That I dare ask
Firmly, near boldly, near with confidence
That gift, I have to thank you. Yes, Lord Tresham,
1 love your sister—as you'd have one love
That lady . . . oh more, more I love her! Wealth,
Rank, all the world thinks me, they're yours, you know,
To hold or part with, at your choice—but grant
My true self, me without a rood of land,
A piece of gold, a name of yesterday,
Grant me that lady, and you . . . Death or life?
Guen. [apart to AUSTIN]. Why, this is loving, Austin!
Aus. He's so young!
Guen. Young? Old enough, I think, to half surmise
He never had obtained an entrance here
Were all this fear and trembling needed.
Aus. Hush!
He reddens.
Guen. Mark him, Austin; that's true love!
Ours must begin again.
Tresh. We'll sit, my lord.
Ever with best desert goes diffidence.
I may speak plainly nor be misconceived.
That I am wholly satisfied with you
On this occasion, when a falcon's eye

Were dull compared with mine to search out faults,
Is somewhat. Mildred's hand is hers to give
Or to refuse.
Mer. But you, you grant my suit?
I have your word if hers?
Tresh. My best of words
If hers encourage you. I trust it will.
Have you seen Lady Mildred, by the way?
Mer. I . . . I . . . our two demesnes, remember, touch;
I have been used to wander carelessly
After my stricken game: the heron roused
Deep in my woods, has trailed its broken wing
Thro' thicks and glades a mile in yours,—or else
Some eyass ill-reclaimed has taken flight
And lured me after her from tree to tree,
I marked not whither. I have come upon
The lady's wondrous beauty unaware,
And—and then . . . I have seen her.
Guen. [aside to AUSTIN], Note that mode
Of faltering out that, when a lady passed,
He, having eyes, did see her I You had said—
'On such a day I scanned her, head to foot;
'Observed a red, where red should not have been,
'Outside her elbow; but was pleased enough
'Upon *the* whole.' Let such irreverent talk
Be bssoned for the future!
Tresh. What's to say
May be said briefly. She has never known
A mother's care; I stand for father too.
Her beauty is not strange to you, it seems—
You cannot know the good and tender heart,
Its girl's trust and its woman's constancy,
How pure yet passionate, how calm yet kind,
How grave yet joyous, how reserved yet free
As light where friends are—how imbued with lore
The world most prizes, yet the simplest, yet
The . . . one might know I talked of Mildred—thus
We brothers talk!
Mer, I thank you.
Tresh. In a word,
Control's not for this lady; but her wish
To please me outstrips in its subtlety
My power of being pleased: herself creates
The want she means to satisfy. My heart
Prefers your suit to her as 'twere its own.
Can I say more?
Mer. No more—thanks, thanks—no more!
Tresh. This matter then discussed . . .
Mer. —We'll waste no breath
On aught less precious. I'm beneath the roof
Which holds her: while I thought of that, my speech
To you would wander—as it must not do,
Since as you favour me I stand or fall.
I pray you suffer that I take my leave!
Tresh. With less regret 'tis suffered, that again
We meet, I hope, so shortly.
Mer. We? again?—
Ah yes, forgive me—when shall . . . you will crown
Your goodness by forthwith apprising me
When . . . if . . . the lady will appoint a day
For me to wait on you—and her.
Tresh. So soon
As I am made acquainted with her thoughts
On your proposal—howsoe'er they lean—
A messenger shall bring you the result.
Mer. You cannot bind me more to you, my lord.
Farewell till we renew . . . I trust, renew
A converse ne'er to disunite again.
Tresh. So may it prove!
Mer. You, lady, you. sir, take
My humble salutation!
Guen. and Aus. Thanks!
Tresh. Within there!
[Servants *enter.* TRESHAM *conducts* MERTOUN *to the door. Meantime* AUSTIN *remarks.*
Well,
Here I have an advantage of the Earl,
Confess now! I'd not think that all was safe
Because my lady's brother stood my friend!
Why, he makes sure of her—'do you say, yes—
'She'll not say, no,*—what comes it to beside?
I should have prayed the brother, 'speak this speech,
'For Heaven's sake urge this on her—put in this—
'Forget not, as you'd save me, t'other thing,—
'Then set down what she says, and how she looks
'And if she smiles, and' (in an under breath)
'Only let her accept me, and do you
•And all the world refuse me, if you dare!'
Guen. That way you'd take, friend Austin? What a shame
I was your cousin, tamely from the first
Your bride, and all this fervour's run to waste!
Do you know you speak sensibly to-day?
The Earl's a fooL
Aus. Here's Thorold. Tell him so!

Tresh. [returning]. Now, voices, voices!
'St! the lady's first!
How seems he?-seems he not... come,
faith give fraud
The mercy-stroke whenever they engage!
Down with fraud, up with faith! How
seems the Earl?
A name! a blazon! if you knew their worth,
As you will never! come—the Earl?
Guen. He's young.
Tresh. What's she? an infant save in
heart and brain.
Young! Mildred is fourteen, remark!
And you . . .
Austin, how old is she?
Guen. There's tact for you!
I meant that being young was good excuse
If one should tax him .. .
Tresh. Well?
Guen. —With lacking wit.
Tresh. He lacked wit? Where might he
lack wit, so please you?
Guen. In standing straighter than the
steward's rod
And making you the tiresomest harangue,
Instead of slipping over to my side
And softly whispering in my ear, 'Sweet
lady,
* Your cousin there will do me detriment
'He little dreams of: he's absorbed, I see,
'In my old name and fame—be sure he'll
leave
'My Mildred, when his best account of
me
'Is ended, in full confidence I wear
'My grandsire's periwig down either
cheek.
'I'm lost unless your gentleness vouch-
safes' . . .
Tresh. . . . 'To give a best of best ac-
counts, yourself,
'Of me and my demerits.' You are right!
He should have said what now **I** say for
him.
Yon golden creature, will you help us all?
Here's Austin means to vouch for much,
but you
—You are . .. what Austin only knows!
Come up,
All three of us: she's in the library
No doubt, for the day's wearing fast.
Precede!
Guen. Austin, how we must—!
Tresh. Must what? Must speak truth,
Malignant tongue! Detect one fault in

I challenge you!
Guen. Witchcraft's a fault in him,
For you're bewitched.
Tresh. What's urgent we obtain
Is, that she soon receive him—say, to-
morrow—
Next day at furthest.
Guen. Ne'er instruct me!
Tresh. Come!
—He's out of your good graces, since for-
sooth,
He stood not as he'd carry us by storm
With his perfections! You're for the com-
posed
Manly assured becoming confidence!
—Get her to say, 'to-morrow,' and I'll
give you . ..
I'll give you black Urganda, to be spoiled
With petting and snail-paces. Will you?
Come!

SCENE III.—MILDRED'S *chamber.* A *painted window overlooks the park.* MILDRED *and* GUENDOLEN.

Guen. Now, Mildred, spare those pains.
I have not left
Our talkers in the library, and climbed
The wearisome ascent to this your bower
In company with you,—I have not
dared...
Nay, worked such prodigies as sparing
you
Lord Mertoun's pedigree before the flood.
Which Thorold seemed in very act to tell
—Or bringing Austin to pluck up that
most
Firm-rooted heresy—your suitor's eyes,
He would maintain, were grey instead of
blue—
I think I brought him to contrition!—
Well,
I have not done such things, (all to deserve
A minute's quiet cousin's talk with you,)
To be dismissed so coolly.
Mil. Guendolen!
What have I done? what could suggest...
Guen. There, there!
Do I not comprehend you'd be alone
To throw those testimonies in a heap,
Thorold's enlargings, Austin's brevities,
With that poor silly heartless Guendolen's
Ill-timed misplaced attempted smart-
nesses—
And sift their sense out? now, I come to
spare you
Nearly a whole night's labour. Ask and
have!
Demand, be answered! Lack I ears and
eyes?
Am I perplexed which side of the rock-
table
The Conqueror dined on when he landed
first,
Lord Mertoun's ancestor was bidden
take—
The bow-hand or the arrow-hand's great
meed?
Mildred, the Earl has soft blue eyes!
Mil. My brother-
Did he . . . you said that he received him
well?

Guen. If I said only 'well' I said not much.
Oh, stay—which brother?
Mil, Thorold! who—**who** else?
Guen, Thorold (a secret) is **too** proud by half,—
Nay, hear me out—with us he's even gentler
Than we are with our birds. Of this great House
The least retainer that e'er caught his glance
Would die for him, real dying—no mere talk:
And in the world, the court, if men would cite
The perfect spirit of honour, Thorold's name
Rises of its clear nature to their lips.
But he should take men's homage, trust in it,
And care no more about what drew it down.
He has desert, and that, acknowledgment;
Is he content?
Mil. You wrong him, Guendolen.
Guen. He's proud, confess; so proud with brooding o'er
The light of his interminable line,
An ancestry with men all paladins,
And women all...
Mil, Dear Guendolen, 'tis late!
When yonder purple pane the climbing moon
Pierces, I know 'tis midnight.
Guen. Well, that Thorold
Should rise up from such musings and receive
One come audaciously to graft himself
Into this peerless stock, yet find no flaw,
No slightest spot in such an one . . .
Mil. Who finds
A spot in Mertoun?
Guen. Not your brother; therefore,
Not the whole world.
Mil. I am weary, Guendolen.
Bear with me I
Guen. I am foolish.
Mil. Oh no, kind!
But I would rest.
Guen. Good night and rest to you!
I said how gracefully his mantle lay
Beneath the rings of his light hair?
Mil. Brown hair.
Guen. Brown? why, it *is* brown: how could you know that?
Mil. How? did not you—Oh, Austin 'twas, declared
His hair was light, not brown—my head!
—and look,
The moon-beam purpling the dark chamber! Sweet,
Good night!
Guen. Forgive me—sleep the soundlier for me!
[Going, she turns suddenly.
Mildred!
Perdition! all's discovered! Thorold finds
—That the Earl's greatest of all grandmothers
Was grander daughter still—to that fair dame
Whose garter slipped down at the famous dance! *[Goes.*
Mil. Is she—can she be really gone at last?
My heart! I shall not reach the window. Needs
Must I have sinned much, so to suffer.
[She lifts the small lamp which is suspended before the Virgin's image in the window, and places it by the purple pane.
There!
[She returns to the seat in front.
Mildred and Mertoun! Mildred, with consent
Of all the world and Thorold, Mertoun's bride!
Too late! 'Tis sweet to think of, sweeter still
To hope for, that this blessed end soothes up
The curse of the beginning; but I know
It comes too late: 'twill sweetest be of all
To dream my soul away and die upon.
[A noise without.
The voice! Oh why, why glided sin the snake
Into the paradise Heaven meant us both?
[The window opens softly, A low voice sings.

There's a woman like a dew-drop, she's so purer than the purest;
*And her noble heart's *he noblest, yes, and her sure faith's the surest:*
And her eyes are dark and humid, like the depth on depth of lustre
Hid V the harebell, while her tresses, sunnier than the wild-grape clustery
Gush in golden-tinted plenty down her neclcs rose-misted marble:
Then her voice's music... call it the well's bubbling, the bird's warble t

[A figure wrapped in a mantle appears at the window.

*And this woman says, * My days were sunless and my nights were moonless,*
' Parched the pleasant April herbage, and the lark's heart's outbreak tuneless,
'If you loved me not!' And! who—(ah, for words of flame!) adore her,
Who am mad to lay my spirit prostrate palpably before her—
*[He enters, approaches her seat, **and** bends over her.*

/ may enter at her portal soon, as now her lattice takes me.
And by noontide asby midnight make her mine, as hers she makes me !

{The Earl *throws off his slouched hat and long cloak.*

My very heart sings, so I sing, Beloved!
Mil. Sit, Henry—do not take my hand I
Mer. 'Tis mine.
The meeting that appalled us both so much
Is ended.
Mil. What begins now?
Mer. Happiness
Such as the world contains not.
Mil. That is it.
Our happiness would, as you say, exceed
The whole world's best of blisses: we—do we
Deserve that? Utter to your soul, what mine
Long since, Beloved, has grown used to hear,
Like a death-knell, so much regarded once, once,
And so familiar now; this will not be!
Mer. Oh, Mildred, have I met your brother's face?
Compelled myself—if not to speak untruth,
Yet to disguise, to shun, to put aside
The truth, as—what had e'er prevailed on me
Save you, to venture? Have I gained at last
Your brother, the one scarer of your dreams,
And waking thoughts' sole apprehension too?
Does a new life, like a young sunrise, break
On the strange unrest of our night, confused
With rain and stormy flaw—and will you see
No dripping blossoms, no fire-tinted drops
On each live spray, no vapour steaming up,
And no expressless glory in the East?
When 1 am by you, to be ever by you.
When I have won you and may worship

Oh, Mildred, can you say 'this will not be'?
Mil. Sin has surprised us, so will punishment.
Mer. No—me alone, who sinned alone!
Mil. The night
You likened our past life to—was it storm
Throughout to you then, Henry?
Mer. Of your life
I spoke—what am I, what my life, to waste
A thought about when you are by me?—you
It was, I said my folly called the storm
And pulled the night upon. 'Twas day with me—
Perpetual dawn with me.
Mil. Come what, come will,
You have been happy: take my hand!
Mer. [after a pause]. How good
Your brother is! I figured him a cold-
Shall I say, haughty man?
Mil. They told me all.
I know all.
Mer. It will soon be over.
Mil. Over?
Oh, what is over ? what must I live through
And say, ''tis over' ? Is our meeting over ?
Have I received in presence of them all
The partner of my guilty love—with brow
Trying to seem a maiden's brow—with lips
Which make believe that when they strive to form
Replies to you and tremble as they strive,
It is the nearest ever they approached
A stranger's ... Henry, yours that stranger s ... lip—
With cheek that looks a virgin's, and that is...
Ah God, some prodigy of thine will stop
This planned piece of deliberate wickedness
In its birth even! some fierce leprous spot
Will mar the brow's dissimulating! I
Shall murmur no smooth speeches got by heart,
But, frenzied, pour forth all our woeful story,
The love, the shame, and the despair—with them
Round me aghast as round some cursed fount
That should spirt water, and spouts blood. I'll not
... Henry, you do not wish that I should draw
This vengeance down? I'll not affect a grace
That s gone from me—gone once, and gone for ever!
Mer. Mildred, my honour is your own. I'll share
Disgrace I cannot suffer by myself.
A word informs your brother I retract
This morning's offer; time will yet bring forth
Some better way of saving both of us.
Mil. I'll meet their faces, Henry!
Mer. When? to-morrow!
Get done with it!
Mil. Oh, Henry, not to-morrow!
Next day! I never shall prepare my words
And looks and gestures sooner.—How you must

Despise me!
Mer. Mildred, break it if you choose,
A heart the love of you uplifted—still
Uplifts, thro* this protracted agony,
To heaven! but Mildred, answer me,—first pace
The chamber with me—once again—now, say
Calmly the part, the .. . what it is of me
You see contempt (for you did say contempt)
—Contempt for you in! I would pluck it off
And cast it from me!—but no—no, you'll not
Repeat that?—will you, Mildred, repeat that?
Mil. Dear Henry!
Mer. I was scarce a boy—e'en now
What am I more? And you were infantine
When first I met you; why, your hair fell loose
On either side! My fool's-cheek reddens now
Only in the recalling how it burned
That morn to see the shape of many a dream
—You know we boys are prodigal of charms
To her we dream of—I had heard of one,
Had dreamed of her, and I was close to her,
Might speak to her, might live and die her own,
Who knew? I spoke. Oh, Mildred, feel you not
That now, wliile I remember every glance
Of yours, each word of yours, with power to test
And weigh them in the diamond scales of pride,
Resolved the treasure of a first and last
Heart's love shall have been bartered at its worth,
—That now I think upon your purity
And utter ignorance of guilt—your own
Or other's guilt—the girlish undisguised
Delight at a strange novel prize—(I talk
A silly language, but interpret, you!)
If I, with fancy at its full, and reason
Scarce in its germ, enjoined you secrecy,
If you had pity on my passion, pity
On my protested sickness of the soul
To sit beside you, hear you breathe, and watch
Your eyelids and the eyes beneath—if you
Accorded gifts and knew not they were gifts—
If I grew mad at last with enterprise
And must behold my beauty in her bower
Or perish—(I was ignorant of even
My own desires—what then were you?) if sorrow—
Sin—if the end came—must I now renounce
My reason, blind myself to light, say truth
Is false and he to God and my own soul?
Contempt were all of this!
Mil, Do you believe . ..
Or, Henry, I'll not wrong you—you believe
That I was ignorant. I scarce grieve o'er
The past. We'll love on; you will love me still.
Mer. Oh, to love less what one has injured! Dove,
Whose pinion I have rashly hurt, my breast—
Shall my heart's warmth not nurse thee into strength?
Flower I have crushed, shall I not care for thee?
Bloom o'er my crest, my fight-mark and device!
Mildred, I love you and you love me.
Mil. Go!
Be that your last word. I shall sleep tonight.
Mer. This is not our last meeting?
Mil. One night more.
Mer. And then—think, then!
Mil. Then, no sweet courtship-days,
No dawning consciousness of love for us,
No strange and palpitating births of sense
From words and looks, no innocent fears and hopes,
Reserves and confidences: morning's over!
Mer. How else should love's perfected noontide follow?
All the dawn promised shall the day perform.
Mil. So may it be! but——
You are cautious, Love?
Are sure that unobserved you scaled the walls?
Mer. Oh, trust me! Then our final meeting's fixed
To-morrow night?
Mil. Farewell! Stay, Henry ... wherefore?
His foot is on the yew-tree bough; the turf
Receives him: now the moonlight as he runs
Embraces him—but he must go—is gone.
Ah, once again he turns—thanks, thanks, my Love!
He's gone. Oh, I'll believe him every word!
I was so young, I loved him so, I had
No mother, God forgot me, and I fell.
There may be pardon yet: all's doubt beyond.
Surely the bitterness of death is past.

ACT I I

SCENE.—*The Library,*

Enter LORD TRESHAM, *hastily,*

Tresh. This way! In, Gerard, quick!
[As GERARD *enters,* TRESHAM *secures the door.*
Now speak! or, wait—
I'll bid you speak directly.
[Seats himself.
Now repeat
Firmly and circumstantially the tale
You just now told me; it eludes me; either
I did not listen, or the half is gone
Away from me. How long have you lived here?
Here in my house, your father kept our woods
Before you?
Ger, —As his father did, my lord.
I have been eating, sixty years almost,
Your bread.
Tres, Yes, yes. You ever were of all
The servants in my father's house. I know,
The trusted one. You'll speak the truth.
Ger. I'll speak
God's truth. Night after night. ..
Tresh, Since when?
Ger. At least
A month—each midnight has some man access
To Lady Mildred's chamber.
Tresh. Tush, 'access'—
No wide words like 'access' to me!
Ger. He runs
Along the woodside, crosses to the South,
Takes the left tree that ends the avenue...
Tresh. The last great yew-tree?
Ger. You might stand upon
The main boughs like a platform. Then he . . .
Tresh. Quick!
Ger. Climbs up, and, where they lessen at the top,
—I cannot see distinctly, but he throws,
I think—for this I do not vouch—a line
That reaches to the lady's casement—
Tresh. —Which
He enters not! Gerard, some wretched fool
Dares pry into my sister's privacy!
When such are young, it seems a precious thing
To have approached,—to merely have approached,
Got sight of, the abode of her they set
Their frantic thoughts upon. He does not enter?
Gerard?
Ger. There is a lamp that's full i' the midst,
Under a red square in the painted glass
Of Lady Mildred's...
Tresh. Leave that name out! Well? That lamp?
Ger, —Is moved at midnight higher up
To one pane—a small dark-blue pane; he waits
For that among the boughs: at sight of that,
I see him, plain as I see you, my lord,
Open the lady's casement, enter there___
Tresh. —And stay?
Ger. An hour, two hours.
Tresh. And this you saw
Once?—twice?—quick!
Ger. Twenty times.
Tresh. And what brings you
Under the yew-trees?
Ger. The first night I left
My range so far, to track the stranger stag
That broke the pale, I saw the man.
Tresh. Yet sent
No cross-bow shaft through the marauder?
Ger. But
He came, my lord, the first time he was seen,
In a great moonlight, light as any day,
From Lady Mildred's chamber.
Tresh. [after a pause]. You have no cause
—Who could have cause to do my sister wrong?
Ger. Oh, my lord, only once—let me this once
Speak what is on my rnindi Since first I noted
All this, I've groaned as if a fiery net
Plucked me this way and that—fire if I turned
To her, fire if I turned to you, and fire
If down I flung myself and strove to die.
The lady could not have been seven years old
When I was trusted to conduct her safe
Through the deer-herd to stroke the snow-white fawn
I brought to eat bread from her tiny hand
Within a month. She ever had a smile
To greet me with—she... if it could undo
What's done, to lop each limb from off this trunk . ..
All that is foolish talk, not fit for you—
I mean, I could not speak and bring her hurt
For Heaven's compelling. But when I was fixed
To hold my peace, each morsel of your food
Eaten beneath your roof, my birth-place too,
Choked me. I wish I had grown mad in doubts
What it behoved me do. This morn it seemed
Either I must confess to you, or die:

Now it is done, I seem the vilest worm
That crawls, to have betrayed my lady.
Tresh. **No—**
No, Gerard!
Ger. Let me go!
Tresh. A man you say:
Whatman? Young? Not a vulgar hind?
What dress?
Ger. A slouched hat and a large dark
foreign cloak
Wraps his whole form; even his face is hid;
But I should judge him young: no hind,
be sure!
Tresh. **Why?**
Ger. He is ever armed: his sword
projects
Beneath the cloak.
Tresh. Gerard,—I will not say
No word, no breath of this!
Ger. Thanks, thanks, my lord!
[Goes.
Tresh. [paces the room. After a pause].
Oh, thought's absurd!—as with some
monstrous fact
Which, when ill thoughts beset us, seems
to give
Merciful God that made the sun and stars,
The waters and the green delights of earth,
The lie! I apprehend the monstrous fact—
Yet know the maker of all worlds is good,
And yield my reason up, inadequate
To reconcile what yet I do behold—
Blasting my sense! There's cheerful day
outside:
This is my library, and this the chair
My father used to sit in carelessly
After his soldier-fashion, while I stood
Between his knees to question him: and
here
Gerard our grey retainer,—as he says,
Fed with our food, from sire to son, an
age,—
Has .told a story—I am to believe!
That Mildred . . . oh, no, no! both tales
are true,
Her pure cheek's story and the forester's!
Would she, or could she, err—much less,
confound
All guilts of treachery, of craft, of . . .
Heaven
Keep me within its hand!—I will sit here
Until thought settle and I see my course.
Avert, oh God, only this woe from me!
[As he sinks his head between his arms on the table, GUENDOLEN'S ***voice is heard at the door.***
Lord Tresham! *[She knocks.]* Is Lord
Tresham there?
[TRESHAM, ***hastily turning, pulls down the first book above him and opens it.***
Tresh, **Come in!** ***[She enters.***
Ha, Guendolen!—good morning.
Guen. Nothing more?
Tresh. What should I say more?
Guen. Pleasant question! more?
This more. Did I besiege poor Mildred's
brain
Last night till close on morning with * the
Earl,'
'The Earl'—whose worth did I asseverate
Till I am very fain to hope that... Thorold,
What is all this? You are not well!
Tresh. Who, I?
You laugh at me.
Guen. Has what I'm fain to hope,
Arrived then? Does that huge tome show
some blot
In the Earl's 'scutcheon come no longer
back
Than Arthur's time?
Tresh. When left you Mildred's
chamber?
Guen. Oh, late enough, I told you! The
main thing
To ask is, how I left her chamber,—sure,
Content yourself, she'll grant this para-
gon
Of Earls no such ungracious . . .
Tresh. Send her here!
Guen. Thorold?
Tresh. I mean—acquaint
her, Guendolen,
—But mildly!
Guen. Mildly?
Tresh. Ah, you guessed aright!
I am not well: there is no hiding it.
But tell her I would see her at her leisure—
That is, at once! here in the library!
The passage in that old Italian book
We hunted for so long is found, say,
found—
And if I let it slip again . . . you see,
That she must come—and instantly!
Guen. **I'll** die
Piecemeal, record that, if there have not
gloomed
Some blot i' the 'scutcheon!
Tresh. Go! or, Guendolen,
Be you at call,—with Austin, if you
choose,—
In the adjoining gallery! There, go!
[GUENDOLEN *goes.*
Another lesson to me! You might bid
A child disguise his heart's sore, and con-
duct
Some sly investigation point by point
With a smooth brow, as well as bid me
catch
The inquisitorial cleverness some praise.
If you had told me yesterday, 'There's
one
'You needs must circumvent and prac-
tise with,
'Entrap by policies, if you would worm
'The truth out: and that one is—Mildred!'
There,
There—reasoning is thrown away on it!

Prove she's unchaste . . . why, you may after prove
That she's a poisoner, traitress, what you will!
Where I can comprehend nought, nought's to say.
Or do, or think. Force on me but the first
Abomination,—then outpour all plagues,
And I shall ne'er make count of them.

Enter MILDRED.

Mil. What book
Is it I wanted, Thorold? Guendolen
Thought you were pale; you are not pale. That book?
That's Latin surely.
Tresh. Mildred, here's a line,
(Don't lean on me: I'll English it for you)
'Love conquers all things.' What love conquers them?
What love should you esteem—best love?
Mil. True love.
Tresh. I mean, and should have said, whose love is best
Of all that love or that profess to love?
Mil. The list 's so long: there's father's, mother's, husband's .. .
Tresh. Mildred, I do believe a brother's love
For a sole sister must exceed them all.
For see now, only see! there's no alloy
Of earth that creeps into the perfect st gold
Of other loves—no gratitude to claim;
You never gave her life, not even aught
That keeps life—never tended her, instructed,
Enriched her—so, your love can claim no right
O'er her save pure love's claim: that's what I call
Freedom from earthliness. You'll never hope
To be such friends, for instance, she and you,
As when you hunted cowslips in the woods
Or played together in the meadow hay.
Oh yes—with age, respect comes, and your worth
Is felt, there's growing sympathy of tastes,
There's ripened friendship, there's confirmed esteem:
—Much head these make against the newcomer!
The startling apparition, the strange youth—
Whom one half-hour's conversing with, or, say,
Mere gazing at, shall change (beyond all change
This Ovid ever sang about) your soul
. . . . Her soul, that is,—the sister's soul! With her
'Twas winter yesterday; now, all is warmth,
The green leaf's springing and the turtle's voice,
* Arise and come away!' Come whither? —far
Enough from the esteem, respect, and all
The brother's somewhat insignificant
Array of rights! All which he knows before,
Has calculated on so long ago!
I think such love, (apart from yours and mine,)
Contented with its little term of life,
Intending to retire betimes, aware
How soon the background must be place for it,
—I think, am sure, a brother's love exceeds
All the world's love in its unworldliness.
Mil. What is this for?
Tresh. This, Mildred, is it for!
Or, no, I cannot go to it so soon!
That's one of many points my haste left out—
Each day, each hour throws forth its silk-slight film
Between the being tied to you by birth,
And you, until those slender threads compose
A web that shrouds her daily life of hopes
And fears and fancies, all her life, from yours:
So close you live and yet so far apart!
And must I rend this web, tear up, break down
The sweet and palpitating mystery
That makes her sacred? You—for you I mean,
Shall I speak, shall I not speak?
Mil. Speak!
Tresh. I will.
Is there a story men could—any man
Could tell of you, you would conceal from me?
I'll never think there's falsehood on that lip.
Say 'There is no such story men could tell,'
And I'll believe you, though I disbelieve
The world—the world of better men than I,
And women such as I suppose you. Speak!
[After a pause.] Not speak? Explain then! Clear it up then! Move
Some of the miserable weight away
That presses lower than the grave! Not speak?
Some of the dead weight, Mildred! Ah, if I
Could bring myself to plainly make their charse
Against you! Must I, Mildred? Silent still?

[After a pause.] Is there a gallant that has night by night
Admittance to your chamber?
[After a pause.] Then, his name!
Till now, I only had a thought for you:
But now,—his name!
Mil. Thorold, do you devise
Fit expiation for my guilt, if fit
There be! 'Tis nought to say that I'll endure
And bless you,—that my spirit yearns to purge
Her stains off in the fierce renewing fire:
But do not plunge me into other guilt!
Oh, guilt enough! I cannot tell his name.
fresh. Then judge yourself! How should I act? Pronounce!
Mil. Oh, Thorold, you must never tempt mc thus!
To die here in this chamber by that sword
Would seem like punishment: so should I glide,
Like an arch-cheat, into extremest bliss!
Twere easily arranged for me: but you—
What would become of you?
Tresh. And what will now
Become of me? I'll bide your shame and mine
From every eye; the dead must heavo their hearts
Under the marble of our chapel-floor;
They cannot rise and blast you. You may wed
Your paramour above our mother's tomb;
Our mother cannot move from 'neath your foot.
We too will somehow wear this one day out:
But with to-morrow hastens here—the Earl!
The youth without suspicion face can come
From Heaven, and heart from... whence proceed such hearts?
I have despatched last night at your command:
A missive bidding him present himself
To-morrow—here—thus much is said; the rest
Is understood as if'twere written down—
'His suit finds favour in your eyes.' Now dictate
This morning's letter that shall countermand
Last night's—do dictate that!
Mil. But, Thorold—if
I will receive him as I said?
Tresh. The Earl?
Mil. I will receive him.
Tresh. [starting up]. Ho there!
Guendolen!

GUENDOLEN *and* AUSTIN *enter.*

And, Austin, you are welcome, too! Look there!
The woman there!
Aus. and Guen. How? Mildred?
Tresh. Mildred once!
Now the receiver night by night, when sleep
Blesses the inmates of her father's house,
—I say, the soft sly wanton that receives
Her guilt's accomplice 'neath this roof which holds
You, Guendolen, you, Austin, and has held
A thousand Treshams—never one like her!
No lighter of the signal-lamp her quick
Foul breath near quenches in hot eagerness
To mix with breath as foul! no loosener
O' the lattice, practised in the stealthy tread,
The low voice and the noiseless come-and-go!
Not one composer of the bacchant's mien
Into—what you thought Mildred's, in a word!
Know her!
Guen. Oh, Mildred, look to me, at least!
Thorold—she's dead, I'd say, but that she stands
Rigid as stone and whiter!
Tresh. You have heard ...
Guen. Too much! You must proceed no further.
Mil. Yes-
Proceed! All's truth. Go from me!
Tresh. All is truth,
She tells you! Well, you know, or ought to know,
All this I would forgive in her. I'd con
Each precept the harsh world enjoins, I'd take
Our ancestors* stern verdicts one by one,
I'd bind myself before them to exact
The prescribed vengeance—and one word of hers,
The sight of her, the bare least memory
Of Mildred, my one sister, my heart's pride
Above all prides, my all in all so long,
Would scatter every trace of my resolve.
What were it silently to waste away
And see her waste away from this day forth,
Two scathed things with leisure to repent,
And grow acquainted with the grave, and die
Tired out if not at peace, and be forgotten?
It were not so impossible to bear.
But this—that, fresh from last night's pledge renewed
Of love with the successful gallant there,

She calmly bids me help her to entice,
Inveigle an unconscious trusting youth
Who thinksher all that's chaste and good and pure,
—Invites me to betray h i m . . . who so fit
As honour's self to cover shame's arch-deed?
—That she'll receive Lord Mertoun—(her own phrase)—
This, who could bear? Why, you have heard of thieves,
Stabbers, the earth's disgrace, who yet have laughed,
'Talk not to me of torture—I'll betray
'No comrade I've pledged faith to!'—you have heard
Of wretched women—all but Mildreds—tied
By wild illicit ties to losels vile
You'd tempt them to forsake; and they'll reply
'Gold, friends, repute, I left for him, I find
'In him, why should I leave him then for gold,
'Repute or friends?'—and you have felt your heart
Respond to such poor outcasts of the world
As to so many friends; bad as you please,
You've felt they were God's men and women still,
So, not to be disowned by you. But she
That stands there, calmly gives her lover up
As means to wed the Earl that she may hide
Their intercourse the surelier: and, for this,
I curse her to her face before you all.
Shame hunt her from the earth ! Then Heaven do right
To both! It hears me now—shall judge her then!

[As MILDRED *faints and falls,* TRESHAM *rushes out.*

Aus. Stay, Tresham, we'll accompany you!

Guen. We?
What, and leave Mildred? We? Why, where's my place
But by her side, and where yours but by mine?
Mildred—one word! Only look at me, then!

Aus. No, Guendolen! I echo Thorold's voice.
She is unworthy to behold . . .

Guen. Us two?
If you spoke on reflection, and if I
Approved your speech—if you (to put the thing
At lowest) you the soldier, bound to make
The king's cause yours and fight for it, and throw
Regard to others of its right or wrong,
—If with a death-white woman you can help,
Let alone sister, let alone a Mildred,
You left her—or if I, her cousin, friend
This morning, playfellow but yesterday,
Who said, or thought at least a thousand times,
'I'd serve you if I could,' should now face round
And say, 'Ah, that's to only signify
'I'd serve you while you're fit to serve yourself:
'So long as fifty eyes await the turn
'Of yours to forestall its yet half-formed wish,
'I'll proffer my assistance you'll not need—
'When every tongue is praising you, I'll join
'The praisers* chorus—when you're hemmed about
'With lives between you and detraction—fives
'To be laid down if a rude voice, rash eye,
'Rough hand should violate the sacred ring
'Their worship throws about you,—then indeed,
'Who'll stand up for you stout as I ?' If so
We said, and so we did,—not Mildred there
Would be unworthy to behold us both,
But we should be unworthy, both of us,
To be beheld by—by—your meanest dog,
Which, if that sword were broken in your face
Before a crowd, that badge torn off your breast,
And you cast out with hooting and contempt,
—Would push his way thro' all the hooters, gain
Your side, go off with you and all your shame
To the next ditch you choose to die in! Austin,
Do you love me? Here's Austin, Mildred, —here's
Your brother says he does not believe half-
No, nor half that—of all he heard! He says,
Look up and take his hand!

Aus. Look up and take
My hand, dear Mildred!

Mil. *I* — I was so young!
Beside, I loved him, Thorold—and I had
No mother; God forgot me: so, I fell.

Guen. Mildred!

Mil. Require no further I
Did I dream
That I could palliate what is done? All's true.

Now, punish me! A woman takes my hand?
Let go my hand! You do not know, I see.
I thought that Thorold told you.
Guen. What is this?
Where start you to?
Mil. Oh, Austin, loosen me!
You heard the whole of it—your eyes were worse,
In their surprise, than Thorold's! Oh, unless
You stay to execute his sentence, loose
My hand! Has Thorold gone, and are you here?
Guen. Here, Mildred, we two friends of yours will wait
Your bidding; be you silent, sleep or muse!
Only, when you shall want your bidding done,
How can we do it if we are not by?
Here's Austin waiting patiently your will!
One spirit to command, and one to love
And to believe in it and do its best,
Poor as that is, to help it—why, the world
Has been won many a time, its length and breadth,
By just such a beginning!
Mil. I believe
If once I threw my arms about your neck
And sunk my head upon your breast, that I
Should weep again.
Guen. Let go her hand now, Austin!
Wait for me. Pace the gallery and think
On the world's seemings and realities,
Until I call you. [AUSTIN *goes.*
Mil. No—I cannot weep.
No more tears from this brain—no sleep—no tears!
O Guendolen, I love you!
Guen. Yes: and 'love'
Is a short word that says so very much!
It says that you confide in me.
Mil. Confide!
Guen. Your lover's name, then! I've so much to learn,
Ere I can work in your behalf!
Mil. My friend,
You know I cannot tell his name.
Guen. At least
He is your lover? and you love him too?
Mil. Ah, do you ask me that?—but I am fallen
So low!
Guen. You love him still, then?
Mil. My sole prop
Against the guilt that crushes me! I say,
Each night ere I lie down, 'I was so young—
•I had no mother, and I loved him so!'
And then God seems indulgent, and I dare
Trust him my soul in sleep.
Guen. How could you let us
E'en talk to you about Lord Mertoun then?
Mil. There is a cloud around me.
Guen. But you said
You would receive his suit in spite of this?
Mil. I say there is a cloud . . .
Guen. No cloud to me!
Lord Mertoun and your lover are the same!
Mil. What maddest fancy . . •
Guen. [calling aloud]. Austin!
(spare your pains—
When I have got a truth, that truth I keep)—
Mil. By all you love, sweet Guendolen, forbear!
Have I confided in you . . .
Guen. Just for this!
Austin!—Oh, not to guess it at the first!
But I did guess it—that is, I divined,
Felt by an instinct how it was: why else
Should I pronounce you free from all that heap
Of sins which had been irredeemable?
I felt they were not yours—what other way
Than this, not yours ? The secret's wholly mine!
Mil. If you would see me die before his face . . .
Guen. I'd hold my peace! And if the Earl returns
To-night?
Mil. Ah Heaven, he's lost!
Guen. I thought so. Austin!

Enter AUSTIN.

Oh, where have you been hiding?
Aus. Thorold's gone,
I know not how, across the meadow-land.
I watched him till I lost him in the skirts
O' the beech-wood.
Guen. Gone? All thwarts us.
Mil. Thorold too?
Guen. I have thought. First lead tlus Mildred to her room.
Go on the other side; and then we'll seek
Your brother: and I'll tell you, by the way,
The greatest comfort in the world. You said
There was a clue to all. Remember, Sweet.
He said there was a clue! I hold it. Come!

ACT in

SCENE I.—*The end of the Yew-tree Avenue under* MILDRED'S *window. A light seen through a central red pane.*

Enter TRESHAM *through the trees.*

Again here! But I cannot lose myself.
The heath—the orchard—I have traversed glades

And dells and bosky paths which used to lead
Into green wild-wood depths, bewildering
My boy's adventurous step. And now they tend
Hither or soon or late; the blackest shade
Breaks up, the thronged trunks of the trees ope wide,
And the dim turret I have fled from, fronts
Again my step; the very river put
Its arm about me and conducted me
To this detested spot. Why then, I'll shun
Their will no longer: do your will with me!
Oh, bitter! To have reared a towering scheme
Of happiness, and to behold it razed.
Were nothing: all men hope, and see their hopes
frustrate, and grieve awhile, and hope anew.
But I . . . to hope that from a line like ours
No horrid prodigy like this would spring,
Were just as though I hoped that from these old
Confederates against the sovereign day,
Children of older and yet older sires.
Whose living coral berries dropped, as now
On me, on many a baron's surcoat once.
On many a beauty's wimple—would proceed
No poison-tree, to thrust, from hell its root,
Hither and thither its strange snaky arms.
Why came I here? What must I do? *[A bell strikes.]* A bell?
Midnight! and 'tis at midnight.. • Ah, I catch
—Woods, river, plains, I catch your meaning now,
And I obey you! Hist! This tree will serve.
[He retires behind one of the trees. After a pause, enter MERTOUN *cloaked as before.*
Mer. Not time! Beat out thy last voluptuous beat
Of hope and fear, my heart! I thought the clock
I' the chapel struck as I was pushing through
The ferns And so I shall no more see rise
My love-star! Oh, no matter for the past!
So much the more delicious task to watch
Mildred revive: to pluck out, thorn by thorn,
All traces of the rough forbidden path
My rash love lured her to! Each day must see
Some fear of hers effaced, some hope renewed:
Then there will be surprises, unforeseen
Delights in store. I'll not regret the past.
[The light is placed above in the purple pane.
And see, my signal rises, Mildred's star!
I never saw it lovelier than now
It rises for the last time. If it sets,
'Tis that the re-assuring sun may dawn.
[As he prepares to ascend the last tree of the avenue, TRESHAM *arrests his arm.*
Unhand me—peasant, by your grasp! Here's gold.
'Twas a mad freak of mine. I said I'd pluck
A branch from the white-blossomed shrub beneath
The casement there. Take this, and hold your peace.
Tresh. Into the moonlight yonder, come with me!
Out of the shadow!
Mer. I am armed, fool!
Tresh. Yes,
Or no ? You'll come into the light, or no ?
My hand is on your throat—refuse!—
Mer. That voice!
Where have I heard... no—that was mild and slow,
I'll come with you. *[They advance.*
Tresh, You're armed: that's well. Declare
Your name: who are you?
Mer. (Tresham!—she is lost!)
Tresh. Oh, silent? Do you know, you bear yourself
Exactly as, in curious dreams I've had
How felons, this wild earth is full of, look
When they're detected, still your kind has looked!
The bravo holds an assured countenance,
The thief is voluble and plausible,
But silently the slave of lust has crouched
Wlien I have fancied it before a man.
Your name!
Mer. I do conjure Lord Tresham—ay,
Kissing his foot, if so I might prevail—
That he for his own sake forbear to ask
My name! As heaven's above, his future weal
Or woe depends upon my silence! Vain!
I read your white inexorable face.
Know me, Lord Tresham!
[He throws off his disguises.
Tresh. Mertoun!
[After a pause.] Draw now!
Mer. Hear me
But speak first!
Tresh. Not one least word on your life!
Be sure that I will strangle in your throat
The least word that informs me how you live
And yet seem what you seem! No doubt 'twas you

Taught Mildred still to keep that face and sin.
We should join hands in frantic sympathy
If you once taught me the unteachable,
Explained how you can live so, and so lie.
With God's help I retain, despite my sense,
The old belief—a life like yours is still
Impossible. Now draw!
Mer. Not for my sake,
Do I entreat a hearing—for your sake,
And most, for her sake!
Tresh. Ha ha, what should I
Know of your ways? A miscreant like yourself,
How must one rouse his ire? A blow?—that's pride
No doubt, to him! One spurns him, does one not?
Or sets the foot upon his mouth, or spits
Into his face! Come! Which, or all of these?
Mer. 'Twixt him and me and Mildred, Heaven be judge!
Can I avoid this? Have your will, my lord!
[He draws and, after a few passes, falls.
Tresh. You are not hurt?
Mer. You'll hear me now!
Tresh. But rise!
Mer. Ah, Tresham, say I not ' you'll hear me now!'
And what procures a man the right to speak
In his defence before his fellow man,
But—I suppose—the thought that presently
He may have leave to speak before his God
His whole defence?
Tresh. Not hurt? It cannot be!
You made no effort to resist me. Where
Did my sword reach you? Why not have returned
My thrusts? Hurt where?
Mer. My lord—
Tresh. How young he is!
Mer. Lord Tresham, I am very young, and yet
I have entangled other lives with mine.
Do let me speak, and do believe my speech!
That when I die before you presently,—
Tresh. Can you stay here till I return with help?
Mer. Oh, stay by me! When I was less than boy
I did you grievous wrong and knew it not—
Upon my honour, knew it not! Once known,
I could not find what seemed a better way
To right **you than I took:** my **life—**you **feel**
How less than nothing were the giving you
The life you've taken! But I thought my way
The better—only for your sake and hers:
And as you have decided otherwise,
Would I had an infinity of lives
To offer you! Now say—instruct me—think!
Can you, from the brief minutes I have left,
Eke out my reparation? Oh think—think!
For I must wring a partial—dare I say,
Forgiveness from you, ere I die?
Tresh. I do
Forgive you.
Mer. Wait and ponder that great word!
Because, if you forgive me, I shall hope
To speak to you of—Mildred!
Tresh. Mertoun, haste
And anger have undone us. 'Tis not you
Should tell me for a novelty you're young,
Thoughtless, unable to recall the past.
Be but your pardon ample as my own!
Mer. Ah, Tresham, that a sword-stroke and a drop
Of blood or two, should bring all this about!
Why, 'twas my very fear of you. my love
Of you—(what passion like a boy's for one
Like you?)—that ruined me! I dreamed of you—
You, all accomplished, courted everywhere,
The scholar and the gentleman. I burned
To knit myself to you: but I was young,
And your surpassing reputation kept me
So far aloof! Oh, wherefore all that love?
With less of love, my glorious yesterday
Of praise and gentlest words and kindest looks,
Had taken place perchance six months ago.
Even now, how happy we had been! And yet
I know the thought of this escaped you, Tresham!
Let me look up into your face; I feel
'Tis changed above me: yet my eyes are glazed.
Where? where?
[As he endeavours to raise himself, his eye catches the lamp.
Ah, Mildred! What will Mildred do?
Tresham, her life is bound up in the life
That's bleeding fast away! I'll live—must live.
There, if you'll only turn me I shall live
And save her! Tresham—oh, had you but heard!

Had you but heard! What right was yours to set
The thoughtless foot upon her life and mine,
And then say, as we perish, 'Had I thought,
'All had gone otherwise'? We've sinned and die:
Never you sin, Lord Tresham! for you'll die,
And God will judge you.

Tresh. Yes, be satisfied!
That process is begun.

Mer. And she sits there
Waiting for me! Now, say you this to her—
You, not another—say, I saw him die
As he breathed this, 'I love her'—you don't know
What those three small words mean! Say, loving her
Lowers me down the bloody slope to death
With memories . . . I speak to her, not you,
Who had no pity, will have no remorse,
Perchance intend her . . • Die along with me,
Dear Mildred! 'tis so easy, and you'll 'scape
Somuchunkindness! Can I lie at rest,
With rude speech spoken to you, ruder deeds
Done to you?—heartless men shall have my heart,
And I tied down with grave-clothes and the worm,
Aware, perhaps, of every blow—oh God!—
Upon those lips—yet of no power to tear
The felon stripe by stripe I Die, Mildred! Leave
Their honourable world to them! For God
We're good enough, though the world casts us out. *[A whistle is heard,*

Tresh. Ho, Gerard!

Enter GERARD, AUSTIN *and* GUENDOLEN, *with lights.*

No one speak!
You see what's done.
I cannot bear another voice.

Mer, There's light—
Light all about me, and I move to it.
Tresham, did I not tell you—did you not
Just promise to deliver words of mine
To Mildred?

Tresh, I will bear those words to her.

Mer, Now?

Tresh, Now. Lift you the body, and leave me
The head.

[As they have half raised MERTOUN, *he turns suddenly.*

Mer. I knew they turned me: turn me not from her!
There! stay you! there! *[Dies,*

Guen, [after a pause], Austin, remain you here
With Thorold until Gerard comes with help:
Then lead him to his chamber. I must go
To Mildred.

Tresh. Guendolen, I hear each word
You utter. Did you hear him bid me give
His message ? Did you hear my promise ?
And only I, see Mildred.

Guen. She will die.

Tresh. Oh no, she will not die! I dare not hope
She'll die. What ground have you to think she'll die?
Why, Austin's with you!

Aus, Had we but arrived
Before you fought!

Tresh. There was no fight atall.
He let me slaughter him—the boy! I'll trust
The body there to you and Gerard—thus!
Now bear him on before me.

Aus. Whither bear him?

Tresh. Oh, to my chamber! When we meet there next,
We shall be friends.

[They bear out the body of MERTOUN.

Will she die, Guendolen?

Guen. Where are you taking me?

Tresh. He fell just here.
Now answer me. Shall you in your whole life
—You who have nought to do with Mertoun's fate,
Now you have seen his breast upon the turf,
Shall you e'er walk this way if you can help?
When you and Austin wander arm-in-arm
Through our ancestral grounds, will not a shade
Be ever on the meadow and the waste—
Another kind of shade than when the night
Shuts the woodside with all its whispers up?
But will you ever so forget his breast
As carelessly to cross this bloody turf
Under the black yew avenue? That's well!
You turn your head: and I then?—

Guen. What is done
Is done. My care is for the living. Thorold,
Bear up against this burden: more remains
To set the neck to!

Tresh. Dear and ancient trees
My fathers planted, and I loved so well!

What have I done that, like some fabled crime
Of yore, lets loose a Fury leading thus
Her miserable dance amidst you all?
Oh, never more for me shall winds intone
With all your tops a vast antiphony,
Demanding and responding in God's praise!
Hers ye are now, not mine! Farewell—farewell!

SCENE II.—MILDRED'S *chamber.*

MILDRED *alone.*

He comes not! I have heard of those who seemed
Resourceless in prosperity,—you thought
Sorrow might slay them when she listed; yet
Did they so gather up their diffused strength
At her first menace, that they bade her strike,
And stood and laughed her subtlest skill to scorn.
Oh, 'tis not so with me! The first woe fell,
And the rest fall upon it, not on me:
Else should I bear that Henry comes not?—fails
Just this first night out of so many nights?
Loving is done with. Were he sitting now,
As so few hours since, on that seat, we'd love
No more—contrive no thousand happy ways
To hide love from the loveless, any more.
I think I might have urged some little point
In my defence, to Thorold; he was breathless
For the least hint of a defence: but no,
The first shame over, allLthat would might fall.
No Henry! Yet I merely sit and think
The morn's deed o'er and o'er. I must have crept
Out of myself. A Mildred that has lost
Her lover—oh, I dare not look upon
Such woe! I crouch away from it! Tis she,
Mildred, will break her heart, not I! The world
Forsakes me: only Henry's left me—left?
When I have lost him, for he does not come,
And I sit stupidly... Oh Heaven, break up
This worse than anguish, this mad apathy,
By any means or any messenger!

Tresh. [without], Mildred!

Mil. Come in!
Heaven hears me!

[Enter TRESHAM.] You? alone?
Oh, no more cursing!

Tresh. Mildred, I must sit.
There—you sit!

Mil. Say it, Thorold—do not look
The curse! deliver all you come to say!
What must become of me? Oh, speak that thought
Which makes your brow and cheeks so pale!

Tresh. My thought?

Mil. All of it!

Tresh. How we waded—years ago-
After those water-lilies, till the plash,
I know not how, surprised us; and you dared
Neither advance nor turn back: so, we stood
Laughing and crying until Gerard came—
Once safe upon the turf, the loudest too,
For once more reaching the relinquished prize!
How idle thoughts are, some men's, dying men's!
Mildred,—

Mil. You call me kindlier by my name
Than even yesterday: what is in that?

Tresh, It weighs so much upon my mind that I
This morning took an office not my own!
I might... of course, I must be glad or grieved,
Content or net, at every little thing
That touches you. I may with a wrung heart
Even reprove you, Mildred; I did more.
Will you forgive me?

Mil. Thorold? do you mock!
Or no ... and yet you bid me... say that word!

Tresh. Forgive me, Mildred!—are you silent, Sweet?

Mil. [starting up]. Why does not Henry Mertoun come to-night?
Are you, too, silent?
[Dashing his mantle aside, and pointing to his scabbard, which is empty.
Ah, this speaks for you!
You've murdered Henry Mertoun! Now proceed!
What is it I must pardon? This and all?
Well, I do pardon you—I think I do.
Thorold, how very wretched you must be!

Tresh, He bade me tell you ...

Mil. What I do forbid
Your utterance of! So much that you may tell
And will not—how you murdered him... but, no!
You'll tell me that he loved me, never more
Than bleeding out his life there: must *I* say
'Indeed,' to that? Enough! I pardon you.

Tresh. You cannot, Mildred! for the harsh words,.yes: . . . .
Of this last deed Another's judge: whose doom
I wait in doubt, despondency and fear.
Mil. Oh, true! There's nought for me to pardon! True!
You loose my soul of all its cares at once.
Death makes me sure of him for ever! You
Tell me his last words? He shall tell me them,
And take my answer—not in words, but reading
Himself the heart I had to read him late,
Which death . . .
Tresh. Death? You are dying too? Well said
Of Guendolen! I dared not hope you'd die:
But she was sure of it.
Mil. Tell Guendolen
I loved her, and tell Austin . . .
lresh. Him you loved:
And me?
Mil Ah, Thorold! Was't not rashly done
To quench that blood, on fire with youth and hope
And love of me—whom you loved too, and yet
Suffered to sit here waiting his approach
While you were slaying him? Oh, doubtlessly
You let him speak his poor confused boy's-speech
—Do this poor utmost to disarm your wrath
And respite me!—you let him try to give
The story of our love and ignorance,
And the brief madness and the long despair—
You let him plead all this, because your code
Of honour bids you hear before you strike:
But at the end, as he looked up for life
Into your eyes—you struck him down!
Tresh. No! No!
Had I but heard him—had I let him speak
Half the truth—less—had I looked long on him
I had desisted! Why. as he lay there,
The moon on his flushed cheek, I gathered all
The story ere he told it: I saw through
The troubled surface of his crime and yours
A depth of purity immovable,
Had I but glanced, where all seemed turbidest
Had gleamed some inlet to the calm beneath;
I would not glance: my punishment's at hand.
There, Mildred, is the truth! and you—say on—
You curse me?
Mil. As I dare approach that Heaven
Which has not bade a living thing despair,
Which needs no code to keep its grace from stain,
But bids the vilest worm that turns on it
Desist and be forgiven,—I—forgive not,
But bless you, Thorold, from my soul of souls! *[Falls on his neck.*
There! Do not think too much upon the past!
The cloud that's broke was all the same a cloud
While it stood up between my friend and you;
You hurt him 'neath its shadow: but is that
So past retrieve? I have his heart, you know;
I may dispose of it: I give it you!
It loves you as mine loves! Confirm me, Henry! *[Dies.*
Tresh. I wish thee joy, Beloved I I am glad
In thy full gladness!
Guen. [without]. Mildred! Tresham! *[Entering with* AUSTIN.] Thorold, I could desist no longer. Ah, she swoons! That's well.
Tresh. Oh, better far than that!
Guen. She's dead!
Let me unlock her arms!
Tresh. She threw them thus
About my neck, and blessed me, and then died:
You'll let them stay now, Guendolen!
Aus. Leave her
And look to him! What ails you, Thorold?
Guen. White
As she, and whiter! Austin! quick—this side!
Aus. A froth is oozing through his clenched teeth;
Both lips, where they're not bitten through, are black:
Speak, dearest Thorold!
Tresh. Something does weigh down
My neck beside her weight: thanks: I should fall
But for you, Austin, I believe!—there, there,
'Twill pass away soon!—ah,—I had forgotten:
I am dying.
Guen. Thorold—Thorold—why was this?
Tresh. I said, just as I drank the poison off,
The earth would be no longer earth to me,
The life out of all life was gone from me.
There are blind ways provided, the foredone

Heart-weary player in this pageant-world
Drops out by, letting the main masque defile
By the conspicuous portal: I am through—
Just through!
Guen. Don't leave him, Austin!
Death is close.
Tresh. Already Mildred's face is peace-fuller.
I see you, Austin—feel you: here's my hand,
Put yours in it—you, Guendolen, yours too!
You're lord and lady now—you're Treshams; name
And fame are yours: you hold our 'scutcheon up.
Austin, no blot on it! You see **how** blood
Must wash one blot away: the first blot came
And the first blood came. To the vain world's eye
All's gules again: no care to the vain world,
From whence the red was drawn!
Aus. No blot shall come!
Tresh. I said that: yet it did come. Should it come,
Vengeance is God's, not man's. Remember me! *[Dies.*
Guen. [letting fall the pulseless arm]. Ah, Thorold, we can but—remember you!

COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

A PLAY

1844

NO ONE LOVES AND HONOURS BARRY CORNWALL MORE THAN
DOES ROBERT BROWNING;
WHO, HAVING NOTHING BETTER THAN THIS PLAY
TO GIVE HIM IN PROOF OF IT, MUST SAY SO.

LONDON: 1844.

Ivy and violet, what do ye here
With blossom and shoot in the warm spring-weather.
Hiding the arms of Monchenci and *Vcrcl—Hanmer.*

PERSONS

COLOMBE OF RAVESTEIN, Duchess of Juliers and Cleves.
SABYNE, ADOLF, *her attendants.*
GUIBERT, OAUCELME, MAUFROY, CLUGNET, *courtiers.*
VALENCE, *advocate of Cleves.*
PRINCE BERTHOLD, *claimant of the Duchy.*
MELCHIOR, *his confidant.*

PLACE.—*The Palace at Juliers.*

ACT I

A

MORNING

SCENE.—*A corridor leading to the Audience-'chamber.*

GAUCELME, CLUGNET, MAUFROY *and other Gui. In time sir but till time comes*
Courtiers, *round* GULBERT, *who is* ur old Duke just disclosed his child's
silently reading a paper: as he drops it old Dock just
at the end retreat,
Declared her true suceessionp to is rule
Gui That this should be her birthday; and the day
We all invested her, twelve months ago,
As the late Duke's true heiress and our liege;
And that this also must become the day...
Oh, miserable lady!
1st Court. Ay, indeed?
2nd Court. Well, Guibert?
3rd Court. But your news, my friend, your news!
The sooner, friend, one learns Prince Berthold's pleasure,
The better for us all: how writes the Prince?
Give me! I'll read it for the common good.
And died: this birthday was the day, last year,
We convoyed her from Castle Ravestein—
That sleeps out trustfully its extreme age
On the Meuse' quiet bank, where she lived queen
Over the water-buds,—to Juliers' court
With joy and bustle. Here again we stand;
Sir Gaucelme's buckle's constant to his cap:
To-day's much such another sunny day!

Gau. Come, Guibert, this outgrows a jest, I thinki:
You re hardly such a novice as to need
The lesson, you pretend.
Gui. What lesson, sir?
That everybody, if he'd thrive at court,
Should, first and last of all, look to himself?
Why, no: and therefore with your good example,
(—Ho, Master Adolf!)—to myself I'll look.

Enter ADOLF.

Gui. The Prince's letter; why, of all men else,
Comes it to me?
Adolf. By virtue of your place,
Sir Guibert! 'Twas the Prince's express charge,
His envoy told us, that the missive there
Should only reach our lady by the hand
Of whosoever held your place.
Gui, Enough!
[ADOLF *retires.*
Then, gentles, who'll accept a certain poor
Indifferently honourable place,
My friends, I make no doubt, have gnashed their teeth
At leisure minutes these half-dozen years,
To find me never in the mood to quit?
Who asks may have it, with my blessing, and—
This to present our lady. Who'll accept?
You,—you,—you ? There it lies, and may, for me!
Mau. [a youth, picking up the paper, reads aloud], 'Prince Berthold, proved by titles following
'Undoubted Lord of Juliers, comes this day
'To claim his own, with licence from the Pope,
'The Emperor, the Kings of Spain and France'. ..
Gau. Sufficient 'titles following,' I judge!
Don't read another! Well,—'to claim his own?'
Mau. '—And take possession of the Duchy held
'Since twelve months, to the true heir's prejudice,
'By' . . . Colombe, Juliers' mistress, so she thinks,
And Ravestein's mere lady, as we find.
Who wants the place and paper? Guibert 's right.
I hope to climb a little in the world,—
I'd push my fortunes,—but, no more than he,
Could tell her on this happy day of days,
That, save the nosegay in her hand, perThere's nothing left to call her own. Sir Clugnet,
You famish for promotion; what say you ?
Clug. [an old man]. To give this letter were a sort, I take it,
Of service: services ask recompense:
What kind of corner may be Ravestein?
Gui. The castle? Oh, you'd share her fortunes? Good!
Three walls stand upright, full as good as four,
With no such bad remainder of a roof.
Clug. Oh,—but the town?
Gui. Five houses, fifteen huts;
A church whereto was once a spire, 'tis judged;
And half a dyke, except in time of thaw.
Clug. Still, there's some revenue?
Gui. Else Heaven forfend!
You hang a beacon out, should fogs increase;
So, when the Autumn floats of pine-wood steer
Safe 'mid the white confusion, thanks to you,
Their grateful raftsman flings a guilder in;
—That's if he mean to pass your way next time.
Clug. If not?
Gui. Hang guilders, then! He blesses you.
Clug. What man do you suppose me? Keep your paper!
And, let me say, it shows no handsome spirit
To dally with misfortune: keep your place!
Gau. Some one must tell her.
Gui. Some one may: you may!
Gau. Sir Guibert, 'tis no trifle turns me sick
Of court-hypocrisy at years like mine,
But this goes near *it.* Where's there news at all?
Who'll have the face, for instance, to affirm
He never heard, e'en while we crowned the girl,
That Juliers' tenure was by Salic law;
That one, confessed her father's cousin's child,
And, she away, indisputable heir,
Against our choice protesting and the Duke's,
Claimed Juliers ?—nor, as he preferred his claim,
That first this, then another potentate,
Inclined to its allowance ?—I or you,
Or any one except the lady's self?
Oh, it had been the direst cruelty
To break the business to her! Things might change:
At all events, we'd see next masque at end,
Next mummery over first: and so the edge

Was taken off sharp tidings as they came,
Till here's the Prince upon us, and there's she
—Wreathing her hair, a song between her lips,
With just the faintest notion possible
That some such claimant earns a livelihood
About the world, by feigning grievances—
Few pay the story of, but grudge its price,
And fewer listen to, a second time.
Your method proves a failure; now try mine!
And, since this must be carried ...
Gui. [snatching the paper from him]. By your leave I
Your zeal transports you! 'Twill not serve the Prince
So much as you expect, this course you'd take.
If she leaves quietly her palace,—well;
But if she died upon its threshold,—no:
He'd have the trouble of removing her.
Come, gentles, we're all—what the devil knows!
You, Gaucelme, won't lose character, beside:
You broke your father's heart superiorly
To gather his succession—never blush!
You're from my province, and, be comforted,
They tell of it with wonder to this day.
You can afford to let your talent sleep.
We'll take the very worst supposed, as true:
There, the old Duke knew, when he hid his child
Among the river-flowers at Ravestein,
With whom the right lay! Call the Prince our Duke!
There, she's no Duchess, she's no anything
More than a young maid with the bluest eyes:
And now, sirs, we'll not break this young maid's heart
Coolly as Gaucelme could and would! No haste!
His talent's full-blown, ours but in the bud:
We'll not advance to his perfection yet—
Will we, Sir Maufroy? See, I've ruined Maufroy
For ever as a courtier!
Gau. Here's a coil!
And, count us, will you ? Count its residue,
This boasted convoy, this day last year's crowd!
A birthday, too, a gratulation day!
I'm dumb: bid that keep silence!
Mau. and others. Eh, Sir Guibert?
He's right: that does say something: that's bare truth.
Ten—twelve, I make: a perilous dropping off!
Gui. Pooh—is it audience hour? The vestibule
Swarms too, I wager, with the common sort
That want our privilege of entry here.
Gau. Adolf! *[Re-enter* ADOLF.] Who's outside?
Gui. Oh, your looks suffice!
Nobody waiting?
Mau. [looking through the door-folds]. Scarce our number!
Gui. 'Sdeath!
Nothing to beg for, to complain about?
It can't be! Ill news spreads, but not so fast
As thus to frighten all the world!
Gau. The world
Lives out of doors, sir—not with you and me
By presence-chamber porches, state-room stairs,
Wherever warmth's perpetual: outside's free
To every wind from every compass-point,
And who may get nipped needs be weather-wise.
The Prince comes and the lady's People go;
The snow-goose settles down, the swallows flee—
Why should they wait for winter-time? 'Tis instinct.
Don't you feel somewhat chilly?
Gui. That's their craft?
And last year's crowders-round and criers-forth
That strewed the garlands, overarched the roads,
Lighted the bonfires, sang the loyal songs!
Well 'tis my comfort, you could never call me
The People's Friend! The People keep their word—
I keep my place: don't doubt I'll entertain
The People when the Prince comes, and the People
Are talked of! Then, their speeches—no one tongue
Found respite, not a pen had holiday
—For they wrote, too, as well as spoke, these knaves!
Now see: we tax and tithe them, pill and poll,
They wince and fret enough, but pay they must
—We manage that,—so, pay with a good grace
They might as well, it costs so little more.
But when we've done with taxes, meet folk next
Outside the toll-booth and the rating-place,
In public—there they have us if they will,
We're at their mercy after that, you see!
For one tax not ten devils could extort—

Over and above necessity, a grace;
This prompt disbosoming of love, to wit—
Their vine-leaf wrappage of our tribute penny.
And crowding attestation, all works well.
Yet this precisely do they thrust on us!
These cappings quick, these crook-and-cringings low,
Hand to the heart, and forehead to the knee,
With grin that shuts the eyes and opes the mouth—
So tender they their love; and, tender made,
Go home to curse us, the first doit we ask.
As if their souls were any longer theirs!
As if they had not given ample warrant
To who should clap a collar on their neck,
Rings in their nose, a goad to either flank,
And take them for the brute they boast themselves!
Stay—there's a bustle at the outer door—
And somebody entreating . ., that's my name!
Adolf,—I heard my name!
Adolf. 'Twas probably
The suitor.
Gui. Oh, there is one?
Adolf. With a suit
He'd fain enforce in person.
Gui. The good heart
—And the great fool! Just ope the mid-door's fold!
Is that a lappet of his cloak, I see?
Adolf. If it bear plenteous sign of travel . . . ay,
The very cloak my comrades tore!
Gui. Why tore?
Adolf. He seeks the Duchess' presence in that trim:
Since daybreak, was he posted hereabouts
Lest he should miss the moment.
Gui. Where's he now?
Adolf. Gone for a minute possibly, not more:
They have ado enough to thrust him back.
Gui. Ay—but my name, I caught?
Adolf. Oh, sir—he said
—What was it?—You had known him formerly,
And, he believed, would help him did you guess
He waited now; you promised him as much:
The old plea! 'Faith, he's back,—renews the charge!
[Speaking at the door.] So long as the man parleys, peace outside—
Nor be too ready with your halberts, there!
Gau. My horse bespattered, as he blocked the path
A thin sour man, not unlike somebody.
Adolf. He holds a paper in his breast, whereon
He glances when his cheeks flush and his brow
At each repulse—
Gau. I noticed he'd a brow.
Adolf. So glancing, he grows calmer, leans awhile
Over the balustrade, adjusts his dress,
And presently turns round, quiet again,
With some new pretext for admittance.—Back!
[To GUIBERT.*}*—Sir, he has seen you! Now cross halberts! Ha—
Pascal is prostrate—there lies Fabian too!
No passage! Whither would the madman press?
Close the doors quick on me!
Gui. Too late! He's here.

Enteri hastily and with discomposed dress, VALENCE.

Val. Sir Guibert, will you help me?—me, that come
Charged by your townsmen, all who starve at Cleves,
To represent their heights and depths of woe
Before our Duchess and obtain relief!
Such errands barricade such doors, it seems:
But not a common hindrance drives me back
On all the sad yet hopeful faces, lit
With hope for the first time, which sent me forth.
Cleves, speak for me! Cleves' men and women, speak!
Who followed me—your strongest—many a mile
That I might go the fresher from their ranks,
—Who sit—your weakest—by the city gates,
To take me fuller of what news I bring
As I return—for I must needs return!
—Can I? 'Twere hard, no listener for their wrongs,
To turn them back upon the old despair—
Harder, Sir Guibert, than imploring thus—
So, I do—any way you please—implore!
If you . . . but how should you remember Cleves?
Yet they of Cleves remember you so well!
Ay, comment on each trait of you they keep,
Your words and deeds caught up at second hand,—
Proud, I believe, at bottom of their hearts,
O' the very levity and recklessness
Which only prove that you forget their wrongs.

Cleves, the grand town, whose men and women starve,
Is Cleves forgotten ? Then, remember me!
You promised me that you would help me once,
For other purpose: will you keep your word?
Gui. And who may you be, friend?
Val. Valence of Cleves.
Gui. Valence of. . . not the advocate of Cleves,
fowed my whole estate to, three years back?
Ay, well may you keep silence! Why, my lords,
You've heard, I'm sure, how, Pentecost three years,
I was so nearly ousted of my land
By some knave's-pretext—(eh? when you refused me
Your ugly daughter, Clugnet!)—and you've heard
How I recovered it by miracle
—(When I refused her!) Here's the very friend,
—Valence of Cleves, all parties have to thank!
Nay, Valence, this procedure 's vile in you!
I'm no more grateful than a courtier should,
But politic am I — I bear a brain,
Can cast about a little, might require
Your services a second time. I tried
To tempt you with advancement here to court
—'No!'—well, for curiosity at least
To view our life here—'No!'—our Duchess, then,—
A pretty woman's worth some pains to see,
Nor is she spoiled, I take it, if a crown
Complete the forehead pale and tresses pure . . .
Val. Our city trusted me its miseries,
And I am come.
Gui. So much for taste! But 'come,'—
So may you be, for anything I know,
To beg the Pope's cross, or Sir Clugnet's daughter,
And with an equal chance you get all three.
If it was ever worth your while to come,
Was not the proper way worth finding too?
Val. Straight to the palace-portal, sir, I came—
Gui. —And said?—
Val. —That I had brought the miseries
Of a whole city to relieve.
Gui. —Which saying
Won your admittance? You saw me, indeed,
And here, no doubt, you stand: as certainly,
My intervention, I shall not dispute,
Procures you audience; which, if I procure,—
That paper's closely written—by Saint Paul,
Here flock the Wrongs, follow the Remedies,
Chapter and verse, One, Two, A, B and C!
Perhaps you'd enter, make a reverence,
And launch these 'miseries' from first to last?
Val. How should they let me pause or turn aside?
Gau. [to VALENCE]. My worthy sir, one question! You've come straight
From Cleves, you tell us: heard you any talk
At Cleves about our lady?
Val. Much.
Gau. And what?
Val. Her wish was to redress all wrongs she knew.
Gau. That, you believed?
Val. You see me, sir!
Gau. —Nor stopped
Upon the road from Cleves to Jullers here,
For any—rumours you might find afloat:
Val. I had my townsmen's wrongs to busy me.
Gau. This is the lady's birthday, do you know?
—Her day of pleasure?
Val. —That the great, I know,
For pleasure born, should still be on the watch
To exclude pleasure when a duty offers:
Even as, for duty born, the lowly too
May ever snatch a pleasure if in reach:
Both will have plenty of their birthright, sir!
Gau. [aside to GUIBERT]. Sir Guibert, here's your man! No scruples now—
You'll never find his like! Time presses hard.
I've seen your drift and Adolf's too, this while,
But you can't keep the hour of audience back
Much longer, and at noon the Prince arrives.
[Pointing to VALENCE.] Entrust him with it—fool no chance away!
Gui. Him?
Gau. —With the missive! What's the man to her?
Gui. No bad thought! Yet, 'tis yours, who ever played
The tempting serpent: else 'twere no bad thought!
I should—and do—mistrust it for your sake,
Or else .. .

Enter an Official *who communicates with* ADOLF.

Adolf. The Duchess will receive the court.
Gui. Give us a moment, Adolf I Valence, friend,
I'll help you. We of the service, you're to mark,
Have special entry, while the herd... the folk
Outside, get access through our help alone;
—Well, it is so, was so, and I suppose
So ever will be: your natural lot is, therefore,
To wait your turn and opportunity,
And probably miss both. Now, I engage
To set you, here and in a minute's space,
Before the lady, with full leave to plead
Chapter and verse, and A, and B, and C,
To heart's content.
VaU I grieve that I must ask,—
This being, yourself admit, the custom here,—
To what the price of such a favour mounts?
Gui. Just so! You're not without a courtier's tact.
Little at court, as your quick instinct prompts,
Do such as we without a recompense.
VaL Yours is?—
Gui, A trifle: here's a document
'Tis some one's duty to present her Grace—
I say, not mine—these say, not theirs—such points
Have weight at court. Will you relieve us all
And take it? Just say, 'I am bidden lay
'This paper at the Duchess' feet!'
VaL No more?
I thank you, sir!
Adolf. Her Grace receives the court.
Gui. [aside]. Now, *sursum corda,* quoth the mass-priest! Do—
Whoever's my kind saint, do let alone
These pushings to and fro, and pullings back;
Peaceably let me hang o* the devil's arm
The downward path, if you can't pluck me off
Completely! Let me live quite his, or yours!
[The Courtiers *begin to range themselves, and move toward the door.*
After me, Valence! So, our famous Cleves
Lacks bread? Yet don't we gallants buy their lace?
And dear enough—it beggars me, I know,
To keep my very gloves fringed properly.
This, Valence, is our Great State Hall you cross;
Yon grey urn's veritable marcasite,
The Pope's gift: and those salvers testify
The Emperor. Presently you'll set your foot
... But you don't speak, friend Valence!
VaL I shall speak.
Gau. [aside to GUIBERT]. Guibert—it were no such ungraceful thing
If you and I, at first, seemed horror-struck
With the bad news. Look here, what you shall do.
Suppose you, first, clap hand to sword and cry
'Yield strangers our allegiance? First I'll perish
* Beside your Grace!'—and so give me the cue
To...
Gui. —Clap your hand to note-book and jot down
That to regale the Prince with? I conceive.
[To VALENCE.] Do, Valence, speak, or I shall half suspect
You're plotting to supplant us, me the first.
I' the lady's favour! Is't the grand harangue
You mean to make, that thus engrosses you?
—Which of her virtues you'll apostrophize?
Or is't the fashion you aspire to start,
Of that close-curled, not unbecoming hair?
Or what else ponder you?
VaL My townsmen's wrongs.

ACT II

NOON

SCENE.—*The Presence-chamber.*

The DUCHESS *and* SABYNE.

The D, Announce that I am ready for the court!
Sab. 'Tis scarcely audience-hour, I think; your Grace
May best consult your own relief, no doubt,
And shun the crowd: but few can have arrived.
The D. Let those not yet arrived, then, keep away!
'Twas me, this day last year at Ravestein,
You hurried. It has been full time, beside,
This half-hour. Do you hesitate?
Sab. Forgive me!
The D. Stay, Sabyne; let me hasten to make sure
Of one true thanker: here with you begins
My audience, claim you first its privilege!
It is my birth's event they celebrate:
You need not wish me more such happy days.

But—ask some favour! Have you none to ask?
Has Adolf none, then? this was far from least
Of much I waited for impatiently,
Assure yourself! It seemed so natural
Your gift, beside this bunch of river-bells,
Should be the power and leave of doing good
To you, and greater pleasure to myself.
You ask my leave to-day to marry Adolf?
The rest is my concern.
Sab. Your Grace is ever
Our lady of dear Ravestein,—but, for Adolf...
The D. 'But'? You have not, sure, changed in your regard
And purpose towards him?
Sab. We change?
The D. Well then? Well?
Sab. How could we two be happy, and, most like,
Leave Juliers, when—when . . . but 'tis audience-time!
The D. 'When, if you left me, I were left indeed!'
Would you subjoin that?—Bid the court approach!
—Why should we play thus with each other, Sabyne?
Do I not know, if courtiers prove remiss,
If friends detain me, and get blame for it,
There is a cause? Of last year's fervid throng
Scarce one half comes now.
Sab. [aside]. One half? No, alas!
The D. So can the mere suspicion of a cloud
Over my fortunes, strike each loyal heart.
They've heard of this Prince Berthold; and, forsooth,
Some foolish arrogant pretence he makes,
May grow more foolish and more arrogant,
They please to apprehend! I thank their love.
Admit them!
Sab. [aside]. How much has she really learned?
TheD, Surely,whoever'sabsent, Tristan waits?
—Or at least Romuald, whom my father raised
From nothing—come, he's faithful to me, come!
(Sabyne, I should but be the prouder—yes,
The fitter to comport myself aright)
Not Romuald? Xavier—what said he to that?
For Xavier hates a parasite, I know!
[SABYNE *goes out.*
The D. Well, sunshine's everywhere, and summer, too.
Next year 'tis the old place again, perhaps—
The water-breeze again, the birds again.
—It cannot be! It is too late to be!
What part had I, or choice in all of it?
Hither they brought me; I had not to think
Nor care, concern myself with doing good
Or ill, my task was just—to live,—to live.
And, answering ends there was no need explain,
To render Juliers happy—so they said.
All could not have been falsehood: some was love,
And wonder and obedience. I did all
They looked for: why then cease to do it now?
Yet this is to be calmly set aside,
And—ere next birthday's dawn, for aught I know,
Things change, a claimant may arrive, and I . . .
It cannot nor it shall not be! His right ?
Well then, he has the right, and I have not,
—But who bade all of you surround my life
And close its growth up with your ducal crown
Which, plucked off rudely, leaves me perishing?
I could have been like one of you,—loved, hoped,
Feared, lived and died like one of you—but you
Would take that life away and give me this,
And I will keep this! I will face you! Come!

Enter the COURTIERS *and* VALENCE.

The Courtiers. Many such happy mornings to your Grace!
The D. [aside, as they pay their devoir]. The same words, the same faces,—the same love!
I have been overfearful. These are few;
But these, at least, stand firmly: these are mine.
As many come as may; and if no more,
'Tis that these few suffice—they do suffice *I*
What succour may not next year bring me? Plainly,
I feared too soon. *[To the* Courtiers.] I thank you, sirs: all thanks!
Val. [aside, as the DUCHESS *passes from one group to another, conversing].* 'Tis she—the vision this day last year brought,
When, for a golden moment at our Cleves,
She tarried in her progress hither. Cleves
Chose me to speak its welcome, and I spoke
—Not that she could have noted the recluse

—Ungainly, old before-his time—who gazed.
Well, Heaven's gifts are not wasted, and that gaze
Kept, and shall keep me to the end, her own!
She was above it—but so would not sink
My gaze to earth! The People caught it, hers—
Thenceforward, mine; but thus entirely mine,
Who shall affirm, had she not raised my soul
Ere she retired and left me—them? She turns—
There's all her wondrous face at once! The ground
Reels and . . . *[suddenly occupying himself with his paper]*
These wrongs of theirs I have to plead!
The D. [to the Courtiers], Nay, compliment enough! and kindness' self
Should pause before it wish me more such years.
Twas fortunate that thus, ere youth escaped,
I tasted life's pure pleasure—one such, pure,
Is worth a thousand, mixed—and youth's for pleasure:
Mine is received; let my age pay for it.
Gau. So, pay, and pleasure paid for, thinks your Grace,
Should never go together?
Gui, How, Sir Gaucelme?
Hurry one's feast down unenjoyingly
At the snatched breathing-intervals of work?
As good you saved it till the dull day's-end
When, stiff and sleepy, appetite is gone.
Eat first, then work upon the strength of food!
The D. True: you enable me to risk my future,
By giving me a past beyond recall.
I lived, a girl, one happy leisure year:
Let me endeavour to be the Duchess now!
And so,—what news, Sir Guibert, spoke you of?
[As they advance a little, and GUIBERT *speaks—*
—That gentleman?
Val. [aside], I feel her eyes on me.
Gui. [to VALENCE], The Duchess, sir, inclines to hear your suit.
Advance! He is from Cleves.
Val. [coming forward. Aside], Their wrongs—their wrongs!
The D, And you, sir, are from Cleves? How fresh in mind,
The hour or two I passed at queenly Cleves!
She entertained me bravely, but the best
Of her good pageant seemed its standers-by
With insuppressive joy on every face!
What says my ancient famous happy Cleves?
Val. Take the truth, lady—you are made for truth!
So think my friends: nor do they less deserve
The having you to take it, you shall think,
When you know all—nay, when you only know
How, on that day you recollect at Cleves,
When the poor acquiescing multitude
Who thrust themselves with all their woes apart
Into unnoticed corners, that the few,
Their means sufficed to muster trappings for,
Might fill the foreground, occupy your sight
With joyous faces fit to bear away
And boast of as a sample of all Cleves
—How, when to daylight these crept out once more,
Clutching, unconscious, each his empty rags
Whence the scant coin, which had not half bought bread,
That morn he shook forth, counted piece by piece,
And, well-advisedly, on perfumes spent them
To burn, or flowers to strew, before your path
—How, when the golden flood of music and bliss
Ebbed, as their moon retreated, and again
Left the sharp black-point rocks of misery bare
—Then I, their friend, had only to suggest
' Saw she the horror as she saw the pomp! '
And as one man they cried 'He speaks the truth:
' Show her the horror! Take from our own mouths
'Our wrongs and show them, she will see them too!'
This they cried, lady! I have brought the wrongs.
The D. Wrongs? Cleves has wrongs—apparent now and thus?
I thank you! In that paper? Give it me!
Val. (There, Cleves!) In this! (What did I promise, Cleves ?)
Our weavers, clothiers, spinners are reduced
Since... Oh, I crave your pardon! I forget
I buy the privilege of this approach,
And promptly would discharge my debt.
Hay
This paper humbly at the Duchess' feet.
[Presenting GUIBERT'S *paper,*
Gui, Stay! for the present...

The D. Stay, sir? I take aught
That teaches me their wrongs with greater pride
Than this your ducal circlet. Thank you, sir!
[The DUCHESS *reads hastily; then, turning to the* Courtiers—
What have I done to you? Your deed or mine
Was it, this crowning me? I gave myself
No more a title to your homage, no,
Than church-flowers, born this season, wrote the words
In the saint's-book that sanctified them first.
For such a flower, you plucked me; well, you erred—
Well, 'twas a weed; remove the eye-sore quick!
But should you not remember it has lain
Steeped in the candles' glory, palely shrined,
Nearer God's Mother than most earthly things?
—That if't be faded 'tis with prayer's sole breath—
That the one day it boasted was God's day?
Still, I do thank you! Had you used respect,
Here might I dwindle to my last white leaf,
Here lose life's latest freshness, which even yet
May yield some wandering insect rest and food:
So, fling me forth, and—all is best for all!
[After a pause.] Prince Berthold, who art Juliers' Duke it seems—
The King's choice, and the Emperor's, and the Pope's—
Be mine, too! Take this People! Tell not me
Of rescripts, precedents, authorities,
—But take them, from a heart that yearns to give!
Find out their love,—I could not; find their fear,—
I would not; find their like,—I never shall,
Among the flowers!
[Taking off her coronet. Colombe of Ravestein
Thanks God she is no longer Duchess here!
Val. [advancing to GUIBERT], Sir Guibert, knight, they call you—this of mine
Is the first step I ever set at court.
You dared make me your instrument, I find;
For that, so sure as you and I are men,
We reckon to the utmost presently:
But as you are a courtier and I none,
Your knowledge may instruct me. I, already,
Have too far outraged, by my ignorance
Of courtier-ways, this lady, to proceed
A second step and risk addressing her:
—I am degraded—you let me address!
Out of her presence, all is plain enough
What I shall do—but in her presence, too,
Surely there's something proper to be done.
[To the others.] You, gentles, tell me if I guess aright—
May I not strike this man to earth?
The Courtiers [as GUIBERT *springs forward, withholding him].* Let go!
—The clothiers' spokesman, Guibert? Grace a churl?
The D. [to VALENCE]. Oh, be acquainted with your party, sir!
He's of the oldest lineage Juliers boasts;
A lion crests him for a cognizance;
'Scorning to waver'—that's his 'scutcheon's word;
His office with the new Duke—probably
The same in honour as with me; or more,
By so much as this gallant turn deserves.
He's now, I dare say, of a thousand times
The rank and influence that remain with her
Whose part you take! So, lest for taking it
You suffer . . ,
Val. I may strike him then to earth?
Gui. [falling on his knee]. Great and dear lady, pardon me! Hear once!
Believe me and be merciful—be just!
I could not bring myself to give that paper
Without a keener pang than I dared meet
—And so felt Clugnet here, and Maufroy here
—No one dared meet it. Protestation's cheap,—
But, if to die for you did any good,
{To GAUCELME. } Would not I die, sir ? Say your worst of me!
But it does no good, that's the mournful truth.
And since the hint of a resistance, even,
Would just precipitate, on you the first,
A speedier ruin—I shall not deny,
Saving myself indubitable pain,
I thought to give you pleasure (who might say?)
By showing that your only subject found
To carry the sad notice, was the man
Precisely ignorant of its contents;
A nameless, mere provincial advocate;
One whom 'twas like you never saw before,
Never would see again. All has gone wrong;
But I meant right, God knows, and you, I trust!
The D. A nameless advocate, this gentleman?
—(I pardon you, Sir Guibert!)

Gui. [rising, to VALENCE]. Sir, and you?
Val. —Rejoice that you are lightened of a load.
Now, you have only me to reckon with.
The D. One I have never seen, much less obliged?
Val. Dare I speak, lady?
TheD. Dare you!
Heard you not
I rule no longer?
Val. Lady, if your rule
Were based alone on such a ground as these *[Pointing to the* Courtiers.
Could furnish you,—abjure it! They have hidden
A source of true dominion from your sight.
The D. You hear them—no such source is left. ..
Val. Hear Cleves!
Whose haggard craftsmen rose to starve this day,
Starve now, and will lie down at night to starve,
Sure of a like to-morrow—but as sure
Of a most unlike morrow-after-that,
Since end things must, end howsoe'er things may.
What curbs the brute-force instinct in its hour?
What makes—instead of rising, all as one,
And teaching fingers, so expert to wield
Their tool, the broadsword's play or carbine's trick,
—What makes that there's an easier help, they think,
For you, whose name so few of them can spell,
Whose face scarce one in every hundred saw,—
You simply have to understand their wrongs,
And wrongs will vanish—so, still trades are plied,
And swords lie rusting, and myself stand here?
There is a vision in the heart of each
Of justice, mercy, wisdom, tenderness
To wrong and pain, and knowledge of its cure:
And these embodied in a woman's form
That best transmits them, pure as first received,
From God above her, to mankind below.
Will you derive your rule from such a ground,
Or rather hold it by the suffrage, say,
Of this man—this—and this?
The D. [after a pause]. You come from Cleves:
How many are at Cleves of such a mind?
Val. [from his paper], 'We, all the manufacturers of Cleves—'
The D. Or stay, sir—lest I seem too covetous—
Are you my subject? such as you describe,
Am I to you, though to no other man?
Val. [from his paper], —' Valence, ordained your Advocate at Cleves'—
The D. [replacing the coronet]. Then I remain Cleves' Duchess! Take you note,
While Cleves but yields one subject of this stamp,
I stand her lady till she waves me off!
For her sake, all the Prince claims I withhold;
Laugh at each menace; and, his power defying,
Return his missive with its due contempt!
[Casting it away.
Gui. [picking it up], —Which to the Prince I will deliver, lady,
(Note it down, Gaucelme)—with your message too!
The D. I think the office is a subject's, sir!
—Either .... how style you him?—my special guarder
The Marshal's—for who knows but violence
May follow the delivery?—Or, perhaps,
My Chancellor's—for law may be to urge
On its receipt!—Or, even my Chamberlain's—
For I may violate established form!
[To VALENCE.] Sir,—for the half-hour till this service ends,
Will you become all these to me?
Val. [falling on his knee]. My liege!
TheD. Give me!
[The Courtiers *present their badges of office.*
[Putting them by.] Whatever was their virtue once,
They need new consecration. *[Raising* VALENCE.] Are you mine?
I will be Duchess yet! *[She retires.*
The Courtiers. Our Duchess yet!
A glorious lady! Worthy love and dread!
I'll stand by her,—And I, whate'er betide!
Gui. [to VALENCE], Well done, well done, sir! I care not who knows,
You have done nobly and I envy you—
Tho' I am but unfairly used, I think:
For when one gets a place like this I hold,
One gets too the remark that its mere wages,
The pay and the preferment, make our prize.
Talk about zeal and faith apart from these,
We're laughed at—much would zeal and faith subsist
Without these also! Yet, let these be stopped,
Our wages discontinue,—then, indeed,
Our zeal and faith, (we hear on every side,)
Are not released—having been pledged away

I wonder, for what zeal and faith in turn?
Hard money purchased me my place! No, no—
I'm right, sir—but your wrong is better still,
If I had time and skill to argue it.
Therefore, I say, I'll serve you, how you please—
If you like,—fight you, as you seem to wish—
(The kinder of me that, in sober truth,
I never dreamed I did you any harm). ..
Gau. —Or, kinder still, you'll introduce, no doubt,
His merits to the Prince who's just at hand,
And let no hint drop he 's made Chancellor
And Chamberlain and Heaven knows what beside!
Clug. [to VALENCE], You stare, young sir, and threaten! Let me say,
That at your age, when first I came to court,
I was not much above a gentleman;
While now .. .
Val. —You are Head-Lackey? With your office
I have not yet been graced, sir!
Other Courtiers [to CLUGNET], Let him talk!
Fidelity, disinterestedness,
Excuse so much! Men claim my worship ever
Who staunchly and steadfastly • ..

Enter ADOLF.

Adolf. The Prince arrives.
Courtiers. Ha? How?
Adolf. He leaves his guard a stage behind
At Aix, and enters almost by himself.
1st Court. The Prince! This foolish business puts all out.
2nd Court, Let Gaucelme speak first!
3rd Court. Better I began
About the state of Juliers: should one say
All's prosperous and inviting him?
4th Court. —Or rather,
All's prostrate and imploring him?
5th Court. That's best!
Where's the Cleves' paper, by the way?
4th Court, [to VALENCE], Sir—sir—
If you'll but lend that paper—trust it me,
I'll warrant. . .
5 th Court. Softly, sir—the Marshal's duty!
Clug. Has not the Chamberlain a hearing first
By virtue of his patent?
Gau. Patents?—Duties?
All that, my masters, must begin again!
One word composes the whole controversy:
We're simply now—the Prince's 1
The Others. Ay—the Prince's!

Enter SABYNE.

Sab. Adolf! Bid . . . Oh, no time for ceremony!
Where's whom our lady calls her only subject?
She needs him. Who is here the Duchess's?
Val. [starting from his reverie]. Most gratefully I follow to her feet.

ACT m

AFTERNOON

SCENE.—*The Vestibule.*

Enter PRINCE BERTHOLD *and* MELCHIOR.

Berth. A thriving little burgh this Juliers looks.
[Half-apart.] Keep Juliers, and as good you kept Cologne:
Better try Aix, though!—
Mel. Please't your Highness speak?
Berth, [as before], Aix, Cologne, Frankfort,—Milan;—Rome!—
Mel. The Grave.
More weary seems your Highness, I remark,
Than sundry conquerors whose path I've watched
Through fire and blood to any prize they gain.
I could well wish you, for your proper sake,
Had met some shade of opposition here
—Found a blunt seneschal refuse unlock,
Or a scared usher lead your steps astray.
You must not look for next achievement's palm
So easily: this will hurt your conquering.
Berth. My next? Ay, as you say, my next and next!
Well, I am tired, that's truth, and moody too,
This quiet entrance-morning: listen why!
Our little burgh, now, Juliers—'tis indeed
One link, however insignificant,
Of the great chain by which I reach my hope,
—A link I must secure; but otherwise,
You'd wonder I esteem it worth my grasp.
Just see what life is, with its shifts and turns!
It happens now—this very nook—to be
A place that once.. not a long while since, neither—
When I lived an ambiguous hanger-on
Of foreign courts, and bore my claims about,
Discarded by one kinsman, and the other
A poor priest merely,—then, I say, this place

Shone my ambition's object; to be Duke—
Seemed then, what to be Emperor seems now.
My rights wercrfar frffm judged as plain and sure
In those days as of late, I promise you:
And 'twas my day-dream, Lady Colombe here
Might e'en compound the matter, pity me,
Be struck, say, with my chivalry and grace
(I was a boy!)—bestow her hand at length,
And make me Duke, in her right if not mine.
Here am I, Duke confessed, at Juliers now.
Hearken: if ever I be Emperor,
Remind me what I felt and said to-day!
Mel. All this consoles a bookish man like me.
—And so will weariness cling to you. Wrong,
Wrong! Had you sought the lady's court yourself,—
Faced the redoubtables composing it,
Flattered this, threatened that man, bribed the other,—
Pleaded by writ and word and deed, your cause,—
Conquered a footing inch by painful inch,—
And, after long years' struggle, pounced at last
On her for prize,—the right life had been lived,
And justice done to divers faculties
Shut in that brow. Yourself were visible
As you stood victor, then; whom now—(your pardon!)
I am forced narrowly to search and see,
So are you hid by helps—this Pope, your uncle—
Your cousin, the other King! You are a mind.—
They, boay: too much of mere legs-and-arms
Obstructs the mind so! Match these with their like:
Match mind with mind!
Berth. And where's your mind to match?
They show me legs-and-arms to cope withal!
I'd subjugate this city—where's its mind?
[The Courtiers *enter slowly.*
Mel. Got out of sight when you came troops and all!
And in its stead, here greets you flesh-and-blood:
A smug oeconomy of both, this first!
[As CLUGNET *bows obsequiously.*
Well done, gout, all considered!—I may go?
Berth. Help me receive them!
Mel. Oh, they just will say
What yesterday at Aix their fellows said—
At Treves, the day before! Sir Prince, my friend,
Why do you let your life slip thus?—Meantime,
I have my little Juliers to achieve—
The understanding this tough Platonist,
Your holy uncle disinterred, Amelius:
Lend me a company of horse and foot,
To help me through his tractate—gain my Duchy!
Berth. And Empire, after that is gained, will be—?
Mel. To help me through your uncle's comment, Prince! *[Goes.*
Berth. Ah? Well: he o'er-refines—the scholar's fault!
How do I let my life slip? Say, this life,
I lead now, differs from the common life
Of other men in mere degree, not kind,
Of joys and griefs,—still there is such degree
Mere largeness in a life is something, sure,—
Enough to care about and struggle for,
In this world: for this world, the size of things;
The sort of things, for that to come, no doubt.
A great is better than a little aim:
And when I wooed Priscilla's rosy mouth
And failed so, under that grey convent-wall,
Was I more happy than I should be now
[By this time, the Courtiers *are ranged before him.*
If failing of my Empire? Not a whit.
—Here comes the mind, it once had tasked me sore
To baffle, but for my advantages!
All's best as 'tis: these scholars talk and talk. *[Seats himself.*
The Courtiers. Welcome our Prince to Juliers!—to his heritage!
Our dutifullest service proffer we!
Clug. I, please your Highness, having exercised
The function of Grand Chamberlain at court,
With much acceptance, as men testify ...
Berth. I cannot greatly thank you, gentlemen!
The Pope declares my claim to the Duchy founded
On strictest justice—you concede it, therefore,
I do not wonder: and the kings my friends
Protest they mean to see such claim enforced,—
You easily may offer to assist.
But there's a slight discretionary power
To serve me in the matter, you've had long,
Though late you use it. This is well to say—

But could you not have said it months ago?
I'm not denied my own Duke's truncheon, true—
'Tis flung me—I stoop down, and from the ground
Pick it, with all you placid standers-by:
And now I have it, gems and mire at once,
Grace go with it to my soiled hands, you say!
Gui. (By Paul, the advocate our doughty friend
Cuts the best figure!)
Gau. If our ignorance
May have offended, sure our loyalty . ..
Berth. Loyalty? Yours? Oh—of yourselves you speak!
I mean the Duchess all this time, I hope!
And since I have been forced repeat my claims
As if they never had been urged before,
As I began, so must I end, it seems.
The formal answer to the grave demand!
What says the lady?
Courtiers [one to another]. 1st Court. Marshal! *2nd Court.* Orator!
Gui. A variation of our mistress' way!
Wipe off his boots' dust, Clugnet!—that, he waits!
1st Court. Your place!
2nd Court. Just now it was your own!
Gui. The devil's!
Berth, [to GUIBERTJ. Come forward, friend—you with the paper, there!
Is Juliers the first city I've obtained?
By this time, I may boast proficiency
In each decorum of the circumstance.
Give it me as she gave it—the petition,
Demand, you style it! What's required, in brief?
What title's reservation, appanage's
Allowance? I heard all at Treves, last week.
Gau. [to GUIBERT], 'Give it him as she gave it!'
Gui. And why not?
[To BERTHOLD.] The lady crushed your summons thus together,
And bade me, with the very greatest scorn
So fair a frame could hold, inform you...
Courtiers, Stop—
Idiot!
Gui. —Inform you she denied your claim,
Defied yourself! (I tread upon his heel,
The blustering advocate!)
Berth. By heaven and earth!
Dare you jest, sir?
Gui. Did they at Treves, last week?
Berth, [starting up]. Why then, I look much bolder than I knew,
And you prove better actors than I thought:
Since, as I live, I took you as you entered
For just so many dearest friends of mine,
Fled from the sinking to the rising power
—The sneaking'st crew, in short, I e'er despised!
Whereas, I am alone here for the moment,
With every soldier left behind at Aix!
Silence? That means the worst? I thought as much!
What follows next then ?
Courtiers. Gracious Prince, he raves!
Gui. He asked the truth and why not get the truth?
Berth. Am I a prisoner? Speak, will somebody?
—But why stand paltering with imbeciles?
Let me see her, or ...
Gui. Her. without her leave,
Shall no one see: she s Duchess yet!
Courtiers [footsteps without, as they are disputing]. Good chance!
She's here—the Lady Colombe's self!
Berth. 'Tis well!
[Aside.] Array a handful thus against my world?
Not ill done, truly! Were not this a mind
To match one's mind with? Colombe! Let us wait!
I failed so, under that grey convent wall!
She comes.
Gui. The Duchess! Strangers, range yourselves!
[As the DUCHESS *enters in conversation with* VALENCE. BERTHOLD *and the* Courtiers *fall back a little.*
The D. Presagefully it beats, presagefully,
My heart: the right is Berthold's and not mine.
Val. Grant that he has the right, dare I mistrust
Your power to acquiesce so patiently
As you believe, in such a dream-like change
Of fortune—change abrupt, profound, complete?
The D. Ah, the first bitterness is over now!
Bitter I may have felt it to confront
The truth, and ascertain those natures' value
I had so counted on; that was a pang:
But I did bear it, and the worst is over.
Let the Prince take them!
Val. And take Juliers too?
—Your people without crosses, wands and chains—
Only with hearts?
The D. There I feel guilty, sir!
I cannot give up what I never had:
For I ruled these, not them—these stood between.
Shall I confess, sir? I have heard by stealth

Of Berthold from the first; more news and more:
Closer and closer swam the thundercloud,
But I was safely housed with these, I knew.
At times when to the casement I would turn,
At a bird's passage or a flower-trail's play,
I caught the storm's red glimpses on its edge—
Yet I was sure some one of all these friends
Would interpose: I followed the bird's flight
Or plucked the flower: some one would interpose!
Val. Not one thought on the People—and Cleves there!
The D. Now, sadly conscious my real sway was missed,
Its shadow goes without so much regret:
Else could I not again thus calmly bid you,
Answer Prince Berthold!
Val. Then you acquiesce?
The D. Remember over whom it was I ruled!
Gui. [stepping forward]. Prince Berthold, yonder, craves an audience, lady!
The D. [to VALENCE]. I only have to turn, and I shall face
Prince Berthold! Oh, my very heart is sick!
It is the daughter of a line of Dukes
This scornful insolent adventurer
Will bid depart from my dead father's halls!
I shall not answer him—dispute with him—
But, as he bids, depart! Prevent it, sir!
Sir—but a mere day's respite! Urge for me
—What I shall call to mind I should have urged
When time's gone by: 'twill all be mine, you urge!
A day—an hour—that I myself may lay
My rule down! 'Tis too sudden—must not be!
The world's to hear of it! Once done—for ever!
How will it read, sir? How be sung about?
Prevent it!
Berth, [approaching]. Your frank indignation, lady,
Cannot escape me. Overbold I seem;
But somewhat should be pardoned my surprise
At this reception,—this defiance, rather.
And if, for their and your sake, I rejoice
Your virtues could inspire a trusty few
To make such gallant stand in your behalf,
I cannot but be sorry, for my own,
Your friends should force me to retrace my steps:
Since I no longer am permitted speak
After the pleasant peaceful course prescribed
No less by courtesy than relationship—
Which I remember, if you once forgot.
But never must attack pass unrepelled.
Surfer that, through you, I demand of these,
Who controverts my claim to Juliers?
The D. —Me
You say, you do not speak to—
Berth. Of your subjects
I ask, then: whom do you accredit? Where
Stand those should answer?
Val. [advancing]. The lady is alone.
Berth. Alone, and thus? So weak and yet so bold?
Val. I said she was alone—
Berth. And weak, I said.
Val. When is man strong until he feels alone?
It was some lonely strength at first, be sure,
Created organs, such as those you seek,
By which to give its varied purpose shape:
And, naming the selected ministrants,
Took sword, and shield, and sceptre,—each, a man!
That strength performed its work and passed its way:
You see our lady: there, the old shapes stand!
—A Marshal, Chamberlain, and Chancellor—
'Be helped their way, into their death put life
'And find advantage!'—so you counsel us.
But let strength feel alone, seek help itself,—
And, as the inland-hatched sea-creature hunts
The sea's breast out,—as, littered 'mid the waves
The desert-brute makes for the desert's joy,
So turns our lady to her true resource,
Passing o'er hollow fictions, worn-out types,
—And I am first her instinct fastens on.
And prompt I say, as clear as heart can speak,
The People will not have you; nor shall have!
It is not merely I shall go bring Cleves
And fight you to the last,—though that does much,
And men and children,—ay, and women too,
Fighting for home, are rather to be feared
Than mercenaries fighting for their pay—
But, say you beat us, since such things have been,
And, where this Juliers laughed, you set your foot

Upon a steaming bloody plash—what then?
Stand you the more our lord that there you stand?
Lord it o'er troops whose force you concentrate,
A pillared flame whereto all ardours tend—
Lord it 'mid priests whose schemes you amplify,
A cloud of smoke 'neath which all shadows brood—
But never, in this gentle spot of earth,
Can you become our Colombe, our play-queen,
For whom, to furnish lilies for her hair,
We'd pour our veins forth to enrich the soil.
—Our conqueror? Yes!—Our despot? Yes!—Our Duke?
Know yourself, know us!
Berth, [who has been in thought]. Know your lady, also!
[Very deferentially.]—To whom I needs must exculpate myself
For having made a rash demand, at least.
Wherefore to you, sir, who appear to be
Her chief adviser, I submit my claims,
[Giving papers.
But, this step taken, take no further step,
Until the Duchess shall pronounce their worth.
Here be our meeting-place; at night, its time:
Till when I humbly take the lady's leave!
[He withdraws. As the DUCHESS *turns to* VALENCE, *the* Courtiers *interchange glances and come forward a little.*
1st Court. So, this was their device!
2nd Court, No bad device!
3rd Court. You'd say they love each other, Guibert's friend
From Cleves, and she, the Duchess!
4th Court. —And moreover,
That all Prince Berthold comes for, is to help
Their loves!
5 th Court. Pray, Guibert, what is next to do?
Gui. [advancing], I laid my office at the Duchess' foot—
Others. And I—and I—and I!
The D. I took them, sirs.
Gui. [apart to VALENCE], And now, sir, I am simple knight again—
Guibert, of the great ancient house, as yet
That never bore affront; whate'er your birth,—
As things stand now, I recognize yourself
(If you'll accept experience of some date)
As like to be the leading man o' the time,
Therefore as much above me now, as I
Seemed above you this morning. Then, I offered
To fight you: will you be as generous
And now fight me?
Val. Ask when my life is mine!
Gui. ('Tis hers now!)
Clug. [apart to VALENCE, *as* GUIBERT *turns from him].* You, sir, have insulted me
Grossly,—will grant me, too, the selfsame favour
You've granted him, just now, I make no question?
Val. I promise you, as him, sir.
Clug. Do you so?
Handsomely said! I hold you to it, sir.
You'll get me reinstated in my office
As you will Guibert!
The D. I would be alone!
[They begin to retire slowly; as VALENCE *is about to follow—*
Alone, sir—only with my heart: you stay!
Gau. You hear that ? Ah, light breaks upon me! Cleves—
It was at Cleves some man harangued us all—
With great effect,—so those who listened said,
My thoughts being busy elsewhere: was this he?
Guibert,—your strange, disinterested manl
Your uncorrupted, if uncourtly friend!
The modest worth you mean to patronize!
He cares about no Duchesses, not he—
His sole concern is with the wrongs of Cleves!
What, Guibert? What, it breaks on you at last?
GIII. Would this hall's floor were a mine's roof! I'd back
And in her very face . . .
Gau. Apply the match
That fired the train,—and where would you be, pray?
Gui. With him!
Gau. Stand, rather, safe outside with me!
The mine's charged: shall I furnish you the match
And place you properly? To the ante-chamber!
Gui. Can you?
Gau. Try me! Your friend's in fortune!
Gui. Quick—
To the antechamber! He is pale with bliss!
Gau. No wonder! Mark her eyes!
Gui. To the antechamber!
[The Courtiers *retire.*
The D. Sir, could you know all you have done for me
You were content! You spoke, and I am saved.
Val. Be not too sanguine, lady! Ere you dream.

That transient flush of generosity
Fades off, perchance. The man, beside,
is gone,— . ... .
Him we might bend; but see, the papers
here—
Inalterably his requirement stays.
And cold hard words have we to deal with
now.
In that large eye there seemed a latent
pride,
To self-denial not incompetent,
But very like to hold itself dispensed
From such a grace: however, let us hope!
He is a noble spirit in noble form.
I wish he less had bent that brow to smile
As with the fancy how he could subject
Himself upon occasion to—himself!
From rudeness, violence, you rest secure;
But do not think your Duchy rescued yet!
The D. You,—who have opened a new
world to me,
Will never take the faded language up
Of that I leave? My Duchy—keeping it,
Or losing it—is that my sole world now?
Vol. Ill have I spoken if you thence
despise
Juliers; although the lowest, on true
grounds,
Be worth more than the highest rule, on
false:
Aspire to rule, on the true grounds!
The D. Nay, hear-
False, I will never—rash, I would not be!
This is indeed my birthday—soul and
body,
Its hours have done on me the work of
years.
You hold the requisition: ponder it!
If I have right, my duty's plain: if he—
Say so, nor ever change a tone of voice!
At night you meet the Prince; meet me at
eve!
Till when, farewell! This discomposes
you?
Believe in your own nature, and its force
Of renovating mine! I take my stand
Only as under me the earth is firm:
So, prove the first step stable, all will
prove.
That first, I choose: *[Laying her hand on
his.]*—the next to take, choose you!
[She withdraws.
Vol. [after a pause]. What drew down
this on me?—on me, dead once,
She thus bids live,—since all I hitherto
Thought dead in me, youth's ardours and
emprise,
Burst into life before her, as she bids
Who needs them. Whither will this reach,
where end?
Her hand's print burns on mine . . . Yet
she's above—
So very far above me! All's too plain:
I served her when the others sank away,
And she rewards me as such souls re-
ward—
The changed voice, the suffusion of the
cheek,
The eye's acceptance, the expressive hand,
—Reward, that's little, in her generous
thought,
Though all to me . . .
I cannot so disclaim
Heaven's gift, nor call it other than it is!
She loves me!
[Looking at the Prince's *papers.h*-Which
love, these, perchance, forbid.
Can I decide against myself—pronounce
She is the Duchess and no mate for me?
—Cleves, help me! Teach me,—every
haggard face,—
To sorrow and endure! I will do right
Whatever be the issue. Help me, Cleves!

ACT IV

EVENING

SCENE.—*An Antechamber.*

Enter the Courtiers.

Mau. Now, then, that we may speak
—how spring this mine?
Gau. Is Guibert ready for its match?
He cools!
Not so friend Valence with the Duchess
there!
'Stay, Valence! Are not you my better
self?'
And her cheek mantled—
Gui. Well, she loves ham, sir:
And more,—since you will have it I grow
cool,—
She's right: he's worth it.
Gau. For his deeds to-day?
Say so!
Gui. What should I say beside?
Gau. Not this—
For friendship's sake leave this for me to
say—
That we're the dupes of an egregious
cheat!
This plain unpractised suitor, who found
way
To the Duchess through the merest die's
turn-up
A year ago, had seen her and been seen,
Loved and been loved.
Gui. Impossible!
Gau. —Nor say,
How sly and exquisite a trick, moreover.
Was this which—taking not their stand
on facts
Boldly, for that had been endurable,
But worming on their way by craft, they
choose
Resort to, rather,—and which you and
we,
Sheep-like, assist them in the playing-off!

The Duchess thus parades him as preferred,
Not on the honest ground of preference,
Seeing first, liking more, and there an end—
But as we all had started equally,
And at the close of a fair race he proved
The only valiant, sage and loyal man.
Herself, too, with the pretty fits and starts,—
The careless, winning, candid ignorance
Of what the Prince might challenge or forego—
She had a hero in reserve! What risk
Ran she? This deferential easy Prince
Who brings his claims for her to ratify
—He's just her puppet for the nonce! You'll see,—
Valence pronounces, as is equitable,
Against him: off goes the confederate:
As equitably, Valence takes her hand!

The Chancellor. You run too fast: her hand, no subject takes.
Do not our archives hold her father's will?
That will provides against such accident,
And gives next heir, Prince Berthold, the reversion
Of Juliers, which she forfeits, wedding so.

Gau. I know that, well as you,—but does the Prince?
Knows Berthold, think you, that this plan, he helps,
For Valence's ennoblement,—would end,
If crowned with the success which seems its due,
In making him the very thing he plays,
The actual Duke of Juliers? All agree
That Colombe's title waived or set aside,
He is next heir.

The Chan. Incontrovertibly.

Gau. Guibert, your match, now, to the train!

Gui. Enough!
I'm with you: selfishness is best again.
I thought of turning honest—what a dream!
Let's wake now!

Gau. Selfish, friend, you never were:
'Twas but a series of revenges taken
On your unselfishness for prospering ill.
But now that you're grown wiser, what's our course?

Gui. —Wait, I suppose, till Valence weds our lady,
And then, if we must needs revenge ourselves,
Apprise the Prince.

Gau. —The Prince, ere then dismissed
With thanks for playing his mock part so well?
Tell the Prince now, sir! Ay, this very night,
Ere he accepts his dole and goes his way,
Explain how such a marriage makes him Duke,
Then trust his gratitude for the surprise!

Gui. —Our lady wedding Valence all the same
As if the penalty were undisclosed?
Good! If she loves, she'll not disown her love,
Throw Valence up. I wonder you see that.

Gau. The shame of it—the suddenness and shame!
Within her, the inclining heart—without,
A terrible array of witnesses—
And Valence by, to keep her to her word,
With Berthold's indignation or disgust!
We'll try it!—Not that we can venture much.
Her confidence we've lost for ever: Berthold's
Is all to gain.

Gui. To-night, then, venture we!
Yet—if lost confidence might be renewed?

Gau. Never in noble natures! With the base ones,—
Twist off the crab's claw, wait a smarting-while,
And something grows and grows and gets to be
A mimic of the lost joint, just so like
As keeps in mind it never, never will
Replace its predecessor! Crabs do that:
But lop the lion's foot—and ...

Gui. To the Prince!

Gau. [aside]. And come what will to the lion's foot I pay you,
My cat's-paw, as I long have yearned to pay.
[Aloud.] Footsteps! Himself! 'Tis Valence breaks on us,
Exulting that their scheme succeeds. We'll hence—
And perfect ours! Consult the archives, first—
Then, fortified with knowledge, seek the Hall!

Clug. [to GAUCELME *as they retire].* You have not smiled so since your father died!

As they retire, enter VALENCE *with papers.*

Val. So must it be! I have examined these
With scarce a palpitating heart—so calm,
Keeping her image almost wholly off,
Setting upon myself determined watch,
Repelling to the uttermost his claims:
And the result is—all men would pronounce
And not I, only, the result to be—
Berthold is heir; she has no shade of right
To the distinction which divided us,
But, suffered to rule first, I know not why,
Her rule connived at by those Kings and Popes,

To serve some devil's-purpose,—now 'tis gained,
Whate'er it was, the rule expires as well.
—Valence, this rapture . . . selfish can it be?
Eject it from your heart, her home!—It stays!
Ah, the brave world that opens on us both!
—Do my poor townsmen so esteem *it?* Cleves,—
I need not your pale faces! This, reward
For service done to you? Too horrible!
I never served you: 'twas myself I served—
Nay, served not—rather saved from punishment
Which, had I failed you then, would plague me now.
My life continues yours, and your life, mine.
But if, to take God's gift, I swerve no step—
Cleves! If I breathe no prayer for it—if she, *[Footsteps without.*
Colombe, that comes now, freely gives herself—
Will Cleves require, that, turning thus to her,

Enter Prince BERTHOLD.

Pardon, sir! I did not look for you
Till night, i' the Hall; nor have as yet declared
My judgment to the lady.
Berth. So I hoped.
VaL And yet I scarcely know why that should check
The frank disclosure of it first to you—
What her right seems, and what, in consequence.
She will decide on.
Berth. That I need not ask.
VaL You need not: I have proved the lady's mind:
And, justice being to do, dare act for her.
Berth. Doubtless she has a very noble mind.
VaL Oh, never fear but she'll in each conjuncture
Bear herself bravely! She no whit depends
On circumstance; as she adorns a throne,
She had adorned . . .
Berth. A cottage—in what book
Have I read that, of every queen that lived?
A throne! You have not been instructed, sure,
To forestall my request?
VaL 'Tis granted, sir!
My heart instructs me. I have scrutinized
Your claims .. .
Berth. Ah—claims, you mean, at first preferred?
I come, before the hour appointed me,
To pray you let those claims at present rest,
In favour of a new and stronger one.
VaL You shall not need a stronger: on the part
O' the lady, all you offer I accept,
Since one clear right suffices: yours is clear.
Propose!
Berth. I offer her my hand,
VaL Your hand?
Berth. A Duke's, yourself say; and, at no far time,
Something here whispers me—an Emperor's.
The lady's mind is noble: which induced
This seizure of occasion ere my claims
Were—settled, let us amicably say!
VaL Your hand!
Berth. (He will fall down and kiss it next!)
Sir, this astonishment's too flattering,
Nor must you hold your mistress' worth so cheap.
Enhance it, rather,—urge that blood is blood—
The daughter of the Burgraves, Landgraves, Markgraves,
Remains their daughter! I shall scarce gainsay.
Elsewhere or here, the lady needs must rule;
Like the imperial crown's great chrysoprase,
They talk of—somewhat out of keeping there,
And yet no jewel for a meaner cap.
VaL You wed the Duchess?
Berth. Cry you mercy, friend!
Will the match also influence fortunes here?
A natural solicitude enough.
Be certain, no bad chance it proves for you!
However high you take your present stand,
There's prospect of a higher still remove—
For Juliers will not be my resting-place,
And, when I have to choose a substitute
To rule the little burgh, I'll think of you
Who need not give your mates a character.
And yet I doubt your fitness to supplant
The grey smooth Chamberlain: he'd hesitate
A doubt his lady could demean herself
So low as to accept me. Courage, sir!
I like your method better: feeling's play
Is franker much, and flatters me beside.
VaL I am to say, you love her?
Berth. Say that too!
Love has no great concernment, thinks the world,

With a Duke's marriage. How go precedents
In Juliers' story—how use Juliers' Dukes?
I see you have them here in goodly row;
Yon must be Luitpold—ay, a stalwart sire!
Say, I have been arrested suddenly
In my ambition's course, its rocky course,
By this sweet flower: I fain would gather it
And then proceed: so say and speedily
—(Nor stand there like Duke Luitpold's brazen self!)
Enough, sir: you possess my mind, I think.
This is my claim, the others being withdrawn,
And to this be it that, i' the Hall to-night,
Your lady's answer comes; till when, farewell! *[He retires.*
Val. [after a pause]. The heavens and earth stay as they were; my heart
Beats as it beat: the truth remains the truth.
What falls away, then, if not faith in her?
Was it my faith, that she could estimate
Love's value, and, such faith still guiding me,
Dare I now test her? Or grew faith so strong
Solely because no power of test was mine?

Enter the DUCHESS.

The D. My fate, sir! Ah, you turn away. All's over.
But you arc sorry for me? Be not so!
What I might have become, and never was,
Regret with me! What I have merely been,
Rejoice I am no longer! What I seem
Beginning now, in my new state, to be,
Hope that I am!—for, once my rights proved void,
This heavy roof seems easy to exchange
For the blue sky outside—my lot henceforth.
Val. AndwhatalotisBerthold's!
The D. How of him?
Val. He gathers earth's whole good into his arms;
Standing, as man now, stately, strong and wise,
Marching to fortune, not surprised by her.
One great aim, like a guiding-star, above—
Which tasks strength, wisdom, stateliness, to lift
His manhood to the height that takes the prize;
A prize not near—lest overlooking earth
He rashly spring to seize it—nor remote,
So that he rest upon his path content:
But day by day, while shimmering grows shine,
And the faint circlet prophesies the orb,
He sees so much as, just evolving these,
The stateliness, the wisdom and the strength,
To due completion, will suffice this life,
And lead him at his grandest to the grave.
After this star, out of a night he springs;
A beggar's cradle for the throne of thrones
He quits; so, mounting, feels each step he mounts,
Nor, as from each to each exultingly
He passes, overleaps one grade of joy.
This, for his own good:—with the world, each gift
Of God and man,—reality, tradition,
Fancy and fact—so well environ him,
That as a mystic panoply they serve—
Of force, untenanted, to awe mankind,
And work his purpose out with half the world,
While he, their master, dexterously slipt
From such encumbrance, is meantime employed
With his own prowess on the other half.
Thus shall he prosper, every day's success
Adding, to what is he, a solid strength—
An aery might to what encircles him,
Till at the last, so life's routine lends help,
That as the Emperor only breathes and moves,
His shadow shall be watched, his step or stalk
Become a comfort or a portent, how
He trails his ermine take significance,—
Till even his power shall cease to be most power,
And men shall dread his weakness more, nor dare
Peril their earth its bravest, first and best,
Its typified invincibility.
Thus shall he go on, greatening, till he ends—
The man of men, the spirit of all flesh,
The fiery centre of an earthly world!
The D. Some such a fortune I had dreamed should rise
Out of my own—that is, above my power
Seemed other, greater potencies to stretch—
Val. For you?
The D. It was not I moved there, I think:
But one I could,—though constantly beside,
And aye approaching,—still keep distant from,
And so adore. Twas a man moved there.
Val. Who?
The D. I felt the spirit, never saw the face.
Val See it! Tis Berthold's! He enables you
To realize your vision.
The D. Berthold?

Val. Duke-
Emperor to be: he proffers you his hand.
TheD. Generous.and princely!
Val. "'' He is all of this.
The D. Thanks, Berthold, for my father's sake! No hand
Degrades me.
Val. You accept the proffered hand?
The D, That he should love me!
Val. 'Loved' I did not say.
Had that been—love might so incline the Prince
To the world's good, the world that's at his foot,—
I do not know, this moment, I should dare
Desire that you refused the world—and Cleves—
The sacrifice he asks.
The D. Not love me, sir?
Val. He scarce affirmed it.
The D. May not deeds affirm?
Vat. What does he? . . . Yes, yes, very much he does!
All the shame saved, he thinks, and sorrow saved—
Immitigable sorrow, so he thinks,—
Sorrow that's deeper than we dream, perchance.
The D. Is not this love?
Val. So very much he does!
For look, you can descend now gracefully:
All doubts are banished, that the world might have,
Or worst, the doubts yourself, in after-time,
May call up of your heart's sincereness now.
To such, reply, 'I could have kept my rule—
' Increased it to the utmost of my dreams—
'Yet I abjured it.' This, he does for you:
It is munificently much.
TheD. Still'much!'
But why is it not love, sir? Answer me!
Val. Because not one of Berthold's words and looks
Had gone with love's presentment of a flower
To the beloved: because bold confidence,
Open superiority, free pride—
Love owns not, yet were all that Berthold owned:
Because where reason, even, finds no flaw,
Unerringly a lover's instinct may.
The D. You reason, then, and doubt?
Val. I love, and know.
The D. You love? How strange! I never cast a thought
On that. Just see our selfishness! You seemed
So much my own . . . I had no ground—and yet,
I never dreamed another might divide
My power with you, much less exceed it.
Val. Lady,
I am yours wholly.
The D. Oh, no, no, not mine!
'Tis not the same now. never more can be.
—Your first love, doubtless. Well, what's gone from me?
What have I lost in you?
Val. My heart replies—
No loss there! So, to Berthold back again:
This offer of his hand, he bids me make-
Its obvious magnitude is well to weigh.
The D. She's . . . yes, she must be very fair for you!
Val. I am a simple advocate of Cleves.
TheD. You! With the heart and brain that so helped me,
I fancied them exclusively my own,
Yet find are subject to a stronger sway!
She must be . . . tell me, is she very fair?
Val. Most fair, beyond conception or belief.
TheD. Black eyes?—no matter! Colombe, the world leads
Its life without you, whom your friends professed
The only woman: see how true they spoke!
One lived this while, who never saw your face,
Nor heard your voice—unless . • • Is she from Cleves?
Val. Cleves knows her well.
The D. Ah—just a fancy, now!
When you poured forth the wrongs of Cleves,—I said,
—Thought, that is, afterward . . .
Val. You thought of me ?
TheD. Of whom else? Only such great cause, I thought,
For such effect: see what true love can do!
Cleves is his love. I almost fear to ask
.. . And will not. This is idling: to our work!
Admit before the Prince, without reserve,
My claims misgrounded; then may follow better
... When you poured out Cleves' wrongs impetuously,
Was she in your mind?
Val. All done was done for her
—To humble me!
The D. She will be proud at least.
Val. She?
The D. When you tell her.
Val. That will never be.
The D. How—are there sweeter things you hope to tell?
No, sir! You counselled me,—I counsel you
In the one point I—any woman—can.
Your worth, the first thing; let her own come next—

Say what you did through her, and she through you—
The praises of her beauty afterward!
Will you?
Val I dare not.
The D. Dare not?
Val She I love
Suspects not such a love in me.
The D. You jest.
Val. The lady is above me and away.
Not only the brave form, and the bright mind,
And the great heart, combine to press me low—
But all the world calls rank divides us.
The D. Rank!
Now grant me patience! Here's a man declares
Oracularly in another's case—
Sees the true value and the false, for them—
Nay, bids them see it, and they straight do see.
You called my court's love worthless—so it turned:
I threw away as dross my heap of wealth,
And here you stickle for a piece or two!
First—has shs seen you?
Val Yes.
The D. She loves you, then.
Val. One flash of hope burst; then succeeded night:
And all's at darkest now. Impossible!
The D. We'll try: you are—so to speak—my subject yet?
Val As ever—to the death.
TheD. Obey me, then!
Val I must.
The D. Approach her, and . . . no! first of all
Get more assurance. 'My instructress,' say,
'Was great, descended from a line of kings,
'And even fair'—(wait why I say this folly)—
'She said, of all men, none for eloquence,
'Courage, and (what cast even these to shade)
'The heart they sprung from,—none deserved like him
'Who saved herat her need: if she said this,
'What should not one I love, say?'
Val Heaven—this hope-
On, lady, you are filling me with fire!
The D. Say this!—nor think I bid you cast aside
One touch of all the awe and reverence;
Nay, make her proud for once to heart's content
That all this wealth of heart and soul's her own!
Think you are all of this,—and, thinking it,
. . . (Obey!)
Val I cannot choose.
The Duchess. Then, kneel to her
{ VALENCE *sinks on his knee.*
I dream!
Val Have mercy! Yours, unto the death,—
I have obeyed. Despise, and let me die!
The D. Alas, sir, is it to be ever thus?
Even with you as with the world? I know
This morning's service was no vulgar deed
Whose motive, once it dares avow itself,
Explains all done and infinitely more,
So, takes the shelter of a nobler cause.
Your service named its true source,—loyalty!
The rest's unsaid again. The Duchess bids you,
Rise, sir! The Prince's words were in debate.
Val. [rising]. Rise? Truth, as ever, lady, comes from you!
I should rise—I who spoke for Cleves, can speak
For Man—yet tremble now, who stood firm then.
I laughed—for 'twas past tears—that Cleves should starve
With all hearts beating loud the Infamy,
And no tongue daring trust as much to air:
Yet here, where all hearts speak, shall I be mute?
Oh, lady, for your own sake look on me!
On all I am, and have, and do—heart, brain.
Body and soul,—this Valence and his gifts!
I was proud once: I saw you, and they sank,
So that each, magnified a thousand times,
Were nothing to you—but such nothingness,
Would a crown gild it, or a sceptre prop,
A treasure speed, a laurel-wreath enhance?
What is my own desert? But should your love
Have . . . there's no language helps here . . . singled me,—
Then—oh, that wild word 'then!'—be just to love,
In generosity its attribute!
Love, since you pleased to love! All's cleared—a stage
For trial of the question kept so long:
Judge you—Is love or vanity the best?
You, solve it for the world's sake—you, speak first
What all will shout one day—you, vindicate
Our earth and be its angel! All is said.
Lady, I offer nothing—I am yours:
But, for the cause' sake, look on me and him,

And speak!
The D. I have received the Prince's message:-
Say, I prepare my answer!
Val. Take me, Cleves!
[He withdraws.
The D. Mournful—that nothing's what it calls itself!
Devotion, zeal, faith, loyalty—mere love!
And, love in question, what may Berthold's be?
I did ill to mistrust the world so soon:
Already was this Berthold at my side.
The valley-level has its hawks no doubt:
May not the rock-top have its eagles, too?
Yet Valence... let me see his rival then!

ACT V

NIGHT

SCENE.—*The Hall.*

Enter BERTHOLD *and* MELCHIOR.

Mel. And here you wait the matter's issue?
Berth. Here.
Mel. I don't regret I shut Amelius, then.
But tell me, on this grand disclosure,—how
Behaved our spokesman with the forehead?
Berth. Oh,
Turned out no better than the foreheadless—
Was dazzled not so very soon, that's all!
For my part, this is scarce the hasty showy
Chivalrous measure you give me credit of.
Perhaps I had a fancy,—but 'tis gone.
—Let her commence the unfriended innocent
And carry wrongs about from court to court?
No, truly! The least shake of fortune's sand,
—My uncle-Pope chokes in a coughing fit,
King-cousin takes a fancy to blue eyes,—
And wondrously her claims would brighten up;
Forth comes a new gloss on the ancient law,
O'er-looked provisoes, o'er-past premises,
Follow in plenty. No: 'tis the safe step.
The hour beneath the convent-wall is lost:
Juliers and she, once mine, are ever mine.
Mel. Which is to say, you, losing heart already,
Elude the adventure.
Berth. Not so—or, if so—
Why not confess at once that I advise
None of our kingly craft and guild just now
To lay, one moment, down their privilege
With the notion they can any time at pleasure
Retake it: that may turn out hazardous.
We seem, in Europe, pretty well at end
O' the night, with our great masque: those favoured few
Who keep the chamber's top, and honour's chance
Of the early evening, may retain their place
And figure as they list till out of breath.
But it is growing late: and I observe
A dim grim kind of tipstaves at the doorway
Not only bar new-comers entering now,
But caution those who left, for any cause,
And would return, that morning draws too near;
The ball must die off, shut itself up. We—
I think, may dance lights out and sunshine in,
And sleep off headache on our frippery:
But friend the other, who cunningly stole out,
And, after breathing the fresh air outside,
Means to re-enter with a new costume,
Will be advised go back to bed, I fear.
I stick to privilege, on second thoughts.
Mel. Yes—you evade the adventure: and, beside,
Give yourself out for colder than you are.
King Philip, only, notes the lady's eyes?
Don't they come in for somewhat of the motive
With you too?
Berth. Yes—no: I am past that now.
Gone 'tis: I cannot shut my soul to fact.
Of course, I might by forethought and contrivance
Reason myself into a rapture. Gone:
And something better come instead, no doubt.
Mel. So be it! Yet, all the same, proceed my way,
Though to your ends; so shall you prosper best!
The lady,—to be won for selfish ends,—
Will be won easier my unselfish .. call *it,*
Romantic way.
Berth. Won easier?
Mel. Will not she?
Berth, There I profess humility without bound:
I11 cannot speed—not I—the Emperor.
Mel. And I should think the Emperor best waived,
From your description of her mood and way.
You could look, if it pleased you, into hearts;
But are too indolent and fond of watching
Your own—you know that, for you study it.

Berth. Had you but seen the orator her friend,
So bold and vobuble an hour before,
Abashed to earth at aspect of the change!
Make her an Empress? Ah, that changed the case!
Oh, I read hearts! 'Tis for my own behoof,
I court her with my true worth: wait the event!
I learned my final lesson on that head
When years ago,—my first and last essay—
Before the priest my uncle could by help
Of his superior, raise me from the dirt—
Priscilla left me for a Brabant lord
Whose cheek was like the topaz on his thumb.
I am past illusion on that score.
Mel. Here comes
The lady—
Berth. —And there you go. But do not! Give me
Another chance to please you! Hear me plead!
Mel. You'll keep, then, to the lover, to the man?

Enter the DUCHESS—*followed by* ADOLF *and* SABYNE *and, after an interval, by the* Courtiers.

Berth. Good auspice to our meeting!
The D. May it prove!
—And you, sir, will be Emperor one day?
Berth. (Ay, that's the point!) I may be Emperor.
The D. 'Tis not for my sake only, I am proud
Of this you offer: I am prouder far
That from the highest state should duly spring
The highest, since most generous, of deeds
Berth. (Generous—still that!) You underrate yourself.
You are, what I, to be complete, must gain—
Find now, and may not find, another time.
While I career on all the world for stage,
There needs at home my representative.
The D. —Such, rather, would some warrior-woman be—
One dowered with lands and gold, or rich in friends—
One like yourself.
Berth. Lady, I am myself,
And have all these: I want what's not myself,
Nor has all these. Why give one hand two swords?
Here's one already: be a friend's next gift
A silk glove, if you will—I have a sword.
The D. You love me, then?
Berth. Your lineage I revere,
Honour your virtue, in your truth believe,
Do homage to your intellect, and bow
Before your peerless beauty.
The D. But, for love—
Berth. A further love I do not understand.
Our best course is to say these hideous truths,
And see them, once said, grow endurable:
Like waters shuddering from their central bed,
Black with the midnight bowels of the earth,
That, once up-spouted by an earthquake's throe,
A portent and a terror—soon subside,
Freshen apace, take gold and rainbow hues
In sunshine, sleep in shadow, and at last
Grow common to the earth as hills or trees—
Accepted by all things they came to scare.
The D. You cannot love, then?
Berth. —Charlemagne, perhaps!
Are you not over-curious in love-lore?
The D. I have become so, very recently.
It seems, then, I shall best deserve esteem,
Respect, and all your candour promises,
By putting on a calculating mood—
Asking the terms of my becoming yours?
Berth. Let me not do myself injustice, neither.
Because I will not condescend to fictions
That promise what my soul can ne'er acquit,
It does not follow that my guarded phrase
May not include far more of what you seek,
Than wide profession of less scrupulous men.
You will be Empress, once for all: with me
The Pope disputes supremacy—you stand,
And none gainsays, the earth's first woman.
The D. That—
Or simple Lady of Ravestein again?
Berth. The matter's not in my arbitrament:
Now I have made my claims—which I regret—
Cede one, cede all.
The D. This claim then, you enforce?
Berth. The world looks on.
The D. And when must I decide?
Berth. When, lady? Have I said thus much so promptly
For nothing?—Poured out, with such pains, at once
What I might else have suffered to ooze forth
Droplet by droplet in a lifetime long-
For aught less than as prompt an answer, too?

All's fairly told now: who can teach you more?
The D. I do not see him.
Berth. I shall ne'er deceive.
This offer should be made befittingly
Did time allow the better setting forth
The good of it, with what is not so good,
Advantage, and disparagement as well:
But as it is, the sum of both must serve.
I am already weary of this place;
My thoughts are next stage on to Rome. Decide!
The Empire—or,—not even Juliers now!
Hail to the Empress—farewell to the Duchess!
[The Courtiers, *who have been drawing nearer and nearer, interpose.*
Gau. —' Farewell,' Prince? when we break in at our risk—
Clug. Almost upon court-licence trespassing—
Gau. —To point out how your claims are valid yet!
You know not, by the Duke her father's will,
The lady, if she weds beneath her rank,
Forfeits her Duchy in the next heir's favour—
So 'tis expressly stipulate. And if
It can be shown 'tis her intent to wed
A subject, then yourself, next heir, by right
Succeed to Juliers.
Berth. What insanity?—
Gui. Sir, there's one Valence, the pale fiery man
You saw and heard this morning—thought, no doubt,
Was of considerable standing here:
I put it to your penetration, Prince,
If aught save love, the truest love for her
Could make him serve the lady as he did!
He's simply a poor advocate of Cleves
—Creeps here with difficulty, finds a place
With danger, gets in by a miracle,
And for the first time meets the lady's face—
So runs the story: is that credible?
For, first—no sooner in, than he's apprised
Fortunes have changed; you are all-powerful here,
The lady as powerless: he stands fast by her!
The D. [aside]. And do such deeds spring up from love alone?
Gui. But here occurs the question, does the lady
Love him again? I say, how else can she?
Can she forget how he stood singly forth
In her defence, dared outrage all of us,
Insult yourself—for what, save love's reward?
The D. [aside]. And is love then the sole reward of love?
Gui. But, love him as she may and must—you ask,
Means she to wed him? 'Yes,' both natures answer!
Both, in their pride, point out the sole result;
Nought less would he accept nor she propose.
For each conjuncture was she greatenough —Will be, for this.
Clug. Though, now that this is known,
Policy, doubtless, urges she deny . . .
The D. —What, sir, and wherefore?—since I am not sure
That all is any other than you say!
You take this Valence, hold him close to me,
Him with his actions: can I choose but look?
I am not sure, love trulier shows itself
Than in this man, you hate and would degrade,
Yet, with your worst abatement, show me thus.
Nor am I—(thus made look within myself,
Ere I had dared)—now that the look is dared—
Sure that I do not love him!
Gui. Hear you, Prince?
Berth. And what, sirs, please you, may this prattle mean
Unless to prove with what alacrity
You give your lady's secrets to the world?
How much indebted, for discovering
That quality, you make me, will be found
When there's a keeper for my own to seek.
Courtiers. 'Our lady?'
Berth. —She assuredly remains.
The D. Ah, Prince—and you too can be generous?
You could renounce your power, if this were so,
And let me, as these phrase it, wed my love
Yet keep my Duchy? You perhaps exceed
Him, even, in disinterestedness!
Berth. How, lady, should all this affect my purpose?
Your will and choice are still as ever, free.
Say, you have known a worthier than myself
In mind and heart, of happier form and face—
Others must have their birthright: I have gifts,
To balance theirs, not blot them out of sight.
Against a hundred alien qualities,
I lay the prize I offer. I am nothing:
Wed you the Empire?
The D. And my heart away?
Berth. When have I made pretension to your heart?

I give none. I shall keep your **honour** safe;
With mine I trust you, as the sculptor trusts
Yon marble woman with the marble rose,
Loose on her hand, she never will let fall,
In graceful, slight, silent security.
You will be proud of my world-wide career,
And I content in you the fair and good.
What were the use of planting a few seeds
The thankless climate never would mature—
Affections all repelled by circumstance?
Enough: to these no credit I attach,—
To what you own, find nothing to object.
Write simply on my requisition's face
What shall content my friends—that you admit,
As Colombe of Ravestein, the claims therein,
Or never need admit them, as my wife—
And either way, all's ended!

TheD. Let all end!

Berth. The requisition!

Gui. —Valence holds, of course!

Berth. Desire his presence!

[ADOLF *goes out.*

Courtiers [to each other]. Out it all comes yet;
He'll have his word against the bargain yet;
He s not the man to tamely acquiesce.
One passionate appeal—upbraiding even,
May turn the tide again. Despair not yet!

[They retire a little.

Berth, [to MELCHIOR]. The Empire has its old success, my friend!

Mel. You've had your way; before the spokesman speaks,
Let me, but this once, work a problem out,
And ever more be dumb! The Empire wins?
To better purpose have I read my books!

Enter VALENCE.

Mel. [to the Courtiers], Apart, my masters!

[To VALENCE.] Sir, one word with you!
I am a poor dependant of the Prince's—
Pitched on to speak, as of slight consequence.
You are no higher, I find: in other words,
We two, as probably the wisest here,
Need not hold diplomatic talk like fools.
Suppose I speak, divesting the plain fact
Of all their tortuous phrases, fit for them?
Do you reply so, and what trouble saved!
The Prince, then—an embroiled strange heap of news
This moment reaches him—if true or false,
All dignity forbids he should inquire
In person, or by worthier deputy;
Yet somehow must inquire, lest slander come:
And so, 'tis I am pitched on. You have heard
His offer to your lady?

VaL Yes.

Mel. —Conceive
Her joy thereat?

Val. I cannot.

Mel. No one can.
All draws to a conclusion, therefore.

Val. [aside]. So!
No after-judgment—no first thought revised—
Her first and last decision!—me, she leaves,
Takes him; a simple heart is flung aside,
The ermine o'er a heartless breast embraced.
Oh Heaven, this mockery has been played too oft!
Once, to surprise the angels—twice, that fiends
Recording, might be proud they chose not so—
Thrice, many thousand times, to teacli the world
All men should pause, misdoubt their strength, since men
Can have such chance yet fail so signally,
—But ever, ever this farewell to Heaven,
Welcome to earth—this taking death for life—
This spurning love and kneeling to the world—
Oh Heaven, it is too often and too old!

Mel. Well, on this point, what but an absurd rumour
Arises—these, its source—its subject, you!
Your faith and loyalty misconstruing,
They say, your service claims the lady's hand!
Of course, nor Prince nor lady can respond:
Yet something must be said: for, were it true
You made such claim, the Prince would...

Val. Well, sir,—would?

Mel. —Not only probably withdraw his suit,
But, very like, the lady might be forced
Accept your own. Oh, there are reasons why!
But you'll excuse at present all save one,—
I think so. What we want is, your own witness,
For, or against—her good, or yours: decide!

Val. [aside]. Be it her good if she accounts it so!

[After a contest.] For what am I but hers.- to choose as she?

Who knows how far, beside, the light from her
May reach, ajud dwell with, what she looks upon?
Mel, [to the Prince]. Now to him, you!
Berth, [to VALENCE]. My friend acquaints you, sir,
The noise runs . . .
Val. —Prince, how fortunate you are,
Wedding her as you will, in spite of noise,
To show belief in love! Let her but love you,
All else you disregard! What else can be ?
You know how love is incompatible
With falsehood—purifies, assimilates
All other passions to itself.
Mel. Ay, sir:
But softly! Where, in the object we select,
Such love is, perchance, wanting?
Val Then indeed,
What is it you can take?
Mel. Nay; ask the world!
Youth, beauty, virtue, an illustrious name,
An influence o'er mankind.
Val. When man perceives .. .
—Ah, I can only speak as for myself!
The D. Speak for yourself!
Val. May I?—no, I have spoken,
And time's gone by. Had I seen such an one,
As I loved her—weighing thoroughly that word—
So should my task be to evolve her love:
If for myself!—if for another—well.
Berth. Heroic truly! And your sole reward,—
The secret pride in yielding up love's right ?
VaL Who thought upon reward? And yet how much
'Comes after—oh, what amplest recompense!
Is the knowledge of her, nought? the memory, nought?
—Lady, should such an one have looked on you,
Ne'er wrong yourself so far as quote the world
And say, love can go unrequited here!
You will have blessed him to his whole life's end—
Low passions hindered, baser cares kept back,
All goodness cherished where you dwelt —and dwell.
What would he have? He holds you—you, both form
And mind, in his,—where self-love makes such room
For love of you, he would not serve you now
The vulgar way,—repulse your enemies,
Win you new realms, or best, to save the old
Die blissfully—that's past so long ago!
He wishes you no need, thought, care of him—
Your good, by any means, himself unseen,
Away, forgotten!—He gives that life's task up,
As it were . . . but this charge which I return—
[Offers the requisition, which she takes.
Wishing your good.
The D. [having subscribed it]. And opportunely, sir—
Since at a birthday's close, like this of mine,
Good wishes gentle deeds reciprocate.
Most on a wedding-day, as mine is too,
Should gifts be thought of: yours comes first by right.
Ask of me!
Berth. He shall have whate'er he asks,
For your sake and his own.
Val. [aside]. If I should ask—
The withered bunch of flowers she wears —perhaps,
One last touch of her hand, I never more
Shall see! *[After a pause, presenting his paper to the* Prince.
Cleves' Prince, redress the wrongs of Cleves!
Berth. I will, sir!
The D. [as VALENCE *prepares to retire].* —Nay, do out your duty, first!
You bore this paper; I have registered
My answer to it: read it and have done!
[VALENCE *reads it.*
I take him—give up Juliers and the world.
This is my Birthday.
Mel. Berthold, my one hero
Of the world she gives up, one friend worth my books,
Sole man I think it pays the pains to watch,—
Speak, for I know you through your Popes and Kings!
Berth, [after a pause]. Lady, well rewarded! Sir, as well deserved!
I could not imitate—I hardly envy—
I do admire you. All is for the best.
Too costly a flower were this. I see it now,
To pluck and set upon my barren helm
To wither—any garish plume will do.
I'll not insult you and refuse your Duchy—
You can so well afford to yield it me,
And I were left, without it, sadly lorn.
As it is—for me—if that will flatter you,
A somewhat wearier life seems to remain
Than I thought possible where . . . 'faith, their life
Begins already! They're too occupied
To listen: and few words content me best.
[Abruptly to the Courtiers.] I am your Duke, though! Who obey me here?

The D. Adolf and Sabyne follow us—
Gui. [starting from the Courtiers].
—And I?
Do I not follow them, if I mayn't you?
Shall not I get some little duties up
At Ravestein and emulate the rest?
God save you, Gaucelme! 'Tis my Birthday, too!
Berth. You happy handful that remain with me
. •. That is, with Dietrich the black Barnabite
I shall leave over you—will earn your wages
Or Dietrich has forgot to ply his trade!
Meantime,—go copy me the precedents
Of every installation, proper styles
And pedigrees of all your Juliers' Dukes—
While I prepare to plod on my old way,
And somewhat wearily, I must confess!
The D. [with a light joyous laugh as she turns from them]. Come, Valence, to our friends, God's earth . . .
Val. [as she falls into his arms].
—And thee!

DRAMATIC ROMANCES

184- 185-

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP

I

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon:
A mile or so away,
On a little mound, Napoleon
Stood on our storming-day;
With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,
Legs wide, arms locked behind,
As if to balance the prone brow
Oppressive with its mind.

II

Just as perhaps he mused 'My plans
'That soar, to earth may fall,
'Let once my army-leader Lannes
'Waver at yonder wall,'—
Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew
A rider, bound on bound
Full-galloping; nor bridle drew
Until he reached the mound.

ni

Then off there flung in smiling joy,
And held himself erect
By just his horse's mane, a boy:
You hardly could suspect—
(So tight he kept his lips compressed,
Scarce any blood came through)
You looked twice ere you saw his breast
Was all but shot in two.

IV

[c] Well,' cried he,' Emperor, by God's grace
'We've got you Ratisbon!
'The Marshal's in the market-place,
'And you'll be there anon
'To see your flag-bird flap his vans
'Where I, to heart's desire,
'Perched him!' The chief's eye flashed; his plans
Soared up again like fire.

v

The chief's eye flashed; but presently
Softened itself, as sheathes
A film the mother-eagle's eye
When her bruised eaglet breathes;
'You're wounded!' 'Nay,' the soldier's pride
Touched to the quick, he said:
'I'm killed, Sire!' And his chief beside
Smiling the boy fell dead.

THE PATRIOT

AN OLD STORY

I

IT was roses, roses, all the way,
With myrtle mixed in my path like mad:
The house-roofs seemed to heave and sway,
The church-spires flamed, such flags they had,
A year ago on this very day.

II

The air broke into a mist with bells,
The old walls rocked with the crowd and cries.
Had I said, 'Good folk, mere noise repels—
'But give me your sun from yonder skies!'
They had answered,' And afterward, what else?'

III

Alack, it was I who leaped at the sun
To give it my loving friends to keep!
Nought man could do, have I left undone:
And you see my harvest, what I reap
This very day, now a year is run.

There's nobody on the house-tops now—
Just a palsied few at the windows set;
For the best of the sight is, all allow,
At the Shambles' Gate—or, better yet,
By the very scaffold's foot, I trow.

I go in the rain, and, more than needs,
A rope cuts both-my wrists behind;
And I think,' by the feel, my forehead bleeds,
For they fling, whoever has a mind,
Stones at me for my year's misdeeds.

VI

Thus I entered, and thus I go!
In triumphs, people have dropped down dead.
'Paid by the world, what dost thou owe
'Me?'—God might question; now instead,
'Tis God shall repay: I am safer so.

MY LAST DUCHESS

FERRARA

THAT'S my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Fra Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
'Fra Pandolf* by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
Fra Pandolf chanced to say 'Her mantle laps
'Over my lady's wrist too much,' or 'Paint
'Must never hope to reproduce the faint
'Half-flush that dies along her throat:' such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 'twas all one 1 My favour at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace—all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men,—good! but thanked
Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech—(which I have not>—to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, 'Just this
' Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
' Or there exceed the mark'—and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
—E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt.
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; 1 gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet
The company below, then. I repeat, *$o~.*
The Count your master's known munifi* cence
Is ample warrant that no just pretence
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

COUNT GISMOND

ATX IN PROVENCE

CHRIST God who savest man, save most
Of men Count Gismond who saved me!
Count Gauthier, when he chose his post,
Chose time and place and company
To suit it; when he struck at length
My honour, 'twas with all his strength.

And doubtlessly ere he could draw
All points to one, he must have schemed!
That miserable morning saw
Few half so happy as I seemed,
While being dressed in queen's array
To give our tourney prize away.

I thought they loved me, did me grace
To please themselves; 'twas all their deed;
God makes, or fair or foul, our face;
If showing mine so caused to bleed
My cousins' hearts, they should have dropped
A word, and straight the play had stopped.

They, too, so beauteous I Each a queen
By virtue of her brow and breast;
Not needing to be crowned, I mean,
As I do. E'en when I was dressed,
Had either of them spoke, instead
Of glancing sideways with still head!

But no; they let me laugh, and sing
My birthday song quite through, adjust
The last rose in my garland, fling
A last look on the mirror, trust
My arms to each an arm of theirs,
And so descend the castle-stairs—

And come out on the morning-troop
Of merry friends who kissed my cheek,
And called me queen, and made me stoop
Under the canopy—(a streak
That pierced it. of the outside sun.
Powdered with gold its gloom's soft dun)—

And they could let me take my state
And foolish throne amid applause
Of all come there to celebrate
My queen's-day—Oh I think the cause
Of much was, they forgot no crowd
Makes up for parents in their shroud!

vIII

However that be, all eyes were bent
Upon me, when my cousins cast
Theirs down: 'twas time I should present
The victors crown, b u t... there, 'twill last
No long time ... the old mist again
Blinds me as then it did. How vain!

See! Gismond's at the gate, in talk
With his two boys: I can proceed.
Well, at that moment, who should stalk
Forth boldly—to my face, indeed—
But Gauthier, and he thundered 'Stay!'
And all stayed. ' Bring no crowns, I say I

'Bring torches! Wind the penance-sheet
' About her! Let her shun the chaste,
'Or lay herself before their feet!
' Shall she whose body I embraced
'A night long, queen it in the day?
'For honour's sake no crowns, I say!'

XI

I? What I answered? As I live,
I never fancied such a thing
As answer possible to give.
What says the body when they spring
Some monstrous torture-engine's whole
Strength on it? No more says the soul.

Till out strode Gismond; then I knew
That I was saved. I never met
His face before, but, at first view,
I felt quite sure that God had set
Himself to Satan; who would spend
A minute's mistrust on the end?

He strode to Gauthier, in his throat
Gave him the lie, then struck his mouth
With one back-handed blow that wrote
In blood men's verdict there. North, South,
East, West, I looked. The lie was dead,
And damned, and truth stood up instead

xIv

This glads me most, that I enjoyed
The heart of the joy, with my contert.
In watching Gismond unalloyed
By any doubt of the event:
God took that on him—I was bid
Watch Gismond for my part: I did.

Did I not watch him while he let
His armourer just brace his greaves,
Rivet his hauberk, on the fret
The while! His f o o t... my memory leaves
No least stamp out, nor how anon
He pulled his ringing gauntlets on.

And e'en before the trumpet's sound
Was finished, prone lay the false knight,
Prone as his lie, upon the ground:
Gismond flew at him, used no sleight
O' the sword, but open-breasted drove,
Cleaving till out the truth he clove.

XVII

Which done, he dragged him to my feet
And saidHeretire, but end thy breath
'In full confession, lest thou fleet
'From my first, to God's second death!
'Say, hast thou lied?* And, 'I have lied
'To God and her,' he said, and died.

Then Gismond, kneeling to me, asked
—What safe my heart holds, though no word
Could I repeat now, if I tasked
My powers for ever, to a third
Dear even as you are. Pass the rest
Until I sank upon his breast.

Over my head his arm he flung
Against the world; and scarce I felt
His sword (that dripped by me and swung)
A little shifted in its belt:
For he began to say the while
How South our home lay many a mile.

So 'mid the shouting multitude
We two walked forth to never more
Return. My cousins have pursued
Their life, untroubled as before
I vexed them. Gauthier's dwelling-place
God lighten! May his soul find grace!

XXI

Our elder boy has got the clear
Great brow; tho' when his brother's black
Full eye shows scorn, it... Gismond here?
And have you brought my tercel back?
I just was telling Adela
How many birds it struck since May.

THE BOY AND THE ANGEL

MORNING, evening, noon and night,
'Praise God!' sang Theocrite.

Then to his poor trade he turned,
Whereby the daily meal was earned.

Hard he laboured, long and well;
O'er his work the boy's curls fell.

But ever, at each period,
He stopped and sang, 'Praise God!'

Then back again his curls he threw,
And cheerful turned to work anew.

Said Blaise, the listening monk, 'Well done;
'I doubt not thou art heard, my son:

'As well as if thy voice to-day
'Were praising God, the Pope's great way.

'This Easter Day, the Pope at Rome
'Praises God from Peter's dome.'

Said Theocrite, 'Would God that I
'Might praise him, that great way, and die!'

Night passed, day shone,
And Theocrite was gone.

With God a day endures alway,
A thousand years are but a day.

God said in heaven, 'Nor day nor night
'Now brings the voice of my delight.'

Then Gabriel, like a rainbow's birth,
Spread his wings and sank to earth;

Entered, in flesh, the empty cell,
Lived there, and played the craftsman well;

And morning, evening, noon and night,
Praised God in place of Theocrite.

And from a boy, to youth he grew:
The man put off the stripling's hue:

The man matured and fell away
Into the season of decay:

And ever o'er the trade he bent,
And ever lived on earth content.

(He did God's will; to him, all one
If on the earth or in the sun.)

God said, 'A praise is in mine ear;
'There is no doubt in it, no fear:

'So sing old worlds, and so
'New worlds that from my footstool go.

'Clearer loves sound other ways:
'I miss my little human praise.'

Then forth sprang Gabriel's wings, off fell
The flesh disguise, remained the cell.

'Twas Easter Day: he flew to Rome,
And paused above Saint Peter's dome.

In the tiring-room close by
The great outer gallery,

With his holy vestments dight,
Stood the new Pope, Theocrite:

And all his past career
Came back upon him clear,

Since when, a boy, he plied his trade,
Till on his life the sickness weighed;

And in his cell, when death drew near,
An angel in a dream brought cheer:

And rising from the sickness drear
He grew a priest, and now stood here.

To the East with praise he turned,
And on his sight the angel burned.

'I bore thee from thy craftsman's cell
'And set thee here; I did not well.

'Vainly I left my angel-sphere,
'Vain was thy dream of many a year.

'Thy voice's praise seemed weak; it dropped—
'Creation's chorus stopped!

'Go back and praise again
'The early way, while I remain.

'With that weak voice of our disdain,
'Take up creation's pausing strain.

'Back to the cell and poor employ:
'Resume the craftsman and the boy!'

Theocrite grew old at home;
A new Pope dwelt in Peter's dome.

One vanished as the other died:
They sought God side by side.

INSTANS TYRANNUS

I

OF the million or two, more or less,
I rule and possess,
One man, for some cause undefined,
Was least to my mind.

II

I struck him, he grovelled of course—
For, what was his force?
I pinned him to earth with my weight
And persistence of hate:
And he lay, would not moan, would not curse,
As his lot might be worse.

III

Were the object less mean, would he stand
*At the swing of my hand!
'For obscurity helps him and blots
'The hole where he squats.'
So, I set my five wits on the stretch
To inveigle the wretch.
All in vain! Gold and jewels I threw,
Still he couched there perdue;
I tempted his blood and his flesh,
Hid in roses my mesh,
Choicest cates and the flagon's best spilth
Still he kept to his filth.

IV

Had he kith now or kin, were access
To his heart, did I press:
Just a son or a mother to seize!
No such booty as these.
Were **it** simply a friend to pursue
'Mid my million or two,
Who could pay me in person or pelf
What he owes me himself!
No: I could not but smile through my chafe:
For the fellow lay safe
As his mates do, the midge and the nit,
—Through minuteness, to wit.

V

Then a humour more great took its place
At the thought of his face,
The droop, the low cares of the mouth,
The trouble uncouth
'Twixt the brows, all that air one is fain
To put out of its pain.
And, 'no!' I admonished myself,
'Is one mocked by an elf,
'Is one baffled by toad or by rat?
'The gravamen's in that!
'How the lion, who crouches to suit
'His back to my foot,
'Would admire that I stand in debate!
'But the small turns the great
'If it vexes you,—that is the thing!
'Toad or rat vex the king?
'Though I waste half my realm to unearth
'Toad or rat, 'tis well worth!'

VI

So, I soberly laid my last plan
To extinguish the man.
Round his creep-hole, with never a break
Ran my fires for his sake;
Over-head, did my thunder combine
With my underground mine:
Till I looked from my labour content
To enjoy the event.

VII

When sudden ... how think ye, the end?
Did I say 'without friend'?
Say rather, from marge to blue marge
The whole sky grew his targe
With the sun's self for visible boss,
While an Arm ran across
Which the earth heaved beneath like a breast
Where the wretch was safe prest!
Do you see? Just my vengeance complete,
The man sprang to his feet,
Stood erect, caught at God's skirts, and prayed!
—So, /was afraid!

MESMERISM

I

ALL I believed is true!
I am able yet
All I want, to get
By a method as strange as new:
Dare I trust the same to you?

MESMERISM

II

If at nighk, when-doors are shut,
And the wood-worm picks,
And the death-watch ticks,
And the bar has a flag of smut,
And a cat's in the water-butt—

III

And the socket floats and flares,
And the house-beams groan,
And a foot unknown
Is surmised on the garret-stairs,
And the locks slip unawares—

Iv

And the spider, to serve his ends,
By a sudden thread,
Aims and legs outspread,
On the table's midst descends,
Comes to find, God knows what
friends!—

v

If since eve drew in, I say.
I have sat and brought
(So to speak) my thought
To bear on the woman away,
Till I felt my hair turn grey—

VI

Till I seemed to have and hold,
In the vacancy
'Twixt the wall and me,
From the hair-plait's chestnut gold
To the foot in its muslin fold—

vII

Have and hold, then and there,
Her, from head to foot,
Breathing and mute,
Passive and yet aware,
In the grasp of my steady stare—

vm

Hold and have, there and then,
All her body and soul
That completes my whole,
All that women add to men,
In the clutch of my steady ken—

Ix

Having and holding, till
I imprint her fast
On the void at last
As the sun does whom he will
By the calotypist's skill—

x

Then,—if my heart's strength serve,
And through all and each
Of the veil31 reach
To her soul and never swerve,
Knitting an iron nerve—

XI

Command her soul to advance
And inform the shape
Which has made escape
And before my countenance
Answers me glance for glance-

xn

I, still with a gesture fit
Of my hands that best
Do my soul's behest,
Pointing the power from it,
While myself do steadfast sit—

xIII

Steadfast and still the same
On my object bent,
While the hands give vent
To my ardour and my aim
And break into very flame—

XIV

Then I reach, I must believe,
Not her soul in vain,
For to me again
It reaches, and past retrieve
Is wound in the toils I weave;

XV

And must follow as I require,
As befits a thrall,
Bringing flesh and all,
Essence and earth-attire,
To the source of the tractile fire:

XVI

Till the house called hers, not mine,
With a growing weight
Seems to suffocate
If she break not its leaden line
And escape from its close confine.

xvn

Out of doors into the night I
On to the maze
Of the wild wood-ways,
Not turning to left nor right
From the pathway, blind with sight-

xvIII

Making thro' rain and wind
O'er the broken shrubs,
'Twixt the stems and stubs,
With a still, composed, strong mind,
Nor a care for the world behind—

XIX

Swifter and still more swift,
As the crowding peace
Doth to joy increase
In the wide blind eyes uplift
Thro' the darkness and the drift!

XX

While I—to the shape, I too
Feel my soul dilate
Nor a whit abate,
And relax not a gesture due,
As I see my belief come true.

XXI

For, there! have I drawn or no
Life to that lip?
Do my fingers dip
In a flame which again they throw
On the cheek that breaks a-glow?

Ha! was the hair so first?
What, unfilleted,
Made alive, and spread
Through the void with a rich outburst,
Chestnut gold-interspersed?

Like the doors of a casket-shrine,
See, on either side,
Her two arms divide
Till the heart betwixt makes sign,
Take me, for I am thine!

'Now—now'—the door is heard!
Hark, the stairs! and near—
Nearer—and here—
'Now!' and at call the third
She enters without a word.

XXV

On doth she march and on
To the fancied shape;
It is, past escape,
Herself, now: the dream is done
And the shadow and she are one.

XXVI

First I will pray. Do Thou
That ownest the soul,
Yet wilt grant control
To another, nor disallow
For a time, restrain me now!

I admonish me while I may,
Not to squander guilt.
Since require Thou wilt
At my hand its price one day!
What the price is, who can say?

THE GLOVE

(PETER RONSARD *loquitur.)*

'HEIGHO! 'yawned one day King Francis,
'Distance all value enhances!
'When a man's busy, why, leisure
'Strikes him as wonderful pleasure:
"Faith, and at leisure once is he?
'Straightway he wants to be busy.
'Here we've got peace; and aghast I'm
'Caught thinking war the true pastime.
'Is there a reason in metre?
'Give us your speech, master Peter!'
I who, if mortal dare say so,
Ne'er am at loss with my Naso,
'Sire,' I replied, 'joys prove cloudlets:
'Men are the merest Ixions'—
Here the King whistled aloud, 'Let's
'—Heigho—go look at our lions!'
Such are the sorrowful chances
If you talk fine to King Francis.

And so, to the courtyard proceeding,
Our company, Francis was leading,
Increased by new followers tenfold
Before he arrived at the penfold;
Lords, ladies, like clouds which bedizen
At sunset the western horizon.
And Sir De Lorge pressed 'mid the foremost
With the dame he professed to adore most.
Oh, what a face! One by fits eyed
Her, and the horrible pitside;
For the penfold surrounded a hollow
Which led where the eye scarce dared follow,
And shelved to the chamber secluded
Where Bluebeard, the great lion, brooded.
The King hailed his keeper, an Arab
As glossy and black as a scarab,
And bade him make sport and at once stir
Up and out of his den the old monster.
They onened a hole in the wire-work
Across it, and dropped there a firework,
And fled: one's heart's beating redoubled;
A pause, while the pit's mouth was troubled,
The blackness and silence so utter,
By the firework's slow sparkling and sputter;
Then earth m a sudden contortion
Gave out to our gaze her abortion.
Such a brute! Were I friend Clement Marot
(Whose experience of nature's but narrow,
And whose faculties move in no small mist
When he versifies David the Psalmist)
I should study that brute to describe you
Ilium Juda Leonem de Tribu.
One's whole blood grew curdling and creepy
To see the black mane, vast and heapy,
The tail in the air stiff and straining,
The wide eyes, nor waxing nor waning,
As over the barrier which bounded
His platform, and us who surrounded
The barrier, they reached and they rested
On space that might stand him in best stead:
For who knew, he thought, what the amazement,
The eruption of clatter and blaze meant,

THE GLOVE

And if, in this minute of wonder,
No outlet, 'mid lightning and thunder,
Lay broad, and, his shackles all shivered,
The lion at last was delivered?
Ay, that was the open sky o'erhead!
And you saw by the flash on his forehead,
By the hope in those eyes wide and steady,
He was leagues in the desert already,
Driving the flocks up the mountain,
Or catlike couched hard by the fountain
To waylay the date-gathering negress:
So guarded he entrance or egress.
'How he stands!' quoth the King: 'we may well swear,
('No novice, we've won our spurs elsewhere
'And so can afford the confession,)
'We exercise wholesome discretion
'In keeping aloof from his threshold;
'Once hold you, those jaws want no fresh hold,
'Their first would too pleasantly purloin
'The visitor's brisket or surloin:
'But who's he would prove so fool-hardy?
'Not the best man of Marignan, pardie!'

The sentence no sooner was uttered,
Than over the rails a glove fluttered,
Fell close to the lion, and rested:
The dame 'twas, who flung it and jested
With life so, De Lorge had been wooing
For months past; he sat there pursuing
His suit, weighing out with nonchalance
Fine speeches like gold from a balance.

Sound the trumpet, no true knight's a tarrier!
De Lorge made one leap at the barrier,
Walked straight to the glove,—while the lion
Ne'er moved, kept his far-reaching eye on
The palm-tree-edged desert-spring's sapphire,
And the musky oiled skin of the Kaffir,—
Picked it up, and as calmly retreated,
Leaped back where the lady was seated,
And full in the face of its owner
Flung the glove.

'Your heart's queen, you dethrone her?
'So should I!'—cried the King—"twas mere vanity,
'Not love, set that task to humanity!'
Lords and ladies alike turned with loathing
From such **a** proved wolf in sheep's clothing.

Not so, I; for I caught an expression
In her brow's undisturbed self-possession
Amid the Court's scoffing and merriment,—
As if from no pleasing experiment
She rose, yet of pain not much heedful
So long as the process was needful,—
As if she had tried in a crucible,
To what 'speeches like gold' were reducible,
And, finding the finest prove copper,
Felt the smoke in her face was but proper;
To know what she had *not* to trust to,
Was worth all the ashes and dust too.
She went out 'mid hooting and laughter;
Clement Marot stayed; I followed after,
And asked, as a grace, what it all meant?
If she wished not the rash deed's recalment?
'For I'—so I spoke—'am a poet:
'Human nature,—behoves that I know it!

She told me, 'Too long had I heard
'Of the deed proved alone by the word:
'For my love—what De Lorge would not dare!
'With my scorn—what De Lorge could compare!
'And the endless descriptions of death
'He would brave when my lip formed a breath,
'I must reckon as braved, or, of course,
'Doubt his word—and moreover, perforce,
'For such gifts as no lady could spurn,
'Must offer my love in return.
'When I looked on your lion, it brought
'All the dangers at once to my thought,
'Encountered by all sorts of men,
'Before he was lodged in his den,—
'From the poor slave whose club or bare hands
'Dug the trap, set the snare on the sands,
'With no King and no Court to applaud,
'By no shame, should he shrink, overawed,
'Yet to capture the creature made shift,
'That his rude boys might laugh at the gift,
'—To the page who last leaped o'er the fence
'Of the pit, on no greater pretence
'Than to get back the bonnet he dropped,
'Lest his pay for a week should be stopped.
'So, wiser I judged it to make
'One trial what "death for my sake"
'Really meant, while the power was yet mine,
'Than to wait until time should define
'Such a phrase not so simply as I,
'Who took it to mean just "to die."
'The blow a glove gives is but weak:
'Docs the mark yet discolour my cheek?
'But when the heart suffers a blow,
'Will the pain pass so soon, do you know?'

I looked, as away she was sweeping,
And saw a youth eagerly keeping
As close as he dared to the doorway.
No **doubt** that a noble should **more weigh**

His life than befits a plebeian;
And yet, had our brute been Nemean—
(I judge by a certain calm fervour
The youth stepped with, forward to serve her)
—He'd have scarce thought you did him the worst turn
If you whispered * Friend, what you'd get, first earn!'
And when, shortly after, she carried
Her shame from the Court, and they married,
To that marriage some happiness, maugre
The voice of the Court, I dared augur.

For De Lorge, he made women with men vie,
Those in wonder and praise, these in envy;
And in short stood so plain a head taller
That he wooed and won ... how do you call her?
The beauty, that rose in the sequel
To the King's love, who loved her a week well.
And 'twas noticed he never would honour
De Lorge (who looked daggers upon her)
With the easy commission of stretching
His legs in the service, and fetching
His wife from her chamber, those straying
Sad gloves she was always mislaying,
While the King took the closet to chat in,—
But of course this adventure came pat in.
And never the King told the story,
How bringing a glove brought such glory,
But the wife smiled—'His nerves are grown firmer:
'Mine he brings now and utters no murmur.'

Venienti occurrite morbo!
With which moral I drop my theorbo.

TIME'S REVENGES

I'VE a Friend, over the sea;
I like him, but he loves me.
It all grew out of the books I write;
They find such favour in his sight
That he slaughters you with savage looks
Because you don't admire my books.
He does himself though,—and if some vein
Were to snap to-night in this heavy brain,
To-morrow month, if I lived to try,
Round should I just turn quietly,
Or out of the bedclothes stretch my hand
Till I found him, come from his foreign land
To be my nurse in this poor place,
And make my broth and wash my face
And light my fire and, all the while,
Bear with his old good-humoured smile
That I told him * Better have kept away
'Than come and kill me, night and day,
' With, worse than fever throbs and shoots,
'The creaking of his clumsy boots.'
I am as sure that this he would do,
As that Saint Paul's is striking two.
And I think I rather . . . woe is me!
—Yes, rather would see him than not see,
If lifting a hand could seat him there
Before me in the empty chair
To-night, when my head aches indeed*
And I can neither think nor read
Nor make these purple fingers hold
The pen; this garret's freezing cold!

And I've a Lady—there he wakes,
The laughing fiend and prince of snakes
Within me, at her name, to pray
Fate send some creature in the way
Of my love for her, to be down-torn,
Upthrust and outward-borne,
So I might prove myself that sea
Of passion which I needs must be!
Call my thoughts false and my fancies quaint
And my style infirm and its figures faint,
All the critics say, and more blame yet,
And not one angry word you get
But, please you, wonder I would put
My cheek beneath that lady's foot
Rather than trample under mine
The laurels of the Florentine,
And you shall see how the devil spends
A fire God gave for other ends!
I tell you, I stride up and down
This garret, crowned with love's best crown,
And feasted with love's perfect feast,
To think I kill for her, at least,
Body and soul and peace and fame,
Alike youth's end and manhood's aim,
—So is my spirit, as flesh with sin,
Filled full, eaten out and in
With the race of her, the eyes of her,
The lips, the little chin, the stir
Of shadow round her mouth; and she
—I'll tell you,—calmly would decree
That I should roast at a slow fire,
If that would compass her desire
And make her one whom they invite
To the famous ball to-morrow night.

There may be heaven; there must be hell;
Meantime, there is our earth here—well!

THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND

THAT second time they hunted me
From hill to plain, from shore to sea,
And Austria, hounding far and wide
Her blood-hounds thro' the country-side,
Breathed hot and instant on my trace,—
I made six days a hiding-place

Of that dry green old aqueduct
Where I and charles* when boys, have plucked
The fire-flies from the roof above,
Bright creeping thro' the moss they love:
—How long it seems since Charles was lost!
Six days the soldiers crossed and crossed
The country in my very sight;
And when that peril ceased at night,
The sky broke out in red dismay
With signal fires; well, there I lay
Close covered o'er in my recess,
Up to the neck in ferns and cress,
Thinking on Metternich our friend,
And Charles's miserable end,
And much beside, two days; the third,
Hunger o'ercame me when I heard
The peasants from the village go
To work among the maize; you know,
With us in Lombardy, they bring
Provisions packed on mules, a string
With little bells that cheer their task,
And casks, and boughs on every cask
To keep the sun's heat from the wine;
These I let pass in jingling line,
And, close on them, dear noisy crew,
The peasants from the village, too;
For at the very rear would troop
Their wives and sisters in a group
To help, I knew. When these had passed,
I threw my glove to strike the last,
Taking the chance: she did not start,
Much less cry out, but stooped apart,
One instant rapidly glanced round,
And saw me beckon from the ground.
A wild bush grows and hides my crypt;
She picked my glove up while she stripped
A branch off, then rejoined the rest
With that; my glove lay in her breast.
Then I drew breath; they disappeared.
It was for Italy I feared.

An hour, and she returned alone
Exactly where my glove was thrown.
Meanwhile came many thoughts: on me
Rested the hopes of Italy.
I had devised a certain tale
Which, when 'twas told her, could not fail
Persuade a peasant of its truth;
I meant to call a freak of youth
This hiding, and give hopes of pay,
And no temptation to betray.
But when I saw that woman's face,
Its calm simplicity of grace,
Our Italy's own attitude
In which she walked thus far, and stood,
Planting each naked foot so firm,
To crush the snake and spare the worm—
At first sight of her eyes, I said,
'I am that man upon whose head
'They fix the price, because I hate
'The Austrians over us: the State
'Will give you gold—oh, gold so much I—
'If you betray me to their clutch,
'And be your death, for aught I know,
'If once they find you saved their foe.
'Now, you must bring me food and drink,
'And also paper, pen and ink,
'And carry safe what I shall write
'To Padua, which you'll reach at night
'Before the duomo shuts; go in,
'And wait till Tenebræ begin;
'Walk to the third confessional,
'Between the pillar and the wall,
'And kneeling whisper, *Whence comes peace?*
'Say it a second time, then cease;
'And if the voice inside returns,
'From Christ and Freedom; what concerns
'The cause of Peace?—for answer, slip
'My letter where you placed your lip;
'Then come back happy we have done
'Our mother service—I, the son,
'As you the daughter of our land!'

Three mornings more, she took her stand
In the same place, with the same eyes:
I was no surer of sun-rise
Than of her coming. We conferred
Of her own prospects, and I heard
She had a lover—stout and tall,
She said—then let her eyelids fall,
'He could do much'—as if some doubt
Entered her heart,—then, passing out,
'She could not speak for others, who
'Had other thoughts; herself she knew:'
And so she brought me drink and food.
After four days, the scouts pursued
Another path; at last arrived
The help my Paduan friends contrived
To furnish me: she brought the news.
For the first time I could not choose
But kiss her hand, and lay my own
Upon her head—'This faith was shown
'To Italy, our mother; she
'Uses my hand and blesses thee.'
She followed down to the sea-shore;
I left and never saw her more.

How very long since I have thought
Concerning—much less wished for—aught
Beside the good of Italy,
For which I live and mean to die!
I never was in love; and since
Charles proved false, what shall now convince.
My inmost heart I have a friend?
However, if I pleased to spend
Real wishes on myself—say, three—
I know at least what one should be.
I would grasp Metternich until
I felt his red wet throat distil
In blood thro' these two hands. And next,
—Nor much for that am I perplexed—

Charles, perjured traitor, for his part,
Should die slow of a broken heart
Under his new employers. Last
—Ah, there, what should I wish? For fast
Do I grow old and out of strength.
If I resolved to seek at length
My father's house again, how scared
They all would look, and unprepared!
My brothers live in Austria's pay
—Disowned me long ago, men say;
And all my early mates who used
To praise me so—perhaps induced
More than one early step of mine—
Are turning wise: while some opine
'Freedom grows license,' some suspect
'Haste breeds delay,' and recollect
They always said, such premature
Beginnings never could endure!
So, with a sullen 'All's for best,'
The land seems settling to its rest.
I think then, I should wish to stand
This evening in that dear, lost land,
Over the sea the thousand miles,
And know if yet that woman smiles
With the calm smile; some little farm
She lives in there, no doubt: what harm
If I sat on the door-side bench,
And, while her spindle made a trench
Fantastically in the dust,
Inquired of all her fortunes—just
Her children's ages and their names,
And what may be the husband's aims
For each of them. I'd talk this out,
And sit there, for an hour about,
Then kiss her hand once more, and lay
Mine on her head, and go my way.

So much for idle wishing—how
It steals the time! To business now.

THE ENGLISHMAN IN ITALY

PIANO DI SORRENTO

FORTU, Fortu, my beloved one,
Sit here by my side,
On my knees put up both little feet!
I was sure, if I tried,
I could make you laugh spite of Scirocco.
Now, open your eyes,
Let me keep you amused till he vanish
In black from the skies,
With telling my memories over
As you tell your beads;
All the Plain saw me gather, I garland
—The flowers or the weeds.

Time for rain! for your long hot dry
Autumn
Had net-worked with brown
The white skin of each grape on the
bunches,
Marked like a quail's crown,
Those creatures you make such account of,
Whose heads,—speckled white
Over brown like a great spider's back,
As I told you last night,—
Your mother bites off for her supper.
Red-ripe as could be.
Pomegranates were chapping and splitting
In halves on the tree:
And betwixt the loose walls of great flint-
stone,
Or in the thick dust
Onthepath,orstraightoutoftherock-side,
Wherever could thrust
Some burnt sprig of bold hardy rock-
flower
Its yellow face up,
For the prize were great butterflies fighting,
Some five for one cup.
So, I guessed, ere I got up this morning,
What change was in store,
By the quick rustle-down of the quail-neis
Which woke me before
I could open my shutter, made fast
With a bough and a stone.
And look thro' the twisted dead vine-
twigs,
Sole lattice that's known.
Quick and sharp rang the rings down the
net-poles,
While, busy beneath,
Your priest and his brother tugged fit
them,
The rain in their teeth.
And out upon all the flat house-roofs
Where split figs lay drying,
The girls took the frails under cover:
Nor use seemed in trying
To get out the boats and go fishing,
For, under the cliff,
Fierce the black water frothed o'er the
blind-rock.
No seeing our skiff
Arrive about noon from Amalfi,
—Our fisher arrive,
And pitch down his basket before us,
All trembling alive
With pink and grey jellies, your sea-fruit;
You touch the strange lumps,
And mouths gape there, eyes open, all
manner
Of horns and of humps,
Which only the fisher looks grave at,
While round him like imps
Cling screaming the children as naked
And brown as his shrimps;
Himself too as bare to the middle
—You see round his neck
The string and its brass coin suspended,
That saves him from wreck.
But to-day not a boat reached Salerno,
So back, to a man,
Came our friends, with whose help in the
vineyards
Grape-harvest began.

In the vat, halfway up in our house-side,
Like blood the jUice spins,
While your brother all bare-legged is dancing
Till breathless he grins
Dead-beaten in effort on effort
To keep the grapes under,
Since still when he seems all but master,
In pours the fresh plunder
From girls who keep coming and going
With basket on shoulder,
And eyes shut against the rain's driving;
Your girls that are older,—
For under the hedges of aloe,
And where, on its bed
Of the orchard's black mould, the love-apple
Lies pulpy and red,
All' the young ones are kneeling and filling
Their laps with the snails
Tempted out by this first rainy weather,—
Your best of regales,
As to-night will be proved to my sorrow,
When, supping in state,
We shall feast our grape-gleaners (two dozen,
Three over one plate)
With lasagne so tempting to swallow
In slippery ropes,
And gourds fried in great purple slices,
That colour of popes.
Meantime, see the grape bunch they've brought you:
The rain-water slips
O'er the heavy blue bloom on each globe
Which the wasp to your lips
Still follows with fretful persistence:
Nay, taste, while awake,
This half of a curd-white smooth cheese-ball
That peels, flake by flake,
Like an onion, each smoother and whiter;
Next, sip this weak wine
From the thin green glass flask, with its stopper,
A leaf of the vine;
And end with the prickly-pear's red flesh
That leaves thro' its juice
The stony black seeds on your pearl-teeth.
Scirocco is loose!
Hark, the quick, whistling pelt of the olives
Which, thick in one's track,
Tempt the stranger to pick up and bite them,
Tho' not yet half black!
How the old twisted olive trunks shudder,
The medlars let fall
Their hard fruit, and the brittle great fig-trees
Snap off, figs and all,
Fox here comes the whole of the tempest!
No refuge, but creep
Back again to my side and my shoulder,
And listen or sleep.
O how will your country show next week,
When all the vine-boughs
Have been stripped of their foliage to pasture
The mules and the cows?
Last eve, I rode over the mountains;
Your brother, my guide,
Soon left me, to feast on the myrtles
That offered, each side,
Their fruit-balls, black, glossy and luscious,—
Or strip from the sorbs
A treasure, or, rosy and wondrous,
Those hairy gold orbs!
Butmy mule pickedhissuresoberpath out,
Just stopping to neigh
When he recognized down in the valley
His mates on their way
With the faggots and barrels of water;
And soon we emerged
From the plain, where the woods could scarce follow;
And still as we urged
Our way, the woods wondered, and left us,
As up still we trudged
Though the wild path grew wilder each instant,
And place was e'en grudged
'Mid the rock-chasms and piles of loose stones
Like the loose broken teeth
Of some monster which climbed there to die
From the ocean beneath—
Place was grudged to the silver-grey fume-weed
That clung to the path,
And dark rosemary ever a-dying
That, 'spite the wind's wrath,
So loves the salt rock's face to seaward,
And lentisks as staunch
To the stone where they root and bear berries,
And . .. what shows a branch
Coral-coloured, transparent, with circlets
Of pale seagreen leaves;
Over all trod my mule with the caution
Of gleaners o'er sheaves,
Still, foot after foot like a lady,
Till, round after round,
He climbed to the top of Calvano,
And God's own profound
Was above me, and round me the mountains,
And under, the sea,
And within me my heart to bear witness
What was and shall be.
Oh, heaven and the terrible crystal!
No rampart excludes
Your eye from the life to be lived
In the blue solitudes.

Oh, those mountains, their infinite move-
ment!
Still moving with you;
For, ever some new head and breast of
them
Thrusts into view
To observe the intruder; you see it
If quickly you turn
And, before they escape you surprise
them.
They grudge you should learn
How the soft plains they look on, lean
over
And love (they pretend)
—Cower beneath them, the flat sea-pine
crouches,
The wild fruit-trees bend,
E'en the myrtle-leaves curl, shrink and
shut :
All is silent and grave:
'Tis a sensual and timorous beauty,
How fair! but a slave.
So, I turned to the sea; and there slum-
bered
As greenly as ever
Those isles of the siren, your Galli;
No ages can sever
The Three, nor enable their sister
To join them,—halfway
On the voyage, she looked at Ulysses—
No farther to-day,
Tho' the small one, just launched in the
wave,
Watches breast-high and steady
From under the rock, her bold sister
Swum halfway already.
Fortu, shall we sail there together
And see from the sides
Quite new rocks show their faces, new
haunts
Where the siren abides?
Shall we sail round and round them, close
over
The rocks, tho' unseen,
That ruffle the grey glassy water
To glorious green?
Then scramble from splinter to splinter,
Reach land and explore,
On the largest, the strange square black
turret
With never a door,
Just a loop to admit the quick lizards;
Then, stand there and hear
The birds' quiet singing, that tells us
What life is, so clear?
—The secret they sang to Ulysses
When, ages ago,
He heard and he knew this life's secret
I hear and I know.

Ah, see! The sun breaks o'er Calvano;
He strikes the great gloom
And flutters it o'er the mount's summit
In airy gold fume.
All is over. Look out, see the gipsy,
Our tinker and smith,
Has arrived, set up bellows and forge,
And down-squatted forthwith
To his hammering, under the wall there;
One eye keeps aloof
The urchins that itch to be putting
His jews'-harps to proof,
While the other, thro' locks of curled
wire,
Is watching how sleek
Shines the hog, come to share in the wind-
fall
—Chew, abbot's own cheek!
All is over. Wake up and come out now,
And down let us go,
And see the fine things got in order
At church for the show
Of the Sacrament, set forth this evening.
To-morrow's the Feast
Of the Rosary's Virgin, by no means
Of Virgins the least,
As you'll hear in the off-hand discourse
Which (all nature, no art)
The Dominican brother, these three
weeks,
Was getting by heart.
Not a pillar nor post but is dizened
With red and blue papers;
All the roof waves with ribbons, each altar
A-blaze with long tapers;
But the great masterpiece is the scaffold
Rigged glorious to hold
All the fiddlers and fifers and drummers
And trumpeters bold,
Not afraid of Bellini nor Auber,
Who, when the priest's hoarse,
Will strike us up something that's brisk
For the feast's second course.
And then will the flaxen-wigged Image
Be carried in pomp
Thro' the plain, while in gallant procession
The priests mean to stomp.
All round the glad church lie old bottles
With gunpowder stopped,
Which will be, when the Image re-enters,
Religiously popped;
And at night from the crest of Calvano
Great bonfires will hang,
On the plain will the trumpets join chorus,
And more poppers bang.
At all events, come—to the garden
As far as the wall;
See me tap with a hoe on the plaster
Till out there shall fall
A scorpion with wide angry nippers!

—'Such trifles!' you say?
Fortu, in my England at home,
Men meet gravely to-day
And debate, if abolishing Corn-laws
Be righteous and wise
— I f 'twere proper, Scirocco should vanish
In black from the skiesl

IN A GONDOLA

"He sings.

I SEND my heart up to thee, all my heart
In this my singing.
For the stars help me, and the sea bears part;
The very night is clinging
Closer to Venice' streets to leave one space
Above me, whence thy face
May light my joyous heart to thee its dwelling-place.

She speaks.

Say after me, and try to say
My very words, as if each word
Came from you of your own accord,
In your own voice, in your own way:
'This woman's heart and soul and brain
'Are mine as much as this gold chain
'She bids me wear; which' (say again)
'I choose to make by cherishing
'A precious thing, or choose to fling
'Over the boat-side, ring by ring.'
And yet once more say... no word more
Since words are only words. Give o'er!

Unless you call me, all the same,
Familiarly by my pet name,
Which if the Three should hear you call,
And me reply to, would proclaim
At once our secret to them all.
Ask of me, too, command me, blame—
Do, break down the partition-wall
'Twixt us, the daylight world beholds
Curtained in dusk and splendid folds!
What's left but—all of me to take?
I am the Three's: prevent them, slake
Your thirst! 'Tis said, the Arab sage,
In practising with gems, can loose
Their subtle spirit in his cruce
And leave but ashes: so, sweet mage,
Leave them my ashes when thy use
Sucks out my soul, thy heritage!

He sings.

I

Past we glide, and past, and past!
What's that poor Agnese doing
Where they make the shutters fast?
Grey Zanobi's just a-wooing
To his couch the purchased bride:
Past we glide!

Past we glide, and past, and past!
Why's the Pucci Palace flaring
Like a beacon to the blast?
Guests by hundreds, not one caring
If the dear host's neck were wried:
Past we glide!

She sings.

I

The moth's kiss, first!
Kiss me as if you made believe
You were not sure, this eve,
How my face, your flower, had pursed
Its petals up; so, here and there
You brush it, till I grow aware
Who wants me, and wide ope I burst.

II

The bee's kiss, now!
Kiss me as if you entered gay
My heart at some noonday,
A bud that dares not disallow
The claim, so all is rendered up,
And passively its shattered cup
Over your head to sleep I bow.

He sings.

What are we two?
I am a Jew,
And carry thee, farther than friends can pursue,
To a feast of our tribe;
Where they need thee to bribe
The devil that blasts them unless he imbibe
Thy . .. Scatter the vision for ever! And now,
As of old, I am I, thou art thou!

II

Say again, what we are?
The sprite of a star,
I lure thee above where the destinies bar
My plumes their full play
Till a ruddier ray
Than my pale one announce there is withering away
Some... Scatter the vision for ever! And now,
As of old, I am I, thou art thou!

He muses.

Oh, which were best, to roam or rest?
The land's lap or the water's breast?
To sleep on yellow millet-sheaves,
Or swim in lucid shallows just
Eluding water-lily leaves,
An inch from Death's black fingers, thrust
To lock you, whom release he must;
Which life were best on Summer eves?

He speaks, musing.

Lie back; could thought of mine improve you?
From this shoulder let there spring
A wing; from this, another wing;
Wings, not legs and feet, shall move you!
Snow-white must they spring, to blend
With your flesh, but I intend
They shall deepen to the end,

Broader, into burning gold,
Till both wings crescent-wise enfold
Your perfect self, from 'neath your feet
To o'er your head, where, lo, they meet
As if a million sword-blades hurled
Defiance from you to the world !

Rescue me thou, the only real!
And scare away this mad ideal
That came, nor motions to depart!
Thanks! Now, stay ever as thou art!

Still he muses.

What if the Three should catch at last
Thy serenader? While there's cast
Paul's cloak about my head, and fast
Gian pinions me, Himself has past
His stylet thro' my back; I reel;
And ... is it thou I feel?

II

They trail me, these three godless knaves,
Past every church that saints and saves,
Nor stop till, where the cold sea raves
By Lido's wet accursed graves,
They scoop mine, roll me to its brink,
And ... on thy breast I sink!

She replies, musing.

Dip your arm o'er the boat-side, elbow-deep,
As I do: thus: were death so unlike sleep,
Caught this way? Death's to fear from flame or steel,
Or poison doubtless; but from water—feel!
Go find the bottom! Would you stay me ? There!
Now pluck a great blade of that ribbon-grass
To plait in where the foolish jewel was,
I flung away: since you have praised my hair,
'Tis proper to be choice in what I wear.

He speaks.

Row home? must we row home? **Too** surely
Know I where its front's demurely
Over the Giudecca piled;
Window just with window mating,
Door on door exactly waiting,
All's the set face of a child:
But behind it, where's a trace
Of the staidness and reserve,
And formal lines without a curve,
In the same child's playing-face?
No two windows look one way
O'er the small sea-water thread
Below them. Ah, the autumn day
I. passing, saw **you** overhead!
First, out a cloud of curtain blew,
Then a sweet cry, and last came you—
To catch your lory that must needs
Escape just then, of all times then,
To peck a tall plant's fleecy seeds,
And make me happiest of men.
I scarce could breathe to see you reach
So far back o'er the balcony
To catch him ere he climbed too high
Above you in the Smyrna peach
That quick the round smooth cord of gold,
This coiled hair on your head, unrolled,
Fell down you like a gorgeous snake
The Roman girls were wont, of old,
When Rome there was, for coolness' sake
To let lie curling o'er their bosoms.
Dear lory, may his beak retain
Ever its delicate rose stain
As if the wounded lotus-blossoms
Had marked their thief to know again!

Stay longer yet, for other's sake
Than mine! What should your chamber do?
—With all its rarities that ache
In silence while day lasts, but wake
At night-time and their life renew,
Suspended just to pleasure you
Who brought against their will together
These objects, and, while day lasts, weave
Around them such a magic tether
That dumb they look; your harp, believe,
With all the sensitive tight strings
Which dare not speak, now to itself
Breathes slumberously. as if some elf
Went in and out the chords, his wings
Make murmur wheresoe'er they graze,
As an angel may, between the maze
Of midnight palace-pillars, on
And on. to sow God's plagues, have gone
Through guilty glorious Babylon.
And while such murmurs flow, the nymph
Bends o'er the harp-top from her shell
As the dry limpet for the lymph
Come with a tune he knows so well.
And how your statues' hearts must swell!
And how your pictures must descend
To see each other, friend with friend!
Oh, could you take them by surprise,
You'd find Schidone's eager Duke
Doing the quaintest courtesies
To that prim saint by Haste-thee-Luke
And. deeper into her rock den,
Bold. Castelfranco's Magdalen
You'd find retreated from the ken
Of that robed counsel-keeping Ser—
As if the Tizian thinks of her,
And is not, rather, gravely bent
On seeing for himself what toys
Are these, his progeny invent,
What litter now the board employs
Whereon he signed a document
That got him murdered! Each enjoys

IN A GONDOLA

Its night so well, you cannot break
The sport up-so, indeed must make
More stay with me, for others' sake.

She speaks,

I

To-morrow, if a harp-string, say,
Is used to tie the jasmine back
That overfloods my room with sweets,
Contrive your Zorzi somehow meets
MyZanze! If the ribbon's black,
The Three are watching: keep away!

Your gondola—let Zorzi wreathe
A mesh of water-weeds about
Its prow, as if he unaware
Had struck some quay or bridge-foot stair!
That I may throw a paper out
As you and he go underneath.

There's Zanze's vigilant taper; safe are we.
Only one minute more to-night with me?
Resume your past self of a month ago!
Be you the bashful gallant, I will be
The lady with the colder breast than snow.
Now bow you, as becomes, nor touch my hand
More than I touch yours when I step to land,
And say, *A11 thanks, Siora!'—
Heart to heart
And lips to lips! Yet once more, ere we part,
Clasp me and make me thine, as mine thou art!

He is surprised, and stabbed.

It was ordained to be so, sweet!—and best
Comes now, beneath thine eyes, upon thy breast.
Still kiss me! Care not for the cowards! Care
Only to put aside thy beauteous hair
My blood will hurt! The Three, I do not scorn
To death, because they never lived: but I
Have lived indeed, and so—(yet one more kiss)—can die!

WARING

I

I

WHAT'S become of Waring
Since he gave us all the slip,
Chose land-travel or seafaring,
Boots and chest or staff and scrip,
Rather than pace up and down
Any longer London town?

Who'd have guessed it from his lip
Or his brow's accustomed bearing,
On the night he thus took ship
Or started landward?—little caring
For us, it seems, who supped together
(Friends of his too, I remember)
And walked home thro' the merry weather,
The snowiest in all December.
I left his arm that night myself
For what's-his-name's, the new prose-poet
Who wrote the book there, on the shelf-
How, forsooth, was I to know it
If Waring meant to glide away
Like a ghost at break of day?
Never looked he half so gay I

III

He was prouder than the devil:
How he must have cursed our revel!
Ay and many other meetings,
Indoor visits, outdoor greetings,
As up and down he paced this London,
With no work done, but great works undone,
Where scarce twenty knew his name.
Why not, then, have earlier spoken,
Written, bustled? Who's to blame
If your silence kept unbroken?
'True, but there were sundry jottings,
'Stray-leaves, fragments, blurrs and blottings,
'Certain first steps were achieved
' Already which'—(is that your meaning ?)
'Had well borne out whoe'er believed
' In more to come!' But who goes gleaning
Hedge-side chance-blades, while full-sheaved
Stand cornfields by him? Pride, o'erweening
Pride alone, puts forth such claims
O'er the day's distinguished names.

Meantime, how much I loved him,
I find out now I've lost him.
I who cared not if I moved him.
Who could so carelessly accost him,
Henceforth never shall get free
Of his ghostly company,
His eyes that just a little wink
As deep I go into the merit
Of this and that distinguished spirit—
His cheeks' raised colour, soon to sink,
As long I dwell on some stupendous
And tremendous (Heaven defend us!)
Monstr'-inform'-ingens-horrend-ous
Demoniaco-seraphic
Penman's latest piece of graphic.
Nay, my very wrist grows warm
With his dragging weight of arm.

E'en so, swimmingly appears,
Through one's after-supper musings,
Some lost lady of old years
With her beauteous vain endeavour
And goodness unrepaid as ever;
The face, accustomed to refusings,
We, puppies that we were .. . Oh never
Surely, nice of conscience, scrupled
Being aught like false, forsooth, to?
Telling aught but honest truth to?
What a sin, had we centupled
Its possessor's grace and sweetness!
No! she heard in its completeness
Truth, for truth's a weighty matter,
And truth, at issue, we can't flatter!
Well, 'tis done with; she's exempt
From damning us thro' such a sally;
And so she glides, as down a valley,
Taking up with her contempt,
Past our reach; and in, the flowers
Shut her unregarded hours.

v

Oh, could I have him back once more,
This Waring, but one half-day more!
Back, with the quiet face of yore,
So hungry for acknowledgment
Like mine! I'd fool him to his bent.
Feed, should not he, to heart's content?
I'd say, * to only have conceived,
' Planned your great works, apart from progress,
'Surpasses little works achieved!'
I'd lie so, I should be believed.
I'd make such havoc of the claims
Of the day's distinguished names
To feast him with, as feasts an ogress
Her feverish sharp-toothed gold-crowned child!
Or as one feasts a creature rarely
Captured here, unreconciled
To capture; and completely gives
Its pettish humours license, barely
Requiring that it lives.

VI

Ichabod, Ichabod,
The glory is departed!
Travels Waring East away?
Who, of knowledge, by hearsay,
Reports a man upstarted
Somewhere as a god,
Hordes grown European-hearted,
Millions of the wild made tame
On a sudden at his fame?
In Vishnu-land what Avatar?
Or who in Moscow, toward the Czar,
With the demurest of footfalls
Over the Kremlin's pavement bright
With serpentine and syenite,
Steps, with five other Generals
That simultaneously take snuff,
For each to have pretext enough
And kerchiefwise unfold his sash
Which, softness' self, is yet the **stuff**
To hold fast where a steel chain snaps,
And leave the grand white neck no gash?
Waring in Moscow, to those rough
Cold northern natures borne perhaps,
Like the lambwhite maiden dear
From the circle of mute kings
Unable to repress the tear,
Each as his sceptre down he flings,
To Dian's fane at Taurica,
Where now a captive priestess, she alway
Mingles her tender grave Hellenic speech
With theirs, tuned to the hailstone-beaten beach;
As pours some pigeon, from the myrrhy lands
Rapt by the whirlblast to fierce Scythian strands
Where breed the swallows, her melodious cry
Amid their barbarous twitter!
In Russia? Never! Spain were fitter!
Ay, most likely 'tis in Spain
That we and Waring meet again
Now, while he turns down that cool narrow lane
Into the blackness, out of grave Madrid
All fire and shine, abrupt as when there's slid
Its stiff gold blazing pall
From some black coffin-lid.
Or, best of all,
I love to think
The leaving us was just a feint;
Back here to London did he slink,
And now works on without a wink
Of sleep, and we are on the brink
Of something great in fresco-paint:
Some garret's ceiling, walls and floor,
Up and down and o'er and o'er
He splashes, as none splashed before
Since great Caldara Polidore.
Or Music means this land of ours
Some favour yet, to pity won
By Purcell from his Rosy Bowers,—
'Give me my so-long promised son,
'Let Waring end what I begun!'
Then down he creeps and out he steals
Only when the night conceals
His face; in Kent 'tis cherry-time,
Or hops are picking: or at prime
Of March he wanders as, too happy,
Years ago when he was young,
Some mild eve when woods grew sappy
And the early moths had sprung
To life from many a trembling sheath
Woven the warm boughs beneath;
While small birds said to themselves
What should soon be actual song,
And young gnats, by tens and twelves
Made as if they were the throng
That crowd around and carry aloft
The sound they **have nursed, so** sweet **and** pure,

Out **of** a myriad noises soft,
Into a tone thatcan endure
Amid the noise of a July noon
When all God's creatures crave their boon,
All at once and all in tune,
And get it, happy as Waring then,
Having first within his ken
What a man might do with men:
And far too glad, in the even-glow,
To mix with the world he meant to take
Into his hand, he told you, so—
And out of it his world to make,
To contract and to expand
As he shut or oped his hand.
Oh Waring, what's to really be?
A clear stage and a crowd to see!
Some Garrick, say, out shall not he
The heart of Hamlet's mystery pluck?
Or, where most unclean beasts are rife,
Some Junius—am I right?—shall tuck
His sleeve, and forth with flaying-knife!
Some Chatterton shall have the luck
Of calling Rowley into life!
Some one shall somehow run a muck
With this old world, for want of strife
Sound asleep. Contrive, contrive
To rouse us, Waring! Who's alive?
Our men scarce seem in earnest now.
Distinguished names!—but 'tis, somehow,
As if they played at being names
Still more distinguished, like the games
Of children. Turn our sport to earnest
With a visage of the sternest!
Bring the real times back, confessed
Still better than our very best!

II

'WHEN I last saw Waring .. .'
(How all turned to him who spoke!
You saw Waring? Truth or joke?
In land-travel or sea-faring?)

'We were sailing by Triest
'Where a day or two we harboured:
'A sunset was in the West,
'When, looking over the vessel's side,
'One of our company espied
'A sudden speck to larboard.
'And as a sea-duck flies and swims
'At once, so came the light craft up,
'With its sole lateen sail that trims
'And turns (the water round its rims
'Dancing, as round a sinking cup)
'And by us like a fish it curled,
'And drew itself up close beside,
'Its great sail on the instant furled,
'And o'er its thwarts a shrill voice cried,
'(A neck as bronzed as a Lascar's)
'"Buy wine of us, you English Brig?
'"Or fruit tobacco and cigars?
'" A pilot for you to Triest?
'"Without one, look you ne'er so big,
'"They'll never let you up the bay!
'"We natives should know best."
'I turned, and "just those fellows' way,"
'Our captain said, "The 'long-shore thieves
'"Are laughing at us in their sleeves."

in

*In truth, the boy leaned laughing back;
'And one, half-hidden by his side
' Under the furled sail, soon I spied,
'With great grass hat and kerchief black,
'Who looked up with his kingly throat,
'Said somewhat, while the other shook
'His hair back from his eyes to look
'Their longest at us; then the boat,
I' know not how, turned sharply round,
'Laying her whole side on the sea
'As a leaping fish does; from the lee
'Into the weather, cut somehow
'Her sparkling path beneath our bow
'And so went **off,** as with a bound,
'Into the rosy and golden half
'O' the sky, to overtake the sun
'And reach the shore, like the sea-calf
'Its singing cave; yet I caught one
'Glance ere away the boat quite passed,
'And neither time nor toil could mar
'Those features: so I saw the last
' Of Waring! '—You ? Oh, never star
Was lost here but it rose afar!
Look East, where whole new thousands are!
In Vishnu-land what Avatar?

THE TWINS

'Give' and 'It-shall-be-given-unto-you.'

GRAND rough old Martin Luther
Bloomed fables—flowers on furze,
The better the uncouther:
Do roses stick like burrs?

A beggar asked an alms
One day at an abbey-door.
Said Luther; but, seized with qualms,
The abbot replied, 'We're poor!

m

' Poor, who had plenty once,
'When gifts fell thick as rain:
' But they give us nought, for the nonce,
'And how should we give again?'

Iv

Then the beggar, 'See your sins!
'Of old, unless I err,
'Ye had brothers for inmates, twins,
'Date and Dabitur.

'While Date was in good case
'Dabitur flourished too:
'For Dabitur's lenten face
'No wonder if Date rue.

'Would ye retrieve the one?
'Try and make plump the other!
'When Date's penance is done,
'Dabitur helps his brother.

'Only, beware relapse!'
The Abbot hung his head.
This beggar might be perhaps
An angel, Luther said.

A LIGHT WOMAN

So far as our story approaches the end,
Wliich do you pity the most of us three?—
My friend, or the mistress of my friend
With her wanton eyes, or me?

II

My friend was already too good to lose,
And seemed in the way of improvement yet,
When she crossed his path with her hunting-noose
And over him drew her net.

m

When I saw him tangled in her toils,
A shame, said I, if she adds just him
To her nine-and-ninety other spoils,
The hundredth for a whim!

And before my friend be wholly hers,
How easy to prove to him, I said,
An eagle's the game her pride prefers,
Though she snaps at a wren instead!

So, I gave her eyes my own eyes to take,
My hand sought hers as in earnest need,
And round she turned for my noble sake,
And gave me herself indeed.

The eagle am I, with my fame in the world,
The wren is he, with his maiden face.
—You look away and your lip is curled?
Patience, a moment's space!

vII

For see, my friend goes shaking and white;
He eyes me as the basilisk :
I have turned, it appears, his day to night,
Eclipsing his sun's disk.

vIII

And I did it, he thinks, as a very thief:
'Though I love her—that, he comprehends—
'One should master one's passions, Gove, in chief)
'And be loyal to one's friends!'

IX

And she,—she lies in my hand as tame
As a pear late basking over a wall;
Just a touch to try and off it came;
'Tis mine,—can I let it fall?

With no mind to eat it, that's the worst!
Were it thrown in the road, would the case assist?
'Twas quenching a dozen blue-flies' thirst
When I gave its stalk a twist.

And I,—what I seem to my friend, you see:
What I soon shall seem to his love, you guess:
What I seem to myself, do you ask of me?
No hero, I confess.

xII

'Tis an awkward thing to play with souls,
And matter enough to save one's own:
Yet think of my friend, and the burning coals
He played with for bits of stone!

xIII

One likes to show the truth for the truth;
That the woman was light is very true:
But suppose she says,—Never mind that youth!
What wrong have I done to you?

XIV

Well, any how, here the story stays,
So far at least as I understand;
And, Robert Browning, you writer of plays,
Here's a subject made to your hand!

THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER

I

I SAID—Then, dearest, since 'tis so,
Since now at length my fate I know,
Since nothing allmy love avails,
Since all, my life seemed meant for, fails,
Since this was written and needs must be—
My whole heart rises up to bless
Your name in pride and thankfulness!
Take back the hope you gave,—I claim
Only a memory of the same,
—And this beside, if you will not blame,
Your leave for one more last ride with

My mistress bent? that brow of hers;
Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs
When pity would be softening through,
Fixed me a breathing-while or two
With life or death in the balance: right!
The blood replenished me again;
My last thought was at least not vain:
I and my mistress, side by side
Shall be together, breathe and ride,
So, one day more am I deified.
Who knows but the world may end to-night?

Hush! *if* you saw some western cloud
All billowy-bosomed, over-bowed
By many benedictions—sun's
And moon's and evening-star's at once—
And so, you, looking and loving best,
Conscious grew, your passion drew
Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too,
Down on you, near and yet more near,
Till flesh must fade for heaven was here!—
Thus leant she and lingered—joy and fear!
Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

Then we began to ride. My soul
Smoothed itself out, a long-cramped scroll
Freshening and fluttering in the wind.
Past hopes already lay behind.
What need to strive with a life awry?
Had I said that, had I done this,
So might I gain, so might I miss.
Might she have loved me? just as well
She might have hated, who can tell!
Where had I been now if the worst befell?
And here we are riding, she and I.

Fail I alone, in words and deeds?
Why, all men strive and who succeeds ?
We rode; it seemed my spirit flew,
Saw other regions, cities new,
As the world rushed by on either side.
I thought,—All labour, yet no less
Bear up beneath their unsuccess.
Look at the end of work, contrast
The petty done, the undone vast,
This present of theirs with the hopeful past!
I hoped she would love me; here we ride.

What hand and brain went ever paired?
What heart alike conceived and dared?
What act proved all its thought had been?
What will but felt the fleshly screen?
We ride and I see her bosom heave.

There's many a crown for who can reach.
Ten lines, a statesman's life in each!
The flag stuck on a heap of bones,
A soldier's doing! what atones?
They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones.
My riding is better, by their leave.

vII

What does it all mean, poet? Well,
Your brains beat into rhythm, you tell
What we felt only; you expressed
You hold things beautiful the best,
And pace them in rhyme so, side by side.
'Tis something, nay 'tis much: but then,
Have you yourself what's best for men?
Are you—poor, sick, old ere your time—
Nearer one whit your own sublime
Than we who never have turned a rhyme?
Sing, riding's a joy! For me, I ride.

And you, great sculptor—so, you gave
A score of years to Art, her slave,
And that's your Venus, whence we turn
To yonder girl that fords the burn!
You acquiesce, and shall I repine?
What, man of music, you grown grey
With notes and nothing else to say,
Is this your sole praise from a friend,
'Greatly his opera's strains intend,
' But in music we know how fashions end!'
I gave my youth; but we ride, in fine.

Who knows what's fit for us? Had fate
Proposed bliss here should sublimate
My being—had I signed the bond—
Still one must lead some life beyond,
Have a bliss to die with, dim-descried.
This foot once planted on the goal,
This glory-garland round my soul,
Could I descry such? Try and test!
I sink back shuddering from the quest.
Earth being so good, would heaven seem best?
Now, heaven and she are beyond this ride.

And yet—she has not spoke so long!
What if heaven be that, fair and strong
At life's best, with our eyes upturned
Whither life's flower is first discerned,
We, fixed so, ever should so abide?
What if we still ride on, we two
With life for ever old yet new,
Changed not in kind but in degree,
The instant made eternity,—
And heaven just prove that I and she
Ride, ride together, for ever ride?

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN;

A CHILD'S STORY

(Written for, and inscribed to, W. M. the Younger.)

HAMELIN Town's in Brunswick,
By famous Hanover city;
The river Weser, deep and wide,
Washes its wall on the southern side;
A pleasanter spot you never spied;
But, when begins my ditty,
Almost five hundred years ago,
To see the townsfolk suffer so
From vermin, was a pity.

II

Rats!
They fought the dogs and killed the cats,
And bit the babies in the cradles,
And ate the cheeses out of the vats,
And licked the soup from the cooks' own ladles,
Split open the kegs of salted sprats,
Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,
And even spoiled the women's chats
By drowning their speaking
With shrieking and squeaking
In fifty different sharps and flats.

III

At last the people in a body
To the Town Hall came flocking:
"'Tis clear,' cried they, 'our Mayor's a noddy;
'And as for our Corporation—shocking
*To think we buy gowns lined with ermine
'For dolts that can't or won't determine
'What's best to rid us of our vermin!
'You hope, because you're old and obese,
'To find in the furry civic robe ease?
' Rouse up, sirs! Give your brains a racking
'To find the remedy we're lacking,
' Or, sure as fate, we'll send you packing!'
At this the Mayor and Corporation
Quaked with a mighty consternation.

Iv

An hour they sat in council,
At length the Mayor broke silence:
'For a guilder I'd my ermine gown sell,
'I wish I were a mile hence!
'It's easy to bid one rack one's brain—
' I'm sure my poor head aches again,
' I've scratched it so, and all in vain.
'Oh for a trap, a trap, a trap!'
Just as he said this, what should hap
At the chamber door but a gentle tap?
' Bless us,' cried the Mayor, 'what's that?'
(With the Corporation as he sat,
Looking little though wondrous fat;
Nor brighter was his eye, nor moister
Than a too-long-opened oyster,
Save when at noon his paunch grew mutinous
For a plate of turtle green and glutinous)
'Only a scraping of shoes on the mat?
'Anything like the sound of a rat
'Makes my heart go pit-a-pat I'

v

'Come in!'—the Mayor cried, looking bigger:
And in did come the strangest figure!
His queer long coat from heel to head
Was half of yellow and half of red,
And he himself was tall and thin,
With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin,
And light loose hair, yet swarthy skin,
No tuft on cheek nor beard on chin,
But lips where smiles went out and in;
There was no guessing his kith and kin:
And nobody could enough admire
The tall man and his quaint attire.
Quoth one: 'It's as my great-grandsire,
'Starting up at the Trump of Doom's tone,
'Had walked this way from his painted tombstone!'

VI

He advanced to the council-table:
And, 'Please your honours,' said he, 'I'm able,
'By means of a secret charm, to draw
'All creatures living beneath the sun,
'That creep or swim or fly or run,
'After me so as you never saw!
'And I chiefly use my charm
'On creatures that do people harm,
'The mole and toad and newt and viper;
'And people call me the Pied Piper.'
(And here they noticed round his neck
A scarf of red and yellow stripe,
To match with his coat of the self-same cheque;
And at the scarf's end hung a pipe;
And his fingers, they noticed, were ever straying
As if impatient to be playing
Upon this pipe, as low it dangled
Over his vesture so old-fangled.)
'Yet,' said he, 'poor piper as I am,
'In Tartary I freed the Cham,
'Last June, from his huge swarms of gnats;
'I eased in Asia the Nizam
'Of a monstrous brood of vampyre-bats:
'And as for what your brain bewilders,
'If I can rid your town of rats
'Will you give me a thousand guilders?'
'One? fifty thousand!'—was the exclamation
Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation.

Into the streettheTTper'stept,
Smiling first a little smile,
As if he knew what magic slept
In his quiet pipe the while;
Then, like a musical adept,
To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled,
And green and blue his sharp eyes twinkled,
Like a candle-flame where salt is sprinkled;
And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,
You heard as if an army muttered;
And the muttering grew to a grumbling;
And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling;
And out of the houses the rats came tumbling.
Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,
Brown rats, black rats, grey rats, tawny rats.
Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,
Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,
Cocking tails and pricking whiskers,
Families by tens and dozens,
Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives—
Followed the Piper for their lives.
From street to street he piped advancing,
And step for step they followed dancing,
Until they came to the river Weser,
Wherein all plunged and perished!
Save one who, stout as Julius Caesar,
Swam across and lived to carry
(As he, the manuscript he cherished)
To Rat-land home his commentary:
Which was, 'At the first shrill notes of the pipe,
'I heard a sound as of scraping tripe,
'And putting apples, wondrous ripe,
'Into a cider-press's gripe:
'And a moving away of pickle-tub-boards,
'And a leaving ajar of conserve-cupboards,
'And a drawing the corks of train-oil-flasks,
'And a breaking the hoops of butter-casks:
' And it seemed as if a voice
' (Sweeter far than by harp or by psaltery
'Is breathed) called out, "Oh rats, rejoice!
'"The world is grown to one vast drysaltery!
'"So munch on, crunch on, take your nuncheon,
'"Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon!"
'And just as a bulky sugar-puncheon,
'All ready staved, like a great sun shone
* Glorious scarce an inch before me,
'Just as methought it said, "Come, bore me!"
' — I found the Weser rolling o'er me.'

vIII

You should have heard the Hamelin people
Ringing the bells till they rocked the steeple.
'Go,' cried the Mayor, 'and get long poles,
'Poke out the nests and block up the holes!
'Consult with carpenters and builders,
'And leave in our town not even a trace
'Of the rats!'—when suddenly, up the face
Of the Piper perked in the market-place,
With a, 'First, if you please, my thousand guilders!'

A thousand guilders! The Mayor looked blue;
So did the Corporation too.
For council dinners made rare havoc
With Claret, Moselle, Vin-de-Grave, Hock;
And half the money would replenish
Their cellar's biggest butt with Rhenish.
To pay this sum to a wandering fellow
With a gipsy coat of red and yellow!
' Beside,' quoth the Mayor with a knowing wink,
'Our business was done at the river's brink;
'We saw with our eyes the vermin sink,
'And what's dead can't come to life, I think.
'So, friend, we're not the folks to shrink
'From the duty of giving you something for drink,
'And a matter of money to put in your poke;
I But as for the guilders, what we spoke
'Of them, as you very well know, was in joke.
'Beside, our losses have made us thrifty.
'A thousand guilders! Come, take fifty!'

The Piper's face fell, and he cried
'No trifling! I can't wait, beside!
'I've promised to visit by dinnertime
'Bagdat, and accept the prime
'Of the Head-Cook's pottage, all he's rich in,
'For having left, in the Caliph's kitchen,
'Of a nest of scorpions no survivor:
'With him I proved no bargain-driver,
'With you, don't think I'll bate a stiver!
'And folks who put me in a passion
'May find me pipe after another fashion.'

XI

'How?' cried the Mayor, 'd'ye think I brook
'Being worse treated than a Cook?
'Insulted by a lazy ribald
'With idle pipe and vesture piebald?
'You threaten us, fellow ? Do your worst,
'Blow your pipe there till you burst!'

Once more he stept into the street
And to his tips again
Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane;
And ere he blew three notes (such sweet
Soft notes as yet musician's cunning
Never gave the enraptured air)
There was a rustling that seemed like a bustling
Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hustling,
Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes clattering,
Little hands clapping and little tongues chattering,
And, like fowls in a farm-yard when barley is scattering,
Out came the children running.
All the little boys and girls,
With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,
And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls,
Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after
The wonderful music with shouting and laughter.

XIII

The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood
As if they were changed into blocks of wood,
Unable to move a step, or cry
To the children merrily skipping by,
—Could only follow with the eye
That joyous crowd at the Piper's back.
But how the Mayor was on the rack,
And the wretched Council's bosoms beat,
As the Piper turned from the High Street
To where the Weser rolled its waters
Right in the way of their sons and daughters!
However he turned from South to West,
And to Koppelberg Hill his steps addressed,
And after him the children pressed;
Great was the joy in every breast.
'He never can cross that mighty top!
'He's forced to let the piping drop,
'And we shall see our children stop!'
When, lo, as they reached the mountain-side,
A wondrous portal opened wide,
As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed;
And the Piper advanced and the children followed,
And when all were in to the very last,
The door in the mountain-side shut fast.
Did I say, all? No! One was lame,
And could not dance the whole of the way;
And in after years, if you would blame
His sadness, he was used to say,—
'It's dull in our town since my playmates left!
'I can't forget that I'm bereft
'Of all the pleasant sights they see,
'Which the Piper also promised me.
'For he led us, he said, to a joyous land,
'Joining the town and just at hand,
'Where waters gushed and fruit-trees grew
'And flowers put forth a fairer hue,
'And everything was strange and new;
'The sparrows were brighter than peacocks here,
'And their dogs outran our fallow deer,
'And honey-bees had lost their stings,
'And horses were born with eagles' wings:
'And just as I became assured
* My lame foot would be speedily cured,
'The music stopped and I stood still,
'And found myself outside the hill,
'Left alone against my will,
'To go now limping as before,
'And never hear of that country more!'

XIV

Alas, alas for Hamelin!
There came into many a burgher's pate
A text which says that heaven's gate
Opes to the rich at as easy rate
As the needle's eye takes a camel in!
The mayor sent East, West, North and South,
To offer the Piper, by word of mouth,
Wherever it was men's lot to find him.
Silver and gold to his heart's content,
If he'd only return the way he went,
And bring the children behind him.
But when they saw 'twas a lost endeavour.
And Piper and dancers were gone for ever,
They made a decree that lawyers never
Should think their records dated duly
If, after the day of the month and year,
These words did not as well appear,
'And so long after what happened here
'On the Twenty-second of July,
'Thirteen hundred and seventy-six:'
And the better in memory to fix
The place of the children's last retreat,
They called it, the Pied Piper's Street—
Where any one playing on pipe or tabor
Was sure for the future to lose his labour.
Nor suffered they hostelry or tavern
To shock with mirth a street so solemn;
But opposite the place of the cavern
They wrote the story on a column,
And on the great church-window painted
The same, to make the world acquainted
How their children were stolen away,
And there it stands to this very day.
And I must not omit to say
That in Transylvania there's a tribe
Of alien people who ascribe
The outlandish ways and dress
On which their neighbours lay such stress,

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

To their fathers and mothers having risen
Out of some-subterraneous prison
Into which they were trepanned
Long time ago in a mighty band
Out of Hamelin town in Brunswick land,
But how or why, they don't understand.

Sex Willy, let me and you be wipers
Oi scores out with all men—especially pipers!
And, whether they pipe us free from rats or from mice,
If we've promised them aught, let us keep our promise!

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS

YOU'RE my friend:
I was the man the Duke spoke to;
I helped the Duchess to cast offhis yoke, too;
So here's the tale from beginning to end,
My friend!

II

Ours is a great wild country:
If you climb to our castle's top,
I don't see where your eye can stop;
For when you've passed the cornfield country,
Where vineyards leave off, flocks are packed,
And sheep-range leads to cattle-tract,
And cattle-tract to open-chase,
And open-chase to the very base
Of the mountain where, at a funeral pace,
Round about, solemn and slow,
One by one, row after row,
Up and up the pine-trees go,
So, like black priests up, and so
Down the other side again
To another greater, wilder country,
That's one vast red drear burnt-up plain,
Branched through and through with many a vein
Whence iron's dug, and copper's dealt;
Look right, look left, look straight before,—
Beneath they mine, above they smelt,
Copper-ore and iron-ore,
And forge and furnace mould and melt,
And so on, more and ever more,
Till at the last, for a bounding belt,
Comes the salt sand hoar of the great sea-shore,
—And the whole is our Duke's country.

I was born the day this present Duke was—
(And O, says the song, ere I was old!)
In the castle where the other Duke was—
(When I was happy and young, not old!)
I in the kennel, he in the bower:
We are of like age to an hour.
My father was huntsman in that day;
Who has not heard my father say
That, when a boar was brought to bay,
Three times, four times out of five,
With Ms huntspear he'd contrive
To get the killing-place transfixed,
And pin him true, both eyes betwixt?
And that's why the old Duke would rather
He lost a salt-pit than my father,
And loved to have him ever in call;
That's why my father stood in the hall
When the old Duke brought his infant out
To show the people, and while they passed
The wondrous bantling round about,
Was first to start at the outside blast
As the Kaiser's courier blew his horn
Just a month after the babe was born.
'And,' quoth the Kaiser's courier, * since
'The Duke has got an heir, our Prince
' Needs the Duke's self at his side:'
The Duke looked down and seemed to wince,
But he thought of wars o'er the world wide,
Castles a-fire, men on their march,
The toppling tower, the crashing arch;
And up he looked, and awhile he eyed
The row ofcrests and shields and banners
Of all achievements after all manners,
And 'ay,' said the Duke with a surly pride.
The more was his comfort when he died
At next year's end, in a velvet suit,
With a gilt glove on his hand, his foot
In a silken shoe for a leather boot,
Petticoated like a herald,
In a chamber next to an ante-room,
Where he breathed the breath of page and groom,
What he called stink, and they, perfume:
—They should have set him on red Berold
Mad with pride, like fire to manage!
They should have got his cheek fresh tannage
Such a day as to-day in the merry sunshine!
Had they stuck on his fist a rough-foot merlin!
(Hark, the wind's on the heath at its game!
Oh for a noble falcon-lanner
To flap each broad wing like a banner.
And turn in the wind, and dance like flame!)
Had they broached a white-beer cask from Berlin
—Or if you incline to prescribe mere wine
Put to his lips, when they saw him pine,
A cup of our own Moldavia fine,
Cotnar for instance, green as May sorrel
And ropy with sweet,—we shall not quarrel.

So, at home, the sick tall yellow Duchess
Was left with the infant in her clutches,
She being the daughter of God knows who:
And now was the time to revisit her tribe.
Abroad and afar they went, the two,
And let our people rail and gibe
At the empty hall and extinguished fire,
As loud as we liked, but ever in vain,
Till after long years we had our desire,
And back came the Duke and his mother again.

v

And he came back the pertest little ape
That ever affronted human shape:
Full of his travel, struck at himself.
You'd say, he despised our bluff old ways?
—Not he! For in Paris they told the elf
Our rough North land was the Land of Lays,
The one good thing left in evil days;
Since the Mid-Age was the Heroic Time,
And only in wild nooks like ours
Could you taste of it yet as in its prime,
And see true castles, with proper towers,
Young-hearted women, old-minded men,
And manners now as manners were then.
So, all that the old Dukes had been, without knowing it,
This Duke woula fain know he was, without being it:
'Twas not for the joy s self, but the joy of his showing it,
Nor for the pride's self, but the pride of our seeing it,
He revived all usages thoroughly worn-out.
The souls of them fumed-forth, the hearts of them torn-out:
And chief in the chase his neck he perilled
On a lathy horse, all legs and length,
With blood for bone, all speed, no strength;
—They should have set him on red Berold
With the red eye slow consuming in fire,
And the thin stiff ear like an abbey-spire!

VI

Well, such as he was, he must marry, we heard:
And out of a convent, at the word,
Came the lady, in time of spring.
—Oh, old thoughts they cling, they cling!
That day, I know, with a dozen oaths
I clad myself in thick hunting-clothes
Fit for the chase of urochs or buffle
In winter-time when you need to muffle.
But the Duke had a mind we should cut a figure,
And so we saw the lady arrive:
My friend, I have seen a white crane bigger!
She was the smallest lady alive,
Made in a piece of nature's madness,
Too small, almost, for the life and gladness
That over-filled her, as some hive
Out of the bears' reach on the high trees
Is crowded with its safe merry bees:
In truth, she was not hard to please!
Up she looked, down she looked, round at the mead,
Straight at the castle, that's best indeed
To look at from outside the walls:
As for us, styled the 'serfs and thralls,'
She as much thanked me as if she had said it,
(With her eyes, do you understand?)
Because I patted her horse while I led it;
And Max, who rode on her other hand,
Said, no bird flew past but she inquired
What its true name was, nor ever seemed tired—
If that was an eagle she saw hover,
And the green and grey bird on the field was the plover.
When suddenly appeared the Duke:
And as down she sprung, the small foot pointed
On to my hand,—as with a rebuke,
And as if his backbone were not jointed,
The Duke stepped rather aside than forward,
And welcomed her with his grandest smile;
And, mind you, his mother all the while
Chilled in the rear, like a wind to Nor'-ward:
And up, like a weary yawn, with its pullies
Went, in a shriek, the rusty portcullis;
And, like a glad sky the north-wind sullies,
The lady's face stopped its play,
As if her first hair had grown grey;
For such things must begin some one day.

In a day or two she was well again;
As who should say, 'You labour in vain!
'This is all a jest against God, who meant
'I should ever be, as I am, content
'And glad in his sight; therefore, glad I will be.'
So, smiling as at first went she.

She was active, stirring, all fire—
Could not rest, could not tire-
To a stone she might have given life!
(I myself loved once, in my day)
—For a shepherd's, miner's, huntsman's wife,
(I had a wife, I know what I say)
Never in all the world such an one!
And here was plenty to be done,
And she that could do it, great or small,
She was to do nothing at all.

There was already this man in his post,
  This in his station and that in his office,
And the Duke's plan admitted a wife, at most,
  To meet his eye. with the other trophies,
Now outside the hall, now in it,
  To sit thus, stand thus, see and be seen,
At the proper place in the proper minute,
  And die away the life between.
And it was amusing enough, each infraction
  Of rule—(but for after-sadness that came)
To hear the consummate self-satisfaction
  With which the young Duke and the old dame
Would let her advise, and criticise,
And, being a fool, instruct the wise,
  And, child-like, parcel out praise or blame:
They bore it all in complacent guise,
As though an artificer, after contriving
A wheel-work image as if it were living,
Should find with delight it could motion to strike him!
So found the Duke, and his mother like him:
The lady hardly got a rebuff-
That had not been contemptuous enough,
With his cursed smirk, as he nodded applause,
And kept off the old mother-cat's claws.

So, the little lady grew silent and thin,
  Paling and ever paling,
As the way is with a hid chagrin;
  And the Duke perceived that she was ailing,
And said in his heart,' 'Tis done to spite me,
' But I shall find in my power to right me! '
Don't swear, friend! The old one, many a year,
Is in hell, and the Duke's self... you shall hear.

Well, early in autumn, at first winter-warning,
When the stag had to break with his foot, of a morning,
A drinking-hole out of the fresh tender ice
That covered the pond till the sun, in a trice,
Loosening it, let out a ripple of gold,
  And another and another, and faster and faster,
Till, dimpling to blindness, the wide water rolled:
  Then it so chanced that the Duke our master
Asked himself what were the pleasures in season,
  And found, since the calendar bade him be hearty,
He should do the Middle Age no treason
  In resolving on a hunting-party.
Always provided, old books showed the way of it!
  What meant old poets by their strictures?
And when old poets had said their say of it,
  How taught old painters in their pictures?
We must revert to the proper channels,
Workings in tapestry, paintings on panels,
And gather up woodcraft's authentic traditions:
Here was food for our various ambitions,
As on each case, exactly stated—
  To encourage your dog, now, the properest chirrup,
  Or best prayer to Saint Hubert on mounting your stirrup—
We of the household took thought and debated.
Blessed was he whose back ached with the jerkin
His sire was wont to do forest-work in;
Blesseder he who nobly sunk *ohs'
And 'ahs' while he tugged on his grandsire's trunk-hose;
What signified hats if they had no rims on,
  Each slouching before and behind like the scallop,
  And able to serve at sea for a shallop,
Loaded with lacquer and looped with crimson?
So that the deer now, to make a short rhyme on't,
  What with our Venerers, Prickers and Verderers,
  Might hope for real hunters at length and not murderers,
And oh the Duke's tailor, he had a hot time on't!

Now you must know that when the first dizziness
  Of flap-hats and buff-coats and jack-boots subsided,
  The Duke put this question, 'The Duke's part provided,
'Had not the Duchess some share in the business?'
For out of the mouth of two or three witnesses
Did he establish all fit-or-unfitnesses:
And, after much laying of heads together,
Somebody's cap got a notable feather
By the announcement with proper unction
That he had discovered the lady's function;

Since ancient authors gave this tenet,
  * When horns wind a mort and the deer is at siege,
'Let the dame of the castle prick forth on her jennet,
  'And, with water to wash the hands of her liege
'In a clean ewer with a fair toweling,
' Let her preside at the disemboweling.'
Now, my friend, if you had so little religion
  As to catch a hawk, somefalcon-lanner,
  And thrust her broad wings like a banner
Into a coop for a vulgar pigeon;
And if day by day and week by week
  You cut her claws, and sealed her eyes,
And clipped her wings, and tied her beak,
  Would it cause you any great surprise
If, when you decided to give her an airing,
You found she needed a little preparing?
—I say, should you be such a curmudgeon,
If she clung to the perch, as to take it in dudgeon?
Yet when the Duke to his lady signified,
Just a day before, as he judged most dignified.
In what a pleasure she was to participate,—
  And, instead of leaping wide in flashes,
  Her eyes just lifted their long lashes,
As if pressed by fatigue even he could not dissipate,
And duly acknowledged the Duke's forethought,
But spoke of her health, if her health were worth aught,
Of the weight by day and the watch by night,
And much wrong now that used to be right,
So, thanking him, declined the hunting,—
Was conduct ever more affronting?
With all the ceremony settled—
  With the towel ready, and the sewer
  Polishing up his oldest ewer,
  And the jennet pitched upon, a piebald,
  Black-barred, cream-coated and pink eye-balled,—
No wonder if the Duke was nettled!
And when she persisted nevertheless,—
Well, I suppose here's the time to confess
That there ran half round our lady's chamber
A balcony none of the hardest to clamber;
And that Jacynth the tire-woman, ready in waiting,
Stayed in call outside, what need of relating?
And since Jacynth was like a June rose, why, a fervent
Adorer of Jacynth of course was your servant;
And if she had the habit to peep through the casement,
  How could I keep at any vast distance?
  And so, as I say, on the lady's persistence,
The Duke, dumb-stricken with amazement,
Stood for a while in a sultry smother,
  And then, with a smile that partook of the awful,
Turned her over to his yellow mother
  To learn what was held decorous and lawful;
And the mother smelt blood with a cat-like instinct.
As her cheek quick whitened thro' all its quince-tinct.
Oh, but the lady heard the whole truth at once!
  What meant she?—Who was she?—Her duty and station,
The wisdom of age and the folly of youth, at once,
  Its decent regard and its fitting relation—
In brief, my friend, set all the devils in hell free
And turn them out to carouse in a belfry
And treat the priests to a fifty-part canon,
And then you may guess how that tongue of hers ran on!
Well, somehow or other it ended at last
And, licking her whiskers, out she passed;
And after her,—making (he hoped) a face
  Like Emperor Nero or Sultan Saladin,
Stalked the Duke's self with the austere grace
  Of ancient hero or modern paladin,
From door to staircase—oh such a solemn
Unbending of the vertebral column!

However, at sunrise our company mustered;
  And here was the huntsman bidding unkennel,
And there 'neath his bonnet the pricker blustered,
  With feather dank as a bough of wet fennel;
For the court-yard walls were filled with fog
You might have cut as an axe chops a log—
Like so much wool for colour and bulkiness;
And out rode the Duke in a perfect sulkiness,
Since, before breakfast, a man feels but queasily,
  And a sinking at the lower abdomen
  Begins the day with indifferent omen.
And To, as he looked around uneasily,
The sun ploughed the fog up and drove it asunder
This way and that from the valley under;

And, looking through the court-yard arch, ...
Down in the valley, what should meet him
But a troop of Gipsies on their march?
No doubt with the annual gifts to greet him.

Now, in your land, Gipsies reach you, only
After reaching all lands beside;
North they go, South they go, trooping or lonely,
And still, as they travel far and wide,
Catch they and keep now a trace here, a trace there,
That puts you in mind of a place here, a place there.
But with us, I believe they rise out of the ground,
And nowhere else, I take it, are found
With the earth-tint yet so freshly embrowned:
Born, no doubt, like insects which breed on
The very fruit they are meant to feed on.
For the earth—not a use to which they don't turn it,
The ore that grows in the mountain's womb,
Or the sand in the pits like a honeycomb,
They sift and soften it, bake it and burn it—
Whether they weld you, for instance, a snaffle
With side-bars never a brute can baffle;
Or a lock that's a puzzle of wards within wards;
Or, if your colt's fore-foot inclines to curve inwards,
Horseshoes they hammer which turn on a swivel
And won't allow the hoof to shrivel.
Then they cast bells like the shell of the winkle
That keep a stout heart in the ram with their tinkle;
But the sand—they pinch and pound it like otters;
Commend me to Gipsy glass-makers and potters!
Glasses they'll blow you, crystal-clear,
Where just a faint cloud of rose shall appear,
As if in pure water you dropped and let die
A bruised black-blooded mulberry;
And that other sort, their crowning pride,
With long white threads distinct inside,
Like the lake-flower's fibrous roots which dangle
Loose such a length and never tangle,
Where the bold sword-lily cuts the clear waters,
And the cup-lily couches with all the white daughters:
Such are the works they put their hand to,
The uses they turn and twist iron and sand to.
And these made the troop, which our Duke saw sally
Toward his castle from out of the valley,
Men and women, like new-hatched spiders,
Come out with the morning to greet our riders.
And up they wound till they reached the ditch,
Whereat all stopped save one, a witch
That I knew, as she hobbled from the group,
By her gait directly and her stoop,
I, whom Jacynth was used to importune
To let that same witch tell us our fortune.
The oldest Gipsy then above ground;
And, sure as the autumn season came round,
She paid us a visit for profit or pastime,
And every time, as she swore, for the last time.
And presently she was seen to sidle
Up to the Duke till she touched his bridle,
So that the horse of a sudden reared up
As under its nose the old witch peered up
With her worn-out eyes, or rather eye-holes
Of no use now but to gather brine,
And began a kind of level whine
Such as they used to sing to their viols
When their ditties they go grinding
Up and down with nobody minding:
And then, as of old, at the end of the humming
Her usual presents were forthcoming
—A dog-whistle blowing the fiercest of trebles,
(Just a sea-shore stone holding a dozen fine pebbles,)
Or a porcelain mouth-piece to screw on a pipe-end,—
And so she awaited her annual stipend.
But this time, the Duke would scarcely vouchsafe
A word in reply • and in vain she felt
With twitching ringers at her belt
For the purse of sleek pine-martin pelt,
Ready to put what he gave in her pouch safe,—
Till, either to quicken his apprehension,
Or possibly with an after-intention,
She was come, she said, to pay her duty
To the new Duchess, the youthful beauty.
No sooner had she named his lady,
Than a shine lit up the face so shady,
And its smirk returned with a novel meaning—
For it struck him, the babe just wanted weaning;

If one gave her a taste of what life was and sorrow,
She, foolish to-day, would be wiser to-morrow;
And who so fit a teacher of trouble
As this sordid crone bent well-nigh double?
So, glancing at her wolf-skin vesture,
(If such it was, for they grow so hirsute
That their own fleece serves for natural fur-suit)
He was contrasting, 'twas plain from his gesture,
The life of the lady so flower-like and delicate
With the loathsome squalor of this helicat.
I, in brief, was the man the Duke beckoned
From out of the throng, and while I drew near
He told the crone—as I since have reckoned
By the way he bent and spoke into her ear
With circumspection and mystery—
The main of the lady's history,
Her frowardness and ingratitude:
And for all the crone's submissive attitude
I could see round her mouth the loose plaits tightening,
And her brow with assenting intelligence brightening,
As though she engaged with hearty goodwill
Whatever he now might enjoin to fulfil,
And promised the lady a thorough frightening.
And so, just giving her a glimpse
Of a purse, with the air of a man who imps
The wing of the hawk that shall fetch the hernshaw,
He bade me take the Gipsy mother
And set her telling some story or other
Of hill or dale, oak-wood or fernshaw,
To wile away a weary hour
For the lady left alone in her bower,
Whose mind and body craved exertion
And yet shrank from all better diversion.

xIv

Then clapping heel to his horse, the mere curveter,
Out rode the Duke, and after his hollo
Horses and hounds swept, huntsman and servitor,
And back I turned and bade the crone follow.
And what makes me confident what's to be told you
Had all along been of this crone's devising,
Is, that, on looking round sharply, behold you,
There was a novelty quick as surprising:
For first, she had shot up a full head in stature,
And her step kept pace with mine nor faltered,
As if age had foregone its usurpature,
And the ignoble mien was wholly altered,
And the face looked quite of another nature,
And the change reached too, whatever the change meant,
Her shaggy wolf-skin cloak's arrangement:
For where its tatters hung loose like sedges,
Gold coins were glittering on the edges,
Like the band-roll strung with tomans
Which proves the veil a Persian woman's:
And under her brow, like a snail's horns newly
Come out as after the rain he paces,
Two unmistakeable eye-points duly
Live and aware looked out of their places.
So, we went and found Jacynth at the entry
Of the lady's chamber standing sentry;
I told the command and produced my companion,
And Jacynth rejoiced to admit any one,
For since last night, by the same token,
Not a single word had the lady spoken:
They went in both to the presence together,
While I in the balcony watched the weather.

And now, what took place at the very first of all,
I cannot tell, as I never could learn it:
Jacynth constantly wished a curse to fall
On that little head of hers and burn it
If she knew how she came to drop so soundly
Asleep of a sudden and there continue
The whole time sleeping as profoundly
As one of the boars my father would pin you
'Twixt the eyes where life holds garrison,
—Jacynth forgive me the comparison!
But where I begin my own narration
Is a little after I took my station
To breathe the fresh air from the balcony,
And, having in those days a falcon eye,
To follow the hunt thro' the open country,
From where the bushes thinlier crested
The hillocks, to a plain where's not one tree.
When, in a moment, my ear was arrested
By—was it singing, or was it saying,
Or a strange musical instrument playing
In the chamber?—and to be certain
I pushed the lattice, pulled the curtain,
And there lay Jacynth asleep,
Yet as if a watch she tried to keep,

In a rosy sleep along the floor
With her head against the door;
While in the midst, on the seat of state,
Was a queen—the Gipsy woman late,
With head and face downbent
On the lady's head and face intent:
For, coiled at her feet like a child at ease,
The lady sat between her knees
And o'er them the lady's clasped hands met,
And on those hands her chin was set,
And her upturned face met the face of the crone
Wherein the eyes had grown and grown
As if she could double and quadruple
At pleasure the play of either pupil
—Very like, by her hands' slow fanning,
As up and down like a gor-crow's flappers
They moved to measure, or bell-clappers.
I said 'Is it blessing, is it banning,
'Do they applaud you or burlesque you—
'Those hands and fingers with no flesh on?'
But, just as I thought to spring in to the rescue,
At once I was stopped by the lady's expression:
For it was life her eyes were drinking
From the crone's wide pair above unwinking,
—Life's pure fire received without shrinking,
Into the heart and breast whose heaving
Told you no single drop they were leaving,
—Life, that filling her, passed redundant
Into her very hair, back swerving
Over each shoulder, loose and abundant,
As her head thrown back showed the white throat curving;
And the very tresses shared in the pleasure,
Moving to the mystic measure,
Bounding as the bosom bounded.
I stopped short, more and more confounded,
As still her cheeks burned and eyes glistened,
As she listened and she listened:
When all at once a hand detained me,
The selfsame contagion gained me,
And I kept time to the wondrous chime,
Making out words and prose and rhyme,
Till it seemed that the music furled
Its wings like a task fulfilled, and dropped
From under the words it first had propped,
And left them midway in the world:
Word took word as hand takes hand,
I could hear at last, and understand,
And when I held the unbroken thread,
The Gipsy said:—

•And so at last we find my tribe.
'And so I set thee in the midst,
'And to one and all of them describe
*What thou saidst and what thou didst,
'Our long and terrible journey through,
'And all thou art ready to say and do
'In the trials that remain:
'I trace them the vein and the other vein
'That meet on thy brow and part again,
'Making our rapid mystic mark;
'And I bid my people prove and probe
'Each eye's profound and glorious globe
'Till they detect the kindred spark
'In those depths so dear and dark,
'Like the spots that snap and burst and flee,
'Circling over the midnight sea.
'And on that round young cheek of thine
'I make them recognize the tinge,
'As when of the costly scarlet wine
'They drip so much as will impinge
'And spread in a thinnest scale afloat
'One thick gold drop from the olive's coat
'Over a silver plate whose sheen
'Still thro' the mixture shall be seen.
'For so I prove thee, to one and all,
'*Fit*, when my people ope their breast,
'To see the sign, and hear the call,
'And take the vow, and stand the test
'Which adds one more child to the rest—
'When the breast is bare and the arms are wide,
'And the world is left outside.
'For there is probation to decree,
'And many and long must the trials be
'Thou shalt victoriously endure,
'If that brow is true and those eyes are sure;
'Like a jewel-finder's fierce assay
'Of the prize he dug from its mountain-tomb--
'Let once the vindicating ray
'Leap out amid the anxious gloom,
'And steel and fire have done their part
'And the prize falls on its finder's heart;
'So, trial after trial past,
'Wilt thou fall at the very last
'Breathless, half in trance
'With the thrill of the great deliverance,
'Into our arms for evermore;
'And thou shalt know, those arms once curled
'About thee, what we knew before,
'How love is the only good in the world.
'Henceforth be loved as heart can love,
'Or brain devise, or hand approve!
'Stand up, look below,
'It is our life at thy feet we throw
'To step with into light and joy;
Not a power of life but we employ
'To satisfy thy nature's want;
'Art thou the tree that props the plant,
'Or the climbing plant that seeks the tree—
'Canst thou help us, must we help thee?

'If any two creatures grew into one,
'They would do more than the world has done:
'Though each apart were never so weak,
'Ye vainly through the world should seek
'For the knowledge and the might
'Which in such union grew their right:
'So, to approach at least that end,
'And blend,—as much as may be, blend
'Thee with us or us with thee,—
'As climbing plant or propping tree,
'Shall some one deck thee, over and down.
'Up and about, with blossoms and leaves?
'Fix his heart's fruit for thy garland-crown,
'Cling with his soul as the gourd-vine cleaves,
'Die on thy boughs and disappear
'While not a leaf of thine is sere?
'Or is the other fate in store,
'And art thou fitted to adore,
'To give thy wondrous self away,
'And take a stronger nature's sway?
'I foresee and could foretell
'Thy future portion, sure and well:
'But those passionate eyes speak true, speak true,
'Let them say what thou shalt do!
'Only be sure thy daily life,
'In its peace or in its strife,
'Never shall be unobserved;
'We pursue thy whole career,
'And hope for it, or doubt, or fear,—
'Lo, hast thou kept thy path or swerved,
'We are beside thee in all thy ways,
'With our blame, with our praise,
'Our shame to feel, our pride to show,
'Glad, angry—but indifferent, no!
'Whether it be thy lot to go,
'For the good of us all, where the haters meet
'In the crowded city's horrible street;
'Or thou step alone through the morass
'Where never sound yet was
'Save the dry quick clap of the stork's bill,
'For the air is still, and the water still,
'When the blue breast of the dipping coot
'Dives under, and all is mute.
*So, at the last shall come old age,
'Decrepit as befits that stage;
'How else wouldst thou retire apart
'With the hoarded memories of thy heart,
'And gather all to the very least
'Of the fragments of life's earlier feast,
'Let fall through eagerness to find
'The crowning dainties yet behind?
'Ponder on the entire past
'Laid together thus at last,
'When the twilight helps to fuse
'The first fresh with the faded hues,
'And the outline of the whole,
'As round eve's shades their framework roll,
'Grandly fronts for once thy soul.

'And then as, 'mid the dark, a gleam
'Of yet another morning breaks,
'And like the hand which ends a dream,
'Death, with the might of his sunbeam,
'Touches the flesh and the soul awakes.
•Then——'
Ay, then indeed something would happen!
But what? For here her voice changed like a bird's;
There grew more of the music and less of the words;
Had Jacynth only been by me to clap pen
To paper and put you down every syllable
With those clever clerkly fingers,
All I've forgotten as well as what lingers
In this old brain of mine that's but ill able
To give you even this poor version
Of the speech I spoil, as it were, with stammering
—More fault of those who had the hammering
Of prosody into me and syntax.
And did it, not with hobnails but tintacks!
But to return from this excursion,—
Just, do you mark, when the song was sweetest,
The peace most deep and the charm completest,
There came, shall I say, a snap—
And the charm vanished!
And my sense returned, so strangely banished,
And, starting as from a nap,
I knew the crone was bewitching my lady,
With Jacynth asleep; and but one spring made I
Down from the casement, round to the portal,
Another minute and I had entered,—
When the door opened, and more than mortal
Stood, with a face where to my mind centred
All beauties I ever saw or shall see,
The Duchess: I stopped as if struck by palsy.
She was so different, happy and beautiful,
I felt at once that all was best,
And that I had nothing to do, for the rest,
But wait her commands, obey and be dutiful.
Not that, in fact, there was any commanding;
I saw the glory of her eye,
And the brow's height and the breast's expanding,
And I was hers to live or to die.
As for finding what she wanted,
You know God Almighty granted

Such little signs shouldserve wild creatures
To tell one another all their desires,
So that each knows what his friend requires,
And does its bidding without teachers.
I preceded her; the crone
Followed silent and alone;
I spoke to her, but she merely jabbered
In the old style; both her eyes had slunk
Back to their pits; her stature shrunk;
In short, the soul in its body sunk
Like a blade sent home *to* its scabbard.
We descended, I preceding;
Crossed the court with nobody heeding;
All the world was at the chase,
The courtyard like a desert-place
The stable emptied of its small fry;
I saddled myself the very palfrey
I remember patting while it carried her,
The day she arrived and the Duke married her.
And, do you know, though it's easy deceiving
Oneself in such matters, I can't help believing
The lady had not forgotten it either,
And knew the poor devil so much beneath her
Would have been only too glad for her service
To dance on hot ploughshares like a Turk dervise,
But, unable to pay proper duty where owing it,
Was reduced to that pitiful method of showing it:
For though the moment I began setting
His saddle on my own nag of Berold's begetting,
(Not that I meant to be obtrusive)
She stopped me, while his rug was shifting,
By a single rapid finger's lifting,
And, with a gesture kind but conclusive,
And a little shake of the head, refused me.—
I say, although she never used me,
Yet when she was mounted, the Gipsy behind her,
And I ventured to remind her,
I suppose with a voice of less steadiness
Than usual, for my feeling exceeded me,
—Something to the effect that I was in readiness
Whenever God should please she needed me,—
Then, do you know, her face looked down on me
With a look that placed a crown on me,
And she felt in her bosom,—mark, her bosom—
And, as a flower-tree drops its blossom,
Dropped me . . . ah, had *it* been a purse
Of silver, my friend, or gold that's worse,
Why, you see, as soon as I found myself
So understood,—that a true heart so may gain
Such a reward,—I should have gone home again,
Kissed Jacynth, and soberly drowned myself!
It was a little plait of hair
Such as friends in a convent make
To wear, each for the other's sake,—
This, see, which at my breast I wear,
Ever did (rather to Jacynth's grudgment),
And ever shall, till the Day of Judgment.
And then,—and then,—to cut short,—this is idle,
These are feelings it is not good to foster,—
I pushed the gate wide, she shook the bridle,
And the palfrey bounded,—and so we lost her.

XVI

When the liquor's out why clink the cannikin?
I did think to describe you the panic in
The redoubtable breast of our master the mannikin,
And what was the pitch of his mother's yellowness,
How she turned as a shark to snap the spare-rib
Clean off, sailors say, from a pearl-diving Carib,
When she heard, what she called the flight of the feloness
—But it seems such child's play,
What they said and did with the lady away!
And to dance on, when we've lost the music,
Always made me—and no doubt makes you—sick.
Nay, to my mind, the world's face looked so stern
As that sweet form disappeared through the postern,
She that kept it in constant good humour,
It ought to have stopped; there seemed nothing to do more.
But the world thought otherwise and went on,
And my head's one that its spite was spent on:
Thirty years are fled since that morning,
And with them all my head's adorning.
Nor did the old Duchess die outright,
As you expect, of suppressed spite,
The natural end of every adder
Not suffered to empty its poison-bladder:
But she and her son agreed, I take it,
That no one should touch on the story to wake it,
For the wound in the Duke's pride rankled fiery,
So, they made no search and small inquiry—

And when fresh Gipsies have paid us a visit, I've
Noticed the couple were never inquisitive,
But told them they're folks the Duke don't want here,
And bade them make haste and cross the frontier.
Brief, the Duchess was gone and the Duke was glad of it,
And the old one was in the young one's stead,
And took, in her place, the household's head,
And a blessed time the household had of it!
And were I not, as a man may say, cautious
How I trench, more than needs, on the nauseous,
I could favour you with sundry touches
Of the paint-smutches with which the Duchess
Heightened the mellowness of her cheek's yellowness
(To get on faster) until at last her
Cheek grew to be one master-plaster
Of mucus and fucus from mere use of ceruse:
In short, she grew from scalp to udder
Just the object to make you shudder.

xvII

You're my friend—
What a thing friendship is, world without end!
How it gives the heart and soul a stir-up
As if somebody broached you a glorious runlet,
And poured out, all lovelily, sparklingly, sunlit,
Our green Moldavia, the streaky syrup,
Cotnar as old as the time of the Druids—
Friendship may match with that monarch of fluids;
Each supples a dry brain, fills you its ins-and-outs,
Gives your life's hour-glass a shake when the thin sand doubts
Whether to run on or stop short, and guarantees
Age is not all made of stark sloth and arrant ease.
I have seen my little lady once more,
Jacynth, the Gipsy, Berold, and the rest of it,
For to me spoke the Duke, as I told you before;
I always wanted to make a clean breast of it;
And now it is made—why, my heart's blood, that went trickle,
Trickle, but anon, in such muddy driblets,
Is pumped up brisk now, through the main ventricle,
And genially floats me about the giblets.
I'll tell you what I intend to do:
I must see this fellow his sad life through —
He is our Duke, after all,
And I, as he says, but a serf and thrall.
My father was born here, and I inherit
His fame, a chain he bound his son with;
Could I pay in a lump I should prefer it,
But there's no mine to blow up and get done with:
So, I must stay till the end of the chapter.
For, as to our middle-age-mannera-adapter,
Be it a thing to be glad on or sorry on,
Some day or other, his head in a morion
And breast in a hauberk, his heels he'll kick up,
Slain by an onslaught fierce of hiccup.
And then, when red doth the sword of our Duke rust,
And its leathern sheath lie o'ergrown with a blue crust,
Then I shall scrape together my earnings;
For, you see, in the churchyard Jacynth reposes,
And our children all went the way of the roses:
It's a long lane that knows no turnings.
One needs but little tackle to travel in;
So, just one stout cloak shall I indue:
And for a staff, what beats the javelin
With which his boars my father pinned you?
And then, for a purpose you shall hear presently,
Taking some Cotnar, a tight plump skinful,
I shall go journeying, who but I, pleasantly!
Sorrow is vain and despondency sinful.
What's a man's age? He must hurry more, that's all;
Cram in a day, what his youth took a year to hold:
When we mind labour, then only, we're too old—
What age had Methusalem when he begat Saul?
And at last, as its haven some buffeted ship sees,
(Come all the way from the north-parts with sperm oil)
I hope to get safely out of the turmoil
And arrive one day at the land of the Gipsies,
And find my lady, or hear the last news of her
From some old thief and son of Lucifer,
His forehead chapleted green with wreathy hop,
Sunburned all over like an *Æthiop*.
And when my Cotnar begins to operate
And the tongue of the rogue to run at a proper rate,

And our wine-skin, tight once, shows each flaccid dent,
I shall drop-in with—as if by accident—
'You never knew, then, how it all ended,
'What fortune good or bad attended
'The little lady your Queen befriended?'
—And when that's told me, what's remaining?
This world's too hard for my explaining.
The same wise judge of matters equine
Who still preferred some slim four-year-old
To the big-boned stock of mighty Berold,
And, for strong Cotnar, drank French weak wine,
He also must be such a lady's scorner!
Smooth Jacob still robs homely Esau:
Now up, now down, the world's one see-saw.
—So, I shall find out some snug corner
Under a hedge, like Orson the wood-knight,
Turn myself round and bid the world good night;
And sleep a sound sleep till the trumpet's blowing
Wakes me (unless priests cheat us laymen)
To a world where will be no further throwing
Pearls before swine that can't value them. Amen!

A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL,

SHORTLY AFTER THE REVIVAL OF LEARNING IN EUROPE

LET us begin and carry up this corpse,
Singing together.
Leave we the common crofts, the vulgar Uiorpes
Each in its tether
Sleeping safe on the bosom of the plain,
Cared-for till cock-crow:
Look out if yonder be not day again
Rimming the rock-row!
That's the appropriate country; there, man's thought,
Rarer, intenser,
Self-gathered for an outbreak, as it ought,
Chafes in the censer.
Leave we the unlettered plain its herd and crop:
Seek we sepulture
On a tall mountain, dried to the top,
Crowded with culture!
All the peaks soar, but one the rest excels;
Clouds overcome it;
No! yonder sparkle is the citadel's
Circling its summit.
Thither our path lies; wind we up the heights:
Wait ye the warning?
Our low life was the level's and the night's;
He's for the morning.
Step to a tune, square chests, erect each head,
'Ware the beholders!
This is our master, famous calm and dead.
Borne on our shoulders.

Sleep, crop and herd! sleep, darkling thorpe and croft,
Safe from the weather!
He, whom we convoy to his grave aloft,
Singing together,
He was a man bora with thy face and throat,
Lyric Apollo!
Long he lived nameless: how should spring take note
Winter would follow?
Till lo, the little touch, and youth was gone!
Cramped and diminished,
Moaned he, 'New measures, other *feet* anon!
'My dance is finished?'
No, that's the world's way: (keep the mountain-sidep
Make for the city!)
He knew the signal, and stepped on with pride
Overmen's pity;
Left play for work, and grappled with the world
Bent on escaping:
'What's in the scroll,' quoth he, 'thou keepest furled?
'Show me their shaping,
'Theirs who most studied man, the bard and sage,—
'Give!'—So, he gowned him,
Straight got by heart that book to its last page:
Learned, we found him.
Yea, but we found him bald too, eyes like lead,
Accents uncertain:
'Time to taste life,' another would have said,
'Up with the curtain!'
This man said rather, 'Actual life comes next?
'Patience a moment!
'Grant I have mastered learning's crabbed *text*,
'Still there's the comment.
'Let me know all! Prate not of most or
Painful or easy!
'Even to the crumbs I'd fain eat up the feast,
'Ay, nor feel queasy.'

Oh, such a life as he resolved to live,
When he had learned it,
When he had gathered all books had to givel
Sooner, he spurned it.
Image the whole, then execute the parts—
Fancy the fabric
Quite, ere you build, ere steel strike fire from quartz,
Ere mortar dab brick!

(Here's the town-gate reached: there's the market-place
Gaping before us.)
Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace
(Hearten our chorus!)
That before living he'd learn how to live—
No end to learning:
Earn the means first—God surely will use-for bur earning.
Others mistrust and say, 'But time escapes:
'Live now or never!'
He said, 'What's time? Leave Now for dogs and apes!
'Man has Forever.'
Back to his book then: deeper drooped his head:
Calculus racked him:
Leaden before, his eyes grew dross of lead:
Tussis attacked him.
'Now, master, take a little rest!'—not he!
(Caution redoubled,
Step two abreast, the way winds narrowly!)
Not a whit troubled
Back to his studies, fresher than at first,
Fierce as a dragon
He (soul-hydroptic with a sacred thirst)
Sucked at the flagon.
Oh, if we draw a circle premature,
Heedless of far gain,
Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure
Bad is our bargain!
Was it not great? did not he throw on God,
(He loves the burthen)—
God's task to make the heavenly period
Perfect the earthen?
Did not he magnify the mind, show clear
Just what it all meant?
He would not discount life, as fools do here,
Paid by instalment.
He ventured neck or nothing—heaven's success
Eqund, or earth's failure:
•Wilt thou trust death or not?' He answered 'Yes:
'Hence with life's pale lure!' i
That low man seeks a little thing to do,,
Sees it and does it:
This high man, with a great thing to pursue,
Dies ere he knows it.
That low man goes on adding one to one,
His hundred's soon hit:
This high man, aiming at a million,
Misses an unit.
That, has the world here—should he need the next,
Let the world mind him!
This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed
Seeking shall find him.
So, with the throttling hands of death at strife,
Ground he at grammar;
Still, thro' the rattle, parts of speech were rife: - -
While he could stammer
He settled *Hoti's* business—let it be!—
Properly based Own-
Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De,*
Dead from the waist down.
Well, here's the platform, here's the proper place:
Hail to your purlieus,
All ye highfliers of the feathered race,
Swallows and curlews!
Here's the top-peak; the multitude below
Live, for they can, there:
This man decided not to Live but Know—
Bury this man there?
Here—here's his place, where meteors shoot, clouds form,
Lightnings are loosened,
Stars come and go! Let joy break with the storm,
Peace let the dew send!
Lofty designs must close in like effects:
Loftily lying,
Leave him—still loftier than the world suspects,
Living and dying.

THE HERETICS TRAGEDY

A MIDDLE-AGE INTERLUDE

ROSA MUNDI; SEU, FULCITE ME FLORIBUS. A CONCEIT OF MASTER GYSBRECHT, CANON-REGULAR OF SAINT JODOCUS-BY-THE-BAR, YPRES CITY. CANTUQUE, *Virgilius.* AND HATH OFTEN BEEN SUNG AT HOCK-TIDE AND FESTIVALS. GAVIsus ERAM, *Jessides.*

(It would seem to be a glimpse from the burning of Jacques du Bourg-Molay, at Paris, A.D. 1314; as distorted by the refraction from Flemish brain to brain, during the course of a couple of centuries.)

[Molay was Grand Master of the Templars when that order was suppressed in 1312.]

PREADMQNJSHETH THE ABBOT DEODAET

THE Lord, we look to once for all,
Is the Lord we should look at, all at once:
He knows not to vary, saith Saint Paul,
Nor the shadow of turning, for the nonce.
See him no other than as he is!
Give both the infinitudes their due—
Infinite mercy, but, I wis,
As infinite a justice too.
[Organ: plagal-cadence.
As infinite a justice too.

II

ONE SINGETH

John, Master of the Temple of God,
Falling to sin the Unknown Sin,
What he bought of Emperor Aldabrod,
He sold it to Sultan Saladin:
Till, caught by Pope Clement, a-buzzing there,
Hornet-prince of the mad wasps' hive,
And dipt of his wings in Paris square,
They bring him now to be burned alive.
[And wanteth there grace of lute or clavicithern, ye shall say to confirm him who singeth—
We bring John now to be burned alive.

In the midst is a goodly gallows built;
'Twixt fork and fork, a stake is stuck;
But first they set divers tumbrils a-tilt,
Make a trench all round with the city muck;
Inside they pile log upon log, good store;
Faggots no few, blocks great and small,
Reach a man's mid-thigh, no less, no more,—
For they mean he should roast in the sight of all.

CHORUS

We mean he should roast in the sight of all.

Iv

Good sappy bavins that kindle forthwith;
Billets that blaze substantial and slow;
Pine-stump split deftly, dry as pith;
Larch-heart that chars to a chalk-white glow:
Then up they hoist me John in a chafe,
Sling him fast like a hog to scorch,
Spit in his face, then leap back safe,
Sing 'Laudes' and bid clap-to the torch.

CHORUS

Laus Deo—who bids clap-to the torch.
John of the Temple, whose fame so bragged,
Is burning alive in Paris square!
How can he curse, if his mouth is gagged?
Or wriggle his neck, with a collar there?
Or heave his chest, which a band goes round?
Or threat with his fist, since his arms are spliced?
Or kick with his feet, now his legs are bound?
—Thinks John, I will call upon Jesus Christ.
[Here one crosseth himself.

Jesus Christ—John had bought and sold,
Jesus Christ—John had eaten and drunk;
To him, *the* Flesh meant silver and gold.
(Salvd reverential)
Now it was,' Saviour, bountiful lamb,
'I have roasted thee Turks, though men roast me!
'See thy servant, the plight wherein I am!
'Art thou a saviour? Save thou me!'

CHORUS

'Tis John the mocker cries, 'Save thou me!'

vII

Who maketh God's menace an idle word?
—Saith, it no more means what it proclaims,
Than a damsel's threat to her wanton bird?—
For she too prattles of ugly names.
—Saith, he knoweth but one thing,—what he knows?
That God is good and the rest is breath;
Why else is the same styled Sharon's rose?
Once a rose, ever a rose, he saith.

CHORUS

O, John shall yet find a rose, he saith!

vIII

Alack, there be roses and roses, John!
Some, honied of taste like your leman's tongue:
Some, bitter; for why? (roast gaily on!)
Their tree struck root in devil's-dung.
When Paul once reasoned of righteousness
And of temperance and of judgment to come,
Good Felix trembled, he could no less:
John, snickering, crook'd his wicked thumb.

What cometh to John of the wicked thumb?

Ha, ha, John plucketh now at his rose
To rid himself of a sorrow at heart!
Lo,—petal on petal, fierce rays unclose;
Anther on anther, sharp spikes outstart;
And with blood for dew, the bosom boils;
And a gust of sulphur is all its smell;
And lo, he is horribly in the toils
Of a coal-black giant flower of hell I

CHORUS

What maketh heaven, That maketh hell.

So, as John called now, through the fire amain,
On the Name, he had cursed with, all his life—
To the Person, he bought and sold again—
For the Face, with his daily buffets rife—
Feature by feature It took its place:
And his voice, like a mad dog's choking bark,
At the steady whole of the Judge's face—
Died. Forth John's soul flared into the dark.

SUBJOINETH THE ABBOT DEODAET

God help all poor souls lost in the dark!

HOLY-CROSS DAY

ON WHICH THE JEWS WERE FORCED TO ATTEND AN ANNUAL CHRISTIAN SERMON IN ROME.

['Now was come about Holy-Cross Day, and now must my lord preach his first sermon to the Jews: as it was of old cared for in the merciful bowels of the Church, that, so to speak, a crumb at least from her conspicuous table here in Rome should be, though but once yearly, cast to the famishing dogs, under-trampled and bespitten-upon beneath the feet of the guests. And a moving sight in truth, this, of so many of the besotted blind restif and ready-to-perish Hebrews! now maternally brought—nay (for He saith, 'Compel them to come in') haled, as it were, by the head and hair, and against their obstinate hearts, to partake of the heavenly grace. What awakening, what striving with tears, what working of a yeasty conscience! Nor was my lord wanting to himself on so apt an occasion; witness the abundance of conversions which did incontinently reward him: though not to my lord be altogether the glory.'—*Diary by the Bishop's Secretary,* 1600.]

What the Jews really said, on thus being driven to church, was rather to this effect:—

I

FEE, faw, fum! bubble and squeak!
Blessedest Thursday's the fat of the week.
Rumble and tumble, sleek and rough,
Stinking and savoury, smug and gruff,
Take the church-road, for the bell's due chime
Gives us the summons—'tis sermon-time!

Boh, here's Barnabas! Job, that's you?
Up stumps Solomon—bustling too?
Shame, man! greedy beyond your years
To handsel the bishop's shaving-shears?
Fair play's a jewel! Leave friends in the lurch?
Stand on a line ere you start for the church!

III

Higgledy piggledy, packed we lie,
Rats in a hamper, swine in a stye,
Wasps in a bottle, frogs in a sieve,
Worms in a carcase, fleas in a sleeve.
Hist! square shoulders, settle your thumbs
And buzz for the bishop—here he comes

Iv

Bow, wow, wow—a bone for the dog!
I liken his Grace to an acorned hog.
What, a boy at his side, with the bloom of a lass,
To help and handle my lord's hour-glass!
Didst ever behold so lithe a chine?
His cheek hath laps like a fresh-singed swine.

Aaron's asleep—shove hip to haunch.
Or somebody deal him a dig in the paunch U
Look at the purse with the tassel and knob,,
And the gown with the angel and thingum-bob!
What's he at, quotha? reading his text!
Now you've his curtsey—and what comes, next?

See to our converts—you doomed! black. dozen—
No stealing away—nor cog nor cozen!
You five, that were thieves, deserve it fairly;
You seven, that were beggars, will live less. sparely;
You took your turn and dipped in the hat,
Got fortune—and fortune gets you; mind that!

vII

Give your first groan—compunction's at work;
And soft! from a Jew you mount to a Turk.
Lo, Micah,—the selfsame beard on chin
He was four times already converted in!
Here's a knife, clip quick—it's a sign of grace—
Or he ruins us all with his hanging-face..

Whom now is the bishop.a-leering at?
I know a point where his text falls pat.
I'll tell him to-morrow, a word just now
Went to my heart and made me vow
I meddle no more with the worst of trades—
Let somebody else pay his serenades.

Groan all together now, whee—hee—hee!
It's a-work, it's a-work, ah, woe is me!
It began, when a herd of us, picked and placed,
Were spurred through the Corso, stripped to the waist;
Jew brutes, with sweat and blood well spent
To usher in worthily Christian Lent.

It grew, when the hangman entered our bounds:
Yelled, pricked us out to his church like hounds!
It got to a pitch, when the hand indeed
Which gutted my purse would throttle my creed:
And it overflows when, to even the odd,
Men I helped to their sins help me to their God.

But now, while the scapegoats leave our flock,
And the rest sit silent and count the clock,
Since forced to muse the appointed time
On these precious facts and truths sublime,—
Let us fitly employ it, under our breath,
In saying Ben Ezra's Song of Death.

xII

For Rabbi Ben Ezra, the night he died,
Called sons and sons' sons to his side,
And spoke, 'This world has been harsh and strange;
'Something is wrong: there needeth a change.
* But what, or where? at the last or first?
' In one point only we sinned, at worst.

xra

'The Lord will have mercy on Jacob yet,
'And again in his border see Israel set.
'When Judah beholds Jerusalem,
' The stranger-seed shall be joined to them:
'To Jacob's House shall the Gentiles cleave.
' So the Prophet saith and his sons believe.

'Ay, the children of the chosen race
[4]Shall carry and bring them to their place:
' In the land of the Lord shall lead the same.
'Bondsmen and handmaids. Who shall blame,
'When the slaves enslave, the oppressed ones o'er
'The oppressor triumph for evermore?

'God spoke, and gave us the word to keep,
'Bade never fold the hands nor sleep
" Mid a faitliless world,—at watch and ward,
'Till Christ at the end relieve our guard.
'By His servant Moses the watch was set;
'Though near upon cock-crow, we keep it yet.

XVI

'Thou! if thou wast He, who at mid-watch came,
'By the starlight, naming a dubious name I
'And if, too heavy with sleep—too rash
'With fear—O Thou, if that martyr-gash
'Fell on Thee coming to take thine own,
'And we gave the Cross, when we owed the Throne—

xvII

' Thou art the Judge, We are bruised thus.
'But, the Judgment over, join sides with us!
'Thine too is the cause! and not more thine
'Than ours, is the work of these dogs and swine,
'Whose life laughs through and spits at their creed!
'Who maintain Thee in word, and defy Thee in deed!

xvIII

'We withstood Christ then? Be mindful how
'At least we withstand Barabbas now!
'Was our outrage sore? But the worst we spared,
'To have called these—Christians, had we dared!
' Let defiance to them pay mistrust of Thee,
'And Rome make amends for Calvary!

' By the torture, prolonged from age to age,
'By the infamy, Israel's heritage,
'By the Ghetto's plague, by the garb's disgrace,
'By the badge of shame, by the felon's place,
'By the branding-tool, the bloody whip,
'And the summons to Christian fellowship,—

xx

'We boast our proof that at least the Jew
'Would wrest Christ's name from the Devil's crew.

•Thy face took never so deep a shade
'But we fought them in it, God our aid!
'A trophy to bear, as we march, thy band,
'South, East, and on to the Pleasant Land!'

[Pope Gregory XVI abolished this bad business of the Sermon.—R. B.J

PROTUS

AMONG these latter busts we count by scores,
Half-emperors and quarter-emperors,
Each with his bay-leaf fillet, loose-thonged vest,
Loric[1] and low-browed Gorgon on the breast,—
One loves a baby face, with violets there,
Violets instead of laurel in the hair,
As those were all the little locks could bear.

Now read here. 'Protus ends a period
"Of empery beginning with a god;
'Born in the porphyry chamber at Byzant,
' Queens by his cradle, proud and minis-trant:
'And if he quickened breath there, 'twould like fire
"Pantingly through the dim vast realm transpire.
'A fame that he was missing spread afar:
'The world from its four corners, rose in war,
'Till he was borne out on a balcony
'To pacify the world when it should see.
'The captains ranged before him, one, his hand
'Made baby points at, gained the chief command.
'And day by day more beautiful he grew
'In shape, all said, in feature and in hue,
'While young Greek sculptors, gazing on the child,
'Became with old Greek sculpture recon-ciled.
'Already sages laboured to condense
'In easy tomes a life's experience:
'And artists took grave counsel to impart
'In one breath and one hand-sweep, all their art—
' To make his graces prompt as blossoming
'Of plentifully-watered palms in spring:
'Since well beseems it, whoso mounts the throne,
'For beauty, knowledge, strength, should stand alone,
'And mortals love the letters of his name.'

—Stop! Have you turned two pages? Still the same.

[1] Cuirass or corslet of leather.

New reign, same date. The scribe goes on to say
How that same year, on such a month and day,
'John the Pannonian, groundedly believed
'A blacksmith's bastard, whose hard hand reprieved
'The Empire from its fate the year be-fore,—
'Came, had a mind to take the crown, and wore
'The same for six years (during which the Huns
' Kept off their fingers from us), till his sons
'Put something in his liquor'—and so forth.
Then a new reign. Stay—'Take at its just worth'
(Subjoins an annotator) 'what I give
'As hearsay. Some think, John let Protus live
'And slip away. 'Tis said, he reached man's age
'At some blind northern court; made, first a page,
'Then tutor to the children; last, of use
'About the hunting-stables. I deduce
'He wrote the little tract "On worming dogs,"
'Whereof the name in sundry catalogues
'Is extant yet. A Protus of the race
'Is rumoured to have died a monk in Thrace,—
'And if the same, he reached senility.'

Here's John the Smith's rough-ham-mered head. Great eye,
Gross jaw and griped hps do what granite can
To give you the crown-grasper. What a man!

THE STATUE AND THE BUST

THERE'S a palace in Florence, the world knows well,
And a statue watches it from the square,
And this story of both do our townsmen tell.

Ages ago, a lady there,
At the farthest window facing the East
Asked, 'Who rides by with the royal air?'

The bridesmaids' prattle around her ceased;
She leaned forth, one on either hand;
They saw how the blush of the bride in-creased—

They felt by its beats her heart expand-
As one at each ear and both in a breath
Whispered,'The Great-Duke Ferdinand.*

That self-same instant, underneath,
The Duke rode past in,his idle way,
Empty and fine like a swordless sheath.

Gay he rode, with a friend as gay,
Till he threw his head back—'Who is she ?'
—'A bride the Riccardi brings home to-day,'

Hair in heaps lay heavily
Over a pale brow spirit-pure—
Carved like the heart of a coal-black tree,

Crisped like a war-steed's encolure
And vainly sought to dissemble her eyes
Of the blackest black our eyes endure.

And lo, a blade for a knight's emprise
Filled the fine empty sheath of a man,—
The Duke grew straightway brave and wise.

He looked at her, as a lover can;
She looked at him, as one who awakes:
The past was a sleep, and her life began.

Now, love so ordered for both their sakes,
A feast was held that selfsame night
In the pile which the mighty shadow makes.

(For Via Larga is three-parts light,
But the palace overshadows one,
Because of a crime which may God requite!

To Florence and God the wrong was done,
Through the first republic's murder there
By Cosimo and his cursed son.)

The Duke (with the statue's face in the square)
Turned in the midst of his multitude
At the bright approach of the bridal pair.

Face to face the lovers stood
A single minute and no more,
While the bridegroom bent as a man subdued—

Bowed till his bonnet brushed the floor—
For the Duke on the lady a kiss conferred,
As the courtly custom was of yore.

In a minute can lovers exchange a word?
It" a word did pass, which I do not think,
Only one out of the thousand heard.

That was the bridegroom. At day's brink
He and his bride were alone at last
In a bedchamber by a taper's blink.

Calmly he said that her lot was cast,
That the door she had passed was shut on her
Till the final catafalk repassed.

The world meanwhile, its noise and stir,
Through a certain window facing the East,
She could watch like a convent's chronicler.

Since passing the door might lead to a feast,
And a feast might lead to so much beside,
He, of many evils, chose the least.

'Freely I choose too,' said the bride—
'Your window and its world suffice,'
Replied the tongue, while the heart replied—

'I f I spend the night with that devil twice,
'May his window serve as my loop of hell
'Whence a damned soul looks on paradise!

'I fly to the Duke who loves me well,
'Sit by his side and laugh at sorrow
'Ere I count another ave-bell.

''Tis only the coat of a page to borrow,
'And tie my hair in a horse-boy's trim,
'And I save my soul—but not to-morrow'—

(She checked herself and her eye grew dim)
'My father tarries to bless my state:
'I must keep it one day more for him.

'Is one day more so long to wait?
'Moreover the Duke rides past, I know;
'We shall see each other, sure as fate.'

She turned on her side and slept. Just so!
So we resolve on a thing and sleep:
So did the lady, ages ago.

That night the Duke said, 'Dear or cheap
'As the cost of this cup of bliss may prove
'To body or soul, I will drain it deep.'

And on the morrow, bold with love,
He beckoned the bridegroom (close on call,
As his duty bade, by the Duke's alcove)

And smiled ''Twas a very funeral,
'Your lady will think, this feast of ours,-
'A shame to efface, whate'er befall!

'What if we break from the Arno bowers,
'And try if Petraja, cool and green,
'Cure last night's fault with this morning's flowers?'

The bridegroom, not a thought to be seen
On his steady brow and quiet mouth,
Said, 'Too much favour for me so mean!

'But, alas! my lady leaves the South;
'Each wind that comes from the Apennine
'Is a menace to her tender youth'

'Nor a way exists, the wise opine,
'If she quits her palace twice this year,
'To avert the flower of life's decline.'

Quoth the Duke, *A sage and a kindly fear.
'Moreover Petraja is cold this spring:
'Be our feast to-night as usual here!'

And then to himself—'Which night shall bring
'Thy bride to her lover's embraces, fool—
'Or I am the fool, and thou art the king!

'Yet my passion must wait a night, nor cool—
'For to-night the Envoy arrives from France
'Whose heart I unlock with thyself, my tool.

'I need thee still and might miss perchance.
'To-day is not wholly lost, beside,
'With its hope of my lady's countenance:

'For I ride—what should I do but ride?
'And passing her palace, if I list,
'May glance at its window—well betide!'

So said, so done: nor the lady missed
One ray that broke from the ardent brow,
Nor a curl of the lips where the spirit kissed.

Be sure that each renewed the vow,
No morrow's sun should arise and set
And leave them then as it left them now.

But next day passed, and next day yet,
With still fresh cause to wait one day more
Ere each leaped over the parapet.

And still, as love's brief morning wore,
With a gentle start, half smile, half sigh,
They found love not as it seemed before.

They thought it would work infallibly,
But not in despite of heaven and earth:
The rose would blow when the storm passed by.

Meantime they could profit in winter's dearth
By store of fruits that supplant the rose:
The world and its ways have a certain worth:

And to press a point while these oppose
Were simple policy; better wait:
We lose no friends and we gain no foes.

Meantime, worse fates than a lover's fate,
Who daily may ride and pass and look
Where his lady watches behind the grate!

And she—she watched the square like a book
Holding one picture and only one,
Which daily to find she undertook:

When the picture was reached the book was done,
And she turned from the picture at night to scheme
Of tearing it out for herself next sun.

So weeks grew months, years; gleam by gleam
The glory dropped from their youth and love,
And both perceived they had dreamed a dream;

Which hovered as dreams do, still above:
But who can take a dream for a truth?
Oh, hide our eyes from the next remove!

One day as the lady saw her youth
Depart, and the silver thread that streaked
Her hair, and, worn by the serpent's tooth,

The brow so puckered, the chin so peaked,—
And wondered who the woman was,
Hollow-eyed and haggard-cheeked,

Fronting her silent in the glass—
'Summon here,' she suddenly said,
'Before the rest of my old self pass,

'Him, the Carver, a hand to aid,
'Who fashions the clay no love will change,
'And fixes a beauty never to fade.

'Let Robbia's craft so apt and strange
'Arrest the remains of young and fair,
'And rivet them while the seasons range.

'Make me a face on the window there,
'Waiting as ever, mute the while,
'My love to pass below in the square!

'And let me think that it may beguile
'Dreary days which the dead must spend
'Down in their darkness under the aisle,

'To say, "What matters it at the end?
*" I did no more while my heart was warm
'"Than does that image, my pale-faced friend."

'Where is the use of the lip's red charm,
'The heaven ofhair, the pride of the brow,
'And the blood that blues the inside arm—

'Unless we turn, as the soul knows how,
'The earthly gift to an end divine?
'A lady of clay is as good, I trow.'

But long ere Robbia's cornice, fine,
With flowers and fruits which leaves enlace,
Was set where now is the empty shrine—

(And, leaning out of a bright blue space,
As a ghost might lean from a chink of sky,
The passionate pale lady's face—

THE STATUE AND THE BUST

Eyeing ever, with earnest eye
And quick-tujrjaed neck, at its breathless
stretch,
Some one who ever is passing by—)

The Duke had sighed like the simplest
wretch
In Florence, 'Youth—my dream escapes!
* Will its record stay ?' And he bade them
fetch

Some subtle moulder of brazen shapes—
'Can the soul, the will, die out of a man
'Ere his body find the grave that gapes?

'John of Douay shall effect my plan,
' Set me on horseback here aloft,
'Alive, as the crafty sculptor can,

'In the very square I have crossed so oft:
'That men may admire, when future suns
'Shall touch the eyes to a purpose soft,

' While the mouth and the brow stay brave
in bronze—
'Admire and say, "When he was alive
'" How he would take his pleasure once!"

'And it shall go hard but I contrive
' To listen the while, and laugh in my tomb
'At idleness which aspires to strive.*

So! While these wait the trump of doom,
How do their spirits pass, I wonder,
Nights and days in the narrow room?

Still, I suppose, they sit and ponder
What a gift life was, ages ago,
Six steps out of the chapel yonder.

Only they see not God, I know,
Nor all that chivalry of his,
The soldier-saints who, row on row,

Burn upward each to his point of bliss—
Since, the end of life being manifest,
He had burned his way thro' the world to
this.

I hear you reproach, 'But delay was best,
'For their end was a crime.'—Oh, a crime
will do
As well, I reply, to serve for a test,

As a virtue golden through and through,
Sufficient to vindicate itself
And prove its worth at a moment's view!

Must a game be played for the sake of pelf ?
Where a button goes, 'twere an epigram
To offer the stamp of the very Guelph.

The true has no value beyond the sham:
As well the counter as coin, I submit,
When your table's a hat, and your prize a
dram.

Stake your counter as boldly every whit,
Venture as warily, use the same skill,
Do your best, whether winning or losing it,

If you choose to play!—is my principle.
Let a man contend to the uttermost
For his life's set prize, be it what it will!

The counter our lovers staked was lost
As surely as if it were lawful coin:
And the sin I impute to each frustrate
ghost

Is—the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,
Though the end in sight was a vice, I say.
You of the virtue (we issue join)
How strive you? *De te, fabula!*

PORPHYRIAS LOVER

THE rain set early in to-night,
The sullen wind was soon awake,
It tore the elm-tops down for spite,
And did its worst to vex the lake:
I listened with heart fit to break.
When glided in Porphyria; straight
She shut the cold out and the storm,
And kneeled and made the cheerless grate
Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;
Which done, she rose, and from her form
Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,
And laid her soiled gloves by, untied
Her hat and let the damp hair fall,
And, last, she sat down by my side
And called me. When no voice replied,
She put my arm about her waist,
And made her smooth white shoulder
bare,
And all her yellow hair displaced,
And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,
And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair,
Murmuring how she loved me—she
Too weak, for all her heart's endeavour,
To set its struggling passion free
From pride, and vainer ties dissever,
And give herself to me for ever.
But passion sometimes would prevail,
Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain
A sudden thought of one so pale
For love of her, and all in vain:
So, she was come through wind and rain.
Be sure I looked up at her eyes
Happy and proud; at last I knew
Porphyria worshipped me; surprise
Made my heart swell, and still it grew
While I debated what to do.
That moment she was mine, mine, fair,
Perfectly pure and good: I found
A thing to do, and all her hair
In one long yellow string I wound
Three times her little throat around,
And strangled her. No pain felt she;
I am quite sure she felt no pain.
As a shut bud that holds a bee,
I warily oped her lids: again
Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.

And I untightened next the tress
About her neck; her cheek once more
Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss:
I propped her head up as before,
Only, this time my shoulder bore
Her head, which droops upon it still:
The smiling rosy little head,
So glad it has its utmost will,
That all it scorned at once is fled,
And I, its love, am gained instead!
Porphyria's love: she guessed not how
Her darling one wish would be heard.
And thus we sit together now,
And all night long we have not stirred,
And yet God has not said a word!

'CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK TOWER CAME'

{See Edgar's song in 'LEAR')

I

MY first thought was, he lied in every word,
That hoary cripple, with malicious eye
Askance to watch the working of his lie
On mine, and mouth scarce able to afford
Suppression of the glee, that pursed and scored
Its edge, at one more victim gained thereby.

II

What else should he be set for, with his staff?
What, save to waylay with his lies, ensnare
All travellers who might find him posted there,
And ask the road? I guessed what skull-like laugh
Would break, what crutch 'gin write my epitaph
For pastime in the dusty thoroughfare,

III

If at his counsel I should turn aside
Into that ominous tract which, all agree,
Hides the Dark Tower. Yet acquiescingly
I did turn as he pointed: neither pride
Nor hope rekindling at the end descried,
So much as gladness that some end might be.

IV

For, what with my whole world-wide wandering,
What with my search drawn out thro' years, my hope
Dwindled into a ghost not fit to cope
With that obstreperous joy success would bring,
I hardly tried now to rebuke the spring
My heart made, rinding failure in its scope.

As when a sick man very near to death
Seems dead indeed, and feels begin and end
The tears and takes the farewell of each friend,
And hears one bid the other go, draw breath
Freelier outside, ('since all is o'er,' he saith,
'And the blow fallen no grieving can amend;')

VI

While some discuss if near the other graves
Be room enough for this, and when a day
Suits best for carrying the corpse away,
With care about the banners, scarves and staves:
And still the man hears all, and only craves
He may not shame such tender love and stay.

vII

Thus, I had so long suffered in this quest,
Heard failure prophesied so oft, been writ
So many times among 'The Band'—to wit,
The knights who to the Dark Tower's search addressed
Their steps—that just to fail as they, seemed best,
And all the doubt was now—should I befit?

vIII

So, quiet as despair, I turned from him,
That hateful cripple, out of his highway
Into the path he pointed. All the day
Had been a dreary one at best, and dim
Was settling to its close, yet shot one grim
Red leer to see the plain catch its estray.

IX

For mark! no sooner was I fairly found
Pledged to the plain, after a pace or two,
Than, pausing to throw backward a last view
O'er the safe road, 'twas gone; grey plain all round:
Nothing but plain to the horizon's bound.
I might go on; nought else remained to do.

x

So, on I went. I think I never saw
Such starved ignoble nature; nothing throve:
For flowers—as well expect a cedar giove!
But cockle, spurge, according to their law
Might propagate their kind, with none to awe,
You'd think; a burr had been a treasure-trove.

No! penury, ffleTtness and grimace,
In some strange sort, were the land's portion. * See
'Or shut your eyes,' said Nature peevishly,
'It nothing skills: I cannot help my case:
'Tis the Last Judgment's fire must cure this place,
'Calcine its clods and set my prisoners free.'

If there pushed any ragged thistle-stalk
Above its mates, the head was chopped; the bents
Were jealous else. What made those holes and rents
In the dock's harsh swarth leaves, bruised as to baulk
All hope of greenness? 'tis a brute must walk
Pashing their life out, with a brute's intents.

As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair
In leprosy; thin dry blades pricked the mud
Which underneath looked kneaded up with blood.
One stiff blind horse, his every bone a-stare,
Stood stupefied, however he came there:
Thrust out past service from the devil's stud!

XIV

Alive? he might be dead for aught I know,
With that red gaunt and colloped neck a-strain,
And shut eyes underneath the rusty mane;
Seldom went such grotesqueness with such woe;
I never saw a brute I hated so;
He must be wicked to deserve such pain.

xv

I shut my eyes and turned them on my heart.
As a man calls for wine before he fights,
I asked one draught of earlier, happier sights,
Ere fitly I could hope to play my part.
Think first, fight afterwards—the soldier's art:
One taste of the old time sets all to rights.

XVI

Not it! I fancied Cuthbert's reddening face
Beneath its garniture of curly gold,
Dear fellow, till I almost felt him fold
An arm in mine to fix me to the place,
That way he used. Alas, one night's disgrace!
Out went my heart's new fire and left it cold.

xvII

Giles then, the soul of honour—there he stands
Frank as ten years ago when knighted first.
What honest man should dare (he said) he durst.
Good—but the scene shifts—faugh! what hangman hands
Pin to his breast a parchment? His own bands
Read it. Poor traitor, spit upon and curst!

xvIII

Better this present than a past like that;
Back therefore to my darkening path again!
No sound, no sight as far as eye could strain.
Will the night send a howlet or a bat?
I asked: when something on the dismal flat
Came to arrest my thoughts and change their train,

XIX

A sudden little river crossed my path
As unexpected as a serpent comes.
No sluggish tide congenial to the glooms;
This, as it frothed by, might have been a bath
For the fiend's glowing hoof—to see the wrath
Of its black eddy bespate with flakes and spumes.

So petty yet so spiteful! All along,
Low scrubby alders kneeled down over it;
Drenched willows flung them headlong in a fit
Of mute despair, a suicidal throng:
The river which had done them all the wrong,
Whate'er that was, rolled by, deterred no whit.

Which, while I forded,—good saints, how I feared
To set my foot upon a dead man's cheek,
Each step, or feel the spear I thrust to seek
For hollows, tangled in his hair or beard!
—It may have been a water-rat I speared,
But, ugh! it sounded like a baby's shriek.

XXII

Glad was I when I reached the other bank.
Now for a better country. Vain presage!
Who were the strugglers, what war did they wage,
Whose savage trample thus could pad the dank
Soil to a plash? Toads in a poisoned tank,
Or wild cats in a red-hot iron cage—

XXIII

The fight must so have seemed in that fell cirque.
What penned them there, with all the plain to choose?
No foot-print leading to that horrid mews,
None out of it. Mad brewage set to work
Their brains, no doubt, like galley-slaves the Turk
Pits for his pastime, Christians against Jews.

XXIV

And more than that—a furlong on—why, there!
What bad use was that engine for, that wheel,
Or brake, not wheel—that harrow fit to reel
Men's bodies out like silk? with all the air
Of Tophet's tool, on earth left unaware,
Or brought to sharpen its rusty teeth of steel.

XXV

Then came a bit of stubbed ground, once a wood,
Next a marsh, it would seem, and now mere earth
Desperate and done with; (so a fool finds mirth,
Makes a thing and then mars it, till his mood
Changes and off he goes!) within a rood—
Bog, clay and rubble, sand and stark black dearth,

XXVI

Now blotches rankling, coloured gay and grim,
Now patches where some leanness of the soil's
Broke into moss or substances like boils;
Then came some palsied oak, a cleft in him
Like a distorted mouth that splits its rim
Gaping at death, and dies while it recoils.

XXVII

And just as far as ever from the end!
Nought in the distance but the evening, nought
To point my footstep further! At the thought,
A great black bird, Apollyon's bosom-friend,
Sailed past, nor beat his wide wing dragon-penned
That brushed my cap—perchance the guide I sought.

XXVIII

For, looking up, aware I somehow grew,
'Spite of the dusk, the plain had given place
All round to mountains—with such name to grace
Mere ugly heights and heaps now stolen in view.
How thus they had surprised me,—solve it, you!
How to get from them was no clearer case.

XXIX

Yet half I seemed to recognize some trick
Of mischief happened to me, God knows when—
In a bad dream perhaps. Here ended, then,
Progress this way. When, in the very nick
Of giving up, one time more, came a click
As when a trap shuts—you're inside the den!

XXX

Burningly it came on me all at once,
This was the place! those two hills on the right,
Crouched like two bulls locked horn in horn in fight;
While to the left, a tall scalped mountain ... Dunce,
Dotard, a-dozing at the very nonce,
After a life spent training for the sight!

XXXI

What in the midst lay but the Tower itself?
The round squat turret, blind as the fool's heart,
Built of brown stone, without a counterpart
In the whole world. The tempest's mocking elf
Points to the shipman thus the unseen shelf
He strikes on, only when the timbers start,

XXXII

Not see? because of night perhaps?—why, day
Came back again for that! before it left,
The dying sunset kindled through a cleft:
The hills, like giants at a hunting, lay,
Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay,—
'Now stab and end the creature—to the heft!'

XXXIII

Not hear? when" "noise was everywhere! it tolled
Increasing like a bell. Names in my ears
Of all the lost adventurers my peers,—
How such a one was strong, and such was bold,
And such was fortunate, yet each of old
Lost, lost! one moment knelled the woe of years.

XXXIV

There they stood, ranged along the hill-sides, met
To view the last of me, a living frame
For one more picture! in a sheet of flame
I saw them and I knew them all. And yet
Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set,
And blew. ' *Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came.*'

LURIA

A TRAGEDY

1846

I DEDICATE THIS LAST ATTEMPT FOR THE PRESENT AT DRAMATIC POETRY
TO A GREAT DRAMATIC POET;
'WISHING WHAT I WRITE MAY BE READ BY HIS LIGHT:'
IF A PHRASE ORIGINALLY ADDRESSED,
BY NOT THE LEAST WORTHY OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES,
TO SHAKESPEARE,
MAY BE APPLIED HERE, BY ONE WHOSE SOLE PRIVILEGE IS IN
A GRATEFUL ADMIRATION,

To WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

LONDON: 1846.

PERSONS

LURIA, *a Moor, Commander of the Florentine Forces.*
HUSAIN, *a Moor, his friend.*
Puccio, *the old Florentine Commander, now* LURIA'S *chief officer,*
BRACCIO, *Commissary of the Republic of Florence.*
JACOPO (LAPO), *his secretary.*
TreuRzio, *Commander of the Pisans.*
DOMIZIA, *a noble Florentine lady.*

SCENE.—LURIA'S *Camp between Florence and Pisa,*

TIME, 14—.

ACT I

MORNING

BRACCIO, *as dictating to his* Secretary;
Puccio *standing by.*

Brac, to Puccio]. Then, you join battle in an hour?
Puc, Not I;
Luria, the captain.
Brae, [to the Secretary]. 'In an hour, the battle'
[To Puccio.l Sir, let your eye run o'er tins loose digest,
And see if very much of your report
Have slipped away through my civilian phrase.
Does this instruct the Signory aright
How army stands with army?
Puc. [taking the paper]. All seems here:
—That Luria, seizing with our city's force
The several points of vantage, hill and plain,
Shuts Pisa safe from help on every side,
And, baffling the Lucchese arrived too late,
Must, in the battle he delivers now,
Beat her best troops and first of chiefs.
Brae, So sure?
Tiburzio's a consummate captain too!
Puc, Luria holds Pisa's fortune in his hand.
Brae, [to the Secretary]. 'The Signory hold Pisa in their hand.'
Your own proved soldiership's our warrant, sir:
So, while my secretary ends his task,
Have out two horsemen, by the open roads,
To post with it to Florence!
Puc. [returning the paper]. All seems here;
Unless... Ser Braccio, 'tis my last report!
Since Pisa's outbreak, and my overthrow,
And Luria's hastening at the city's call
To save her, as he only could, no doubt;
Till now that she is saved or sure to be,—
Whatever you tell Florence, I tell you:
Each day's note you, her Commissary, make
Of Luria's movements, I myself supply.
No youngster am I longer, to my cost;
Therefore while Florence gloried in her choice

And vaunted Luria, whom but Luria, still,
As if zeal, courage, prudence, conduct, faith,
Had never met in any man before,
I saw no pressing need to swell the cry.
But now, this last report and I have done:
So, ere to-night comes with its roar of praise,
'Twere not amiss if some one old i' the trade
Subscribed with, True, for once rash counsel's best.
'This Moor of the bad faith and doubtful race,
'This boy to whose untried sagacity,
'K.aw valour, Florence trusts without reserve
'The charge to save her,—justifies her choice;
'In no point has this stranger failed his friends.
'Now praise!' I say this, and it is not here.
Brae, [to the Secretary!. Write, 'Puccio, superseded in the charge,
•By Luria, bears full witness to his worth,
'And no reward our Signory can give
'Their champion but he'll back it cheerfully,'
Aught more? Five minutes hence, both messengers! [Puccio *goes.*
Brae, [after a pause, and while he slowly tears the paper into shreds]. I think • • •
(pray God, I hold in fit contempt
This warfare's noble art and ordering,
And,—once the brace of prizers fairly matched,
Poleaxe with poleaxe, knife with knife as good,—
Spit properly at what men term their

Yet here I think our fighter has the odds.
With Pisa's strength diminished thus and thus,
Such points of vantage in our hands and such,
Lucca still off the stage, too,—all's assured:
Luria must win this battle. Write the Court,
That Luria's trial end and sentence pass!
Sec. Patron,—
Brae, Ay, Lapo?
Sec. If you trip, I fall;
Tis in self-interest I speak—
Brac. Nay, nay.
You overshoot the mark, my Lapo! Nay!
When did I say pure love's impossible?
I make you daily write those red cheeks thin,
Load your young brow with what concerns it least,
And, when we visit Florence, let you pace
The Piazza by my side as if we talked,
Where all your old acquaintances **may** see:
You'd die forme, I should not be surprised.
Now then!
Sec. Sir, look about and love yourself!
Step after step, the Signory and you
Tread gay till this tremendous point's to pass;
Which pass not, pass not, ere you ask yourself,—
Bears the brain steadily such draughts of fire,
Or too delicious may not prove the pride
Of this long secret trial you dared plan,
Dare execute, you solitary here,
With the grey-headed toothless fools at home,
Who think themselves your lords, such slaves are they?
If they pronounce this sentence as you bid,
Declare the treason, claim its penalty,—
And sudden out of all the blaze of life,
On the best minute of his brightest day,
From that adoring army at his back,
Thro' Florence' joyous crowds before his face,
Into the dark you beckon Luria ...
Brac. Then-
Why, Lapo, when the fighting-people vaunt,
We of the other craft and mystery,
May we not smile demure, the danger past?
Sec. Sir, no, no, no,—the danger, and your spirit
At watch and ward? Where's danger on your part,
With that thin flitting instantaneous steel
'Gainstthebhndbull-frontofabrute-force world?
If Luria, that's to perish sure as fate,
Should nave been really guiltless after all?
Brac. Ah, you have thought that?
Sec. Here I sit, your scribe,
And in and out goes Luna, days and nights;
This Puccio comes; the Moor his other friend,
Husain; they talk—that's all feigned easily;
He speaks (I would not listen if I could),
Reads, orders, counsels:—but he rests sometimes,—
I see him stand and eat, sleep stretched an hour
On the lynx-skins yonder; hold his bared black arms
Into the sun from the tent-opening; laugh
When his horse drops the forage from his teeth
And neighs to hear him hum his Moorish songs.
That man believes in Florence, as the saint
Tied to the wheel believes in God.
Brac. How strange!
You too **have thought** that!

Sec. Do but you think too,
And all is savedkl only have to write,
'The man seemed false awhile, proves true at last,
'Bury it'—so I write the Signory—
'Bury this trial in your breast for ever,
'Blot it from things or done or dreamed about!
'So Luria shall receive his meed to-day
'With no suspicion what reverse was near,—
'As if no meteoric finger hushed
'The doom-word just on the destroyer's lip,
'Motioned him off, and let life's sun fall straight.'
Brac. [looks to the wall of the tent]. Did he draw that?
Sec. With charcoal, when the watch
Made the report at midnight; Lady Domizia
Spoke of the unfinished Duomo, you remember;
That is his fancy how a Moorish front
Might join to, and complete, the body,—a sketch,—
And again where the cloak hangs, yonder in the shadow.
Brac. He loves that woman.
Sec. She is sent the spy
Of Florence,—spies on you as you on him:
Florence, if only for Domizia's sake,
Is surely safe. What shall I write?
Brae. I see—
A Moorish front, nor of such ill design!
Lapo, there's one thing plain and positive;
Man seeks his own good at the whole world's cost.
What? If to lead our troops, stand forth our chiefs,
And hold our fate, and see us at their beck,
Yet render up the charge when peace return,
Have ever proved too much for Florentines,
Even for the best and bravest of ourselves—
If in the struggle when the soldier's sword
Should sink its point before the statist's pen,
And the calm head replace the violent hand,
Virtue on virtue still have fallen away
Before ambition with unvarying fate,
Till Florence' self at last in bitterness
Be forced to own such falls the natural end,
And, sparing further to expose her sons
To a vain strife and profitless disgrace,
Declare, 'The foreigner, one not my child,
'Shall henceforth lead my troops, reach height by height
'The glory, then descend into the shame;
'So shall rebellion be less guilt in him,
'And punishment the easier task for me:'
—If on the best of us such brand she set,
Can I suppose an utter alien here,
This Luria, our inevitable foe,
Confessed a mercenary and a Moor,
Born free from many ties that bind the rest
Of common faith in Heaven or hope on earth,
No past with us, no future,—such a spirit
Shall hold the path from which our staunchest broke,
Stand firm where every famed precursor fell?
My Lapo, I will frankly say, these proofs
So duly noted of the man's intent,
Are for the doting fools at home, not me.
The charges here, they may be true or false:
—What is set down? Errors and oversights,
A dallying interchange of courtesies
With Pisa's General,—all that, hour by hour,
Puccio's pale discontent has furnished us,
Of petulant speeches, inconsiderate acts,
Now overhazard, overcaution now;
Even that he loves this lady who believes
She outwits Florence, and whom Florence posted
By my procurement here, to spy on me,
Lest I one minute lose her from my sight—
She who remembering her whole House's fall,
That nest of traitors strangled in the birth,
Now labours to make Luria (poor device
As plain) the instrument of her revenge
—That she is ever at his ear to prompt
Inordinate conceptions of his worth,
Exorbitant belief in worth's reward,
And after, when sure disappointment follows,
Proportionable rage at such a wrong—
Why, all these reasons, while I urge them most,
Weigh with me less than least—as nothing weigh.
Upon that broad man's-heart of his, I go:
On what I know must be, yet, while I live,
Shall never be, because I live and know.
Brute-force shall not rule Florence! Intellect
May rule her, bad or good as chance supplies:
But intellect it shall be, pure if bad,
And intellect's tradition so kept up.
Till the good come—'twas intellect that ruled,
Not brute-force bringing from the battle-field
The attributes of wisdom, foresight's graces
We lent it there to lure its grossness on;
All which it took for earnest and kept safe
To show against us in our market-place,
Just as the plumes and tags and swordsman's-gear

(Fetched from the camp where, at their foolish best,
When all was done they frightened nobody)
Perk in our faces in the street, forsooth,
With our own warrant and allowance. No!
The whole procedure's overcharged,—its end
In too strict keeping with the bad first step.
To conquer Pisa was sheer inspiration?
Well then, to perish for a single fault,
Let that be simple justice! There, my Lapo!
A Moorish front ill suits our Duomo's body:
Blot it out—and bid Luria's sentence come!
[LURIA, *who, with* DOMIZIA, *has entered unobserved at the close of the last phrase, now advances,*
Lur. And Luria, Luria, what of Luria now?
Brac, Ah, you so close, sir? Lady Domizia too?
I said it needs must be a busy moment
For one like you: that you were now i' the thick
Of your duties, doubtless, while we idlers sat...
Lur. No—in that paper,—it was in that paper
What you were saying!
Brac. Oh—my day's despatch!
I censure you to Florence: will you see?
Lur. See your despatch, your last, for the first time?
Well, if I should, now? For in truth, Domizia,
He would be forced to set about another,
In his sly cool way, the true Florentine,
To mention that important circumstance.
So, while he wrote I should gain time, such time!
Do not send this!
Brac. And wherefore?
Lur. These Lucchese
Are not arrived—they never will arrive!
And I must fight to-day, arrived or not,
And I shall beat Tiburzio, that is sure:
And then will be arriving his Lucchese,
But slowly, oh so slowly, just in time
To look upon my battle from the hills,
Like a late moon, of use to nobody!
And I must break my battle up, send forth,
Surround on this side, hold in check on that.
Then comes to-morrow, we negotiate,
You make me send for fresh instructions home.
—Incompleteness, incompleteness!
Brac. Ah, we scribes!
Why, I had registered that very point,
The non-appearance of our foes' ally,
As a most happy fortune; both at once
Were formidable: singly faced, each falls.
Lur. So, no great battle for my Florentines!
No crowning deed, decisive and complete,
For all of them, the simple as the wise,
Old, young, alike, that do not understand
Our wearisome pedantic art of war,
By which we prove retreat may be success,
Delay—best speed,—half loss, at times,—whole gain:
They want results: as if it were their fault!
And you, with warmest wish to be my friend,
Will not be able now to simply say
' Your servant has performed his task—enough!
'You ordered, he has executed: good!
'Now walk the streets in holiday attire,
'Congratulate your friends, till noon strikes fierce,
'Then form bright groups beneath the Duomo's shade!'
No, you will have to argue and explain,
Persuade them, all is not so ill in the end,
Tease, tire them out! Arrive, arrive, Lucchese!
Dom. Well, you will triumph for the past enough,
Whatever be the present chance; no service
Falls to the ground with Florence: she awaits
Her saviour, will receive him fittingly.
Lur. Ah Braccio, you know Florence! Will she, think you,
Receive one ... what means ' fittingly receive'?
—Receive compatriots, doubtless—I am none:
And yet Domizia promises so much!
Brac. Kind women still give men a woman's prize.
I know not o'er which gate most boughs will arch,
Nor if the Square will wave red flags or blue.
I should have judged, the fullest of rewards
Our state gave Luria, when she made him chief
Of her whole force, in her best captain's place.
Lur. That, my reward? Florence on my account
Relieved Ser Puccio?—mark you, my reward!
And Puccio's having all the fight's true joy-
Goes here and there, gets close, may fight, himself,
While I must order, stand aloof, o'ersee.
That was my calling, there was my true place!
I should have felt, in some one over me,

Florence impersonate, my, visible head,
As I am over PuccTo,—taking life
Directly from her eye! They give me you:
But do you cross me, set me half to work?
I enjoy nothing—though I will, for once!
Decide, shall we join battle? may I wait?
Brac. Let us compound the matter; wait till noon:
Then, no arrival,—
Lur. Ah, noon comes too fast!
I wonder, do you guess why I delay
Involuntarily the final blow
As long as possible? Peace follows it!
Florence at peace, and the calm studious heads
Come out again, the penetrating eyes;
As if a spell broke, all's resumed, each art
You boast, more vivid that it slept awhile.
'Gainst the glad heaven, o'er the white palace-front
The interrupted scaffold climbs anew;
The walls are peopled by the painter's brush;
The statue to its niche ascends to dwell.
The present noise and trouble have retired
And left the eternal past to rule once more;
You speak its speech and read its records plain,
Greece lives with you, each Roman breathes your friend:
But Luria—where will then be Luria's place?
Dom. Highest in honour, for that past's own sake,
Of which his actions, sealing up the sum
By saving all that went before from wreck,
Will range as part, with which be worshipped too.
Lur. Then I may walk and watch you in your streets,
Lead the smooth life my rough life helps no more,
So different, so new, so beautiful—
Nor fear that you will tire to see parade
The club that slew the lion, now that crooks
And shepherd-pipes come into use again?
For very lone and silent seems my East
In its drear vastness: still it spreads, and still
No Braccios, no Domizias anywhere—
Not ever more! Well, well, to-day is ours!
Dom. [to BRACCIO*].* Should he not have been one of us?
Lur. Oh, no!
Not one of you, and so escape the thrill
Of coming into you, of changing thus,—
Feeling a soul grow on me that restricts
The boundless unrest of the savage heart!
The sea heaves up, hangs loaded o'er the land.
Breaks there and buries its tumultuous strength;
Horror, and silence, and a pause awhile:
Lo, inland glides the gulf-stream, miles away,
In rapture of assent, subdued and still,
'Neath those strange banks, those unimagined skies.
Well, 'tis not sure the quiet lasts for ever!
Your placid heads still find rough hands new work;
Some minute's chance—there comes the need of mine:
And, all resolved on, I too hear at last.
Oh, you must find some use for me, Ser Braccio!
You hold my strength; 'twere best dispose of it:
What you created, see that you find food for—
I shall be dangerous else!
Brac. How dangerous, sir?
Lur. There are so many ways, Domizia warns me,
And one with half the power that I possess,
—Grows very formidable. Do you doubt?
Why, first, who holds the army . . .
Dom. While we talk,
Morn wears; we keep you from your proper place,
The field.
Lur. Nay, to the field I move no more;
My part is done, and Puccio's may begin:
I cannot trench upon his province longer
With any face.—You think yourselves so safe?
Why, see—in concert with Tiburzio, now—
One could . . .
Dom. A trumpet!
Lur. My Lucchese at last!
Arrived, as sure as Florence stands! Your leave! *[Springs out*
Dom. How plainly is true greatness charactered
By such unconscious sport as Luria's here
Strength sharing least the secret of itself!
Be it with head that schemes or hand that acts,
Such save the world which none but they could save,
Yet think whate'er they did, that world could do.
Brae. Yes: and how worthy note, that these same great ones
In hand or head, with such unconscious ness
And all its due entailed humility,
Should never shrink, so far as I perceive,,
From taking up whatever tool there be
Effects the whole world's safety or mishap,
Into their mild hands as a thing of course!
The statist finds it natural to lead
The mob who might as easily lead him—
the captain marshals troopa born skilled in war—

Statist and captain verily believe!
While we poor scribes . .. you catch me thinking now,
That I shall in this very letter write
What none of you are able! To it, Lapo!
[DOMIZIA *goes.*
This last worst all-affected childish fit
Of Luria's, this be-praised unconsciousness,
Convinces me; the past was no child's play:
It was a man beat Pisa,—not a child.
All's mere dissimulation—to remove
The fear, he best knows we should entertain.
The utmost danger was at hand. Is't written?
Now make a duplicate, lest this should fail,
And speak your fullest on the other side.
Sec. I noticed he was busily repairing
My half-effacement of his Duomo sketch,
And, while he spoke of Florence, turned to it,
As the Mage Negro king to Christ the babe.
I judge his childishness the mere relapse
To boyhood of a man who has worked lately,
And presently will work, so, meantime, plays:
Whence, more than ever I believe in him.
Brac, [after a pause]. The sword! At best, the soldier, as he says,
In Florence—the black face, the barbarous name,
For Italy to boast her show of the age,
Her man of men! To Florence with each letter!

ACT II

NOON

Dom. Well, Florence, shall I reach thee, pierce thy heart
Thro' all its safeguards? Hate is said to help—
Quicken the eye, invigorate the arm;
And this my hate, made up of many hates,
Might stand in scorn of visible instrument,
And will thee dead: yet do I trust it not.
Nor man's devices nor Heaven's memory
Of wickedness forgot on earth so soon,
But thy own nature,—hell and thee I trust,
To keep thee constant in that wickedness,
Where my revenge may meet thee. Turn aside
A single step, for gratitude or shame,—
Grace but this Luria,—this wild mass of rage
I have prepared to launch against thee now,—
With other payment than thy noblest found,—
Give his desert for once its due reward,—
And past thee would my sure destruction roll.
But thou, who mad'st our House thy sacrifice,
It cannot be thou wilt except this Moor
From the accustomed fate of zeal and truth:
Thou wilt deny his looked-for recompense,
And then—I reach thee. Old and trained, my sire
Could bow down on his quiet broken heart,
Die awe-struck and submissive, when at last
The strange blow came for the expected wreath;
And Porzio passed in blind bewilderment
To exile, never to return,—they say,
Perplexed in his frank simple honest soul,
As *if* some natural law had changed,—how else
Could Florence, on plain fact pronouncing thus,
Judge Porzio's actions worthy such reward?
But Berto, with the ever-passionate pulse,
—Oh that long night, its dreadful hour on hour,
In which no way of getting his fair fame
From their inexplicable charges free,
Was found, save pouring forth the impatient blood
To show its colour whether false or no!
My brothers never had a friend like me
Close in their need to watch the time, then speak,
—Burst with a wakening laughter on their dream,
Cry, ' Florence was all falseness, so, false here!'
And show them what a simple task remained—
To leave dreams, rise, and punish in God's name
The city wedded to the wickedness.
None stood by them as I by Luria stand.
So, when the stranger cheated of his due
Turns on thee as his rapid nature bids.
Then, Florence, think, a hireling at thy throat
For the first outrage, think who bore thy last,
Yet mutely in forlorn obedience died!
He comes—his friend—black faces in the camp
Where moved those peerless brows and eyes of old.

Enter LURIA *and* HUSAIN.

Dom. Well, and the movement—is it as you hope?
'Tis Lucca?
Lur. Ah, the Pisan trumpet merely ! Tiburzio's envoy, I must needs receive.

Dom Whom-I twith draw before; tho' if I lingered
You could not wonder, for my time fleets fast.
The overtaking night brings such reward!
And where will then be room for me? Yet, praised,
Remember who was first to promise praise,
And envy those who also can perform!
[Goes,
Lur. This trumpet from the Pisans?—
Hus. In the camp;
A very noble presence—Braccio's visage
On Puccio's body—calm and fixed and good;
A man I seem as I had seen before:
Most like, it was some statue had the face.
Lur. Admit him! This will prove the last delay.
Hus. Ay, friend, go on, and die thou going on!
Thou heardst what the grave woman said but now:
To-night rewards thee. That is well to hear;
But stop not therefore: hear it, and go on!
Lur. Oh, their reward and triumph and the rest
They round me in the ears with, all day long?
All that, I never take for earnest, friend!
Well would it suit us,—their triumphal arch
Or storied pillar,—thee and me, the Moors!
But gratitude in those Italian eyes—
That, we shall get?
Hus. It is too cold an air.
Our sun rose out ofyonder mound of mist:
Where is he now? So, I trust none of them.
Lur, Truly?
Hus, I doubt and fear. There stands a wall
'Twixt our expansive and explosive race
And those absorbing, concentrating men.
They use thee.
Lur. And I feel it, Husain! yes,
And care not—yes, an alien force like mine
Is only called to play its part outside
Their different nature; where its sole use seems
To fight with and keep off an adverse force,
As alien,—which repelled, mine too withdraws:
Inside, they know not what to do with me.
Thus I have told them laughingly and oft,
But long since am prepared to learn the worst.
Hus, What is the worst?
Lur, I will forestall them, Husain,
Will speak the destiny they dare not speak—
Banish myself before they find the heart.
I will be first to say, *The work rewards!
'I know, for all your praise, my use is over,
'So may it prove!—meanwhile 'tis best I go,
'Go carry safe my memories of you all
'To other scenes of action, newer lands.'—
Thus leaving them confirmed in their belief
They would not easily have tired of me.
You think this hard to say?
Hus. Say or not say,
So thou but go, so they but let thee go!
This hating people, that hate each the other,
And in one blandness to us Moors unite—
Locked each to each like slippery snakes, I say,
Which still in all their tangles, hissing tongue
And threatening tail, ne'er do each other harm;
While any creature of a better blood,
They seem to fight for, while they circle safe
And never touch it,—pines without a wound,
Withers away beside their eyes and breath.
See thou, if Puccio come not safely out
Of Braccio's grasp, tins Braccio sworn his foe,
As Braccio safely from Domizia's toils
Who hates him most! But thou, the friend of all,
... Come out of them!
Lur. The Pisan trumpet now!
Hus. Breathe free—it is an enemy, no friend! *[Goes.*
Lur. He keeps his instincts, no new culture mars
Their perfect use in him; just so the brutes
Rest not, are anxious without visible cause,
When change is in the elements at work,
Which man's trained senses fail to apprehend.
But here,—he takes the distant chariot wheel
For thunder, festal flame for lightning's flash,
The finer traits of cultivated life
For treachery and malevolence: I see!

Enter TIBURZIO.

Lur. Quick, sir, your message! I but wait your message
To sound the charge. You bring no overture
For truce? I would not, for your General's sake,
You spoke of truce: a time to fight is come,
And, whatsoe'er the fight's event, he keeps
His honest soldier's-name to beat me with,
Or leaves me all himself to beat, I trust!
Tib, I am Tiburzio.
Lur, You? 'Tis—yes ... Tiburzio!

You were the last to keep the ford *V* the valley
From Puccio, when I threw in succours there!
Why, I was on the heights—through the defile
Ten minutes after, when the prey was lost!
You wore an open skull-cap with a twist
Of water-reeds—the plume being hewn away;
While I drove down my battle from the heights,
I saw with my own eyes!
Tib. And you are Luria
Who sent my cohort, that laid down its arms
In error of the battle-signal's sense,
Back safely to me at the critical time—
One of a hundred deeds. I know you. Therefore
To none but you could I . . .
Lur. No truce, Tiburzio!
Tib. Luria, you know the peril imminent
On Pisa,—that you have us in the toils,
Us her last safeguard, all that intercepts
The rage of her implacablest of foes
From Pisa: if we fall to-day. she falls.
Tho' Lucca will arrive, yet, tis too late.
You have so plainly here the best of it,
That you must feel, brave soldier as you are,
How dangerous we grow in this extreme,
How truly formidable by despair.
Still, probabilities should have their weight:
The extreme chance is ours, but, that chance failing,
You win this battle. Wherefore say I this ?
To be well apprehended when I add,
This danger absolutely comes from you.
Were you, who threaten thus, a Florentine . . .
Lur. Sir, I am nearer Florence than her sons.
I can, and have perhaps obliged the State,
Nor paid a mere son's duty.
Tib. Even so.
Were you the son of Florence, yet endued
With all your present nobleness of soul,
No question, what I must communicate
Would not detach you from her.
Lur. Me, detach?
Tib. Time urges. You will ruin presently
Pisa, you never knew, for Florence' sake
You think you know. I have from time to time
Made prize of certain secret missives sent
From Braccio here, the Commissary, home:
And knowing Florence otherwise, I piece
The entire chain out, from these its scattered links.
Your trial occupies the Signory;
They sit in judgment on your conduct now.
When men at home inquire into the acts
Which in the field e'en foes appreciate . . .
Brief, they are Florentines! You, saving them,
Seek but the sure destruction saviours find.
Lur. Tiburzio!
Tib. All the wonder is of course.
I am not here to teach you, nor direct,
Only to loyally apprise—scarce that.
This is the latest letter, sealed and safe,
As it left here an hour ago. One way
Of two thought free to Florence, I command.
The duplicate is on its road; but this,—
Read it, and then I shall have more to say.
Lur. Florence!
Tib. Now, were yourself a Florentine,
This letter, let it hold the worst it can,
Would be no reason you should fall away.
The mother city is the mother still,
And recognition of the children's service
Her own affair; reward—there's no reward!
But you are bound by quite another tie.
Nor nature shows, nor reason, why at first
A foreigner, born friend to all alike,
Should give himself to any special State
More than another, stand by Florence' side
Rather than Pisa; 'tis as fair a city
You war against as that you fight for—famed
As well as she in story, graced no less
With noble heads and patriotic hearts:
Nor to a stranger's eye would either cause,
Stripped of the cumulative loves and hates
Which take importance from familiar view,
Stand as the right and sole to be upheld.
Therefore, should the preponderating gift
Of love and trust, Florence was first to throw,
Which made you hers, not Pisa's, void the scale,—
Old ties dissolving, things resume their place
And all begins again. Break seal and read!
At least let Pisa offer for you now!
And I, as a good Pisan, shall rejoice—
Though for myself I lose, in gaining you,
This last fight and its opportunity;
The chance it brings of saving Pisa yet,
Or in the turn of battle dying so
That shame should want its extreme bitterness.
Lur. Tiburzio, you that fight for Pisa now
As I for Florence... say my chance were yours!

You read this letter, and-you find . . . no, no!
Too mad!
Tib. I read the letter, find they purpose
When I have crushed their foe, to crush me: well?
Lur. You, being their captain, what is it you do?
Tib. Why, as it is, all cities are alike;
As Florence pays you, Pisa will pay me.
I shall be as belied, whate'er the event,
As you, or more: my weak head, they will say,
Prompted this last expedient, my faint heart
Entailed on them indelible disgrace,
Both which defects ask proper punishment.
Another tenure of obedience, mine!
You are no son of Pisa's: break and read!
Lur. And act on what I read? What act were fit?
If the firm-fixed foundation of my faith
In Florence, who to me stands for mankind,
— I f that break up and, disimprisoning
From the abyss... Ah friend, it cannot be!
You may be very sage, yet—all the world
Having to fail, or your sagacity,
You do not wish to find yourself alone!
What would the world be worth? Whose love be sure?
The world remains: you are deceived!
Tib. Your hand!
I lead the vanguard.—If you fall, beside,
The better: I am left to speak! For me,
This was my duty, nor would I rejoice
If I could help, it misses its effect;
And after all you will look gallantly
Found dead here with that letter in your breast.
Lur. Tiburzio—I would see these people once
And test them ere I answer finally!
At your arrival let the trumpet sound:
If mine return not then the wonted cry
It means that I believe—am Pisa's!
Tib. Well!
[Goes.
Lur. My heart will have it he speaks true! My blood
Beats close to this Tiburzio as a friend.
If he had stept into my watch-tent, night
And the wild desert full of foes around,
I should have broke the bread and given the salt
Secure, and, when my hour of watch was done,
Taken my turn to sleep between his knees,
Safe in the untroubled brow and honest cheek.
Oh world, where all things pass and nought abides,
Oh life, the long mutation—is it so?
Is it with life as with the body's change?
—Where, e'en tho' better follow, good must pass,
Nor manhood's strength can mate with boyhood's grace,
Nor age's wisdom, in its turn, find strength,
But silently the first sift dies away,
And though the new stays, never both at once.
Life's time of savage instinct o'er with me,
It fades and dies away, past trusting more,
As if to punish the ingratitude
With which 1 turned to grow in these new lights,
And learned to look with European eyes.
Yet it is better, this cold certain way,
Where Braccio's brow tells nothing, Puccio's mouth,
Domizia's eyes reject the searcher: yes!
For on their calm sagacity I lean.
Their sense of right, deliberate choice of good,
Sure, as they know my deeds, they deal with me.
Yes, that is better—that is best of all!
Such faith stays when mere wild belief would go.
Yes—when the desert creature's heart, at fault
Amid the scattering tempest's pillared sands,
Betrays its step into the pathless drift—
The calm instructed eye of man holds fast
By the sole bearing of the visible star,
Sure that when slow the whirling wreck subside,
The boundaries, lost now, shall be found again,—
The palm-trees and the pyramid over all.
Yes: I trust Florence: Pisa is deceived.

Enter BRACCIO, PUCCIO, *and* DOMTZIA.

Brac. Noon's at an end: no Lucca? You must fight.
Lur. Do you remember ever, gentle friends,
I am no Florentine?
Dom. It is yourself
Who still are forcing us, importunately,
To bear in mind what else we should forget.
Lur. For loss!—for what I lose in being none!
No shrewd man, such as you yourselves respect,
But would remind you of the stranger's loss
In natural friends and advocates at home,
Hereditary loves, even rivalships
With precedent for honour and reward.
Still, there's a gain, too! If you take it so,
The stranger's lot has special gain as well.
Do you forget there was my own far East

I might have given away myself to, once,
As now to Florence, and for such a gift,
Stood there like a descended deity?
There, worship waits us: what is it waits here?
[Shows the letter.
See! Chance has put into my hand the means
Of knowing what I earn, before I work.
Should I fight better, should I fight the worse,
With payment palpably before me? See!
Here lies my whole reward! Best learn it now
Or keep it for the end's entire delight?
Brac. If you serve Florence as the vulgar serve,
For swordsman's-pay alone,—break seal and read!
In that case, you will find your full desert.
Lur. Give me my one last happy moment, friends!
You need me now, and all the graciousness
This letter can contain will hardly balance
The after-feeling that you need no more.
This moment... oh, the East has use with you!
Its word still flashes—is not flung aside
With the past praise, in a dark corner yet!
How say you? Tis not so with Florentines,
Captains of yours: for them, the ended war
Is but a first step to the peace begun:
He who did well in war, just earns the right
To begin doing well in peace, you know:
And certain my precursors,—would not such
Look to themselves in such a chance as mine,
Secure the ground they trod upon, perhaps?
For I have heard, by fits, or seemed to hear,
Of strange mishap, mistake, ingratitude,
Treachery even. Say that one of you
Surmised this letter carried what might turn
To harm hereafter, cause him prejudice:
What would he do?
Dom. [hastily]. Thank God and take revenge!
Hurl her own force against the city straight
And, even at the moment when the foe
Sounded defiance . ..
[TIBURZIO'S *trumpet sounds in the distance.*
Lur. Ah, you Florentines!
So would you do? Wisely for you, no doubt.
My simple Moorish instinct bids me clench
The obligation you relieve me **from,**
Still deeper! *[To* Puccio.] Sound our answer, I should say,
And thus:—*[tearing the paper.]*—The battle! That solves every doubt.

ACT III

AFTERNOON

Puccio, *as making a report to* JACOPO.

Puc. And here, your captain must report the rest;
For, as I say, the main engagement over
And Luria's special part in it performed,
How could a subaltern like me expect
Leisure or leave to occupy the field
And glean what dropped from his wide harvesting?
I thought, when Lucca at the battle's end
Came up, just as the Pisan centre broke,
That Luria would detach me and prevent
The flying Pisans seeking what they found,
Friends in the rear, a point to rally by.
But no, more honourable proved my post!
I had the august captive to escort
Safe to our camp; some other could pursue,
Fight, and be famous; gentler chance was mine—
Tiburzio's wounded spirit must be soothed!
He's in the tent there.
Jac. Is the substance down?
I write—'The vanguard beaten and both wings
'In full retreat, Tiburzio prisoner'—
And now,—'That they fell back and formed again
' On Lucca's coming.' Why then, after all,
'Tis half a victory, no conclusive one?
Puc. Two operations where a sole had served.
Jac. And Luria's fault was—?
Puc. Oh, for fault—not much!
He led the attack, a thought impetuously,
—There's commonly more prudence; now, he seemed
To hurry measures, otherwise well judged.
By over-concentrating strength at first
Against the enemy's van, both wings escaped:
That's reparable, yet it is a fault.

Enter BRACCIO.

Jac. As good as a full victory to Florence,
With the advantage of a fault beside—
What is it, Puccio?—that by pressing forward
With too impetuous ...
Brac. The report anon!
Thanks, sir—you have elsewhere a charge,
I know. **[Puccio** ***goes.***

There's nothing done,-but I would do again;
Yet, Lapo, it may be the past proves nothing,
And Luria has kept faithful to the close.
Jac. I was for waiting.
Brac. Yes: so was not I.
He could not choose but tear that letter—true!
Still, certain of his tones, I mind, and looks:—
You saw, too, with a fresher soul than I.
So, Porzio seemed an injured man, they say!
Well, I have gone upon the broad, sure ground.

Enter LURIA, PUCCIO, *and* DOMIZIA

Lur. [to Puccio]. Say, at his pleasure I will seeTiburzio!
All's at his pleasure.
Dom. [to LURIA]. Were I not forewarned
You would reject, as you do constantly,
Praise,—I might tell you how you have deserved
Of Florence by this last and crowning feat:
But words offend.
Lur. Nay, you may praise me now.
I want instruction every hour, I find,
On points where once I saw least need of it;
And praise, I have been used to slight perhaps,
Seems scarce so easily dispensed with now.
After a battle half one's strength is gone;
The glorious passion in us once appeased,
Our reason's calm cold dreadful voice begins.
All justice, power and beauty scarce appear
Monopolized by Florence, as of late,
To me, the stranger: you, no doubt, may know
Why Pisa needs must bear her rival's yoke.
And peradventure I grow nearer you,
For I, too, want to know and be assured.
When a cause ceases to reward itself,
Its friend seeks fresh sustainments; praise is one,
And here stand you—you, lady, praise me well.
But yours—(your pardon)—is unlearned praise.
To the motive, the endeavour, the heart's self,
Your quick sense looks: you crown and call aright
The soul o' the purpose, ere 'tis shaped as act,
Takes flesh i' the world, and clothes itself a king.
But when the act comes, stands for what 'tis worth,
—Here's Puccio, the skilled soldier, he's my judge!
Was all well, Puccio?
Puc. All was . .. must be well:
If we beat Lucca presently, as doubtless . . .
—No, there's no doubt, we must—all was well done.
Lur. In truth? Still you are of the trade, my Puccio!
You have the fellow-craftsman's sympathy.
There's none cares, like a fellow of the craft,
For the all-unestimated sum of pains
That go to a success the world can see:
They praise then, but the best they never know
—While you know! So, if envy mix with it,
Hate even, still the bottom-praise of all,
Whatever be the dregs, that drop's pure gold!
—For nothing's like it; nothing else records
Those daily, nightly drippings in the dark
Of the heart's blood, the world lets drop away
For ever—so, pure gold that praise must be!
And I have yours, my soldier! yet the best
Is still to come. There's one looks on apart
Whom all refers to, failure or success;
What's done might be our best, our utmost work,
And yet inadequate to serve his need.
Here's Braccio now, for Florence—here's our service—
Well done for us, seems it well done for him?
His chosen engine, tasked to its full strength
Answers the end? Should he have chosen higher?
Do we help Florence, now our best is wrought?
Brac. This battle, with the foregone services,
Saves Florence.
Lur. Why then, all is very well!
Here am I in the middle of my friends,
Who know me and who love me, one and all.
And yet. . . 'tis like . . . this instant while I speak
Is like the turning-moment of a dream
When . . . Ah, you are not foreigners like me!
Well then, one always dreams of friends at home;
And always comes, I say, the turnine-point
When something changes in the friendly eyes

That love and look on you . . . so slight, so slight. . .
And yet it tells you they are dead and gone,
Or changed and enemies, for all their words,
And all is mockery and a maddening show.
You now, so kind here, all you Florentines,
What is it in your eyes... those lips, those brows . . .
Nobody spoke it, yet I know it well!
Come now—this battle saves you, all's at end,
Your use of me is o'er, for good, for ill,—
Come now, what's done against me, while I speak,
In Florence? Come! I feel it in my blood,
My eyes, my hair, a voice is in my ears
That spite of all this smiling and soft speech
You are betraying me. What is it you do?
Have it your way, and think my use is over—
Think you are saved and may throw off the mask—
Have it my way, and think more work remains
Which I could do,—so, show you fear me not!
Or prudent be, or daring, as you choose,
But tell me—tell what I refused to know
At noon, lest heart should fail me! Well? That letter?
My fate is sealed at Florence! What is it?
Brae. Sir, I shall not deny what you divine.
It is no novelty for innocence
To be suspected, but a privilege:
The after certain compensation comes.
Charges, I say not whether false or true,
Have been preferred against you some time since,
Which Florence was bound, plainly, to receive,
And which are therefore undergoing now
The due investigation. That is all.
I doubt not but your innocence will prove
Apparent and illustrious, as to me,
To them this evening, when the trial ends.
Lur. My trial?
Dom. Florence, Florence to the end,
My whole heart thanks thee!
Puc. [to BRACCIO]. What is 'trial,' sir?
It was not for a trial—surely, no—
I furnished you those notes from time to time?
I held myself aggrieved—I am a man—
And I might speak,—ay, and speak mere truth, too,
And yet not mean at bottom of my heart
What should assist a—trial, do you say?
You should have told me!
Dom. Nay, go on, go on!
His sentence! Do they sentence him? What is *it?*
The block—wheel?
Brac. Sentence there is none as yet,
Nor shall I give my own opinion now
Of what it should be, or is like to be.
When it is passed, applaud or disapprove!
Up to that point, what is there to impugn?
Lur. They are right, then, to try me?
Brac. I assert,
Maintain and justify the absolute right
Of Florence to do all she can have done
In this procedure,—standing on her guard,
Receiving even services like yours
With utmost fit suspicious wariness.
In other matters, keep the mummery up!
Take all the experiences of all the world,
Each knowledge that broke through a heart to life,
Each reasoning which, to reach, burnt out a brain,
—In other cases, know these, warrant these,
And then dispense with these—'tis very well!
Let friend trust friend, and love demand love's like.
And gratitude be claimed for benefits,—
There's grace in that,—and when the fresh heart breaks,
The new brain proves a ruin, what of them?
Where is the matter of one moth the more
Singed in the candle, at a summer's end?
But Florence is no simple John or James
To have his toy, his fancy, his conceit
That he's the one excepted man by fate,
And, when fate shows him he's mistaken there,
Die with all good men's praise, and yield his place
To Paul and George intent to try their chance!
Florence exists because these pass away.
She's a contrivance to supply a type
Of man, which men's deficiencies refuse;
She binds so many, that she grows out of them—
Stands steady o'er their numbers, though they change
And pass away—there's always what upholds,
Always enough to fashion the great show.
As see, yon hanging city, in the sun,
Of shapely cloud substantially the same!
A thousand vapours rise and sink again,
Are interfused, and live their life and die,—
Yet ever hangs the steady show *V* the air,
Under the sun's straight influence: that is well,
That is worth heaven should hold, and **God** should bless!

And so is Florence,—the unseen sun above,
Which draws and holds suspended all of us,
Binds transient vapours into a single cloud
Differing from each and better than they all.
And shall she dare to stake this permanence
On any one man's faith ? Man's heart is weak,
And its temptations many: let her prove
Each servant to the very uttermost
Before she grant him her reward, I say!
Dom. And as for hearts she chances to mistake,
Wronged hearts, not destined to receive reward,
Though they deserve it, did she only know,
—What should she do for these?
Brac. What does she cot?
Say, that she gives them but herself to serve!
Here's Luria—what had profited his strength,
When half an hour of sober fancying
Had shown him step by step the usslcss-ness
Of strength exerted for strength's proper sake?
But the truth is, she did create that strength,
Draw to the end the corresponding means.
The world is wide—are we the only men?
Oh, for the time, the social purpose' sake,
Use words agreed on, bandy epithets,
Call any man the sole great wise and good!
But shall we therefore, standing by our- flouts selves,
Insult our souls and God with the same speech ?
There, swarm the ignoble thousands under him:
What marks us from the hundreds and the tens?
Florence took up, turned all one way the soul
Of Luria with its fires, and here he glows!
She takes me out of all the world as him,
Fixing my coldness till like ice it checks
The fire! So, Braccio, Luria, which is best?
Lur. Ah, brave me? And is this indeed the way
To gain your good word and sincere esteem?
Am I the baited animal that must turn
And fight his baiters to deserve their praise?
Obedience is mistake then? Be it so!
Do you indeed remember I stand here
The captain of the conquering army,— mine—
With all your tokens, praise and promise, ready

To show for what their names meant when you gave,
Not what you style them now you take away?
If I call in my troops to arbitrate,
And dash the first enthusiastic thrill
Of victory with this you menace now—
Commend to the instinctive popular sense,
My story first, your comment afterward,—
Will they take, think you, part with you or me?
If I say—I, the labourer they saw work,
Ending my work, ask pay, and find my lords
Have all this while provided silently
Against the day of pay and proving faith,
By what you call my sentence that's to come—
Will friends advise I wait complacently?
If I meet Florence half way at their head,
What will you do, my mild antagonist?
Brac. I will rise up like fire, proud and triumphant
That Florence knew you thoroughly and by me,
And so was saved. 'See, Italy,* I'll say,
'The crown of our precautions! Here's a man
'Was far advanced, just touched on the belief
'Less subtle cities had accorded long;
'But we are wiser: at the end comes this!'
And from that minute, where is Luria? Lost!
The very stones of Florence cry against
The all-exacting, nought-enduring fool
Who thus resents her first probation,
As if he, only, shone and cast no shade,
He, only, walked the earth with privilege
Against suspicion, free where angels fear:
He, for the first inquisitive mother's-word,
Must turn, and stand on his defence, forsooth!
Reward? You will not be worth punishment!
Lur. And Florence knew me thus! Thus I have lived,—
And thus you, with the clear fine intellect,
Braccio, the cold acute instructed mind,
Out of the stir, so calm and unconfused.
Reported me—how could you otherwise!
Ay?—and what dropped from you, just now, moreover?
Your information, Puccio?—Did your skill,
Your understanding sympathy approve
Such a report of me? Was this the end?
Or is even this the end? Can I stop here?
You. lady, with the woman's stand apart,
The heart to see with, past man's brain and eyes,
. . . I cannot fathom why you should destroy

The unoffending one, you call your friend—
Still, lessoned by the good examples here
Of friendship, 'tis but natural I ask—
Had you a further aim, in aught you urged,
Than your friend's profit—in all those instances
Of perfidy, all Florence wrought of wrong—
All I remember now for the first time?
Dom. I am a daughter of the Traversari,
Sister of Porzio and of Berto both,
So, have foreseen all that has come to pass.
I knew the Florence that could doubt their faith,
Must needs mistrust a stranger's—dealing them
Punishment, would deny him his reward.
And I believed, the shame they bore and died,
He would not bear, but live and fight against—
Seeing he was of other stuff than they.
Lur. Hear them I All these against one foreigner!
And all this while, where is, in the whole world,
To his good faith a single witness?
Tib. [who has entered unseen during the preceding dialogue]. Here!
Thus I bear witness, not in word but deed.
I live for Pisa; she's not lost to-day
By many chances—much prevents from that!
Her army has been beaten, I am here,
But Lucca comes at last, one happy chance!
I rather would see Pisa three times lost
Than saved by any traitor, even by you;
The example of a traitor's happy fortune
Would bring more evil in the end than good;—
Pisa rejects the traitor, craves yourself!
I, in her name, resign forthwith to you
My charge,—the highest office, sword and shield!
You shall not, by my counsel, turn on Florence
Your army, give her calumny that ground—
Nor bring one soldier: be you all we gain!
And all she'll lose,—a head to deck some bridge,
And save the cost o' the crown should deck the head.
Leave her to perish in her perfidy,
Plague-stricken and stripped naked to all eyes,
A proverb and by-word in all mouths!
Go you to Pisa! Florence is my place-
Leave me to tell her of the rectitude,
I, from the first, told Pisa, knowing it.
To Pisa!
Dom. Ah my Braccio, are you caught?
Brac. Puccio, good soldier and good citizen,
Whom I have ever kept beneath my eye,
Ready as fit, to serve in this event
Florence, who clear foretold it from the first—
Through me, she gives you the command and charge
She takes, through me, from him who held it late!
A painful trial, very sore, was yours:
All that could draw out, marshal in array
The selfish passions 'gainst the public good—
Slights, scorns, neglects, were heaped on you to bear:
And ever you did bear and bow the head!
It had been sorry trial, to precede
Your feet, hold up the promise of reward
For luring gleam; your footsteps kept the track
Thro' dark and doubt: take all the light at once!
Trial is over, consummation shines;
Well have you served, as well henceforth command!
Puc. No, no... I dare not! I am grateful, glad;
But Luria—you shall understand he's wronged:
And he's my captain: this is not the way
We soldiers climb to fortune: think again!
The sentence is not even passed, beside!
I dare not: where's the soldier could?
Lur. Now, Florence—
Is it to be? You will know all the strength
O' the savage—to your neck the proof must go?
You will prove the brute nature ? Ah, I see!
The savage plainly is impassible:
He keeps his calm way through insulting words,
Sarcastic looks, sharp gestures—one of which
Would stop you, fatal to your finer sense,
But if he stolidly advance, march mute
Without a mark upon his callous hide,
Through the mere brushwood you grow angry with,
And leave the tatters of your flesh upon,
—You have to learn that when the true bar comes,
The murk mid-forest, the grand obstacle,
Which when you reach, you give the labour up,
Nor dash on, but lie down composed before,
—He goes against it, like the brute he is:
It falls before him, or he dies in his course.
I kept my course through past ingratitude:
I saw—it does seem, now, as if I saw,
Could not but see, those insults as they fell,
—Ay. let them glance from off me, very like,

Laughing, perhaps, to think the quality
You grew so bold on, while you so despised ,-,–
The Moor's dull mute inapprehensive mood,
Was saving you: I bore and kept my course.
Now real wrong fronts me: see if I succumb!
Florence withstands me? I will punish her.

At night my sentence will arrive, you say.
Till then I cannot, if I would, rebel
—Unauthorized to lay my office down,
Retaining my full power to will and do:
After—it is to see. Tiburzio, thanks!
Go; you are free: join Lucca! I suspend
All further operations till to-night.
Thank you, and for the silence most of all!
[To BRACCIO.] Let my complacent bland accuser go
Carry his self-approving head and heart
Safe through the army which would trample him
Dead in a moment at my word or sign!
Go, sir, to Florence; tell friends what I say—
That while I wait my sentence, theirs waits them!
[To DOMIZIA.] You, lady,—you have black Italian eyes!
I would be generous if I might: oh, yes—
For I remember how so oft you seemed
Inclined at heart to break the barrier down
Which Florence finds God built between us both.
Alas, for generosity! this hour
Asks retribution: bear it as you may,
I must—the Moor—-the savage,—pardon you!
Puccio, my trusty soldier, see them forth!

ACT IV

EVENING

Enter Puccio *and* JACOPO.

Puc. What Luria will do? Ah, 'tis yours, fair sir,
Your and your subtle-witted master's part,
To tell me that; I tell you what he can.
Jac. Friend, you mistake my station: I observe
The game, watch how my betters play, no more.
Puc. But mankind are not pieces—there's your fault!
You cannot push them, and, the first move made,
Lean back and study what the next shall
In confidence that, when 'tis fixed upon,
You find just where you left them, blacks and whites:
Men go on moving when your hand's away.
You build, I notice, firm on Luria's faith
This whole time,—firmlier than I choose to build.
Who never doubted it—of old, that is—
With Luria in his ordinary mind.
But now, oppression makes the wise man mad:
How do I know he will not turn and stand
And hold his own against you, as he may?
Suppose he but withdraw to Pisa—well,—
Then, even if all happen to your wish,
Which is a chance . . .
Jac. Nay—'twas an oversight,
Not waiting till the proper warrant came:
You could not take what was not ours to give.
But when at night the sentence really comes,
Our city authorizes past dispute
Luria's removal and transfers the charge,
You will perceive your duty and accept?
Puc. Accept what? muster-rolls of soldiers' names?
An army upon paper? I want men,
The hearts as well as hands—and where's a heart
But beats with Luria, in the multitude
I come from walking through by Luria's side?
You gave them Luria, set him thus to grow,
Head-like, upon their trunk; one heart feeds both,
They feel him there, live twice, and well know why.
—For they do know, if you are ignorant,
Who kept his own place and respected theirs,
Managed their sweat, yet never spared his blood.
All was your act: another might have served—
There's peradventure no such dearth of heads—
But you chose Luria; so, they grew one flesh,
And now, for nothing they can understand,
Luria removed, off is to roll the head;
The body's mine—much I shall do with it!
Jac, That's at the worst.
Puc. No—at the best, it is!
Best, do you hear? I saw them by his side.
Only we two v/ith Luria in the camp
Are left that keep the secret? You think that?
Hear what I know: from rear to van, no heart
But felt the quiet patient hero there
Was wronged, nor in the moveless rank*? an eye

But glancing told its fellow the whole story
Of that convicted silent knot of spies
Who passed thro' them to Florence; they might pass—
No breast but gladlier beat when free of such!
Our troops will catch up Luria, close him round,
Bear him to Florence as their natural lord,
Partake his fortune, live or die with him.
Jac. And by mistake catch up along with him
Puccio, no doubt, compelled in self despite
To still continue second in command!
Puc. No, sir, no second nor so fortunate!
Your tricks succeed with me too well for that!
I am as you have made me, live and die
To serve your end—a mere trained fighting-hack,
With words, you laugh at while they leave your mouth
For my life's rule and ordinance of God!
I have to do my duty, keep my faith,
And earn my praise, and guard against my blame,
As I was trained. I shall accept your charge,
And fight against one better than myself,
Spite of my heart's conviction of his worth—
That, you may count on!—just as hitherto
I have gone on, persuaded I was wronged,
Slighted, insulted, terms we learn by rote,—
All because Luria superseded me—
Because the better nature, fresh-inspired,
Mounted above me to its proper place!
What mattered all the kindly graciousness,
The cordial brother's-bearing? This was clear—
I, once the captain, now was subaltern,
And so must keep complaining like a fool!
Go, take the curse of a lost soul, I say!
You neither play your puppets to the end,
Nor treat the real man,—for his realness' sake
Thrust rudely in their place,—with such regard
As might console them for their altered rank.
Me, the mere steady soldier, you depose
For Luria, and here's all your pet deserves!
Of what account, then, is your laughing-stock?
One word for all: whatever Luria does.
—If backed by his indignant troops he turn,
Revenge himself, and Florence go to ground,—
Or, for a signal everlasting shame,
He pardon you, simply seek better friends,
Side with the Pisans and Lucchese for change
—And if I, pledged to ingrates past belief.
Dare fight against a man such fools call false,
Who, inasmuch as he was true, fights me,—
Whichever way he win, he wins for worth,
For every soldier, for all true and good!
Sir, chronicling the rest, omit not this!

As they go, enter LURIA *and* HUSAIN.

Hus. Saw'st thou ?—For they are gone!
The world lies bare
Before thee, to be tasted, felt and seen
Like what it is, now Florence goes away!
Thou livest now, with men art man again!
Those Florentines were all to thee of old;
But Braccio, but Domizia, gone is each
There lie beneath thee thine own multitudes!
Saw'st thou?
Lur. I saw.
Hus. Then, hold thy course, my king!
The years return. Let thy heart have its way:
Ah, they would play with thee as with all else,
Turn thee to use, and fashion thee anew,
Find out God's fault in thee as in the rest?
Oh watch, oh listen only to these fiends
Once at their occupation! Ere we know,
The free great heaven is shut, their stifling pall
Drops till it frets the very tingling hair.
So weighs it on our head,—and, for the earth,
Our common earth is tethered up and down,
Over and across—'here shalt thou move,' they cry!
Lur. Ay, Husain?
Hus. So have they spoiled all beside!
So stands a man girt round with Florentines,
Priests, greybeards, Braccios, women, boys and spies,
All in one tale, all singing the same song,
How thou must house, and live at bed and board,
Take pledge and give it, go their every way,
Breathe to their measure, make thy blood beat time
With theirs—or, all is nothing—thou art lost—
A savage, how shouldst thou perceive as they?
Feel glad to stand 'neath God's close naked hand!
Look up to it! Why, down they pull thy neck,
Lest it crush thee, who feel'st it and wouldst **kiss,**

Without their priests that needsmust glove it first,
Lest peradventure flesh offend thy lip.
Love woman! Why, a very beast tnou art I
Thou must...
Lur. Peace, Husain!
Hus. Ay but, spoiling all,
For all, else true things, substituting false,
That they should dare spoil, of all instincts, thine!
Should dare to take thee with thine instincts up,
Thy battle-ardours, like a ball of fire,
And class them and allow them place and play
So far, no farther—unabashed the while!
Thou with the soul that never can take rest—
Thou born to do, undo, and do again,
And never to be still,—wouldst thou make war?
Oh, that is commendable, just and right!
'Come over,' say they, 'have the honour due
'In living out thy nature! Fight thy best:
'It is to be for Florence, not thyself!
'For thee, it were a horror and a plague;
'For us, when war is made for Florence, see,
'How all is changed: the fire that fed on earth
'Now towers to heaven!*—
Lur. And what sealed up so long
My Husain's mouth?
Hus. Oh friend, oh lord—for me,
What am I?—I was silent at thy side,
Who am a part of thee. It is thy hand,
Thy foot that glows when in the heart fresh blood
Boils up, thou heart of me! Now, live again,
Again love as thou likest, hate as free!
Turn to no Braccios nor Domizias now,
To ask, before thy very limbs dare move.
If Florence' welfare be concerned thereby!
Lur. So clear what Florence must expect of me?
Hus. Both armies against Florence! Take revenge!
Wide, deep—to live upon, in feeling now,—
And, after live, in memory, year by year—
And, with the dear conviction, die at last!
She lies now at thy pleasure: pleasure have!
Their vaunted intellect that gilds our sense,
And blends with life, to show it better by,
—How think'st thou?—I have turned that light on them!
They called our thirst of war a transient thing;
'The battle-element must pass away
'From life,' they said, 'and leave a tranquil world.'
—Master, I took their light and turned it full
On that dull turgid vein they said would burst
And pass away; and as I looked on life,
Still everywhere I tracked this, though it hid
And shifted, lay so silent as it thought,
Changed shape and hue yet ever was the same.
Why, 'twas all fighting, all their nobler life!
All work was fighting, every harm—defeat,
And every joy obtained—a victory!
Be not their dupe!
—Their dupe? That hour is past!
Here stand'st thou in the glory and the calm:
All is determined. Silence for me now!
[HUSAIN *goes.*
Lur. Have I heard all?
Dom. [advancing from the background]. No, Luria, I remain!
Not from the motives these have urged on thee,
Ignoble, insufficient, incomplete,
And pregnant each with sure seeds of decay,
As failing of sustainment from thyself,
—Neither from low revenge, nor selfishness,
Nor savage lust of power, nor one, nor all,
Shalt thou abolish Florence! I proclaim
The angel in thee, and reject the sprites
Which ineffectual crowd about his strength,
And mingle with his work and claim a share!
Inconsciously to the augustest end
Thou hast arisen: second not in rank
So much as time, to him who first ordained
That Florence, thou art to destroy, should be.
Yet him a star, too, guided, who broke first
The pride of lonely power, the life apart,
And made the eminences, each to each,
Lean o'er the level world and let it lie
Safe from the thunder henceforth 'neath their tops;
So the few famous men of old combined,
And let the multitude rise underneath,
And reach them and unite—so Florence grew:
Braccio speaks true, it was well worth the price.
But when the sheltered many grew in pride
And grudged the station of the elected ones,
Who, greater than their kind, are truly great
Only in voluntary servitude—
Time was for thee to rise, and thou art here.
Such plague possessed this Florence: who can tell

The mighty girth and greatness at the heart
Of those so perfect pillars of the grove
She pulled down in her envy? Who as I,
The light weak parasite born but to twine
Round each of them and, measuring them, live?
My light love keeps the matchless circle safe,
My slender life proves what has passed away.
I lived when they departed; lived to cling
To thee, the mighty stranger; thou wouldst rise
And burst the thraldom, and avenge, I knew.
I have done nothing; all was thy strong bole.
But a bird's weight can break the infant tree
Which after holds an aery in its arms,
And 'twas my care that nought should warp thy spire
From rising to the height; the roof is reached
O' the forest, break through, see extend the sky!
Go on to Florence, Luria! 'Tis man's cause!
Fail thou, and thine own fall were least to dread:
Thou keepest Florence in her evil way,
Encouragest her sin so much the more—
And while the ignoble past is justified,
Thou all the surelier warp'st the future growth,
The chiefs to come, the Lurias yet unborn,
That, greater than thyself, are reached o'er thee
Who giv'st the vantage-ground their foes require
As o'er my prostrate House thyself wast reached.
Man calls thee, God requites thee! All is said,
The mission of my House fulfilled at last:
And the mere woman, speaking for herself,
Reserves speech—it is now no woman's time. [DOMIZIA *goes.*
Lur. Thus at the last must figure Luria, then!
Doing the various work of all his friends,
And answering every purpose save his own.
No doubt, 'tis well for them to wish; but him—
After the exploit what were left? Perchance
A little pride upon the swarthy brow,
At having brought successfully to bear
'Gainst Florence' self her own especial arms,—
Her craftiness, impelled by fiercer strength
From Moorish blood than feeds the northern wit—
But after!—once the easy vengeance willed,
Beautiful Florence at a word laid low
—(Not in her domes and towers and palaces,
Not even in a dream, that outrage!)—low,
As shamed in her own eyes henceforth for ever,
Low, for the rival cities round to laugh,
Conquered and pardoned by a hireling Moor!
—For him, who did the irreparable wrong,
What would be left, his life's illusion fled,—
What hope or trust in the forlorn wide world?
How strange that Florence should mistake me so!
Whence grew this? What withdrew her faith from me?
Some cause! These fretful-blooded children talk
Against their mother,—they are wronged, they say—
Notable wrongs her smile makes up again!
So, taking fire at each supposed offence,
They may speak rashly, suffer for their speech:
But what could it have been in word OF deed
Thus injured me? Some one word spoken more
Out of my heart, and all had changed perhaps.
My fault, it must have been,—for, what gain they?
Why risk the danger? See, what I could do!
And my fault, wherefore visit upon them,
My Florentines? The notable revenge
I meditated! To stay passively,
Attend their summons, be as they dispose I
Why, if my very soldiers keep the rank,
And if my chieftains acquiesce, what then?
I ruin Florence, teach her friends mistrust,
Confirm her enemies in harsh belief,
And when she finds one day, as find she must,
The strange mistake, and how my heart was hers,
Shall it console me, that my Florentines
Walk with a sadder step, in graver guise,
Who took me with such frankness, praised me so,
At the glad outset? Had they loved me less,
They had less feared what seemed a change in me.
And after all, who did the harm? Not they!
How could they interpose with those old fools

I' the council? Suffer for those old fools' sake—
They, who made pictures of me, sang the songs
About my battles? Ah, we Moors get blind
Out of our proper world, where we can see!
The sun that guides is closer to us! There-
There, my own orb I He sinks from out the sky.
Why. there! a whole day has he blessed the land,
My land, our Florence all about the hills,
The fields and gardens, vineyards, olive-grounds,
All have been blest: and yet we Florentines
With souls intent upon our battle here,
Found that he rose too soon, or set too late,
Gave us no vantage, or gave Pisa much—
Therefore we wronged him! Does he turn in ire
To burn the earth that cannot understand ?
Or drop out quietly, and leave the sky,
His task once ended? Night wipes blame away.
Another morning from my East shall spring
And find all eyes at leisure, all disposed
To watch and understand its work, no doubt.
So, praise the new sun, the successor praise,
Praise the new Luria and forget the old!
[Taking a phial from his breast.
Strange! This is all I brought from my own land
To help me: Europe would supply the rest,
All needs beside, all other helps save one!
I thought of adverse fortune, battle lost,
The natural upbraiding of the loser,
And then this quiet remedy to seek
At end of the disastrous day.
[He drinks.
'Tis sought!
This was my happy triumph-morning: Florence
Is saved: I drink this, and ere night,—die!
Strange!

ACT V

NIGHT

LURIA *and* Puccio.

Lur. I thought to do this, not to talk this: well,
Such were my projects for the city's good,
To help her in attack or by defence.
Time, here as elsewhere, soon or late may take
Our foresight by surprise thro' chance and change;
But not a little we provide against
— I f you see clear on every point.
Puc. Most clear.
Lur. Then all is said—not much, if you count words,
Yet to an understanding ear enough
And all that my brief stay permits, beside.
Nor must you blame me, as I sought to teach
My elder in command, or threw a doubt
Upon the very skill, it comforts me
To know I leave,—your steady soldiership
Which never failed me: yet, because it seemed
A stranger's eye might haply note defect
That skill, through use and custom, over-looks—
I have gone into the old cares once more,
As if I had to come and save again
Florence—that May—that morning! Tis night now.
Well—I broke off with? .. .
Puc. Of the past campaign
You spoke—of measures to be kept in mind
For future use.
Lur. True, so... but, time—no time!
As well end here: remember this, and mel
Farewell now!
Puc. Dare I speak?
Lur. South o' the river—
How is the second stream called ... no, —the third?
Puc. Pesa.
Lur. And a stone's cast from the fording-place,
To the east,—the little mount's name?
Puc. Lupo.
Lur. Ay!
Ay—there the tower, and all that side is safe!
With San Romano, west of Evola,
San Miniato, Scala, Empoli,
Five towers in all,—forget not!
Puc. Fear not me!
Lur. —Nor to memorialize the Council now,
I' the easy hour, on those battalions' claim,
Who forced a pass by Staggia on the hills,
And kept the Sienese at check!
Puc. One word—
Sir, I must speak! That you submit yourself
To Florence* bidding, howsoe'er it prove,
And give up the command to me—is much,
Too much, perhaps: but what you tell me now,
Even will affect the other course you choose—
Poor as it may be, perils even that!
Refuge you seek at Pisa: yet these plans

All militate for Florence, **all** conclude
Your formidable work to make her queen
O' the country,—which her rivals rose against
When you began it,—which to interrupt,
Pisa would buy you off at any price!
You cannot mean to sue for Pisa's help,
With this made perfect and on record?
Lur. I —
At Pisa, and for refuge, do you say?
Puc. Where are you going, then? You must decide
On leaving us, a silent fugitive,
Alone, at night—you, stealing through our lines
Who were this morning's Luria,—you escape
To painfully begin the world once more,
With such a past, as it had never been!
Where are you going?
Lur. Not so far, my Puccio,
But that I hope to hear, enjoy and praise
(If you mind praise from your old captain yet)
Each happy blow you strike for Florence.
Puc. Ay,—
But ere you gain your shelter, what may come?
For see—though nothing's surely known as yet,
Still—truth must out—I apprehend the worst.
If mere suspicion stood for certainty
Before, there's nothing can arrest the step
Of Florence toward your ruin, once on foot.
Forgive her fifty times, it matters not!
And having disbelieved your innocence,
How can she trust your magnanimity?
You may do harm to her—why then, you will!
And Florence is sagacious in pursuit.
Have you a friend to count on?
Lur, One sure friend.
Puc. Potent?
Lur. All-potent.
Puc. And he is apprised?
Lur. He waits me.
Puc. So!—Then I, put in your place,
Making my profit of all done by you,
Calling your labours mine, reaping their fruit,
To this, the State's gift, now add yours beside—
That I may take as my peculiar store
These your instructions to work Florence good.
And if, by putting some few happily
In practice, I should both advantage her
And draw down honour on myself,—what then?
Lur. Do it, my Puccio! I shall know **and** praise.
Puc. Though so, men say, 'mark what we gain by change
'—A Puccio for a Luria!'
Lur. Even so.
Puc. Then, not for fifty hundred Florences,
Would I accept one office save my own,
Fill any other than my rightful post
Here at your feet, my captain and my lord!
That such a cloud should break, such trouble be,
Ere a man settle, soul and body, down
Into his true place and take rest for ever!
Here were my wise eyes fixed on your right-hand,
And so the bad thoughts came and the worse words,
And all went wrong and painfully enough,—
No wonder,—till, the right spot stumbled on,
All the jar stops, and there is peace at once!
I am yours now,—a tool your right-hand wields!
God's love, that I should live, the man I am,
On orders, warrants, patents, and the like,
As if there were no glowing eye i' the world
To glance straight inspiration to my brain,
No glorious heart to give mine twice the beats!
For, see—my doubt, where is it?—fear? 'tis flown!
And Florence and her anger are a tale
To scare a child. Why, half-a-dozen words
Will tell her, spoken as I now can speak,
Her error, my past folly—and all's right,
And you are Luria, our great chief again!
Or at the worst—which worst were best of ail-
To exile or to death I follow you.
Lur. Thanks, Puccio! Let me use the privilege
You grant me: if I still command you,—stay!
Remain here—my vicegerent, it shall be,
And not successor: let me, as of old,
Still serve the State, my spirit prompting yours—
Still triumph, one for both. There! Leave me now!
You cannot disobey my first command?
Remember what I spoke of Jacopo,
And what you promised to concert with him!
Send him to speak with me—nay, no farewell!
You shall be by me when the sentence comes. [Puccio *goes.*
So, there's one Florentine returns again!
Out of the genial morning-company,
One face is left to take into the night

Enter JACOPO.

Jac. I wait for yourxommand, sir.
Lur. What, so soon!
I thank your ready presence and fair word.
I used to notice you in early days
As of the other species, so to speak,
Those watchers of the lives of us who act—
That weigh our motives, scrutinize our thoughts.
So, I propound this to your faculty
As you would tell me, were a town to take
... That is, of old. I am departing hence
Under these imputations; that is nought—
I leave no friend on whom they may rebound,
Hardly a name behind me in the land,
Being a stranger: all the more behoves
That I regard how altered were the case
With natives of the country, Florentines
On whom the like mischance should fall: the roots
O' the tree survive the ruin of the trunk—
No root of mine will throb, you understand.
But I had predecessors, Florentines,
Accused as I am now, and punished so—
The Traversari: you know more than I
How stigmatized they are, and lost in shame.
Now Puccio, who succeeds me in command,
Both served them and succeeded, in due time;
He knows the way, holds proper documents,
And has the power to lay the simple truth
Before an active spirit, as I count yours:
And also there's Tiburzio, my new friend,
Will, at a word, confirm such evidence,
He being the great chivalric soul we know,
f put it to your tact, sir—were't not well,
—A grace, though but for contrast's sake, no more,—
If you who witness, and have borne a share
Involuntarily in my mischance,
Should, of your proper motion, set your skill
To indicate—that is, investigate
The right or wrong of what mischance befell
Those famous citizens, your countrymen?
Nay, you shall promise nothing: but reflect,
And if your sense of justice prompt you—good!
Jac. And if, the trial past, their fame stand clear
To all men's eyes, as yours, my lord, to mine—
Their ghosts may sleep in quiet satisfied!
For me, a straw thrown up into the air,
My testimony goes for a straw's worth.
I used to hold by the instructed brain,
And move with Braccio as my master **wind;**
The heart leads surelier: I must move with you—
As greatest now, who ever were the best.
So, let the last and humblest of your servants
Accept your charge, as Braccio's heretofore,
And tender homage by obeying you!
[JACOPO *goes.*
Lur. Another! Luria goes not poorly forth.
If we could wait! The only fault's with time;
All men become good creatures: but so slow!

Enter DOMIZIA.

Lur. Ah, you once more?
Dom. Domizia, whom you knew,
Performed her task, and died with it. 'Tis l,
Another woman, you have never known.
Let the past sleep now!
Lur. I have done with it.
Dom. How inexhaustibly the spirit grows!
One object, she seemed erewhile born to reach
With her whole energies and die content,—
So like a wall at the world's edge it stood,
With nought beyond to live for,—is that reached?
Already are new undreamed energies
Outgrowing under, and extending farther
To a new object; there's another world.
See! I have told the purpose of my life;
'Tis gained: you are decided, well or ill—
You march on Florence, or submit to her—
My work is done with you, your brow declares.
But—leave you ? More of you seems yet to reach:
I stay for what I just begin to see.
Lur. So that you turn not to the past!
Dom. You trace
Nothing but ill in it—my selfish impulse.
Which sought its end and disregarded yours?
Lur. Speak not against your nature: best, each keep
His own—you, yours—most, now that I keep mine,
—At least, fall by it, having too weakly stood.
God's finger marks distinctions, all so fine,
We would confound: the lesser has its use,
Which, when it apes the greater, is forgone.
I, born a Moor, lived half a Florentine;
But, punished properly, can end, a Moor*

Beside, there's something makes me understand
Your nature: I have seen it.
Dom. Aught like mine?
Lur. In my own East... if you would stoop and help
My barbarous illustration! It sounds ill;
Yet there's no wrong at bottom: rather, praise.
Dom. Well?
Lur. We have creatures there, which if you saw
The first time, you would doubtless marvel at
For their surpassing beauty, craft and strength.
And though it were a lively moment's shock
When you first found the purpose of forked tongues
That seem innocuous in their lambent play,
Yet, once made know such grace requires such guard,
Your reason soon would acquiesce, I think,
In wisdom which made all things for the best—
So, take them, good with ill, contentedly,
The prominent beauty with the latent sting.
I am glad to have seen you wondrous Florentines:
Yet...
Dom, I am here to listen.
Lur. My own East!
How nearer God we were! He glows above
With scarce an intervention, presses close
And palpitatingly, his soul o'er ours:
We feel him, nor by painful reason know!
The everlasting minute of creation
Is felt there; now it is, as it was then;
All changes at his instantaneous will,
Not by the operation of a law
Whose maker is elsewhere at other work.
His hand is still engaged upon his world—
Man's praise can forward it, man's prayer suspend,
For is not God all-mighty? To recast
The world, erase old things and make them new,
What costs it Him? So, man breathes nobly there.
And inasmuch as feeling, the East's gift,
Is quick and transient—comes, and lo, is gone—
While Northern thought is slow and durable,
Surely a mission was reserved for me,
Who, born with a perception of the power
And use of the North's thought for us of the East,
Should have remained, turned knowledge to account,
Giving thought's character and permanence
To the too transitory feeling there—
Writing God's message plain in mortal words.
Instead of which, I leave my fated field
For this where such a task is needed least,
Where all are born consummate in the art
I just perceive a chance of making mine,—
And then, deserting thus my early post.
I wonder that the men I come among
Mistake me! There, how all had understood,
Still brought fresh stuff for me to stamp and keep,
Fresh instinct to translate them into law!
Me, who . . .
Dom. Who here the greater task achieve,
More needful even: who have brought fresh stuff
For us to mould, interpret and prove right,—
New feeling fresh from God, which, could we know
O' the instant, where had been our need of it?
—Whose life re-teaches us what life should be,
What faith is, loyalty and simpleness,
All, once revealed but taught us so long since
That, having mere tradition of the fact,—
Truth copied falteringly from copies faint,
The early traits all dropped away,—we said
On sight of faith like yours, 'So looks not faith
'We understand, described and praised before/
But still, the feat was dared; and though at first
It suffered from our haste, yet trace by trace
Old memories reappear, old truth returns,
Our slow thought does its work, and all's re-known.
Oh noble Luria! What you have decreed
I see not, but no animal revenge,
No brute-like punishment of bad by worse—
It cannot be, the gross and vulgar way
Traced for me by convention and mistake,
Has gained that calm approving eye and brow!
Spare Florence, after all! Let Luria trust
To his own soul, he whom I trust with mine!
Lur. In time!
Dom. How, Luria?
Lur. It is midnight now,
And they arrive from Florence with my fate.
Dom. I hear no step.
Lur I feel one, as you say.

Enter HUSAIN.

Hus. The man returned from Florence!
Lur. * As I knew.
Hus. He seeks thee.
Lur. And I only wait for him.
Aught else?
Hus. A movement of the Lucchese troops
Southward—
Lur. Toward Florence? Have out instantly .. .
Ah, old use clings! Puccio must care henceforth.
In—quick—' tis nearly midnight! Bid him come!

Enter TIBURZIO, BRACCIO, *and* Puccio.

Tiburzio?—not at Pisa?
Tib. I return
From Florence: I serve Pisa, and must think
By such procedure I have served her best.
A people is but the attempt of many
To rise to the completer life of one;
And those who live as models for the mass
Are singly of more value than they all.
Such man are you, and such a time is this,
That your sole fate concerns a nation more
Than much apparent welfare: that to prove
Your rectitude, and duly crown the same,
mports us far beyond to-day's event,
A battle's loss or gain: man's mass remains,—
Keep but God's model safe, new men will rise
To take its mould, and other days to prove
How great a good was Luria's glory. True—
I might go try my fortune as you urged,
And, joining Lucca, helped by your disgrace,
Repair our harm—so were to-day's work done;
But where leave Luria for our sons to see?
No, I look farther. I have testified
(Declaring my submission to your arms)
Her full success to Florence, making clear
Your probity, as none else could: I spoke,
And out it shone!
Lur. Ah—until Braccio spoke!
Brac. Till Braccio told in just a word the whole—
His lapse to error, his return to knowledge:
Which told... Nay, Luria,/should droop the head,
I whom shame rests with! Yet I dare look up,
Sure of your pardon now I sue for it,
Knowing you wholly. Let the midnight end!
'Tis morn approaches! Still you answer not?
Sunshine succeeds the shadow past away;
Our faces, which phantasmal grew and false,
Are all that felt it: they change round you, turn
Truly themselves now in its vanishing.
Speak, Luria! Here begins your true career:
Look up, advance! All now is possible,
Fact's grandeur, no false dreaming! Dare and do!
And every prophecy shall be fulfilled
Save one—(nay, now your word must come at last)
—That you would punish Florence!
Hus. [pointing to LURIA'S *dead body].* That is done.

A SOUL'S TRAGEDY

1846

ACT FIRST, BEING WHAT WAS CALLED THE POETRY OF CHIAPPINO'S LIFE: AND ACT SECOND, ITS PROSE

PERSONS

LUITOLFO *and* EULALIA, *betrothed lovers.*
CHIAPPINO, *their friend.*
OGNIBEN, *the Pope's Legate.*
Citizens of Faenza.

TIME, 15—. PLACE, *Faenza.*

ACT I

SCENE.—INSIDe LUITOLFO'S *house. few* minutes, such a very few, to say!

CHIAPPINO, EULALIA. LORD

Eu. What is it keeps Luitolfo? Night's fast falling,
And 'twas scarce sunset... had the ave-bell
Sounded before he sought the Provost's house?
I think not: all he had to say would take
How do you think, Chiappino? If our
The Provost were less friendly to your friend
Than everybody here professes him,
I should begin to tremble—should not you?
Why are you silent when so many times

I turn and speak to you?
Ch. That's good!
Eu. You laugh!
Ch. Yes. I had fancied nothing that bears price
In the whole world was left to call my own;
And, may be, felt a little pride thereat.
Up to a single man's or woman's love,
Down to the right in my own flesh and blood,
There's nothing mine, I fancied,—till you spoke:
—Counting, you see, as 'nothing' the permission
To study this peculiar lot of mine
In silence: well, go silence with the rest
Of the world's good! What can I say, snail serve?
Eu. This,—lest you, even more than needs, embitter
Our parting: say your wrongs have cast, for once,
A cloud across your spirit!
Ch. How a cloud?
Eu. No man nor woman loves you, did you say?
Ch. My God, were't not for thee!
Eu. Ay, God remains,
Even did men forsake you.
Ch. Oh, not so!
Were't not for God, I mean, what hope of truth-
Speaking truth, hearing truth, would stay with man?
I, now—the homeless friendless penniless
Proscribed and exiled wretch who speak to you,—
Ought to speak truth, yet could not, for my death,
(The thing that tempts me most) help speaking lies
About your friendship and Luitolfo's courage
And all our townsfolk's equanimity—
Through sheer incompetence to rid myself
Of the old miserable lying trick
Caught from the liars I have lived with,—God,
Did I not turn to thee! It is thy prompting
I dare to be ashamed of, and thy counsel
Would die along my coward lip, I know.
But I do turn to thee. This craven tongue,
These features which refuse the soul its way,
Reclaim thou! Give me truth—truth, power to speak—
And after be sole present to approve
The spoken truth! Or, stay, that spoken truth,
Who knows but you, too, may approve?
Eu. Ah, well-
Keep silence then, Chiappino!
Ch. You would hear,
You shall now,—why the thing we please to style
My gratitude to you and all your friends
For service done me, is just gratitude
So much as yours was service: no whit more.
I was born here, so was Luitolfo; both
At one time, much with the same circumstance
Of rank and wealth; and both, up to this night
Of parting company, have side by side
Still fared, he in the sunshine—I, the shadow.
' Why ?' asks the world. ' Because,' replies the world
To its complacent self,' these playfellows,
'Who took at church the holy-water drop
'Each from the other's finger, and so forth,—
'Were of two moods: Luitolfo was the proper
'Friend-making, everywhere friend-finding soul,
'Fit for the sunshine, so, it followed him.
'A happy-tempered bringer of the best
'Out of the worst; who bears with what's past cure,
'And puts so good a face on't—wisely passive
'Where action's fruitless, while he remedies
'In silence what the foolish rail against;
'A man to smooth such natures as parade
'Of opposition must exasperate;
'No general gauntlet-gatherer for the weak
'Against the strong, yet over-scrupulous
'At lucky junctures; one who won't forego
'The after-battle work of binding wounds,
' Because, forsooth he'd have to bring himself
'To side with wound-inflictors for their leave!'
—Why do you gaze, nor help me to repeat
What comes so glibly from the common mouth,
About Luitolfo and his so-styled friend?
Eu. Because that friend's sense is obscured .. .
Ch. I thought
You would be readier with the other half
Of the world's story, my half! Yet, 'tis true.
For all the world does say it. Say your worst!
True, I thank God, I ever said 'you sin,'
When a man did sin: if I could not say it,
I glared it at him; if I could not glare it.
I prayed against him; then my part seemed over.
God's may begin yet: so it will, I trust.
Eu. If the world outraged you, did we?

Ch. What's 'me'
That you use well or ill? It's man, in me,
All your successes are an outrage to,
You all, whom sunshine follows, as you say!
Here's our Faenza birthplace; they send here
A provost from Ravenna: how he rules,
You can at times be eloquent about.
'Then, end his rule!'—* Ah yes, one stroke does that!
'But patience under wrong works slow and sure.
'Must violence still bring peace forth? He, beside,
'Returns so blandly one's obeisance! ah—
'Some latent virtue may be lingering yet,
'Some human sympathy which, once excite,
'And all the lump were leavened quietly:
'So, no more talk of striking, for this time!'
But I, as one of those he rules, won't bear
These pretty takings-up and layings-down
Our cause, just as you think occasion suits.
Enough of earnest, is there? You'll play, will you?
Diversify your tactics, give submission,
Obsequiousness and flattery a turn,
While we die in our misery patient deaths?
We all are outraged then, and I the first:
I, for mankind, resent each shrug and smirk,
Each beck and bend, each ... all you do and are,
I hate!

Eu. We share a common censure, then.
'Tis well you have not poor Luitolfo's part
Nor mine to point out in the wide offence.

Ch. Oh, shall I let you so escape me, lady?
Come, on your own ground, lady,—from yourself,
(Leaving the people's wrong, which most is mine)
What have I got to be so grateful for?
These three last fines, no doubt, one on the other
Paid by Luitolfo?

Eu. Shame, Chiappino!

Ch. Shame
Fall presently on who deserves it most!
—Which is to see. He paid my fines—my friend,
Your prosperous smooth lover presently,
Then, scarce your wooer,—soon, your husband: well—
I loved you.

Eu. Hold!

Ch. You knew it, years ago.
When my voice faltered and my eye grew dim
Because you gave me your silk mask to hold—
My voice that greatens when there's need to curse
The people's Provost to their heart's content,
—My eye, the Provost, who bears all men's eyes,
Banishes now because he cannot bear,—
You knew... but you do your parts—my part, I:
So be it! You flourish, I decay: all's well.

Eu. I hear this for the first time.

Ch. The fault's there?
Then my days spoke not, and my nights of fire
Were voiceless? Then the very heart may burst,
Yet all prove nought, because no mincing speech
Tells leisurely that thus it is and thus?
Eulalia, truce with toying for this once!
A banished fool, who troubles you to-night
For the last time—why, what's to fear from me?
You knew I loved you!

Eu. Not so, on my faith!
You were my now-afiianced lover's friend—
Came in, went out with him, could speak as he.
All praise your ready parts and pregnant wit;
See how your words come from you in a crowd!
Luitolfo's first to place you o'er himself
In all that challenges respect and love:
Yet you were silent then, who blame me now.
I say all this by fascination, sure:
I, all but wed to one I love, yet listen!
It must be, you are wronged, and that the wrongs
Luitolfo pities ...

Ch. —You too pity? Do!
But hear first what my wrongs are; so began
This talk and so shall end this talk. I say,
Was't not enough that I must strive (I saw)
To grow so far familiar with your charms
As next contrive some way to win them—which
To do, an age seemed far too brief—for, see!
We all aspire to heaven; and there lies heaven
Above us: go there! Dare we go? no, surely!
How dare we go without a reverent pause,
A growing less unfit for heaven? Just so,
I dared not speak: the greater fool, it seems!
Was't not enough to struggle with such folly,
But I must have, beside, the very man

Whose slight free loose and incapacious soul
Gave his tongue scope to say whate'er he would
—Must have him load me with his benefits
—For fortune's fiercest stroke?
Eu. Justice to him
That's now entreating, at his risk perhaps,
Justice for you! Did he once call those acts
Of simple friendship—bounties, benefits?
Ch. No: the straight course had been to call them thus.
Then, I had flung them back, and kept myself
Unhampered, free as he to win the prize
We both sought. But 'the gold was dross,' he said:
'He loved me, and I loved him not: why spurn
'A trifle out of superfluity?
'He had forgotten he had done as much.'
So had not I! Henceforth, try as I could
To take him at his word, there stood by you
My benefactor; who might speak and laugh
And urge his nothings, even banter me
Before you—but my tongue was tied. A dream!
Let's wake: your husband .. • how you shake at that!
Good—my revenge!
Eu. Why should I shake? What forced
Or forces me to be Luitolfo's bride?
Ch. There's my revenge, that nothing forces you.
No gratitude, no liking of the eye
Nor longing of the heart, but the poor bond
Of habit—here so many times he came,
So much he spoke,—all these compose the tie
That pulls you from me. Well, he paid my fines,
Nor missed a cloak from wardrobe, dish from table;
He spoke a good word to the Provost here,
Held me up when my fortunes fell away
—It had not looked so well to let me drop—
Men take pains to preserve a tree-stump, even,
Whose boughs they played beneath—much more a friend.
But one grows tired of seeing, after the first,
Pains spent upon impracticable stuff
Like me. I could not change: you know the rest.
I've spoke[n] my mind too fully out, by chance,
This morning to our Provost; so, ere night
I leave the city on pain of death. And now
On my account there's gallant intercession
Goes forward—that's so graceful!—and anon
He'll noisily come back: 'the intercession
*Was made and fails; all's over for us both;
"Tis vain contending; I would better go.'
And I do go—and straight to you he turns
Light of a load; and ease of that permits
His visage to repair the natural bland
CEconomy, sore broken late to suit
My discontent. Thus, all are pleased—you, with him,
He with himself, and all of you with me
—'Who,' say the citizens, 'had done far better
'In letting people sleep upon their woes,
'If not possessed with talent to relieve them
'When once awake;—but then I had,' they'll say,
'Doubtless some unknown compensating pride
'In what I did; and as I seem content
'With ruining myself, why, so should they be.'
And so they are, and so be with his prize
The devil, when he gets them speedily!
Why does not your Luitolfo come? I long
To don this cloak and take the Lugo path.
It seems you never loved me, then?
Eu. Chiappino!
Ch. Never?
Eu. Never.
Ch. That's sad. Say what I might,
There was no help from being sure this while
You loved me. Love like mine must have return,
I thought: no river starts but to some sea.
And had you loved me, I could soon devise
Some specious reason why you stifled love,
Some fancied self-denial on your part.
Which made you choose Luitolfo; so, excepting
From the wide condemnation of all here,
One woman. Well, the other dream may break!
If I knew any heart, as mine loved you,
Loved me, though in the vilest breast 'twere lodged,
I should, I think, be forced to love again:
Else there's no right nor reason in the world.
Eu. 'If you knew,' say you,—but I did not know.
That's where you're blind, Chiappino!—a disease
Which if I may remove, I'll not repent
The listening to. You cannot, will not, see
How, place you but in every circumstance
Of us, you are just now indignant at,
You'd be as we.
Ch. I should be? . . . that; again!
I, to my friend, my country and my love,

Be as Luitolfo and these Faentines?
Eu. As we.
Ch. NOw, I'll say something to remember.
I trust in nature for the stable laws
Of beauty and utility.—Spring shall plant,
And Autumn garner to the end of time:
I trust in God—the right shall be the right
And other than the wrong, while he endures:
I trust in my own soul, that can perceive
The outward and the inward, nature's good
And God's: so, seeing these men and myself,
Having a right to speak, thus do I speak.
I'll not curse—God bears with them, well may I –
But I—protest against their claiming me.
I simply say, if that's allowable,
I would not (broadly) do as they have done.
—God curse this townful of born slaves, bred slaves,
Branded into the blood and bone, slaves! Curse
Whoever loves, above his liberty,
House, land or life! and . . .
[A knocking without.
—bless my hero-friend,
Luitolfo!
Eu. How he knocks!
Ch. The peril, lady!
'Chiappino, I have run a risk—a risk!
'For when I prayed the Provost (he's my friend)
'To grant you a week's respite of the sentence
'That confiscates your goods, exiles yourself,
'He shrugged his shoulder—I say, shrugged it! Yes,
'And fright of that drove all else from my head.
'Here's a good] purse of *scudi:* off with you,
'Lest of that shrug come what God only knows!
'The *scudi*—friend, they're trash—no thanks, I beg!
'Take the north gate,—for San Vitale's suburb,
'Whose double taxes you appealed against,
'In discomposure at your ill-success
'Is apt to stone you: there, there—only go!
'Beside, Eulalia here looks sleepily.
'Shake... oh, you hurt me, so you squeeze my wrist!'
—Is it not thus you'll speak, adventurous friend?
[As he opens the door, LUITOLFO *rushes in, his garments disordered.*
Eu. Luitolfo! Blood?
Luit. There's more —and more of it!
Eulalia—take the garment! No—you, friend!
You take it and the blood from me—you dare!
Eu. Oh, who has hurt you ? where's the wound?
Ch. 'Who.' say you?
The man with many a touch of virtue yet!
The Provost's friend has proved too frank of speech,
And this comes of it. Miserable hound!
This comes of temporizing, as I said!
Here's fruit of your smooth speeches and soft looks!
Now see my way! As God lives, I *zo* straight
To the palace and do justice, once for all!
Luit. What says he?
Ch. I'll do justice on him.
Luit. Him?
Ch. The Provost.
Luit. I've just killed him.
Eu. Oh, my God!
Luit. Mv friend, they're on my trace; they'll have me—now!
They're round him, busy with him: soon they'll find
He's past their help, and then they'll be on me!
Chiappino, save Eulalia! I forget. ..
Were you not bound for . , .
Ch. Lugo?
Luit. Ah—yes—yes!
That was the point I prayed of him to change.
Well, go—be happy! Is Eulalia safe?
They're on me!
Ch. 'Tis through me they reach you,then!
Friend, seem the man you are! Lock arms —that's right!
Now tell me what you've done; explain how you
That still professed forbearance, still preached peace,
Could bring yourself...
Luit. What was peace for, Chiappino?
I tried peace: did that promise, when peace failed,
Strife should not follow ? All my peaceful days
Were just the prelude to a day like this.
I cried 'You call me "friend": save my true friend!
'Save him, or lose me!'
Ch. But you never said
You meant to tell the Provost thus and thus.
Luit. Why should I say it? What else did I mean ?
Ch. Well? He persisted?

Luit. —'Would so order it
'You should not trouble him too soon again.,'
I saw a meaning in his eye and lip;
I poured my heart's store of indignant words
Out on him: then—I know not I He retorted,
And I . . . some staff lay there to hand—I think
He bade his servants thrust me out—I struck ...
Ah, they come! Fly you, save yourselves, you two!
The dead back-weight of the beheading axe!
The glowing trip-hook, thumbscrews and the gadge !
Eu. They do cornel Torches in the Place! Farewell,
Chiappino! You can work no good to us—
Much to yourself; believe not, all the world
Much needs be cursed henceforth!
Ch. And you?
Eu. I stay.
Ch. Ha, ha! Now, listen! I am master here!
This was my coarse disguise; this paper shows
My path of flight and place of refuge—see-
Lugo, Argenta, past San Nicolo,
Ferrara, then to Venice and all's safe!
Put on the cloak! His people have to fetch
A compass round about. There's time enough
Ere they can reach us, so you straightway make
For Lugo... nay, he hears not! On with it—
The cloak, Luitolfo, do you hear me? See—
He obeys he knows not how. Then, if I must—
Answer me! Do you know the Lugo gate?
Eu. The north-west gate, over the bridge?
Luit. I know.
Ch. Well, there—you are not frightened? all my route
Is traced in that: at Venice you escape
Their power. Eulalia, I am master here!
[Shouts from without. He pushes out LUITOLFO, *who complies mechanically.*
In time! Nay, help me with him—so! He's gone.
Eu. What have you done? On you, perchance, all know
The Provost's hater, will men's vengeance fall
As our accomplice.
Ch. Mere accomplice? Seei
[Putting on LUITOLFO'S *vest.*
Now, lady, am I true to my profession,
Or one of these?
Eu. You take Luitolfo's place?
Ch. Die for him.
Eu. Well done!
[Shouts increase,
Ch. How the people tarry!
I can't be silent; I must speak: or sing—
How natural to sing now!
Eu. Hush and pray!
We are to die; but even I perceive
'Tis not a very hard thing so to die.
My cousin of the pale-blue tearful eyes.
Poor Cesca, suffers more from one day's life
With the stern husband; Tisbe's heart goes forth
Each evening after that wild son of hers,
To track his thoughtless footstep through the streets:
How easy for them both to die like this!
I am not sure that I could live as they.
Ch. Here they come, crowds! They pass the gate? Yes!—No!—
One torch is in the courtyard. Here flock all.
Eu. At least Luitolfo has escaped. What cries!
Ch. If they would drag one to the market-place,
One might speak there!
Eu. List, list!
Ch. They mount the steps.

Enter the Populace.

Ch. I killed the Provost!
The Populace [speaking together]. 'Twas Chiappino, friends!
Our saviour! The best man at last as first!
He who first made us feel what chains we wore,
He also strikes the blow that shatters them,
He at last saves us—our best citizen!
—Oh, have you only courage to speak now?
My eldest son was christened a year since
'Cino' to keep Chiappino's name in mind—
Cino, for shortness merely, you observe!
The city's in our hands. The guards are fled.
Do you, the cause of all, come down—come up—
Come out to counsel us, our chief, our king,
Whate'er rewards you! Choose your own reward!
The peril over, its reward begins!
Come and harangue us in the market-place!
Eu. Chiappino?
Ch. Yes—I understand your eyes I

You think I should have promptlier disowned
This deed with its strange unforeseen success,
In favour of Luitolfo. But the peril,
So far from ended, hardly seems begun.
To-morrow, rather, when a calm succeeds,
We easily shall make him full amends:
And meantime—if we save them as they pray,
And justify the deed by its effects?

Eu. You would, for worlds, you had denied at once.

Ch. I know my own intention, be assured!

All's well. Precede us, fellow-citizens!

ACT II

SCENE.—*The Market-place.* LUITOLFO *in disguise mingling with the* Populace *assembled opposite the* Provost's *Palace.*

1st Bystander [to LUITOLFO]. You, a friend of Luitolfo's? Then, your friend is vanished,—in all probability killed on the night that his patron the tyrannical Provost was loyally suppressed here, exactly a month ago, by our illustrious fellow-citizen, thrice-noble saviour, and new Provost that is like to be, this very morning,—Chiappino!

Luit. He the new Provost?

2nd Bys. Up those steps will he go, and beneath yonder pillar stand, while Ogniben, the Pope's Legate from Ravenna, reads the new dignitary's title to the people, according to established custom: for which reason, there is the assemblage you inquire about.

Luit. Chiappino—the late Provost's successor? Impossible! But tell me of that presently. What I would know first of all is, wherefore Luitolfo must so necessarily have been killed on that memorable night?

3rd Bys. You were Luitolfo's friend? So was I. Never, if you will credit me, did there exist so poor-spirited a milksop. He, with all the opportunities in the world, furnished by daily converse with our oppressor, would not stir a finger to help us: and, when Chiappino rose in solitary majesty and . . . how does one go on saying? . . . dealt the godlike blow,—this Luitolfo, not unreasonably fearing the indignation of an aroused and liberated people, fled precipitately. He may have got trodden to death in the press at the south-east gate, when the Provost's guards fled through it to Ravenna, with their wounded master,—if he did not rather hang himself under some hedge.

Luit. Or why not simply have lain perdue in some quiet corner,—such as San Cassiano, where his estate was,—receiving daily intelligence from some sure friend, meanwhile, as to the turn matters were taking here—how, for instance, the Provost was not dead, after all, only wounded—or, as to-day's news would seem to prove, how Chiappino was not Brutus the Elder, after all, only the new Provost—and thus Luitolfo be enabled to watch a favourable opportunity for returning? Might it not have been so?

3rd Bys. Why, he may have taken that care of himself, certainly, for he came of a cautious stock. I'll tell you how his uncle, just such another gingerly treader on tiptoes with finger on lip,—how he met his death in the great plague-year: *dico vobis!* Hearing that the seventeenth house in a certain street was infected, he calculates to pass it in safety by taking plentiful breath, say, when he shall arrive at the eleventh house; then scouring by, holding that breath, till he be got so far on the other side as number twenty-three, and thus elude the danger.—And so did he begin; but, as he arrived at thirteen, we will say,—thinking to improve on his precaution by putting up a little prayer to St. Nepomucene of Prague, this exhausted so much of his lungs' reserve, that at sixteen it was clean spent,—consequently at the fatal seventeen he inhaled with a vigour and persistence enough to suck you any latent venom out of the heart of a stone—Ha, ha!

Luit. [aside]. (If I had not lent that man the money he wanted last spring, I should fear this bitterness was attributable to me.) Luitolfo is dead then, one may conclude?

3rd Bys. Why, he had a house here, and a woman to whom he was affianced; and as they both pass naturally to the new Provost, his friend and heir . . .

Luit. Ah, I suspected you of imposing on me with your pleasantry! I know Chiappino better.

1st Bys. (Our friend has the bile! After all, I do not dislike finding somebody vary a little this general gape of admiration at Chiappino's glorious qualities.) Pray, how much may you know of what has taken place in Faenza since that memorable night?

Luit. It is most to the purpose, that I know Chiappino to have been by profession a hater of that very office of Provost, you now charge him with proposing to accept.

1st Bys. Sir, I'll tell you. That night was indeed memorable. Up we rose, a mass of us, men, women, children; out fled the guards with the body of the tyrant; we were to defy the world: but, next grey morning, 'What will Rome say?' began everybody.

You know we are governed by Ravenna, which is governed by Rome. And quietly into the town, by the Ravenna road, comes on muleback a portly personage, Ogniben by name, with the quality of Pontifical Legate; trots briskly through the streets humming a *Cur fremuere gentes?* and makes directly for the Provost's Palace—there it faces you. 'One Messer Chiappino is your leader? I have known three-and-twenty leaders of revolts!' (laughing gently to himself)—'Give me the help of your arm from my mule to yonder steps under the pillar—So! And now, my revolters and good friends, what do you want ? The guards burst into Ravenna last night bearing your wounded Provost; and, having had a little talk with him, I take on myself to come and try appease the disorderliness, before Rome, hearing of it, resort to another method: 'tis I come, and not another, from a certain love I confess to, of composing differences. So, do you understand, you are about to experience this unheard-of tyranny from me, that there shall be no heading nor hanging, no confiscation nor exile: I insist on your simply pleasing yourselves. And now, pray, what does please you? To live without any government at all? Or having decided for one, to see its minister murdered by the first of your body that chooses to find himself wronged, or disposed for reverting to first principles and a justice anterior to all institutions,—and so will you carry matters, that the rest of the world must at length unite and put down such a den of wild beasts? As for vengeance on what has just taken place,—once for all, the wounded man assures me he cannot conjecture who struck him; and this so earnestly, that one may be sure he knows perfectly well what intimate acquaintance could find admission to speak with him late last evening. I come not for vengeance therefore, but from pure curiosity to hear what you will do next.' And thus he ran on, on, easily and volubly, till he seemed to arrive quite naturally at the praise of law, order, and paternal government by somebody from rather a distance. All our citizens were in the snare, and about to be friends with so congenial an adviser; but that Chiappino suddenly stood forth, spoke out indignantly, and set things right again.

Luit. Do you see ? I recognize him there!

3rd Bys. Ay but, mark you, at the end of Chiappino's longest period in praise of a pure republic,—'And by whom do I desire such a government should be administered, perhaps, but by one like yourself?'—returns the Legate: thereupon speaking for a quarter of an hour together, on the natural and only legitimate government by the best and wisest. And it should seem there was soon discovered to be no such vast discrepancy at bottom between this and Chiappino's theory, place but each in its proper light. 'Oh, are you there?' quoth Chiappino: 'Ay. in that, I agree,' returns Chiappino: and so on.

Luit. But did Chiappino cede at once to this?

Ist *Bys.* Why, not altogether at once, For instance, he said that the difference between him and all his fellows was, that they seemed all wishing to be kings in one or another way,—'whereas what right,' asked he,' has any man to wish to be superior to another?'—whereat, 'Ah, sir,' answers the Legate, 'this is the death of me, so often as I expect something is really going to be revealed to us by you clearer-seers, deeper-thinkers—this—that your right-hand (to speak by a figure) should be found taking up the weapon it displayed so ostentatiously, not to destroy any dragon in our path, as was prophesied, but simply to cut off its own fellow left-hand: yourself set about attacking yourself. For see now! Here are you who, I make sure, glory exceedingly in knowing the noble nature of the soul, its divine impulses, and so forth; and with such a knowledge you stand, as it were, armed to encounter the natural doubts and fears as to that same inherent nobility, which are apt to waylay us, the weaker ones, in the road of life, And when we look eagerly to see them fall before you, lo, round you wheel, only the left-hand gets the blow; one proof of the soul's nobility destroys simply another proof, quite as good, of the same, for you are found delivering an opinion like this! Why, what is this perpetual yearning to exceed, to subdue, to be better than, and a king over, one's fellows,—all that you so disclaim,—but the very tendency yourself are most proud of, and under another form, would oppose to it,—only in a lower stage of manifestation ? You don't want to be vulgarly superior to your fellows after their poor fashion—to have me hold solemnly up your gown's tail, or hand you an express of the last importance from the Pope, with all these bystanders noticing how unconcerned you look the while: but neither does our gaping friend, the burgess yonder, want the other kind of kingship, that consists in understanding better than his fellows this and similar points of human nature, nor to roll under his tongue this sweeter morsel still,—the feeling that, through immense philosophy, he does *not* feel, he rather thinks, above you and me!' And so chatting, they glided off arm-in-arm.

Luit. And the result is . . .

1 *st Bys.* WhjOfeat, amonth having gone by, the indomitable Chiappino, marrying as he will Luitolfo's love—at all events succeeding to Luitolfo's wealth—becomes the first inhabitant of Faenza, and a proper aspirant to the Provostship; which we assemble here to see conferred on him this morning. The Legate's Guard to clear the way! He will follow presently.

Luit. [withdrawing a little]. I understand the drift of Eulalia's communications less than ever. Yet she surely said, in so many words, that Chiappino was in urgent danger: wherefore, disregarding her injunction to continue in my retreat and await the result of—what she called, some experiment yet in process—I hastened here without her leave or knowledge: how could I else? But if this they say be true—if it were for such a purpose, she and Chiappino kept me away... Oh, no, no! I must confront him and her before I believe this of them. And at the word, see!

Enter CHIAPPINO *and* EULALIA.

Eu. We part here, then? The change in your principles would seem to be complete.

Ch. Now, why refuse to see that in my present course I change no principles, only re-adapt them and more adroitly? I had despaired of, what you may call the material instrumentality of life; of ever being able to rightly operate on mankind through such a deranged machinery as the existing modes of government: but now, if I suddenly discover how to inform these perverted institutions with fresh purpose, bring the functionary limbs once more into immediate communication with, and subjection to, the soul I am about to bestow on them—do you see? Why should one desire to invent, as long as it remains possible to renew and transform ? When all further hope of the old organization shall be extinct, then, I grant you, it may be time to try and create another.

Eu. And there being discoverable some hope yet in the hitherto much-abused old system of absolute government by a Provost here, you mean to take your time about endeavouring to realize those visions of a perfect State, we once heard of?

Ch. Say, I would fain realize my conception of a palace, for instance, and that there is, abstractedly, but a single way of erecting one perfectly. Here, in the market-place is my allotted building-ground; here I stand without a stone to lay, or a labourer to help me,—stand, too, during a short day of life, close on which the night comes. On the other hand, circumstances suddenly offer me (turn and see it!) the old Provost's house to experiment upon—ruinous, if you please, wrongly constructed at the beginning, and ready to tumble now. But materials abound, a crowd of workmen offer their services; here, exists yet a Hall of Audience of originally noble proportions, there a Guest-chamber of symmetrical design enough: and I may restore, enlarge, abolish or unite these to heart's content. Ought I not make the best of such an opportunity, rather than continue to gaze disconsolately with folded arms on the flat pavement here, while the sun goes slowly down, never to rise again? Since you cannot understand this nor me, it is better we should part as you desire.

Eu. So, the love breaks away too!

Ch. No, rather my soul's capacity for love widens—needs more than one object to content it,—and, being better instructed, will not persist in seeing all the component parts of love in what is only a single part,—nor in finding that so many and so various loves are all united in the love of a woman,—manifold uses in one instrument, as the savage has his sword, staff, sceptre and idol, all in one club-stick. Love is a very compound thing. The intellectual part of my love I shall give to men, the mighty dead or the illustrious living; and determine to call a mere sensual instinct by as few fine names as possible. What do I lose?

Eu. Nay, I only think, what do I lose ? and, one more word—which shall complete my instruction—does friendship go too ? What of Luitolfo, the author of your present prosperity?

Ch. How the author?

Eu. That blow now called yours .. .

Ch. Struck without principle or purpose, as by a blind natural operation: yet to which all my thought and life directly and advisedly tended. I would have struck it, and could not: he would have done his utmost to avoid striking it, yet did so. I dispute his right to that deed of mine—a final action with him, from the first effect of which he fled away,—a mere first step with me, on which I base a whole mighty superstructure of good to follow. Could he get good from it?

Eu. So we profess, so we perform!

Enter OGNIBEN. EULALIA *stands apart.*

Ogni. I have seen three-and-twenty leaders of revolts. By your leave, sir! Perform? What does the lady say of performing?

Ch. Only the trite saying, that we must not trust profession, only performance.

Ogni. She'll not say that, sir, when she knows you longer; you'll instruct her better. Ever judge of men by their pro-

fessions! For though the bright moment of promising is but a moment and cannot be prolonged, yet, if sincere in its moment's extravagant goodness, why, trust it and know the man by it, I say—not by his performance; which is half the world's work, interfere as the world needs must, with its accidents and circumstances: the profession was purely the man's own. I judge people by what they might be,—not are, nor will be.

Ch. But have there not been found, too, performing natures, not merely promising?

Ogni. Plenty. Little Bindo of our town, for instance, promised his friend, great ugly Masaccio, once, 'I will repay you!'—for a favour done him. So, when his father came to die, and Bindo succeeded to the inheritance, he sends straightway for Masaccio and shares all with him—gives him half the land, half the money, half kegs of wine in the cellar. ' Good,' say you: and it is good. But had little Bindo found himself possessor of all this wealth some five years before—on the happy night when Masaccio procured him that interview in the garden with his pretty cousin Lisa—instead of being the beggar he then was,—I am bound to believe that in the warm moment of promise he would have given away all the wine-kegs and all the money and all the land, and only reserved to himself some hut on a hill-top hard by, whence he might spend his life in looking and seeing his friend enjoy himself: he meant fully that much, but the world interfered.—To our business! Did I understand you just now within-doors ? You are not going to marry your old friend's love, after all ?

Ch, I must have a woman that can sympathize with, and appreciate me, I told you.

Ogni. Oh, I remember! you, the greater nature, needs must have a lesser one (— avowedly lesser—contest with you on that score would never do)—such a nature must comprehend you, as the phrase is, accompany and testify of your greatness from point to point onward. Why, that were being not merely as great as yourself, but greater considerably! Meantime, might not the more bounded nature as reasonably count on your appreciation of it, rather?—on your keeping close by it, so far as you both go together, and then going on by yourself as far as you please ? Thus you have got a truth in your head about the God serves us. right

Ch. And yet a woman that could understand the whole of me, to whom I could reveal alike the strength and the weakness—

Ogni. Ah, my friend, wish for nothing so foolish! Worship your love, give her the best of you to see; be to her like the western lands (they bring us such strange news of) to the Spanish Court; send her only your lumps of gold, fans of feathers, your spirit-like birds, and fruits and gems! So shall you, what is unseen of you, be supposed altogether a paradise by her,—as these western lands by Spain: though I warrant there is filth, red baboons, ugly reptiles and squalor enough, which they bring Spain as few samples of as possible. Do you want your mistress to respect your body generally? Offer her your mouth to kiss: don't strip off your boot and put your foot to her lips! You understand my humour by this time? I help men to carry out their own principles: if they please to say two and two make five, I assent, so they will but go on and say, four and four make ten.

Ch. But these are my private affairs; what I desire you to occupy yourself about, is my public appearance presently: for when the people hear that I am appointed Provost, though you and I may thoroughly discern—and easily, too—the right principle at bottom of such a movement, and how my republicanism remains thoroughly unaltered, only takes a form of expression hitherto commonly judged (and heretofore by myself) incompatible with its existence,—when thus I reconcile myself to an old form of government instead of proposing a new one .. .

Ogni. Why, you must deal with people broadly. Begin at a distance from this matter and say,—New truths, old truths 1 all we shall ever know: and it is for simply reminding us, by their various respective expedients, how we do know this and the other matter, that men get called prophets, poets and the like. A philosopher's life is spent in discovering that, of the half-dozen truths he knew when a child, such an one is a lie, as the world states it in set terms; and then, after a weary lapse of years, and plenty of hard-thinking, it becomes a truth again after all, as he happens to newly consider it and view it in a different relation with the others: and so he restates it, to the confusion of somebody else in good time, As for adding to the original stock of truths,—impossible! Thus, you see the expression of them is the grand business:—

right way of governing people, and you took a mode of expressing it which now you confess to be imperfect. But what then? There is truth in falsehood, falsehood in truth. No man ever told one great truth, that I know, without the help of a

good dozen of lies at least, generally unconscious ones? AM *M* when a child comes in breathlessly and relates a strange story, you try to conjecture from the very falsities in it, what the reality was,—do not conclude that he saw nothing in the sky, because he assuredly did not see a flying horse there as he says,—so, through the contradictory expression, do you see, men should look painfully for, and trust to arrive eventually at, what you call the true principle at bottom. Ah, what an answer is there! to what will it not prove applicable?—'Contradictions? Of course there were,' say you!

Ch. Still, the world at large may call it inconsistency, and what shall I urge in reply ?

Ogni Why, look you, when they tax you with tergiversation or duplicity, you may answer—you begin to perceive that, when all's done and said, both great parties in the State, the advocators of change in the present system of things, and the opponents of it, patriot and anti-patriot, are found working together for the common good; and that in the midst of their efforts for and against its progress, the world somehow or other still advances: to which result they contribute in equal proportions, those who spend their life in pushing it onward, as those who give theirs to the business of pulling it back. Now, if you found the world stand still between the opposite forces, and were glad, I should conceive you: but it steadily advances, you rejoice to see! Bythesideofsucharejoicer, the man who only winks as he keeps cunning and quiet, and says, * Let yonder hot-headed fellow fight out my battle! I, for one, shall win in the end by the blows he gives, and which I ought to be giving'—even he seems graceful in his avowal, when one considers that he might say, 'I shall win quite as much by the blows our antagonist gives him, blows from which he saves me—I thank the antagonist equally!' Moreover, you may enlarge on the loss of the edge of party-animosity with age and experience . . .

Ch. And naturally time must wear off such asperities: the bitterest adversaries get to discover certain points of similarity between each other, common sympathies —do they not?

Ogni Ay, had the young David but sat first to dine on his cheeses with the Philistine, he had soon discovered an abundance of such common sympathies. HeofGath, it is recorded, was born of a father and mother, had brothers and sisters like another man,—they, no more than the sons of Jesse, were used to eat each other, But, for the sake of one broad antipathy that had existed from the beginning, David slung the stone, cut off the giant's head, made a spoil of it, and after ate his cheeses alone, with the better appetite, for all I can learn. My friend, as you, with a quickened eye-sight, go on discovering much good on the worse side, remember that the same process should proportionately magnify and demonstrate to you the much more good on the better side! And when I profess no sympathy for the Goliaths of our time, and you object that a large nature should sympathize with every form of intelligence, and see the good in it, however limited—I answer, * So I do; but preserve the proportions of my sympathy, however finelier or widelier I may extend its action.' I desire to be able, with a quickened eye-sight, to descry beauty in corruption where others see foulness only: but I hope I shall also continue to see a redoubled beauty in the higher forms of matter, where already everybody sees no foulness at all. I must retain, too, my old power of selection, and choice of appropriation, to apply to such new gifts; else they only dazzle instead of enlightening me. God has his archangels and consorts with them; though he made too, and intimately sees what is good in, the worm, Observe, I speak only as you profess to think and, so, ought to speak: I do justice to your own principles, that is all.

Ch, But you very well know that the two parties do, on occasion, assume each other's characteristics. What more disgusting, for instance, than to see how promptly the newly emancipated slave will adopt, in his own favour, the very measures of precaution, which pressed soreliest on himself as institutions of the tyranny he has just escaped from? Do the classes, hitherto without opinion, get leave to express it? there follows a confederacy immediately, from which—exercise your individual right and dissent, and woe be to you!

Ogni. And a journey over the sea to you! That is the generous way. Cry—* Emancipated slaves, the first excess, and off I go! The first time a poor devil, who has been bastinadoed steadily his whole life long, finds himself let alone and able to legislate, so, begins pettishly, while he rubs his soles,' Woe be to whoever brings anything in the shape of a stick this way!'—you, rather than give up the very innocent pleasure of carrying one to switch flies with,—you go away, to everybody's sorrow. Yet you were quite reconciled to staying at home while the governors used to pass, every now and then, some such edict as ' Let no man indulge in owning a stick which is not thick enough to chastise

our slaves, if need require!' Well, there are pre-ordained hierarchies among us, and a profane vulgar subjected to a different law altogether; yet I am rather sorry you should see it so clearly: for, do you know what is to—all but save you at the Day of Judgment, all you men of genius? It is this: that, while you generally began by pulling down God, and went on to the end of your life, in one effort at setting up your own genius in his place,—still, the last, bitterest concession wrung with the utmost unwillingness from the experience of the very loftiest of you, was invariably—would one think it?—that the rest of mankind, down to the lowest of the mass, stood not, nor ever could stand, just on a level and equality with yourselves. That will be a point in the favour of all such, I hope and believe.

Ch. Why, men of genius are usually charged, I think, with doing just the reverse; and at once acknowledging the natural inequality of mankind, by themselves participating in the universal craving after, and deference to, the civil distinctions which represent it. You wonder they pay such undue respect to titles and badges of superior rank.

OgnL Not I (always on your own ground and showing, be it noted!) Who doubts that, with a weapon to brandish. a man is the more formidable? Titles and badges are exercised as such a weapon, to which you and I look up wistfully. We could pin lions with it moreover, while in its present owner's hands it hardly prods rats. Nay, better than a mere weapon of easy mastery and obvious use, it is a mysterious divining rod that may serve us in undreamed-of ways. Beauty, strength, intellect—men often have none of these, and yet conceive pretty accurately what kind of advantages they would bestow on the possessor. We know at least what it is we make up our mind to forego, and so can apply the fittest substitute in our power. Wanting beauty, we cultivate good humour; missing wit, we get riches: but the mystic unimaginable operation of that gold collar and string of Latin names which suddenly turned poor stupid little peevish Cecco of our town into natural lord of the best of us—a Duke, he is now—there indeed is a virtue to be reverenced!

Ch. Ay, by the vulgar: not by Messere Stiatta the poet, who pays more assiduous court to him than anybody.

Ogni What else should Stiatta pay court to? He has talent, not honour and riches: men naturally covet what they have not.

Ch. No, or Cecco would covet talent, which he has not, whereas he covets more riches, of which he has plenty, already.

Ogni Because a purse added to a purse makes the holder twice as rich: but just such another talent as Stiatta's, added to what he now possesses, what would that profit him? Give the talent a purse indeed, to do something with! But lo, how we keep the good people waiting! I only desired to do justice to the noble sentiments which animate you, and which you are too modest to duly enforce. Come, to our main business: shall we ascend the steps? I am going to propose you for Provost to the people; they know your antecedents, and will accept you with a joyful unanimity: whereon I confirm their choice. Rouse up! Are you nerving yourself to an effort? Beware the disaster of Messere Stiatta we were talking of! who, determining to keep an equal mind and constant face on whatever might be the fortune of his last new poem with our townsmen, heard too plainly 'hiss, hiss, hiss,' increase every moment. Till at last the man fell senseless: not perceiving that the portentous sounds had all the while been issuing from between his own nobly clenched teeth, and nostrils narrowed by resolve

Ch. Do you begin to throw off the mask?—to jest with me, having got me effectually into your trap?

Ogni Where is the trap, my friend? You hear what I engage to do, for my part you, for yours, have only to fulfil your promise made just now within doors, of professing unlimited obedience to Rome's authority in my person. And I shall authorize no more than the simple re-establishment of the Provostship and the conferment of its privileges upon yourself: the only novel stipulation being a birth of the peculiar circumstances of the time,

Ch. And that stipulation?

Ogni Just the obvious one—that in the event of the discovery of the actual assailant of the late Provost...

Ch. Ha!

Ogni Why, he shall suffer the proper penalty, of course; what did you expect?

Ch. Who heard of this?

Ogni Rather, who needed to hear of this?

Ch. Can it be, the popular rumour never reached you ,..

Ogni Many more such rumours reach me. friend, than I choose to receive; those which wait longest have best chance. Has the present one sufficiently waited? Now is its time or entry with effect. See the good people crowding about yonder palace-steps—which we may not have to ascend, after all. My good friends! (nay, two or three of you will answer every purpose)—who was it fell upon and proved nearly the death of your late Provost ? His

successor desires to hear, that his day of inauguration may be graced by the act of prompt bare j us dee we all anticipate. Who dealt the blow that night, does anybody know?

Luit. [coming forward], I;

All Luitolfo!

Luit. I avow the deed, justify and approve it, and stand forth now, to relieve my friend of an unearned responsibility. Having taken thought, I am grown stronger: I shall shrink from nothing that awaits me. Nay, Chiappino—we are friends still: I dare say there is some proof of your superior nature in this starting aside, strange as it seemed at first. So, they tell me, my horse is of the right stock, because a shadow in the path frightens him into a frenzy, makes him dash my brains out. I understand only the dull mule's way of standing stockishly, plodding soberly, suffering on occasion a blow or two with due patience.

Eu. I was determined *to* justify my choice, Chiappino,—to let Luitolfo's nature vindicate itself. Henceforth we are undivided, whatever be our fortune.

Ogni Now, in these last ten minutes of silence, what have I been doing, deem you ? Putting the finishing stroke to a homily of mine, I have long taken thought to perfect, on the text,' Let whoso thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.' To your house, Luitolfo! Still silent, my patriotic friend ? Well, that is a good sign however. And you will go aside for a time ? That is better still. I understand: it would be easy for you to die of remorse here on the spot and shock us all, but you mean to live and grow worthy of coming back to us one day. There, I will tell everybody; and you only do right to believe you must get better as you get older. All men do so: they are worst in childhood, improve in manhood, and get ready in old age for another world. Youth, with its beauty and grace, would seem bestowed on us for some such reason as to make us partly endurable till we have time for really becoming so of ourselves, without their aid; when they leave us. The sweetest child we all smile on for his pleasant want of the whole world to break up, or suck in his mouth, seeing no other good in it—would be rudely handled by that world's inhabitants, if he retained those angelic infantine desires when he had grown six feet high, black and bearded. But, little by little, he sees fit to forego claim after claim on the world, puts up with a less and less share of its good as his proper portion; and when the octogenarian asks barely a sup of gruel and a fire of dry sticks, and thanks you as for his full allowance and right in the common good of life,—hoping nobody may murder him,—he who began by asking and expecting the whole of us to bow down in worship to him,—why, I say he is advanced, far onward, very far, nearly out of sight like our friend Chiappino yonder. And now—(ay, good-bye to you! He turns round the north-west gate: going to Lugo again ? Good-bye!)—and now give thanks to God, the keys of the Provost's palace to me, and yourselves to profitable meditation at home! I have known/w-and-twenty leaders of revolts.

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY

1850

CHRISTMAS EVE

O U T of the little chapel I burst
Into the fresh night-air again.
Five minutes full, I waited first
In the doorway, to escape the rain
That drove in gusts down the common's centre
At the edge of which the chapel stands,
Before I plucked up heart to enter.
Heaven knows how many sorts of hands
Reached past me, groping for the latch
Of the inner door that hung on catch
More obstinate the more they fumbled,
Till, giving way at last with a scold
Of the crazy hinge, in squeezed or tumbled
One sheep more to the rest in fold,
And left me irresolute, standing sentry
In the sheepfold's lath-and-plaster entry,
Six feet long by three feet wide,
Partitioned off from the vast inside—
I blocked up half of it at least.
No remedy; the rain kept driving.
They eyed me much as some wild beast,
That congregation, still arriving,
Some of them by the main road, white
A long way past me into the night,
Skirting the common, then diverging;
Not a few suddenly emerging
From the common's self thro' the paling-gaps,
—They house in the gravel-pits perhaps,
Where the road stops short with its safe-guard border
Of lamps, as tired of such disorder;—

But the most turned in yet more abruptly
From a certain squalid knot of alleys,
Where the town's bad blood once slept corruptly,
Which now the little chapel rallies
And leads into day again,—its priestliness
Lending itself to hide their beastliness
So cleverly (thanks in part to the mason),
And putting so cheery a whitewashed face on
Those neophytes too much in lack of it,
That, where you cross the common as I did,
And meet the party thus presided,
'Mount Zion' with Love-lane at the back of it,
They front you as little disconcerted
As, bound for the hills, her fate averted,
And her wicked people made to mind him,
Lot might have marched with Gomorrah behind him.

Well, from the road, the lanes or the common,
In came the flock: the fat weary woman.
Panting and bewildered, down-clapping
Her umbrella with a mighty report,
Grounded it by me, wry and flapping.
A wreck of whalebones; then, with a snort,
Like a startled horse, at the interloper
(Who humbly knew himself improper,
But could not shrink up small enough)
—Round to the door, and in,—the gruff
Hinge's invariable scold
Making my very blood run cold.
Prompt in the wake of her, up-pattered
On broken clogs, the many-tattered
Little old-faced peaking sister-turned-mother
Of the sickly babe she tried to smother
Somehow up, with its spotted face,
From the cold, on her breast, the one warm place;
She too must stop, wring the poor ends dry
Of a draggled shawl, and add thereby
Her tribute to the door-mat, sopping
Already from my own clothes' dropping,
Which yet she seemed to grudge I should stand on:
Then, stooping down to take off her pattens,
She bore them defiantly, in each hand one,
Planted together before her breast
And its babe, as good as a lance in rest.
Close on her heels, the dingy satins
Of a female something, past me flitted,
With lips as much too white, as a streak
Lay far too red on each hollow cheek;
And it seemed the very door-hinge pitied
All that was left of a woman once,
Holding at least its tongue for the nonce.
Then a tall yellow man, like the Penitent Thief,
With his jaw bound up in a handkerchief,
And eyelids screwed together tight,
Led himself in by some inner light.
And, except from him, from each that entered,
I got the same interrogation—
'What, you the alien, you have ventured
'To take with us, the elect, your station?
'A carer for none of it, a Galliol'—
Thus, plain as print, I read the glance
At a common prey, in each countenance
As of huntsman giving his hounds the tallyho.
And, when the door's cry drowned their wonder,
The draught, it always sent in shutting,
Made the flame of the single tallow candle
In the cracked square lantern I stood under,
Shoot its blue Up at me, rebutting
As it were, the luckless cause of scandal:
I verily fancied the zealous light
(In the chapel's secret, too!) for spite
Would shudder itself clean off the wick,
With the airs of a Saint John's Candlestick.[1]
There was no standing it much longer.
'Good folks,' thought I, as resolve grew stronger,
'This way you perform the Grand-Inquisitor
'When the weather sends you a chance visitor?
'You are the men, and wisdom shall die with you,
'And none of the old Seven Churches vie with you!
'But still, despite the pretty perfection
'To which you carry your trick of exclusiveness,
'And, taking God's word under wise protection,
'Correct its tendency to diffusiveness,
'And bid one reach it over hot ploughshares,—
Still, as I say, though you've found salvation,
'If I should choose to cry, as now, "Shares!"—
'See if the best of you bars me my ration!
'I prefer, if you please, for my expounder
'Of the laws of the feast, the feast's OWN Founder;
'Mine's the same right with your poorest and sickliest
'Supposing I don the marriage vestiment:
'So, shut your mouth and open your Testament,
'And carve me my portion at your quickliestr

[1] *Sec* Rev. i. 20.

Accordingly, as a shoemaker's lad
With wizened-face in-want of soap,
And wet apron wound round his waist like a rope,
(After stopping outside, for his cough was bad,
To get the fit over, poor gentle creature,
And so avoid disturbing the preacher)
—Passed in, I sent my elbow spikewise
At the shutting door, and entered likewise,
Received the hinge's accustomed greeting,
And crossed the threshold's magic pentacle.
And found myself in full conventicle,
—To wit, in Zion Chapel Meeting,
On the Christmas-Eve of 'Forty-nine,
Which, calling its flock to their special clover,
Found all assembled and one sheep over,
Whose lot, as the weather pleased, was mine.

III

I very soon had enough of it.
The hot smell and the human noises,
And my neighbour's coat, the greasy cuff of it,
Were a pebble-stone that a child's hand poises,
Compared with the pig-of-lead-like pressure
Of the preaching man's immense stupidity,
As he poured his doctrine forth, full measure,
To meet his audience's avidity.
You needed not the wit of the Sibyl
To guess the cause of it all, in a twinkling:
No sooner our friend had got an inkling
Of treasure hid in the Holy Bible,
(Whene'er 'twas the thought first struck him,
How death, at unawares, might duck him
Deeper than the grave, and quench
The gin-shop's light in hell's grim drench)
Than he handled it so, in fine irreverence,
As to hug the book of books to pieces:
And, a patchwork of chapters and *texts* in severance,
Not improved by the private dog's-ears and creases,
Having clothed his own soul with, he'd fain see equipt yours,—
So tossed you again your Holy Scriptures.
And you picked them up, in a sense, no doubt:
Nay, had but a single face of my neighbours
Appeared to suspect that the preacher's labours
Were help which the world could be saved without,
'Tis odds but I might have borne in quiet
A qualm or two at my spiritual diet,
Or (who can tell?) perchance even mustered
Somewhat to urge in behalf of the sermon:
But the flock sat on, divinely flustered,
Sniffing, methought, its dew of Hermon
With such content in every snuffle.
As the devil inside us loves to ruffle.
My old fat woman purred with pleasure,
And thumb round thumb went twirling faster,
While she, to his periods keeping measure,
Maternally devoured the pastor.
The man with the handkerchief untied it,
Showed us a horrible wen inside it,
Gave his eyelids yet another screwing,
And rocked himself as the woman was doing.
The shoemaker's lad, discreetly choking,
Kept down his cough. 'Twas too provoking!
My gorge rose at the nonsense and stuff of it;
So, saying like Eve when she plucked the apple,
'I wanted a taste, and now there's enough of it,'
I flung out of the little chapel.

There was a lull in the rain, a lull
In the wind too; the moon was risen,
And would have shone out pure and full,
But for the ramparted cloud-prison,
Block on block built up in the West,
For what purpose the wind knows best,
Who changes his mind continually.
And the empty other half of the sky
Seemed in its silence as if it knew
What, any moment, might look through
A chance gap in that fortress massy:—
Through its fissures you got hints
Of the flying moon, by the shifting tints,
Now, a dull lion-colour, now, brassy
Burning to yellow, and whitest yellow,
Like furnace-smoke just ere flames bellow,
All a-simmer with intense strain
To let her through,—then blank again,
At the hope of her appearance failing.
Just by the chapel, a break in the railing
Shows a narrow path directly across;
'Tis ever dry walking there, on the moss—
Besides, you go gently all the way uphill.
I stooped under and soon felt better;
My head grew lighter, my limbs more supple,
As I walked on, glad to have slipt the fetter.
My mind was full of the scene I had left,
That placid flock, that pastor vociferant,
—HowThis outside was pure and different!

The sermon, now—what a mingled weft
Of good and ill! Were either less,
Its fellow had coloured the whole distinctly;
But alas for the excellent earnestness,
And the truths, quite true if stated succinctly,
But as surely false, in their quaint presentment,
However to pastor and flock's contentment!
Say rather, such truths looked false to your eyes,
With his provings and parallels twisted and twined,
Till how could you know them, grown double their size
In the natural fog of the good man's mind,
Like yonder spots of our roadside lamps,
Haloed about with the common's damps?
Truth remains true, the fault's in the prover;
The zeal was good, and the aspiration;
And yet, and yet, yet, fifty times over,
Pharaoh received no demonstration,
By his Baker's dream of Baskets Three,
Of the doctrine of the Trinity,—
Although, as our preacher thus embellished it,
Apparently his hearers relished it
With so unfeigned a gust—who knows if
They did not prefer our friend to Joseph?
But so it is everywhere, one way with all of them!
These people have really felt, no doubt,
A something, the motion they style the Call of them;
And this is their method of bringing about,
By a mechanism of words and tones,
(So many texts in so many groans)
A sort of reviving and reproducing,
More or less perfectly, (who can tell?)
The mood itself, which strengthens by using;
And how that happens, I understand well.
A tune was born in my head last week,
Out of the thump-thump and shriek-shriek
Of the train, as I came by it, up from Manchester;
And when, next week, I take it back again,
My head will sing to the engine's clack

While it only makes my neighbour's haunches stir,
—Finding no dormant musical sprout
In him, as in me, to be jolted out.
'Tis the taught already that profits by teaching;
He gets no more from the railway's preaching
Than, from this preacher who does the rail's office, I:
Whom therefore the flock cast a jealous eye on.
Still, why paint over their door 'Mount Zion,'
To which all flesh shall come, saith the prophecy?

v

But wherefore be harsh on a single case?
After how many modes, this Christmas-Eve,
Does the self-same weary thing take place?
The same endeavour to make you believe,
And with much the same effect, no more:
Each method abundantly convincing,
As I say, to those convinced before,
But scarce to be swallowed without wincing
By the not-as-yet-convinced. For me,
I have my own church equally:
And in this church my faith sprang first!
(I said, as I reached the rising ground,
And the wind began again, with a burst
Of rain in my face, and a glad rebound
From the heart beneath, as if, God speeding me,
I entered his church-door, nature leading me)
—In youth I looked to these very skies,
And probing their immensities,
I found God there, his visible power;
Yet felt in my heart, amid all its sense
Of the power, an equal evidence
That his love, there too, was the nobler dower.
For the loving worm within its clod,
Were diviner than a loveless god
Amid his worlds, I will dare to say.
You know what I mean: God's all, man's nought:
But also, God, whose pleasure brought
Man into being, stands away
As it were a handbreadth off, to give
Room for the newly-made to live,
And look at him from a place apart,
And use his gifts of brain and heart,
Given, indeed, but to keep for ever.
Who speaks of man, then, must not sever
Man's very elements from man,
Saying, 'But all is God's'—whose plan
Was to create man and then leave him
Able, his own word saith, to grieve him,
But able to glorify him too,
As a mere machine could never do,
That prayed or praised, all unaware
Of its fitness for aught but praise and prayer,
Made perfect as a thing of course.
Man, therefore, stands on his own stock
Of love and power as a pin-point rock:
And, looking to God who ordained divorce

Of the rock from his boundless continent,
Sees, in his power made'evident,
Only excess by a million-fold
O'er the power God gave man in the mould.
For, note: man's hand, first formed to carry
A few pounds' weight, when taught to marry
Its strength with an engine's, lifts a mountain,
—Advancing in power by one degree;
And why count steps through eternity?
But love is the ever-springing fountain:
Man may enlarge or narrow his bed
For the water's play, but the water-head—
How can he multiply or reduce it?
As easy create it, as cause it to cease;
He may profit by it, or abuse it,
But 'tis not a thing to bear increase
As power does: be love less or more
In the heart of man, he keeps it shut
Or opes it wide, as he pleases, but
Love's sum remains what it was before.
So, gazing up, in my youth, at love
As seen through power, ever above
All modes which make it manifest,
My soul brought all to a single test—
That he, the Eternal First and Last,
Who, in his power, had so surpassed
All man conceives of what is might,—
Whose wisdom, too, showed infinite,
—Would prove as infinitely good;
Would never, (my soul understood,)
With power to work all love desires,
Bestow e'en less than man requires;
That he who endlessly was teaching,
Above my spirit's utmost reaching,
What love can do in the leaf or stone,
(So that to master this alone,
This done in the stone or leaf for me,
I must go on learning endlessly)
Would never need that I, in turn,
Should point him out defect unheeded,
And show that God had yet to learn
What the meanest human creature needed,
—Not life, to wit, for a few short years,
Tracking his way through doubts and fears,
While the stupid earth on which I stay
Suffers no change, but passive adds
Its myriad years to myriads,
Though I, he gave *it* to, decay,
Seeing death come and choose about me,
And my dearest ones depart without me.
No: love which, on earth, amid all the shows of it,
Has ever been seen the sole good of life in it,
The love, ever growing there, spite of the strife in it,
Shall arise, made perfect, from death's repose of it.
And shall behold thee, face to face,
0 God, and in thy light retrace
How in all I loved here, still wast thou!
Whom pressing to, then, as I fain would now,
1 shall find as able to satiate
The love, thy gift, as my spirit's wonder
Thou art able to quicken and sublimate,
With this sky of thine, that I now walk under,
And glory in thee for, as I gaze
Thus, thus! Oh, let men keep their ways
Of seeking thee in a narrow shrine—
Be this my way! And this is mine!

For lo, what think you ? suddenly
The rain and the wind ceased, and the sky
Received at once the full fruition
Of the moon's consummate apparition.
The black cloud-barricade was riven,
Ruined beneath her feet, and driven
Deep in the West; while, bare and breathless,
North and South and East lay ready
For a glorious thing that, dauntless, deathless,
Sprang across them and stood steady.
'Twas a moon-rainbow, vast and perfect,
From heaven to heaven extending, perfect
As the mother-moon's self, full in face.
It rose, distinctly at the base
With its seven proper colours chorded,
Which still, in the rising, were compressed,
Until at last they coalesced,
And supreme the spectral creature lorded
In a triumph of whitest white,—
Above which intervened the night.
But above night too, like only the next,
The second of a wondrous sequence.
Reaching in rare and rarer frequence,
Till the heaven of heavens were circumflexed,
Another rainbow rose, a mightier,
Fainter, flushier and flightier,—
Rapture dying along its verge.
Oh, whose foot shall I see emerge,
Whose, from the straining topmost dark,
On to the keystone of that arc?

This sight was shown me, there and then,—
Me, one out of a world of men,
Singled forth, as the chance might hap
To another if, in a thunderclap
Where I heard noise and you saw flame,
Some one man knew God called his name.
For me, I think I said, 'Appear!
'Good were it to be ever here.
'If thou wilt, let me build to thee
'Service-tabernacles three,
'Where, forever in thy presence,
'In ecstatic acquiescence,

'Far alike from thriftless learning
'And ignorance's undiscerning,
'I may worship and remain!'
Thus at the show above me, gazing
With upturned eyes, I felt my brain
Glutted with the glory, blazing
Throughout its whole mass, over and under
Until at length it burst asunder
And out of it bodily there streamed,
The too-much glory, as it seemed,
Passing from out me to the ground,
Then palely serpentining round
Into the dark with mazy error.

VIII

All at once I looked up with terror.
He was there.
He himself with his human air.
On the narrow pathway, just before.
I saw the back of him, no more—
He had left the chapel, then, as I.
I forgot all about the sky.
No face: only the sight
Of a sweepy garment, vast and white,
With a hem that I could recognize.
I felt terror, no surprise;
My mind filled with the cataract,
At one bound of the mighty fact.
'I remember, he did say
'Doubtless that, to this world's end,
* Where two or three should meet and pray,
'He would be in the midst, their friend;
'Certainly he was there with them!'
And my pulses leaped for joy
Of the golden thought without alloy,
That I saw his very vesture's hem.
Then rushed the blood back, cold and clear,
With a fresh enhancing shiver of fear;
And I hastened, cried out while I pressed
To the salvation of the vest,
'But not so, Lord! It cannot be
'That thou, indeed, art leaving me—
'Me. that have despised thy friends!
'Did my heart make no amends?
'Thou art the love of God—above
'His power, didst hear me place his love,
'And that was leaving the world for thee.
'Therefore thou must not turn from me
'As I had chosen the other part!
'Folly and pride o'ercame my heart.
'Our best is bad, nor bears thy test;
'Still, *it* should be our very best.
'I thought it best that thou, the spirit,
'Be worshipped in spirit and in truth,
'And in beauty, as even we require it—
'Not in the forms burlesque, uncouth,
'I left but now, as scarcely fitted
'For thee: I knew not what I pitied.
'But, all I felt there, right or wrong,
'What is it to thee, who curest sinning?
'Am I not weak as thou art strong?
*I have looked to thee from the beginning,
'Straight up to thee through all the world
'Which, like an idle scroll, lay furled
'To nothingness on either side:
'And since the time thou wast descried,
'Spite of the weak heart, so have I
'Lived ever, and so fain would die,
'Living and dying, thee before!
'But if thou lea vest me_____'

Less or more,
I suppose that I spoke thus.
When,—have mercy, Lord, on us!
The whole face turned upon me full.
And I spread myself beneath it,
As when the bleacher spreads, to seethe it
In the cleansing sun, his wool,—
Steeps in the flood of noontide whiteness
Some defiled, discoloured web-
So lay I, saturate with brightness.
And when the flood appeared to ebb,
Lo, I was walking, light and swift,
With my senses settling fast and steadying,
But my body caught up in the whirl and drift
Of the vesture's amplitude, still eddying
On, just before me, still to be followed,
As it carried me after with its motion:
What shall I say?—as a path were hollowed
And a man went weltering through the ocean,
Sucked along in the flying wake
Of the luminous water-snake.
Darkness and cold were cloven, as through
I passed, upborne yet walking too.
And I turned to myself at intervals,—
'So he said, so it befalls.
'God who registers the cup
'Of mere cold water, for his sake
'To a disciple rendered up,
'Disdains not his own thirst to slake
'At the poorest love was ever offered:
'And because my heart I proffered,
'With true love trembling at the brim,
'He suffers me to follow him
'For ever, my own way,—dispensed
'From seeking to be influenced
'By all the less immediate ways
'That earth, in worships manifold,
'Adopts to reach, by prayer and praise,
'The garment's hem, which, lo, I hold!'

And so we crossed the world and stopped.
For where am I, in city or plain,
Since I am 'ware of the world again?
And what is this that rises propped
With pillars of prodigious girth?
Is it really on the earth,
This miraculous Dome of God?
Has the angel's measuring-rod

Which numbered cubits, gem from gem,
'Twixt the gates of the New Jerusalem,
Meted it out,—and what he meted,
Have the sons of men completed?
—Binding, ever as he bade,
Columns in the colonnade
With arms wide open to embrace
The entry of the human race
To the breast of... what is *it*, yon building,
Ablaze in front, all paint and gilding,
With marble for brick, and stones of price
For garniture of the edifice?
Now I see: it is no dream;
It stands there and it does not seem;
For ever, in pictures, thus it looks,
And thus I have read of it in books
Often in England, leagues away,
And wondered how these fountains play,
Growing up eternally
Each to a musical water-tree,
Whose blossoms drop, a glittering boon,
Before my eyes, in the light of the moon,
To the granite lavers underneath.
Liar and dreamer in your teeth!
I, the sinner that speak to you,
Was in Rome this night, and stood, and knew
Both this and more. For see, for see,
The dark is rent, mine eye is free
To pierce the crust of the outer wall,
And I view inside, and all there, all,
As the swarming hollow of a hive,
The whole Basilica alive I
Men in the chancel, body and nave,
Men on the pillars' architrave.
Men on the statues, men on the tombs
With popes and kings in their porphyry wombs,
All famishing in expectation
Of the main-altar's consummation.
For see, for see, the rapturous moment
Approaches, and earth s best endowment
Blends with heaven's; the taper-fires
Pant up, the winding brazen spires
Heave loftier yet the baldachin;
The incense-gaspings, long kept in,
Suspire in clouds; the organ blatant
Holds his breath and grovels latent,
As if God's hushing finger grazed him,
(Like Behemoth when he praised him)
At the silver bell's shrill tinkling,
Quick cold drops of terror sprinkling
On the sudden pavement strewed
With faces of the multitude.
Earth breaks up, time drops away,
In flows heaven, with its new day
Of endless life, when He who trod,
Very man and very God,
This earth in weakness, shame and pain,
Dying the death whose signs remain
Up yonder on the accursed tree,—
Shall come again, no more to be
Of captivity the thrall,
But the one God, All in all,
King of kings, Lord *Of* lords,
As His servant John received the words,
'I died, and live for evermore!'

Yet I was left outside the door.
'Why sit I here on the threshold-stone
'Left till He return, alone
'Save for the garment's extreme fold
'Abandoned still to bless my hold?'
My reason, to my doubt, replied,
As if a book were opened wide,
And at a certain page I traced
Every record undefaced,
Added by successive years,—
The harvestings of truth's stray ears
Singly gleaned, and in one sheaf
Bound together for belief.
Yes, I said—that he will go
And sit with these in turn, I know.
Their faith's heart beats, though her head swims
Too giddily to guide her limbs,
Disabled by their palsy-stroke
From propping mine. Though Rome's gross yoke
Drops off, no more to be endured,
Her teaching is not so obscured
By errors and perversities,
That no truth shines athwart the lies
And he, whose eye detects a spark
Even where, to man's, the whole seems dark,
May well see flame where each beholder
Acknowledges the embers smoulder.
But I, a mere man, fear to quit
The clue God gave me as most fit
To guide my footsteps through life's maze,
Because himself discerns all ways
Open to reach him: I, a man
Able to mark where faith began
To swerve aside, till from its summit
Judgment drops her damning plummet,
Pronouncing such a fatal space
Departed from the founder's base:
He will not bid me enter too,
But rather sit, as now I do,
Awaiting his return outside.
—'Twas thus my reason straight replied
And joyously I turned, and pressed
The garment's skirt upon my breast,
Until, afresh its light suffusing me,
My heart cried—What has been abusing me
That I should wait here lonely and coldly
Instead of rising, entering boldly,
Baring truth's face, and letting drift
Her veils of lies as they choose to shift?
Do these men praise him? I will raise
My voice up to their point of praise!
I see the error; but above
The scope of error, see the love.—
Oh, love of those first Christian days!
—Fanned so soon into a blaze,

From the spark preserved by the trampled sect,
That the antique sovereign Intellect
Which then sat ruling in the world,
Like a change in dreams, was hurled
From the throne he reigned upon:
You looked up and he was gone.
Gone, his glory of the pen!
—Love, with Greece and Rome in ken,
Bade her scribes abhor the trick
Of poetry and rhetoric,
And exult with hearts set free,
In blessed imbecility
Scrawled, perchance, on some torn sheet
Leaving Sallust incomplete.
Gone, his pride of sculptor, painter!
—Love, while able to acquaint her
With the thousand statues yet
Fresh from chisel, pictures wet
From brush, she saw on every side,
Chose rather with an infant's pride
To frame those portents which impart
Such unction to true Christian Art.
Gone, music too! The air was stirred
By happy wings: Terpander's bird
(That, when the cold came, fled away)
Would tarry not the wintry day,—
As more-enduring sculpture must,
Till filthy saints rebuked the gust
With which they chanced to get a sight
Of some dear naked Aphrodite
They glanced a thought above the toes of,
By breaking zealously her nose off.
Love, surely, from that music's lingering,
Might have filched her organ-fingering,
Nor chosen rather to set prayings
To hog-grunts, praises to horse-neighings.
Love was the startling thing, the new:
Love was the all-sufficient too;
And seeing that, you see the rest:
As a babe can find its mother's breast
As well in darkness as in light,
Love shut our eyes, and all seemed right.
True, the world's eyes are open now:
—Less need for me to disallow
Some few that keep Love's zone unbuckled,
Peevish as ever to be suckled,
Lulled by the same old baby-prattle
With intermixture of the rattle,
When she would have them creep, stand steady
Upon their feet, or walk already,
Not to speak of trying to climb.
I will be wise another time,
And not desire a wall between us,
When next I see a church-roof cover
So many species of one genus,
All with foreheads bearing *lover*
Written above the earnest eyes of them;
All with breasts that beat for beauty,
Whether sublimed, to the surprise of them,
In noble daring, steadfast duty,
The heroic in passion, or in action,—
Or, lowered for sense s satisfaction,
To the mere outside of human creatures,
Mere perfect form and faultless features.
What? with all Rome here, whence to levy
Such contributions to their appetite,
With women and men in a gorgeous bevy,
They take, as it were, a padlock, clap it tight
On their southern eyes, restrained from feeding
On the glories of their ancient reading,
On the beauties of their modern singing,
On the wonders of the builder's bringing,
On the majesties of Art around them,—
And, all these loves, late struggling incessant,
When faith has at last united and bound them,
They offer up to God for a present?
Why, I will, on the whole, be rather proud of it,—
And, only taking the act in reference
To the other recipients who might have allowed it,
I will rejoice that God had the preference.

So I summed up my new resolves:
Too much love there can never be.
And where the intellect devolves
Its function on love exclusively,
I, a man who possesses both,
Will accept the provision, nothing loth,
—Will feast my love, then depart elsewhere,
That my intellect may find its share.
And ponder, O soul, the while thou departest,
And see thou applaud the great heart of the artist,
Who, examining the capabilities
Of the block of marble he has to fashion
Into a type of thought or passion,—
Not always, using obvious facilities,
Shapes it, as any artist can,
Into a perfect symmetrical man,
Complete from head to foot of the life-size,
Such as old Adam stood in his wife's eyes,—
But, now and then, bravely aspires to consummate
A Colossus by no means so easy to come at,
And uses the whole of his block for the bust,
Leaving the mind of the public to finish it,
Since cut it ruefully short he must:
On the face alone he expends his devotion,
He rather would mar than resolve to diminish it,
—Saying, 'Applaud me for this grand notion

'Of what a face may be! As for completing it
'In breast and body and limbs, do that, you!'
All hail! I fancy how, happily meeting it,
A trunk and legs would perfect the statue,
Could man carve so as to answer volition.
And how much nobler than petty cavils,
Were a hope to find, in my spirit-travels,
Some artist of another ambition,
Who having a block to carve, no bigger,
Has spent his power on the opposite quest,
And believed to begin at the feet was best—
For so may I see, ere I die, the whole figure!

XIII

No sooner said than out in the night !
My heart beat lighter and more light:
And still, as before, I was walking swift,
With my senses settling fast and steadying,
But my body caught up in the whirl and drift
Of the vesture's amplitude, still eddying
On just before me, still to be followed,
As it carried me after with its motion,
—What shall I say?—as a path were hollowed,
And a man went weltering through the ocean,
Sucked along in the flying wake
Of the luminous water-snake.

XIV

Alone! I am left alone once more—
(Save for the garment's extreme fold
Abandoned still to bless my hold)
Alone, beside the entrance-door
Of a sort of temple,—perhaps a college,
—Like nothing I ever saw before
At home in England, to my knowledge.
The tall old quaint irregular town!
It may be... though which, I can't affirm ...any
Of the famous middle-age towns of Germany;
And this flight of stairs where I sit down,
Is *it* Halle, Weimar, Cassel, Frankfort
Or Gottingen, I have to thank for't?
It may be Gottingen,—most likely.
Through the open door I catch obliquely
Glimpses of a lecture-hall;
And not a bad assembly neither,
Ranged decent and symmetrical
On benches, waiting what 's to see there;
Which, holding still by the vesture's hem,
I also resolve to see with them,
Cautious this time how I suffer to slip
The chance of joining in fellowship
With any that call themselves his friends;
As these folk do, I have a notion.
But hist—a buzzing and emotion!
All settle themselves, the while ascends
By the creaking rail to the lecture-desk,
Step by step, deliberate
Because of his cranium's over-freight,
Three parts sublime to one grotesque,
If I have proved an accurate guesser,
The hawk-nosed high-cheek-boned Professor.
I felt at once as if there ran
A shoot of love from my heart to the man—
That sallow virgin-minded studious
Martyr to mild enthusiasm,
As he uttered a kind of cough-preludious
That woke my sympathetic spasm,
(Beside some spitting that made me sorry)
And stood, surveying his auditory
With a wan pure look, well nigh celestial,—
Those blue eyes had survived so much!
While, under the foot they could not smutch,
Lay all the fleshly and the bestial.
Over he bowed, and arranged his notes,
Till the auditory's clearing of throats
Was done with, died into a silencer
And, when each glance was upward sent,
Each bearded mouth composed intent,
And a pin might be heard drop half a mile hence,—
He pushed back higher his spectacles,
Let the eyes stream out like lamps from cells,
And giving his head of hair—a hake
Of undressed tow, for colour and quantity-
One rapid and impatient shake,
(As our own Young England adjusts a jaunty tie
When about to impart, on mature digestion,
Some thrilling view of the surplice-question)
—The Professor's grave voice, sweet though hoarse.
Broke into his Christmas-Eve discourse.

And he began it by observing
How reason dictated that men
Should rectify the natural swerving,
By a reversion, now and then,
To the well-heads of knowledge, few
And far away, whence rolling grew
The life-stream wide whereat we drink,
Commingled, as we needs must think,
With waters alien to the source;
To do which, aimed this eve's discourse;
Since, where could be a fitter time
For tracing backward to its prime

This Christianity, this lake,
This reservoir, whereat we slake,
From one or other bank, our thirst?
So, he proposed inquiring first
Into the various sources whence
  This Myth of Christ is derivable;
Demanding from the evidence,
  (Since plainly no such life was liveable)
How these phenomena should class?
Whether 'twere best opine Christ was,
Or never was at all, or whether
He was and was not, both together—
It matters little for the name,
So the idea be left the same.
Only, for practical purpose' sake,
'Twas obviously as well to take
The popular story,—understanding
  How the ineptitude of the time,
And the penman's prejudice, expanding
  Fact into fable fit for the clime,
Had, by slow and sure degrees, translated it
  Into this myth, this Individuum,—
Which, when reason had strained and abated it
  Of foreign matter, left, for residuum,
A Man!—a right true man, however,
Whose work was worthy a man's endeavour:
Work, that gave warrant almost sufficient
  To his disciples, for rather believing
He was just omnipotent and omniscient,
  As it gives to us, for as frankly receiving
His word, their tradition,—which, though it meant
Something entirely different
From all that those who only heard it,
In their simplicity thought and averred it,
Had yet a meaning quite as respectable:
For, among other doctrines delectable,
Was he not surely the first to insist on
  The natural sovereignty of our race?—
  Here the lecturer came to a pausing-place.
And while his cough, like a drouthy piston,
Tried to dislodge the husk that grew to him,
I seized the occasion of bidding adieu to him,
The vesture still within my hand.

I could interpret its command.
This time he would not bid me enter
The exhausted air-bell of the Critic.
Truth's atmosphere may grow mephitic
When Papist struggles with Dissenter,
Impregnating its pristine clarity,
—One, by his daily fare's vulgarity.
  Its gust of broken meat and garlic;
—One, by his soul's too-much presuming
To turn the frankincense's fuming
  And vapours of the candle starlike
Into the cloud her wings she buoys on.
  Each, that thus sets the pure air seething,
  May poison it for healthy breathing—
But the Critic leaves no air to poison;
Pumps out with ruthless ingenuity
Atom by atom, and leaves you—vacuity.
Thus much of Christ does he reject?
And what retain? His intellect?
What is it I must reverence duly?
Poor intellect for worship, truly,
Which tells me simply what was told
  (If mere morality, bereft
  Of the God in Christ, be all that's left)
Elsewhere by voices manifold;
With this advantage, that the stater
  Made nowise the important stumble
  Of adding, he, the sage and humble,
Was also one with the Creator.
You urge Christ's followers' simplicity:
  But how does shifting blame, evade it?
Have wisdom's words no more felicity?
  The stumbling-block, his speech—who laid it?
How comes it that for one found able
To sift the truth of it from fable,
Millions believe it to the letter?
Christ's goodness, then—does that fare better?
Strange goodness, which upon the score
  Of being goodness, the mere due
Of man to fellow-man, much more
  To God,—should take another view
Of its possessor's privilege.
And bid him rule his race! You pledge
Your fealty to such rule? What, all—
From heavenly John and Attic Paul,
And that brave weather-battered Peter,
Whose stout faith only stood completer
For buffets, sinning to be pardoned,
As, the more his hands hauled nets, they hardened,—
All, down to you, the man of men,
Professing here at Gottingen,
Compose Christ's flock! They, you and I,
Are sheep of a good man! And why?
The goodness,—how did he acquire it?
Was it self-gained, did God inspire it?
Choose which; then tell me, on what ground
Should its possessor dare propound
His claim to rise o'er us an inch?
  Were goodness all some man's invention,
  Who arbitrarily made mention
What we should follow, and whence flinch,—
What qualities might take the style
  Of right and wrong,—and had such guessing
  Met with as general acquiescing
As graced the alphabet erewhile,
When A got leave an Ox to be,
No Camel (quoth the Jews) like G,[1]—

[1] Gimel, the Hebrew G, means camel.

For thus inventing thing and title
Worship were that malfs fit requital.
But if the common conscience must
Be ultimately judge, adjust
Its apt name to each quality
Already known,—I would decree
Worship for such mere demonstration
And simple work of nomenclature,
Only the day I praised, not nature,
But Harvey, for the circulation.
X would praise such a Christ, with pride
And joy, that he, as none beside,
Had taught us how to keep the mind
God gave him, as God gave his kind,
Freer than they from fleshly taint:
I would call such a Christ our Saint,
As I declare our Poet, him
Whose insight makes all others dim:
A thousand poets pried at life,
And only one amid the strife
Rose to be Shakespeare: each shall take
His crown, I'd say, for the world's sake—
Though some objected—'Had we seen
' The heart and head of each, what screen
* Was broken there to give them light,
' While in ourselves it shuts the sight,
' We should no more admire, perchance,
* That these found truth out at a glance,
'Than marvel how the bat discerns
' Some pitch-dark cavern's fifty turns,
'Led by a finer tact, a gift
* He boasts, which other birds must shift
'Without, and grope as best they can.'
No, freely I would praise the man,—
Nor one whit more, if he contended
That gift of his, from God descended.
Ah friend, what gift of man's does not?
No nearer something, by a jot,
Rise an infinity of nothings
Than one: take Euclid for your teacher:
Distinguish kinds: do crownings, clothings,
Make that creator which was creature?
Multiply gifts upon man's head,
And what, when all's done, shall be said
But—the more gifted he, I ween!
That one's made Christ, this other, Pilate,
And this might be all that has been,—
So what is there to frown or smile at?
What is left for us, save, in growth
Of soul, to rise up, far past Both,
From the gift looking to the giver,
And from the cistern to the river,
And from the finite to infinity,
And from man's dust to God's divinity?

xvII

Take all in a word: the truth in God's breast
Lies trace for trace upon ours impressed:
Though he is so bright and we so dim,
We are made in his image to witness him:
And were no eye in us to tell,
Instructed by no inner sense,
The light of heaven from the dark of hell,
That light would want its evidence,—
Though justice, good and truth were still
Divine, if, by some demon's will,
Hatred and wrong had been proclaimed
Law through the worlds, and right misnamed.
No mere exposition of morality
Made or in part or in totality,
Should win you to give it worship, therefore:
And, if no better proof you will care for,
—Whom do you count the worst man upon earth?
Be sure, he knows, in his conscience, more
Of what right is, than arrives at birth
In the best man's acts that we bow before:
This last knows better—true, but my fact is,
'Tis one thing to know, and another to practise.
And thence I conclude that the real God-function
Is to furnish a motive and injunction
For practising what we know already.
And such an injunction and such a motive
As the God in Christ, do you waive, and 'heady.
'High-minded,' hang your tablet-votive
Outside the fane on a finger-post?
Morality to the uttermost,
Supreme in Christ as we all confess,
Why need we prove would avail no jot
To make him God, if God he were not?
What is the point where himself lays stress?
Does the precept run 'Believe in good,
'In justice, truth, now understood
'For the first time?'—or, 'Believe in me,
'Who lived and died, yet essentially
'Am Lord of Life?' Whoever can take
The same to his heart and for mere love's sake
Conceive of the love,—that man obtains
A new truth; no conviction gains
Of an old one only, made intense
By a fresh appeal to his faded sense.

xvIII

Can it be that he stays inside?
Is the vesture left me to commune with ?
Could my soul find aught to sing in tune with
Even at this lecture, if she tried?
Oh, let me at lowest sympathize
With the lurking drop of blood that lies
In the desiccated brain's white roots
Without throb for Christ's attributes,
As the lecturer makes his special boast!
If love's dead there, it has left a ghost.

Admire we, how from heart to brain
(Though to say so strike the doctors dumb)
One instinct rises and falls again,
Restoring the equilibrium.
And how when the Critic had done his best,
And the pearl of price, at reason's test,
Lay dust and ashes levigable
On the Professor's lecture-table,—
When we looked for the inference and monition
That our faith, reduced to such condition,
Be swept forthwith to its natural dust-hole,—
He bids us, when we least expect it,
Take back our faith,—if it be not just whole,
Yet a pearl indeed, as his tests affect it,
Which fact pays damage done rewardingly,
So, prize we our dust and ashes accordingly!
'Go home and venerate the myth
'I thus have experimented with—
'This man, continue to adore him
'Rather than all who went before him,
'And all who ever followed after!'—
Surely for this I may praise you, my brother!
Will you take the praise in tears or laughter?
That's one point gained: can I compass another?
Unlearned love was safe from spurning—
Can't we respect your loveless learning?
Let us at least give learning honour!
What laurels had we showered upon her,
Girding her loins up to perturb
Our theory of the Middle Verb;
Or Turk-like brandishing a scimitar
O'er anapaests in comic-trimeter;
Or curing the halt and maimed 'Iketides,'[1]
While we lounged on at our indebted ease:
Instead of which, a tricksy demon
Sets her at Titus or Philemon!
When ignorance wags his ears of leather
And hates God's word, 'tis altogether;
Nor leaves he his congenial thistles
To go and browse on Paul's Epistles.
—And you, the audience, who might ravage
The world wide, enviably savage,
Nor heed the cry of the retriever.
More than Herr Heine (before his fever),—
I do not tell a lie so arrant
As say my passion's wings are furled up,
And, without plainest heavenly warrant,
I were ready and glad to give the world up—
But still, when you rub brow meticulous,
And ponder the profit of turning holy
If not for God's, for your own sake solely.
—God forbid I should find you ridiculous!
Deduce from this lecture all that eases you,
Nay, call yourselves, if the calling pleases you,
'Christians,'—abhor the deist's pravity,—
Go on, you shall no more move my gravity
Than, when I see boys ride a-cockhorse,
I find it in my heart to embarrass them
By hinting that their stick's a mock horse.
And they really carry what they say carries them.

XIX

So sat I talking with my mind.
I did not long to leave the door
And find a new church, as before,
But rather was quiet and inclined
To prolong and enjoy the gentle resting
From further tracking and trying and testing.
'This tolerance is a genial mood!*
(Said I, and a little pause ensued.)
'One trims the bark twixt shoal and shelf,
'And sees, each side, the good effects of it,
'A value for religion's self,
'A carelessness about the sects of it.
'Let me enjoy my own conviction,
'Not watch my neighbour's faith with fretfulness,
'Still spying there some dereliction
'Of truth, perversity, forgetfulnessl
'Better a mild indifferentism,
'Teaching that both our faiths (though duller
'His shine through a dull spirit's prism)
'Originally had one colour!
'Better pursue a pilgrimage
'Through ancient and through modem times
'To many peoples, various climes,
'Where I may see saint, savage, sage
'Fuse their respective creeds in one
'Before the general Father's thronel'

xx

—'Twas the horrible storm began afresh!
The black night caught me in his mesh,
Whirled me up, and flung me prone.
I was left on the college-step alone.
I looked, and far there, ever fleeting
Far, far away, the receding gesture,
And looming of *the* lessening vesture I—
Swept forward from my stupid hand,
While I watched my foolish heart expand
In the lazy glow of benevolence,
O'er the various modes of man's belief.
I sprang up with fear's vehemence.
Needs must there be one way, our chief
Best way of worship: let me strive
To find it, and when found, contrive
My fellows also take their share!
This constitutes my earthly care:
God's is above it and distinct.
Nor I, a man, with men am linked

[1] *The Suppliants*, a fragment of a play by Æschylus.

And not a brute with brutes; no gain
That I experience, must remain
Unshared: but should my best endeavour
To share it, fail—subsisteth ever
God's care above, and I exult
That God, by God's own ways occult,
May—doth, I will believe—bring back
All wanderers to a single track.
Meantime, I can but testify
God's care for me—no more, can I—
It is but for myself I know;
The world rolls witnessing around me
Only to leave me as it found me;
Men cry there, but my ear is slow:
Their races flourish or decay
—What boots it, while yon lucid way
Loaded with stars divides the vault?
But soon my soul repairs its fault
When, sharpening sense's hebetude,
She turns on my own life! So viewed,
No mere mote's-breadth but teems immense
With witnessings of providence:
And woe to me if when I look
Upon that record, the sole book
Unsealed to me, I take no heed
Of any warning that I read!
Have I been sure, this Christmas-Eve,
God's own hand did the rainbow weave,
Whereby the truth from heaven slid
Into my soul ?—I cannot bid
The world admit he stooped to heal
My soul, as if in a thunder-peal
Where one heard noise, and one saw flame,
I only knew he named my name:
But what is the world to me, for sorrow
Or joy in its censure, when to-morrow
It drops the remark, with just-turned head
Then, on again, 'That man is dead'?
Yes, but for me—my name called,—drawn
As a conscript's lot from the lap's black yawn,
He has dipt into on a battle-dawn:
Bid out of life by a nod, a glance,—
Stumbling, mute-mazed, at nature's chance,—
With a rapid finger circled round,
Fixed to the first poor inch of ground
To fight from, where his foot was found;
Whose ear but a minute since lay free
To the wide camp's buzz and gossipry—
Summoned, a solitary man
To end his life where his life began,
From the safe glad rear, to the dreadful van!
Soul of mine, hadst thou caught and held
By the hem of the vesture!—

XXI

And I caught
At the flying robe, and unrepelled
Was lapped again in its folds full-fraught
With warmth and wonder and delight,
God's mercy being infinite.
For scarce had the words escaped my tongue,
When, at a passionate bound, I sprung,
Out or the wandering world of rain,
Into the little chapel again.

xxII

How else was I found there, bolt upright
On my bench, as if I had never left it?
—Never flung out on the common at night,
Nor met the storm and wedge-like cleft it,
Seen the raree-show of Peter's successor,
Or the laboratory of the Professor!
For the Vision, that was true, I wist,
True as that heaven and earth exist.
There sat my friend, the yellow and tall,
With his neck and its wen in the selfsame place;
Yet my nearest neighbour's cheek showed gall.
She had slid away a contemptuous space:
And the old fat woman, late so placable,
Eyed me with symptoms, hardly mistakable,
Of her milk of kindness turning rancid.
In short a spectator might have fancied
That! had nodded, betrayed by slumber,
Yet kept my seat, a warning ghastly,
Through the heads of the sermon, nine in number,
And woke up now at the tenth and lastly.
But again, could such disgrace have happened?
Each friend at my elbow had surely nudged it;
And, as for the sermon, where did my nap end?
Unless I heard it, could I have iudged it ?
Could I report as I do at the close,
First, the preacher speaks through his nose:
Second, his gesture is too emphatic:
Thirdly, to waive what's pedagogic,
The subject-matter itself lacks logic:
Fourthly, the English is ungrammatic.
Great news! the preacher is found no Pascal,
Whom, if I pleased, I might to the task call
Of making square to a finite eye
The circle of infinity,
And find so all-but-just-succeeding!
Great news! the sermon proves no reading
Where bee-like in the flowers I bury me,
Like Taylor's, the immortal Jeremy!
And now that I know the very worst of him,
What was it I thought to obtain at first of him?
Ha! Is God mocked, as he asks?
Shall I take on me to change his tasks,

And dare, despatched to a river-head
For a simple draught of the element,
Neglect the thing for which he sent,
And return with another thing instead?—
Saying, ' Because the water found
* Welling up from underground,
'Is mingled with the taints of earth,
'While thou, I know, dost laugh at dearth,
'And couldst, at wink or word, convulse
'The world with the leap of a river-pulse,—
'Therefore I turned from the oozings muddy,
'And bring thee a chalice I found, instead:
* See the brave veins in the breccia ruddy!
'One would suppose that the marble bled.
' What matters the water? A hope I have nursed:
'The waterless cup will quench my thirst.'
—Better have knelt at the poorest stream
That trickles in pain from the straitest rift!
For the less or the more is all God's gift,
Who blocks up or breaks wide the granite-seam.
And here, is there water or not, to drink?
I then, in ignorance and weakness,
Taking God's help, have attained to think
My heart does best to receive in meekness
That mode of worship, as most to his mind,
Where earthly aids being cast behind,
His All in All appears serene
With the thinnest human veil between,
Letting the mystic lamps, the seven,
The many motions of his spirit,
Pass, as they list, to earth from heaven.
For the preacher's merit or demerit,
It were to be wished the flaws were fewer
In the earthen vessel, holding treasure
Which lies as safe in a golden ewer;
But the main thing is, does it hold good measure?
Heaven soon sets right all other matters !—
Ask, else, these ruins of humanity,
This flesh worn out to rags and tatters,
This soul at struggle with insanity,
Who thence take comfort—can I doubt ?—
Which an empire gained, were a loss without.
May it be mine! And let us hope
That no worse blessing befall the Pope,
Turned sick at last of to-day's buffoonery,
Of posturings and petticoatings,
Beside his Bourbon bully's gloatings
In the bloody orgies of drunk poltroonery!
Nor may the Professor forego its peace
At Gottingen presently, when, in the dusk
Of his life, if his cough, as I fear, should increase,
Prophesied of by that horrible husk—
When thicker and thicker the darkness fills
The world through his misty spectacles,
And he gropes for something more substantial
Than a fable, myth or personification,—
May Christ do for him what no mere man shall,
And stand confessed as the God of salvation!
Meantime, in the still recurring fear
Lest myself, at unawares, be found,
While attacking the choice of my neighbours round,
With none of my own made—I choose here!
The giving out of the hymn reclaims me;
I have done: and if any blames me,
Thinking that merely to touch in brevity
The topics I dwell on, were unlawful,—
Or worse, that I trench, with undue levity,
On the bounds of the holy and the awful,—
I praise the heart, and pity the head of him,
And refer myself to THEE, instead of him,
Who head and heart alike discernest,
Looking below light speech we utter,
When frothy spume and frequent sputter
Prove that the soul's depths boil in earnest!
May truth shine out, stand ever before us!
I put up pencil and join chorus
To Hepzibah Tune, without further apology,
The last five verses of the third section
Of the seventeenth hymn of Whitfield's Collection,
To conclude with the doxology.

EASTER-DAY

How very hard it is to be
A Christian! Hard for you and me,
—Not the mere task of making real
That duty up to its ideal,
Effecting thus, complete and whole,
A purpose of the human soul—
For that is always hard to do;
But hard, I mean, for me and you
To realize it, more or less,
With even the moderate success
Which commonly repays our strife
To carry out the aims of life.
'This aim is greater,' you will say,
'And so more arduous every way.'
—But the importance of their fruits
Still proves to man, in all pursuits,
Proportional encouragement.
'Then, what if it be God's intent
'That labour to this one result
'Should seem unduly difficult*V*
Ah, that's a question in the dark—
And the sole thing that I remark

Upon the o^ulty^-XhisL;
We do not see it where it is,
At the beginning of the race:
As we proceed, it shifts its place,
And where we looked for crowns to fall,
We find the tug's to come,—that's all.

At first you say, 'The whole, or chief
[4] Of difficulties, is belief.
' Could I believe once thoroughly,
* The rest were simple. What? Am I
'An idiot, do you think,—a beast?
' Prove to me, only that the least
' Command of God is God's indeed,
' And what injunction shall I need
* To pay obedience? Death so nigh,
' When time must end, eternity
' Begin,—and cannot I compute,
'Weigh loss and gain together, suit
' My actions to the balance drawn,
' And give my body to be sawn
* Asunder, hacked in pieces, tied
' To horses, stoned, burned, crucified,
'Like any martyr of the list?
' How gladly!—if I make acquist,
'Through the brief minute's fierce annoy,
'Of God's eternity of joy.'

—And certainly you name the point
Whereon all turns: for could you joint
This flexile finite life once tight
Into the fixed and infinite,
You, safe inside, would spurn what's out,
With carelessness enough, no doubt—
Would spurn mere life: but when time brings
To their next stage your reasonings,
Your eyes, late wide, begin to wink
Nor see the path so well, I think.

You say, 'Faith may be, one agrees,
'A touchstone for God's purposes,
'Even as ourselves conceive of them.
'Could he acquit us or condemn
'For holding what no hand can loose,
'Rejecting when we can't but choose?
'As well award the victor's wreath
'To whosoever should take breath
' Duly each minute while he lived—
'Grant heaven, because a man contrived
' To see its sunlight every day
'He walked forth on the public way.
' You must mix some uncertainty
' With faith, if you would have faith be.
' Why, what but faith, do we abhor
' And idolize each other for—
' Faith in our evil or our good,
* Which is or is not understood
'Aright by those we love or those
'We hate, thence called our friends or foes?
'Your mistress saw your spirit's grace,
'When, turning from the ugly face,
'I found belief in it too hard;
'And she and I have our reward.
'—Yet here a doubt peeps: well for us
'Weak beings, to go using thus
'A touchstone for our little ends,
"Trying with faith the foes and friends;
'—But God, bethink you! I would fain
'Conceive of the Creator's reign
'As based upon exacter laws
'Than creatures build by with applause.
' In all God's acts—(as Plato cries
'He doth)—he should geometrize.
'Whence, I desiderate . . .'

I see!
You would grow as a natural tree,
Stand as a rock, soar up like fire.
The world's so perfect and entire.
Suite above faith, so right and fit!
So there, walk up and down in it!
No. The creation travails, groans—
Contrive your music from its moans,
Without or let or hindrance, friend!
That's an old story, and its end
As old—you come back (be sincere)
With every question you put here
(Here where there once was, and is still,
We think, a living oracle,
Whose answers you stand carping at)
This time flung back unanswered flat,—
Beside, perhaps, as many more
As those that drove you out before,
Now added, where was little need.
Questions impossible, indeed,
To us who sat still, all and each
Persuaded that our earth had speech,
Of God's, writ down, no matter if
In cursive type or hieroglyph,—
Which one fact freed us from the yoke
Of guessing why He never spoke.
You come back in no better plight
Than when you left us,—am I right?

VI

So, the old process, I conclude,
Goes on, the reasoning's pursued
Further. You own,' 'Tis well averred,
'A scientific faith's absurd,
'—Frustrates the very end 'twas meant
'To serve. So, I would rest content
'With a mere probability,
'But, probable; the chance must lie
'Clear on one side,—lie all in rough,
'So long as there be just enough
'To pin my faith to, though it hap
'Only at points: from gap to gap
'One hangs up a huge curtain so,
'Grandly, nor seeks to have it go
'Foldless and flat along the wall.
'What care I if some interval

'Of life less plainly may depend
'On God? I'd hang there to the end;
'And thus I should not find it hard
'To be a Christian and debarred
'From trailing on the earth, till furled
'Away by death.—Renounce the world!
'Were that a mighty hardship? Plan
'A pleasant life, and straight some man
'Beside you, with, if he thought fit,
'Abundant means to compass it,
'Shall turn deliberate aside
'To try and live as, if you tried
'You clearly might, yet most despise.
'One friend of mine wears out his eyes,
'Slighting the stupid joys of sense,
'In patient hope that, ten years hence,
'"Somewhat completer," he may say,
'"My list of *coleoptera!*"
'While just the other who most laughs
*At him, above all epitaphs
'Aspires to have his tomb describe
'Himself as sole among the tribe
'Of snuffbox-fanciers, who possessed
'A Grignon with the Regent's crest.
'So that, subduing, as you want,
'Whatever stands predominant
'Among my earthly appetites
'For tastes and smells and sounds and sights,
'I shall be doing that alone,
'To gain a palm-branch and a throne.
'Which fifty people undertake
*To do, and gladly, for the sake
'Of giving a Semitic guess,
'Or playing pawns at blindfold chess.'

vII

Good: and the next thing is,—look round
For evidence enough! 'Tis found,
No doubt: as is your sort of mind,
So is your sort of search: you'll find
What you desire, and that's to be
A Christian. What says history?
How comforting a point it were
To find some mummy-scrap declare
There lived a Moses! Better still,
Prove Jonah's whale translatable
Into some quicksand of the seas,
Isle, cavern, rock, or what you please,
That faith might flap her wmgs and crow
From such an eminence! Or, no—
The human heart's best; you prefer
Making that prove the minister
To truth; you probe its wants and needs,
And hopes and fears, then try what creeds
Meet these most aptly,—resolute
That faith plucks such substantial fruit
Wherever these two correspond,
She little needs to look beyond,
And puzzle out who Orpheus was,
Or Dionysius Zagrias.
You'll find sufficient, as I say,
To satisfy you either way;
You wanted to believe; your pains
Are crowned—you do: and what remains?
'Renounce the world!'—Ah, were it done
By merely cutting one by one
Your limbs off, with your wise head last,
How easy were it!—how soon past,
If once in the believing mood!
'Such is man's usual gratitude,
'Such thanks to God do we return,
'For not exacting that we spurn
*A single gift of life, forego
'One real gain,—only taste them so
'With gravity and temperance,
'That those mild virtues may enhance
'Such pleasures, rather than abstract—
'Last spice of which, will be the fact
'Of love discerned in every gift;
'While, when the scene of life shall shift,
'And the gay heart be taught to ache,
'As sorrows and privations take
'The place of joy,—the thing that seems
'Mere misery, under human schemes,
'Becomes, regarded by the light
'Of love, as very near, or quite
'As good a gift as joy before.
'So plain is it that, all the more
'A dispensation's merciful,
'More pettishly we try and cull
'Briars, thistles, from our private plot,
'To mar God's ground where thorns an not!'

vIII

Do you say this, or I?—Oh, youl
Then, what, my friend?—(thus I pursue
Our parley)—you indeed opine
That the Eternal and Divine
Did, eighteen centuries ago,
In very truth . . . Enough! you know
The all-stupendous tale,—that Birth,
That Life, that Death! And all, the eaitl
Shuddered at,—all, the heavens grev black
Rather than see; all, nature's rack
And throe at dissolution's brink
Attested,—all took place, you think,
Only to give our joys a zest,
And prove our sorrows for the best?
We differ, then! Where I, still pale
And heartstruck at the dreadful tale,
Waiting to hear God's voice declare
What horror followed for my share,
As implicated in the deed,
Apart from other sins,—concede
That if He blacked out in a blot
My brief life's pleasantness, 'twere not
So very disproportionate!
Or there might be another fate—
I certainly could understand
(If fancies were the thing in hand)
How God might save, at that day s price
The impure in their impurities,
Give licence formal and complete
To choose the fair and pick the sweet.

But there be pertain, words, broad, plain,
Uttered again* and yet again,
Hard to mistake or overgloss—
Announcing this world's gain for loss,
And bidding us reject the same:
The whole world lieth (they proclaim)
In wickedness,—come out of it I
Turn a deaf ear, if you think fit,
But I who thrill through every nerve
At thought of what deaf ears deserve—
How do you counsel in the case?

Ix

'I'd take, by all means, in your place,
'The safe side, since it so appears:
'Deny myself, a few brief years,
'The natural pleasure, leave the fruit
'Or cut the plant up by the root.
'Remember what a martyr said
'On the rude tablet overhead I
' " I was born sickly, poor and mean,
'"A slave: no misery could screen
'"The holders of the pearl of price
'"From Caesar's envy; therefore twice
" ' I fought with beasts, and three times
saw
"My children suffer by his law;
"'At last my own release was earned:
' " I was some time in being burned,
'"But at the close a Hand came through
'"The fire above my head, and drew
'"My soul to Christ, whom now I see.
'"Sergius, a brother, writes for me
'"This testimony on the wall—
"'For me, I have forgot it all."
'You say right; this were not so hard!
'And since one nowise is debarred
'From this, why not escape some sins
'By such a method?'

Then begins
To the old point revulsion new—
(For 'tis just this I bring you to)
If after all we should mistake,
And so renounce life for the sake
Of death and nothing else? You hear
Each friend we jeered at, send the jeer
Back to ourselves with good effect—
'There were my beetles to collect!
' My box—a trifle, I confess.
'But here I hold it, ne'ertheless!'
Poor idiots, (let us pluck up heart
And answer) we, the better part
Have chosen, though 'twere only hope,—
Nor envy moles like you that grope
Amid your veritable muck,
More than the grasshoppers would truck,
For yours, their passionate life away,
That spends itself in leaps all day
To reach the sun, you want the eyes
To see, as they the wings to rise
And match the noble hearts of them!
Thus the contemner we contemn,—
And, when doubt strikes us, thus we ward
Its stroke off, caught upon our guard,
—Not struck enough to overturn
Our faith, but shake it—make us learn
What I began with, and, I wis,
End, having proved,—how hard it is
To be a Christian!

XI

'Proved, or not,
'Howe'er you wis, small thanks, I wot,
'You get of mine, for taking pains
'To make it hard to me. Who gains
'By that, I wonder? Here I live
'In trusting ease; and here you drive
'At causing me to lose what most
'Yourself would mourn for had you lost!

xII

But, do you see, my friend, that thus
You leave Saint Paul for *'Æschylus?*
—Who made his Titan's arch-device
The giving men *blind hopes* to spice
The meal of life with, else devoured
In bitter haste, while lo, death loured
Before them at the platter's edge!
If faith should be, as I allege,
Quite other than a condiment
To heighten flavours with, or meant
(Like that brave curry of his Grace)
To take at need the victuals' place?
If, having dined, you would digest
Besides, and turning to your rest
Should find instead . ..

Now, you shall see
And judge if a mere foppery
Pricks on my speaking! I resolve
To utter—yes, it shall devolve
On you to hear as solemn, strange
And dread a thing as in the range
Of facts,—or fancies, if God will—
E'er happened to our kind! I still
Stand in the cloud and, while it wraps
My face, ought not to speak perhaps;
Seeing that if I carry through
My purpose, if my words in you
Find a live actual listener,
My story, reason must aver
False after all—the happy chance!
While, if each human countenance
I meet in London day by day,
Be what I fear,—my warnings fray
No one, and no one they convert,
And no one helps me to assert
How hard it is to really be
A Christian, and in vacancy
I pour this story!

xIv

I commence
By trying to inform you, whence
It comes that every Easter-night
As now, I sit up, watch, till light,

Upon those chimney-stacks and roofs,
Give, through my window-pane, grey proofs
That Easter-day is breaking slow.
On such a night three years ago,
It chanced that I had cause to cross
The common, where the chapel was,
Our friend spoke of, the other day—
YouVe not forgotten, I dare say.
I fell to musing of the time
So close, the blessed matin-prime
All hearts leap up at, in some guise—
One could not well do otherwise.
Insensibly my thoughts were bent
Toward the main point; I overwent
Much the same ground of reasoning
As you and I just now. One thing
Remained, however—one that tasked
My soul to answer; and I asked.
Fairly and frankly, what might be
That History, that Faith, to me
—Me there—not me in some domain
Built up and peopled by my brain,
Weighing its merits as one weighs
Mere theories for blame or praise,
—The kingcraft of the Lucumons,
Or Fourier's scheme, its pros and cons,—
But my faith there, or none at all.
'How were my case, now, did I fall
'Dead here, this minute—should 1 lie
' Faithful or faithless?' Note that I
Inclined thus ever!—little prone
For instance, when I lay alone
In childhooa, to go calm to sleep
And leave a closet where might keep
His watch perdue some murderer
Waiting till twelve o'clock to stir,
As good authentic legends tell:
'He mights but how improbable I
'How little likely to deserve
'The pains and trial to the nerve
'Of thrusting head into the dark!'—
Urged my old nurse, and bade me mark
Beside, that, should the dreadful scout
Really lie hid there, and leap out
At first turn of the rusty key,
Mine were small gain that she could see,
Killed not in bed but on the floor,
And losing one night's sleep the more.
I tell you, I would always burst
The door ope, know my fate at first.
This time, indeed, the closet penned
No such assassin: but a friend
Rather, peeped out to guard me, fit
For counsel, Common Sense, to wit,
Who said a good deal that might pass,—
Heartening, impartial too, it was,
Judge else: 'For, soberly now,—who
'Should be a Christian if not you?'
(Hear how he smoothed me down.) 'One takes
'A whole life, sees what course it makes
'Mainly, and not by fits and starts—
'In spite of stoppage which imparts
'Fresh value to the general speed.
'A life, with none, would fly indeed:
'Your progressing is slower—right!
'We deal with progress and not flight.
'Through baffling senses passionate,
'Fancies as restless,—with a freight
'Of knowledge cumbersome enough
'To sink your ship when waves grow rough,
'Though meant for ballast in the hold,—
'I find, 'mid dangers manifold,
'The good bark answers to the helm
'Where faith sits, easier to o'erwhelm
'Than some stout peasant's heavenly guide,
'Whose hard head could not, if it tried,
'Conceive a doubt, nor understand
'How senses hornier than his hand
'Should 'tice the Christian off his guard.
'More happy! But shall we award
'Less honour to the hull which, dogged
'By storms, a mere wreck, waterlogged,
'Masts by the board, her bulwarks gone
'And stanchions going, yet bears on,—
'Than to mere life-boats, built to save,
''And triumph o'er the breaking wave?
'Make perfect your good ship as these,
'And what were her performances!'
I added—'Would the ship reach home!
'I wish indeed "God's kingdom come—"
'The day when I shall see appear
'His bidding, as my duty, clear
' From doubt! And it shall dawn, that day,
'Some future season; Easter may
'Prove, not impossibly, the time—
'Yes, that were striking—fates would chime
'So aptly! Easter-morn, to bring
'The Judgment!—deeper in the spring
'Than now, however, when there's snow
'Capping the hills; for earth must show
'All signs of meaning to pursue
'Her tasks as she was wont to do
'—The skylark, taken by surprise
'As we ourselves, shall recognize
'Sudden the end. For suddenly
'It comes; the dreadfulness must be
'In that; all warrants the belief—
'"At night it cometh like a thief."
'I fancy why the trumpet blows;
'—Plainly, to wake one. From repose
'We shall start up, at last awake
'From life, that insane dream we take
'For waking now, because it seems.
'And as, when now we wake from dreams,
'We laugh, while we recall them, "Fool,
'"To let the chance slip, linger cool
"'When such adventure offered! Just
'"A bridge to cross, a dwarf to thrust
'"Aside, a wicked mage to stab—
'"And, lo ye, I had kissed Queen Mab!"
'So shall we marvel why we grudged
'Our labour here, and idly judged

'Of heaven, we might have gained, but lose! *"**"
'Lose? Talk of loss, and I refuse
'To plead at all! You speak no worse
'Nor better than my ancient nurse
'When she would tell me in my youth
'I well deserved that shapes uncouth
'Frighted and teased me in my sleep:
'Why could I not in memory keep
'Her precept for the evil's cure?
'" Pinch your own arm, boy, and be sure
'" You'll wake forthwith!"'

xv

And as I said
This nonsense, throwing back my head
With light complacent laugh, I found
Suddenly all the midnight round
One fire. The dome of heaven had stood
As made up of a multitude
Of handbreadth cloudlets, one vast rack
Of ripples infinite and black,
From sky to sky. Sudden there went,
Like horror and astonishment,
A fierce vindictive scribble of red
Quick flame across, as if one said
(The angry scribe of Judgment) 'There—
'Burn it!' And straight I was aware
That the whole ribwork round, minute
Cloud touching cloud beyond compute,
Was tinted, each with its own spot
Of burning at the core, till clot
Jammed against clot, and spilt its fire
Over all heaven, which 'gan suspire
As fanned to measure equable,—
Just so great conflagrations kill
Night overhead, and rise and sink,
Reflected. Now the fire would shrink
And wither off the blasted face
Of heaven, and I distinct might trace
The sharp black ridgy outlines left
Unburned like network—then, each cleft
The fire had been sucked back into,
Regorged, and out it surging flew
Furiously, and night writhed inflamed,
Till, tolerating to be tamed
No longer, certain rays world-wide
Shot downwardly. On every side
Caught past escape, the earth was lit;
As if a dragon's nostril split
And all his famished ire o'erflowed;
Then, as he winced at his lord's goad,
Back he inhaled: whereat I found
The clouds into vast pillars bound,
Based on the corners of the earth,
Propping the skies at top: a dearth
Of fire i' the violet intervals,
Leaving exposed the utmost walls
Of time, about to tumble in
And end the world.

XVI

I felt begin
The Judgment-Day: to retrocede
Was too late now. 'In very deed,'
(I uttered to myself) 'that Day!'
The intuition burned away
All darkness from my spirit too:
There, stood I, found and fixed, I knew,
Choosing the world. The choice was made;
And naked and disguiseless stayed,
And unevadable. the fact.
My brain held all the same compact
Its senses, nor my heart declined
Its office; rather, both combined
To help me in this juncture. I
Lost not a second,—agony
Gave boldness: since my life had end
And my choice with it—best defend,
Applaud both! I resolved to say,
'So was I framed by thee, such way
'I put to use thy senses here!
'It was so beautiful, so near,
'Thy world,—what could I then but choose
'My part there? Nor did I refuse
'To look above the transient boon
'Of time; but it was hard so soon
'As in a short life, to give up
'Such beauty: I could put the cup
'Undrained of half its fulness, by;
'But, to renounce it utterly,
'—That was too hard! Nor did the cry
'Which bade renounce it, touch my brain
'Authentically deep and plain
'Enough to make my lips let go.
'But Thou, who knowest all, dost know
'Whether I was not, life's brief while,
'Endeavouring to reconcile
'Those lips (too tardily, alas!)
'To letting the dear remnant pass,
'One day.—some drops of earthly good
'Untasted! Is it for this mood,
'That Thou, whose earth delights so well,
'Hast made its complement a hell?'

xvII

A final belch of fire like blood,
Overbroke all heaven in one flood
Of doom. Then fire was sky, and sky
Fire, and both, one brief ecstasy,
Then ashes. But I heard no noise
(Whatever was) because a voice
Beside me spoke thus, 'Life is done,
'Time ends, Eternity's begun,
'And thou art judged for evermore.'

xvIII

I looked up; all seemed as before;
Of that cloud-Tophet overhead
No trace was left: I saw instead
The common round me, and the sky
Above, stretched drear and emptily
Of life. 'Twas the last watch of night,
Except what brings the morning quite;
When the armed angel, conscience-clear,
His task nigh done, leans o'er his spear

And gazes on the earth he guards,
Safe one night more through all its wards,
Till God relieve him at his post.
'A dream—a waking dream at most!*
(I spoke out quick, that I might shake
The horrid nightmare off, and wake.)
'The world gone, yet the world is here?
'Are not all things as they appear?
'Is Judgment past for me alone?
'—And where had place the great white throne?
'The rising of the quick and dead?
' Where stood they, small and great ? Who read
'The sentence from the opened book?'
So, by degrees, the blood forsook
My heart, and let it beat afresh;
I knew I should break through the mesh
Of horror, and breathe presently:
When, lo, again, the voice by me!

I saw ... Oh brother, 'mid far sands
The palm-tree-cinctured city stands,
Bright-white beneath, as heaven, bright-blue,
Leans o'er it, while the years pursue
Their course, unable to abate
Its paradisal laugh at fate!
One morn,—the Arab staggers blind
O'er a new tract of death, calcined
To ashes, silence, nothingness,—
And strives, with dizzy wits, to guess
Whence fell the blow. What if, 'twixt skies
And prostrate earth, he should surprise
The imaged vapour, head to foot,
Surveying, motionless and mute,
Its work, ere, in a whirlwind rapt
It vanish up again?—So hapt
My chance. HE stood there. Like the smoke
Pillared o'er Sodom, when day broke,—
I saw Him. One magnific pall
Mantled in massive fold and fall
His head, and coiled in snaky swathes
About His feet: night's black, that bathes
All else, broke, grizzled with despair,
Against the soul of blackness there.
A gesture told the mood within—
That wrapped right hand which based the chin,
That intense meditation fixed
On His procedure,—pity mixed
With the fulfilment of decree.
Motionless, thus. He spoke to me,
Who fell before His feet, a mass,
No man now.

'All is come to pass.
'Such shows are over for each soul
'They had respect to. In the roll
'Of judgment which convinced mankind
'Of sin, stood many, bold and blind,
'Terror must burn the truth into:
'Their fate for them!—thou hadst to do
'With absolute omnipotence,
'Able its judgments to dispense
'To the whole race, as every one
'Were its sole object. Judgment done,
'God is, thou art,—the rest is hurled
'To nothingness for thee. This world,
'This finite life, thou hast preferred,
'In disbelief or God's plain word,
'To heaven and to infinity.
'Here the probation was for thee,
'To show thy soul the earthly mixed
'With heavenly, it must choose betwixt.
'The earthly joys lay palpable,—
*A taint, in each, distinct as well;
'The heavenly flitted, faint and rare,
'Above them, but as truly were
'Taintless, so, in their nature, best.
'Thy choice was earth: thou didst attest
"Twas fitter spirit should subserve
'The flesh, than flesh refine to nerve
'Beneath the spirit's play. Advance
'No claim to their inheritance
'Who chose the spirit's fugitive
'Brief gleams, and yearned, "This were to live
"'Indeed, if rays, completely pure
"'From flesh that dulls them, could endure,—
"'Not shoot in meteor-light athwart
'"Our earth, to show how cold and swart
"'It lies beneath their fire, but stand
'"As stars do, destined to expand,
"'Prove veritable worlds, our home!"
'Thou saidst,—"Let spirit star the dome
'"Of sky, that flesh may miss no peak,
"'No nook of earth,—I shall not seek
"'Its service further!" Thou art shut
'Out of the heaven of spirit; glut
'Thy sense upon the world: 'tis thine
'Forever—take it!'

XXI

'How? Is mine,
' The world ?' (I cried, while my soul broke
Out in a transport.) 'Hast Thou spoke
'Plainly in that? Earth's exquisite
'Treasures of wonder and delight,
'For me?'

xxII

The austere voice returned,-
'So soon made happy? Hadst thou learned
'What God accounteth happiness,
'Thou wouldst not find it hard to guess
'What hell may be his punishment
'For those who doubt if God invent
'Better than they. Let such men rest
'Content with what they judged the best.
'Let the unjust usurp at will:
'The filthy shall be filthy still:
'Miser, there waits the gold for thee!
'Hater, indulge thine enmity!

'And thou whose heaven self-ordained
'Was, to enjoy earth unrestrained,
'Do it! Take all the ancient show!
'The woods shall wave, the rivers flow,
'And men apparently pursue
'Their works, as they were wont to do,
'While living in probation yet.
'I promise not thou shalt forget
'The past, now gone to its account;
* But leave thee with the old amount
'Of faculties, nor less nor more,
'Unvisited, as heretofore,
'By God's free spirit, that makes an end.
'So, once more, take thy world! Expend
'Eternity upon its shows,
'Flung thee as freely as one rose
'Out of a summer's opulence,
'Over the Eden-barrier whence
'Thou art excluded. Knock in vain!'

xxIII

I sat up. All was still again.
I breathed free: to my heart, back fled
The warmth. 'But, all the world! * — I said.
I stooped and picked a leaf of fern,
And recollected I might learn
From books, how many myriad sorts
Of fern exist, to trust reports,
Each as distinct and beautiful
As this, the very first I cull.
Think, from the first leaf to the last!
Conceive, then, earth's resources! Vast
Exhaustless beauty, endless change
Of wonder! And this foot shall range
Alps, Andes.—and this eye devour
The bee-bird and the aloe-flower?

Then the voice, 'Welcome so to rate
'The arras-folds that variegate
'The earth, God's antechamber, well!
'The wise, who waited there, could tell
'By these, what royalties in store
'Lay one step past the entrance-door.
* For whom, was reckoned, not too much,
'This life's munificence? For such
'As thou,—a race, whereof scarce one
'Was able, in a million,
'To feel that any marvel lay
'In objects round his feet all day;
'Scarce one, in many millions more,
'Willing, if able, to explore
'The secreter, minuter charm!
'—Brave souls, a fern-leaf could disarm
'Of power to cope with God's intent,—
'Or scared if the south firmament
'With north-fire did its wings refledge!
'All partial beauty was a pledge
'Of beauty in its plenitude:
'But since the pledge sufficed thy mood,
'Retain it! plenitude be theirs
'Who looked above!*

xxv

Though sharp despairs
Shot through me, I held up, bore on.
'What matter though my trust were gone
'From natural things? Henceforth my part
'Be less with nature than with art!
'For art supplants, gives mainly worth
'To nature; 'tis man stamps the earth—
'And I will seek his impress, seek
'The statuary of the Greek,
'Italy's painting—there my choice
'Shall fix!'

XXVI

'Obtain it!' said the voice,
'—The one form with its single act,
'Which sculptors laboured to abstract,
'The one face, painters tried to draw,
'With its one look, from throngs they saw.
'And that perfection in their soul,
'These only hinted at? The whole,
'They were but parts of? What each laid
'His claim to glory on?—afraid
'His fellow-men should give him rank
'By mere tentatives which he shrank
'Smitten at heart from, all the more,
'That gazers pressed in to adore!
"'Shall I be judged by only these?"
'If such his soul's capacities,
'Even while he trod the earth,—think, now,
'What pomp in Buonarroti's brow,
'With its new palace-brain where dwells
'Superb the soul, unvexed by cells
'That crumbled with the transient clay!
'What visions will his right hand's sway
'Still turn to forms, as still they burst
'Upon him? How will he quench thirst,
'Titanically infantine,
'Laid at the breast of the Divine?
'Does it confound thee,—this first page
'Emblazoning man's heritage?—
'Can this alone absorb thy sight,
'As pages were not infinite,—
'Like the omnipotence which tasks
'Itself to furnish all that asks
'The soul it means to satiate?
'What was the world, the starry state
'Of the broad skies,—what, all displays
'Of power and beauty intermixed,
'Which now thy soul is chained betwixt,—
'What else than needful furniture
'For life's first stage? God's work, be sure,
'No more spreads wasted, than falls scant!
'He filled, did not exceed, man's want
'Of beauty in this life. But through
'Life pierce,—and what has earth to do,
'Its utmost beauty's appanage,
'With the requirement of next stage?
'Did God pronounce earth "very good"?
'Needs must it be, while understood
'For man's preparatory state;
'Nought here to heighten nor abate;

'Transfer the same completeness here,
'To serve a new state's use,—and drear
'Deficiency gapes every side!
'The good, tried once, were bad, retried.
'See the enwrapping rocky niche,
'Sufficient for the sleep in which
'The lizard breathes for ages safe:
'Split the mould—and as light would chafe
'The creature's new world-widened sense,
'Dazzled to death at evidence
'Of all the sounds and sights that broke
'Innumerous at the chisel's stroke,—
'So, in God's eye, the earth's first stuff
'Was, neither more nor less, enough
'To house man's soul, man's need fulfil.
'Man reckoned it immeasurable?
'So thinks the lizard of his vault I
'Could God be taken in default,
'Short of contrivances, by you,—
'Or reached, ere ready to pursue
'His progress through eternity?
'That chambered rock, the lizard's world,
'Your easy mallet's blow has hurled
'To nothingness for ever; so,
'Has God abolished at a blow
'This world, wherein his saints were pent,—
'Who, though found grateful and content,
*With the provision there, as thou,
'Yet knew he would not disallow
* Their spirit's hunger, felt as well,-*
' Unsated,—not unsatable,
'As paradise gives proof. Deride
' Their choice now, thou who sit'st outsider

xxvII

I cried in anguish, 'Mind, the mind,
'So miserably cast behina,
'To gain what had been wisely lost!
'Oh, let me strive to make the most
'Of the poor stinted soul, I nipped
'Of budding wings, else now equipped
'For voyage from summer isle to isle!
'And though she needs must reconcile
'Ambition to the life on ground,
'Still, I can profit by late found
'But precious knowledge. Mind is best—
'I will seize mind, forego the rest,
'And try how far my tethered strength
'May crawl in this poor breadth and length.
'Let me, since I can fly no more,
'At least spin dervish-like about
'(Till giddy rapture almost doubt
*I fly) through circling sciences,
•Philosophies and histories!
'Should the whirl slacken there, then verse,
'Fining to music, shall asperse
'Fresh and fresh fire-dew, till I strain
'Intoxicate, half-break my chain!
'Not joyless, though more favoured feet
'Stand calm, where I want wings to beat
' The floor. At least earth's bond is broke!'

xxvIII

Then, (sickening even while I spoke)
'Let me alone! No answer, pray,
'To this! I know what Thou wilt say!
'All still is earth's,—to know, as much
'As feel its truths, which if we touch
'With sense, or apprehend in soul,
'What matter? I have reached the goal—
'"Whereto does knowledge serve!" will burn
'My eyes, too sure, at every turn!
'I cannot look back now, nor stake
'Bliss on the race, for running's sake.
'The goal's a ruin like the rest!'—
'And so much worse thy latter quest,'
(Added the voice) 'that even on earth—
'Whenever, in man's soul, had birth
'Those intuitions, grasps of guess,
'Which pull the more into the less,
'Making the finite comprehend
'Infinity,—the bard would spend
'Such praise alone, upon his craft,
'As, when wind-lyres obey the waft,
'Goes to the craftsman who arranged
'The seven strings, changed them and re-changed—
' Knowing it was the South that harped.
'He felt his song, in singing, warped;
* Distinguished his and God's part: whence
' A world of spirit as of sense
*Was plain to him, yet not too plain,
'Which he could traverse, not remain
'A guest in:—else were permanent
'Heaven on the earth its gleams were meant
'To sting with hunger for full light,—
'Made visible in verse, despite
'The veiling weakness,—truth by means
'Of fable, showing while it screens,—
'Since highest truth, man e'er supplied,
'Was ever fable on outside.
'Such gleams made bright the earth an age;
•Now the whole sun's his heritage!
'Take up thy world, it is allowed,
•Thou who hast entered in the cloud I'

xxrx

Then I—'Behold, my spirit bleeds,
'Catches no more at broken reeds,—
•But lilies flower those reeds above:
•I let the world go, and take love!
•Love survives in me, albeit those
•I love be henceforth masks and shows,
'Not living men and women: still
•I mind how love repaired all ill,
'Cured wrong, soothed grief, made earth amends
'With parents, brothers, children, friends!

'Some semblance oka woman yet
'With eyes to help me to forget,
'Shall look on me; and I will match
'Departed love with love, attach
'Old memories to new dreams, nor scorn
'The poorest of the grains of corn
'I save from shipwreck on this isle,
'Trusting its barrenness may smile
'With happy foodful green one day,
'More precious for the pains. I pray,—
'Leave to love, only!'

xxx

At the word,
The form, I looked to have been stirred
With pity and approval, rose
O'er me, as when the headsman throws
Axe over shoulder to make end—
I fell prone, letting Him expend
His wrath, while thus the inflicting voice
Smote me. 'Is this thy final choice?
'Love is the best? 'Tis somewhat late!
'And all thou dost enumerate
'Of power and beauty in the world,
*The mightiness of love was curled
'Inextricably round about.
'Love lay within it and without,
'To clasp thee,—but in vain! Thy soul
'Still shrunk from Him who made the whole,
•Still set deliberate aside
'His love!—Now take love! Well betide
'Thy tardy conscience! Haste to take
'The show of love for the name's sake,
'Remembering every moment Who,
'Beside creating thee unto
'These ends, and these for thee, was said
'To undergo death in thy stead
'In flesh like thine: so ran the tale.
'What doubt in thee could countervail
'Belief in it? Upon the ground
'"That in the story had been found
"'Too much love! How could God love so?"
'He who in all his works below
'Adapted to the needs of man,
'Made love the basis of the plan,—
'Did love, as was demonstrated:
'While man, who was so fit instead
'To hate, as every day gave proof,—
'Man thought man, for his kind's behoof,
'Both could and did invent that scheme
'Of perfect love: 'twould well beseem
'Cain's nature thou wast wont to praise,
'Not tally with God's usual ways!*

XXXI

And I cowered deprecatingly—
'Thou Love of God! Or let me die,
'Or grant what shall seem heaven almost!
'Let me not know that all is lost,
'Though lost it be—leave me not tied
'To this despair, this corpse-like bride!
'Let that old life seem mine—no more—
'With limitation as before,
'With darkness, hunger, toil, distress:
'Be all the earth a wilderness!
'Only let me go on, go on,
'Still hoping ever and anon
To reach one eve the Better Land!'

xxxII

Then did the form expand, expand—
I knew Him through the dread disguise
As the whole God within His eyes
Embraced me.

xxxIII

When I lived again,
The day was breaking,—the grey plain
I rose from, silvered thick with dew.
Was this a vision? False or true?
Since then, three varied years are spent,
And commonly my mind is bent
To think it was a dream—be sure
A mere dream and distemperature—
The last day's watching: then the night,—
The shock of that strange Northern Light
Set my head swimming, bred in me
A dream. And so I live, you see,
Go through the world, try, prove, reject,
Prefer, still struggling to effect
My warfare; happy that I can
Be crossed and thwarted as a man,
Not left in God's contempt apart,
With ghastly smooth life, dead at heart,
Tame in earth's paddock as her prize.
Thank God, she still each method tries
To catch me, who may yet escape,
She knows,—the fiend in angel s shape!
Thank God, no paradise stands barred
To entry, and I find it hard
To be a Christian, as I said!
Still every now and then my head
Raised glad, sinks mournful—all grows drear
Spite of the sunshine, while I fear
And think, 'How dreadful to be grudged
'No ease henceforth, as one that's judged.
'Condemned to earth for ever, shut
'From heaven!'
But Easter-Day breaks! But
Christ rises! Mercy every way
Is infinite,—and who can say?

•TRANSCENDENTALISM: A POEM IN TWELVE BOOKS'

STOP playing, poet! May a brother speak?
'Tis you speak, that's your error. Song's our art:
Whereas you please to speak these naked thoughts
Instead of draping them in sights and sounds.
—True thoughts, good thoughts, thoughts fit to treasure up!
But why such long prolusion and display,
Such turning and adjustment of the harp,
And taking it upon your breast, at length,
Only to speak dry words across its strings?
Stark-naked thought is in request enough:
Speak prose and hollo it till Europe hears!
The six-foot Swiss tube, braced about with bark,
Which helps the hunters voice from Alp to Alp -
Exchange our harp for that,—who hinders you?

But here's your fault; grown men want thought, you think;
Thought's what they mean by verse, and seek in verse.
Boys seek for images and melody,
Men must have reason—so, you aim at men.
Quite otherwise! Objects throng our youth, 'tis true;
We see ana hear and do not wonder much:
If you could tell us what they mean, indeed!
As German Boehme never cared for plants
Until it happed, a-walking in the fields,
He noticed all at once that plants could speak,
Nay, turned with loosened tongue to talk with him.
That day the daisy had an eye indeed—
Colloquized with the cowslip on such themes!
We find them extant yet in Jacob's prose.
But by the time youth slips a stage or two
While reading prose in that tough book he wrote
(Collating and emendating the same
And settling on the sense most to our mind),
We shut the clasps and find life's summer

Then, who helps more, pray, to repair our loss—
Another Boehme with a tougher book
And subtler meanings of what roses say,—
Or some stout Mage like him of Halberstadt,[1] „
John who made things Boehme wrote thoughts about?
He with a 'look you!' vents a brace of rhymes,
And in there breaks the sudden rose herself,
Over us, under, round us every side,
Nay, in and out the tables and the chairs
And musty volumes, Boehme's book and all,—
Buries us with a glory, young once more,
Pouring heaven into this shut house of life.

So come, the harp back to your heart again!
You are a poem, though your poem's naught. I
The best of all you showed before, believe,
Was your own boy-face o'er the finer chords
Bent, following the cherub at the top
That points to God with his paired naif-moon wings.

HOW IT STRIKES A CONTEMPORARY

I ONLY knew one poet in my life:
And this, or something like it, was his way.

You saw go up and down Valladolid,
A man of mark, to know next time you saw.
His very serviceable suit of black
Was courtly once and conscientious still,
And many might have worn it, though none did:
The cloak, that somewhat shone and showed the threads,
Had purpose, and the ruff, significance.
He walked and tapped the pavement with his cane,
Scenting the world, looking it full in face,
An old dog, bald and blindish, at his heels.
They turned up, now, the alley by the church,
That leads nowhither; now, they breathed themselves
On the main promenade just at the wrong time:

[1] John of Halberstadt, a magician botanist and a chymist.

You'd come upon his scrutinizing hat
Making a peaked shade blacker than itself Against the single window spared some house
Intact yet with its mouldered Moorish work,—
Or else surprise the ferrel of his stick
Trying the mortar's temper 'tween the chinks
Of some new shop a-building, French and fine.
He stood and watched the cobbler at his trade,
The man who slices lemons into drink,
The coffee-roaster's brazier, and the boys
That volunteer to help him turn its winch.
He glanced o'er books on stalls with half an eye,
And fly-leaf ballads on the vendor's string,
And broad-edge bold-print posters by the wall.
He took such cognizance of men and things,
If any beat a horse, you felt he saw;
If any cursed a woman, he took note;
Yet stared at nobody,—you stared at him,
And found, less to your pleasure than surprise,
He seemed to know you and expect as much.
So, next time that a neighbour's tongue was loosed,
It marked the shameful and notorious fact,
We had among us, not so much a spy,
As a recording chief-inquisitor,
The town's true master if the town but knew!
We merely kept a governor for form,
While this man walked about and took account
Of all thought, said and acted, then went home,
And wrote it fully to our Lord the King
Who has an itch to know things, he knows why,
And reads them in his bedroom of a night.
Oh, you might smile! there wanted not a touch,
A tang of... well, it was not wholly ease
As back into your mind the man's look came.
Stricken in years a little,—such a brow
His eyes had to live under!—clear as flint
On either side the formidable nose
Curved, cut and coloured like an eagle's claw.
Had he to do with A.*s surprising fate?
When altogether old B. disappeared
And young C. got his mistress,—was't our friend,
His letter to the King, that did it all?
What paid the bloodless man for so much pains?
Our Lord the King has favourites manifold.
And shifts his ministry some once a month;
Our city gets new governors at whiles,—
But never word or sign, that I could hear,
Notified to this man about the streets
The King's approval of those letters conned
The last thing duly at the dead of night.
Did the man love his office ? Frowned our Lord,
Exhorting when none heard—'Beseech me not!
'Too far above my people,—beneath me!
*I set the watch,—how should the people know?
'Forget them, keep me all the more in mind!'
Was some such understanding 'twixt the two?

I found no truth in one report at least—
That if you tracked him to his home, down lanes
Beyond the Jewry, and as clean to pace,
You found he ate his supper in a room
Blazing with lights, four Titians on the wall,
And twenty naked girls to change his plate!
Poor man, he lived another kind of life
In that rew stuccoed third house by the bridge,
Fresh-painted, rather smart than otherwise!
The whole street might o'erlook him as he sat,
Leg crossing leg, one foot on the dog's back,
Playing a decent cribbage with his maid
(Jacynth, you're sure her name was) o'er the cheese
And fruit, three red halves of starved winter-pears,
Or treat of radishes in April. Nine,
Ten, struck the church clock, straight to bed went he.

My father, like the man of sense he was
Would point him out to me a dozen times
' 'St—'St,' he'd whisper,' the Corregidor!
I had been used to think that personage
Was one with lacquered breeches, lustrous belt,
And feathers like a forest in his hat,
Who blew a trumpet and proclaimed the news,
Announced the bull-fights, gave each church its turn,
And memorized the miracle in vogue!
He had a great observance from us boys;
We were in error; that was not the man.

I'd like now, yet had haply been afraid,
To have just looked, when this man came to die,

And seen who lined the clean gay garret-sides
''And stood about the neat low truckle-bed,
With the heavenly manner of relieving guard.
Here had been, mark, the general-in-chief,
Thro' a whole campaign of the world's life and death,
Doing the King's work all the dim day long,
In his old coat and up to knees in mud,
Smoked like a herring, dining on a crust,—
And, now the day was won, relieved at once!
No further show or need for that old coat.
You are sure, for one thing 1 Bless us, all the while
How sprucely we are dressed out, you and I!
A second, and the angels alter that.
Well, I could never write a verse,—could you?
Let's to the Prado and make the most of time.

ARTEMIS PROLOGIZES

1 AM a goddess of the ambrosial courts,
And save by Here, Queen of Pride, sur-

By none whose temples whiten this the world.
Through heaven I roll my. lucid moon along;
I shed in hell o'er my pale people peace;
On earth I, caring for the creatures, guard
Each pregnant yellow wolf and fox-bitch sleek,
And every feathered mother's callow brood,
And all that love green haunts and loneliness.
Of men, the chaste adore me, hanging crowns
Of poppies red to blackness, bell and stem,
Upon my image at Athenai here;
And this dead Youth, Asclepios bends above,
Was dearest to me. He, my buskined step
To follow through the wild-wood leafy ways,
And chase the panting stag, or swift with darts
Stop the swift ounce, or lay the leopard low,
Neglected homage to another god:
Whence Aphrodite, by no midnight smoke
Of tapers lulled, in jealousy despatched
A noisome lust that, as the gadbee stings,
Possessed his stepdame Phaidra for himself
The son of Theseus her great absent spouse.
Hippolutos exclaiming in his rage
Against the fury of the Queen, she judged
Life insupportable; and, pricked at heart
An Amazonian stranger's race should dare
To scorn her, perished by the murderous cord:
Yet, ere she perished, blasted in a scroll
The fame of him her swerving made not swerve.
And Theseus, read, returning, and believed.
And exiled, in the blindness of his wrath,
The man without a crime who, last as first,
Loyal, divulged not to his sire the truth.
Now Theseus from Poseidon had obtained
That of his wishes should be granted three,
And one he imprecated straight—'Alive
'May ne'er Hippolutos reach other lands!'
Poseidon heard, ai ai! And scarce the prince
Had stepped into the fixed boots of the car
That give the feet a stay against the strength
Of the Henetian horses, and around
His body flung the rein, and urged their speed
Along the rocks and shingles of the shore,
When from the gaping wave a monster flung
His obscene body in the coursers' path.
These, mad with terror, as the sea-bull sprawled
Wallowing about their feet, lost care of him
That reared them; and the master-chariot-pole
Snapping beneath their plunges like a reed,
Hippolutos, whose feet were trammelled fast,
Was yet dragged forward by the circling rein
Which either hand directed; nor they quenched
The frenzy of their flight before each trace,
Wheel-spoke and splinter of the woeful car,
Each boulder-stone, sharp stub and spiny shell.
Huge fish-bone wrecked and wreathed amid the sands
On that detested beach, was bright with blood
And morsels of his flesh: then fell the steeds
Head foremost, crashing in their mooned fronts,
Shivering with sweat, each white eye horror-fixed.
His people, who had witnessed all afar,
Bore back the ruins of Hippolutos.
But when his sire, too swoln with pride, rejoiced
(Indomitable as a man foredoomed)
That vast Poseidon had fulfilled his prayer,
In a flood of glory visible,
Stood o'er my dying votary and, deed

ARTEMIS PROLOGIZES

By deed, revealed, as all took place, the truth.
Then These lay the woefullest of men,
And worthily; but ere the death-veils hid
His face, the murdered prince full pardon breathed
To his rash sire. Whereat Athenai wails.

So I, who ne'er forsake my votaries,
Lest in the cross-way none the honey-cake
Should tender, nor pour out the dog's hot life;
Lest at my fane the priests disconsolate
Should dress my image with some faded poor
Few crowns, made favours of, nor dare object
Such slackness to my worshippers who turn
Elsewhere the trusting heart and loaded hand,
As they had climbed Olumpos to report
Of Artemis and nowhere found her throne—
I interposed: and, this eventful night,—
(While round the funeral pyre the populace
Stood with fierce light on their black robes which bound
Each sobbing head, while yet their hair they clipped
O'er the dead body of their withered prince,
And, in his palace, Theseus prostrated
On the cold hearth, his brow cold as the slab
'Twas bruised on, groaned away the heavy grief—
As the pyre fell, and down the cross logs crashed
Sending a crowd of sparkles through the night,
And the gay fire, elate with mastery,
Towered like a serpent o'er the clotted jars
Of wine, dissolving oils and frankincense,
And splendid gums like gold),—my potency
Conveyed the perished man to my retreat
In the thrice-venerable forest here.
And this white-bearded sage who squeezes now
The berried plant, is Phoibos' son of fame,
Asclepios, whom my radiant brother taught
The doctrine of each herb and flower and root,
To know their secret'st virtue and express
The saving soul of all; who so has soothed
With lavers the torn brow and murdered cheeks,
Composed the hair and brought its gloss again,
And called the red bloom to the pale skin back,
And laid the strips and jagged ends of flesh
Even once more, and slacked the sinew's knot
Of every tortured limb—that now he lies
As if mere sleep possessed him underneath
These interwoven oaks and pines. Oh cheer,
Divine presenter of the healing rod.
Thy snake, with ardent throat and lulling eye,
Twines his lithe spires around! I say, much cheer!
Proceed thou with thy wisest pharmacies!
And ye, white crowd of woodland sister-nymphs,
Ply, as the sage directs, these buds and leaves
That strew the turf around the twain! While I
Await, in fitting silence, the event.

AN EPISTLE

CONTAINING THE STRANGE MEDICAL EXPERIENCE OF KARSHISH, THE ARAB PHYSICIAN.

KARSHISH, the picker-up of learning's
' crumbs,
The not-incurious in God's handiwork
(This man's-flesh he hath admirably made,
Blown like a bubble, kneaded like a paste,
To coop up and keep down on earth a space
That puff of vapour from its mouth, man's soul)
—To Abib, all-sagacious in our art,
Breeder in me of what poor skill I boast,
Like me inquisitive how pricks and cracks
Befall the flesh through too much stress and strain,
Whereby the wily vapour fain would slip
Back and rejoin its source before the term,—
And aptest in contrivance (under God)
To baffle it by deftly stopping such:—
The vagrant Scholar to his Sage at home
Sends greeting (health and knowledge, fame with peace)
Three samples of true snakestone—rarer still,
One of the other sort, the melon-shaped,
(But fitter, pounded fine, for charms than drugs)
And writeth now the twenty-second time.

My journeyings were brought to Jericho:
Thus I resume. Who studious in our art
Shall count a little labour unrepaid?
I have shed sweat enough, left flesh and bone
On many a flinty furlong of this land.
Also, the country-side is all on fire
With rumours of a marching hitherward:

Some say Vespasian cometh, some, his son.
A black lynx snarled and pricked a tufted ear;
Lust of my blood inflamed his yellow balls:
I cried and threw my staff and he was gone.
Twice have the robbers stripped and beaten me,
And once a town declared me for a spy;
But at the end, I reach Jerusalem,
Since this poor covert where I pass the night,
This Bethany, lies scarce the distance thence
A man with plague-sores at the third degree
Runs till he drops down dead. Thou Jaughest here!
'Sooth, it elates me, thus reposed and safe,
To void the stuffing of my travel-scrip
And share with thee whatever Jewry yields.
A viscid choler is observable
In tertians, I was nearly bold to say;
And falling-sickness hath a happier cure
Than our school wots of: there's a spider here
Weaves no web, watches on the ledge of tombs,
Sprinkled with mottles on an ash-grey back;
Take five and drop them . . . but who knows his mind,
The Syrian runagate I trust this to?
His service payeth me a sublimate
Blown up his nose to help the ailing eye.
Best wait: I reach Jerusalem at morn,
There set in order my experiences,
Gather what most deserves, and give thee all—
Or I might add, Judaea's gum-tragacanth
Scales off in purer flakes, shines clearer-grained,
Cracks 'twixt the pestle and the porphyry,
In fine exceeds our produce. Scalp-disease
Confounds me, crossing so with leprosy—
Thou hadst admired one sort I gained at Zoar—
But zeal outruns discretion. Here I end.

Yet stay: my Syrian blinketh gratefully,
Protesteth his devotion is my price—
Suppose I write what harms not, though he steal?
I half resolve to tell thee, yet I blush,
What set me off a-writing first of all.
An itch I had, a sting to write, a tang!
For, be at this town's barrenness—or else
The Man had something in the look of him—
His case has struck me far more than 'tis worth.
So, pardon if—(lest presently I lose
In the great press of novelty at hand
The care and pains this somehow stole from me)
I bid thee take the thing while fresh in mind,
Almost in sight—for, wilt thou have the truth?
The very man is gone from mc but now,
Whose ailment is the subject of discourse.
Thus then, and let thy better wit help all!

'Tis but a case of mania-subinduced
By epilepsy at the turning-point
Of trance prolonged unduly some three days:
When, by the exhibition of some drug
Or spell, exorcization, stroke of art
Unknown to me and which 'twere well to know,
The evil thing out-breaking all at once
Left the man whole and sound of body indeed,—
But, flinging (so to speak) life's gates too wide,
Making a clear house of it too suddenly,
The first conceit that entered might inscribe
Whatever it was minded on the wall
So plainly at that vantage, as it were,
(First come, first served) that nothing subsequent
Attaineth to erase those fancy-scrawls
The iust-returned and new-established soul
Hath gotten now so thoroughly by heart
That henceforth she will read or these or none.
And first—the man's own firm conviction rests
That he was dead (in fact they buried him)
—That he was dead and then restored to life
By a Nazarene physician of his tribe:
—'Sayeth, the same bade 'Rise,' and he did rise.
'Such cases are diurnal,' thou wilt cry.
Not so this figment!—not, that such a fume,
Instead of giving way to time and health,
Should eat itself into the life of life,
As saffron tingeth flesh, blood, bones and all!
For see, how he takes up the after-life.
The man—it is one Lazarus a Jew,
Sanguine, proportioned, fifty years of age,
The body's habit wholly laudable,
As much, indeed, beyond the common health
As he were made and put aside to show.
Think, could we penetrate by any drug
And bathe the wearied soul and worried flesh.
And bring it clear and fair, by three days' sleep!
Whence has the man the balm that brightens all?
This grown man eyes the world now like a chile

Some elders of his tribe, I should premise,
Led in their friend, obedient as a sheep,
To bear my inquisition. While they spoke,
Now sharply, now with sorrow,—told the case,—
He listened not except I spoke to him,
But folded his two hands and let them talk,
Watching the flies that buzzed: and yet no fool.
And that 's a sample how his years must go.
Look, if a beggar, in fixed middle-life,
Should find a treasure,—can he use the same
With straitened habits and with tastes starved small,
And take at once to his impoverished brain
The sudden element that changes things,
That sets the undreamed-of rapture at his hand
And puts the cheap old joy in the scorned dust?
Is he not such an one as moves to mirth—
Warily parsimonious, when no need,
Wasteful as drunkenness at undue times?
All prudent counsel as to what befits
The golden mean, is lost on such an one:
The man's fantastic will is the man's law.
So here—we call the treasure knowledge, say,
Increased beyond the fleshly faculty—
Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth,
Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing heaven:
The man is witless of the size, the sum,
The value in proportion of all things,
Or whether it be little or be much.
Discourse to him of prodigious armaments
Assembled to besiege his city now,
And of the passing of a mule with gourds—
'Tis one! Then take it on the other side,
Speak of some trifling fact,—he will gaze rapt
With stupor at its very littleness,
(Far as I see) as if in that indeed
He caught prodigious import, whole results;
And so will turn to us the bystanders
In ever the same stupor (note this point)
That we too see not with his opened eyes.
Wonder and doubt come wrongly into play,
Preposterously, at cross purposes.
Should his child sicken unto death,—why, look
For scarce abatement of his cheerfulness,
Or pretermission of the daily craft!
While a word, gesture, glance from that same child
At play or in the school or laid asleep,
Will startle him to an agony of fear,
Exasperation, just as like. Demand
The reason why—"tis but a word,' object—
'A gesture'—he regards thee as our lord
Who lived there in the pyramid alone,
Looked at us (dost thou mind?) when, being young,
We both would unadvisedly recite
Some charm's beginning, from that book of his,
Able to bid the sun throb wide and burst
All into stars, as suns grown old are wont.
Thou and the child have each a veil alike
Thrown o'er your heads, from under which ye both
Stretch your blind hands and trifle with a match
Over a mine of Greek fire, did ye know!
He holds on firmly to some thread of life—
(It is the life to lead perforcedly)
Which runs across some vast distracting orb
Of glory on either side that meagre thread,
Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet—
The spiritual life around the earthly life:
The law of that is known to him as this,
His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here.
So is the man perplext with impulses
Sudden to start off crosswise, not straight on,
Proclaiming what is right and wrong across,
And not along, this black thread through the blaze—
'It should be' baulked by 'here it cannot be.'
And oft the man's soul springs into his face
As if he saw again and heard again
His sage that bade him 'Rise* and he did rise.
Something, a word, a tick o' the blood within
Admonishes: then back he sinks at once
To ashes, who was very fire before,
In sedulous recurrence to his trade
Whereby he earneth him the daily bread,
And studiously the humbler for that pride,
Professedly the faultier that he knows
God's secret, while he holds the thread of life.
Indeed the especial marking of the man
Is prone submission to the heavenly will—
Seeing it, what it is, and why it is.
'Sayeth, he will wait patient to the last
For that same death which must restore his being
To equilibrium, body loosening soul
Divorced even now by premature full growth:
He will live, nay, it pleaseth him to live
So long as God please, and just how God please.
He even seeketh not to please God more

(Which meaneth, otherwise) than as God please.
Hence, I perceive not he affects to preach
The doctrine of his sect whate'er it be,
Make proselytes as madmen thirst to do:
How can he give his neighbour the real ground,
His own conviction? Ardent as he is—
Call his great truth a lie, why, still the old
'Be it as God please* reassureth him.
I probed the sore as thy disciple should:
'How, beast/ said I, 'this stolid carelessness
'Sufficeth thee, when Rome is on her march
'To stamp out like a little spark thy town,
' Thy tribe, thy crazy tale and thee at once ?'
He merely looked with his large eyes on me.
The man is apathetic, you deduce?
Contrariwise, he loves both old and young,
Able and weak, affects the very brutes
And birds—how say I? flowers of the field-
As a wise workman recognizes tools
In a master's workshop, loving what they make.
Thus is the man as harmless as a lamb:
Only impatient let him do his best,
At ignorance and carelessness and sin—
An indignation which is promptly curbed:
As when in certain travel I have feigned
To be an ignoramus in our art
According to some preconceived design,
And happed to hear the land's practitioners
Steeped in conceit sublimed by ignorance,
Prattle fantastically on disease,
Its cause and cure—and I must hold my peace!

Thou wilt object—Why have I not ere this
Sought out the sage himself, the Nazarene
Who wrought this cure, inquiring at the source,
Conferring with the frankness that befits?
Alas! it grieveth me, the learned leech
Perished in a lumult many years ago,
Accused,—our learning's fate,—of wizardry,
Rebellion, to the setting up a rule
And creed prodigious as described to me.
His death, which happened when the earthquake fell
(Prefiguring, as soon appeared, the loss
To occult learning in our lord the sage
Who lived there in the pyramid alone)
Was wrought by the mad people—that's their wont!
On vain recourse, as I conjecture it,
To his tried virtue, for miraculous help—
How could he stop the earthquake? That's their way !
The other imputations must be lies:
But take one, though I loathe to give it thee,
In mere respect for any good man's fame.
(And after all, our patient Lazarus
Is stark mad; should we count on what he says?
Perhaps not: though in writing to a leech
'Tis well to keep back nothing of a case.)
This man so cured regards the curer, then,
lAs—God forgive me! who but God himself,
Creator and sustainer of the world,
That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile!
—'Sayeth that such an one was born and lived
Taught, healed the sick, broke bread at his own house,
Then died, with Lazarus by, for aught I know,
And yet was .. . what I said nor choose repeat,
And must have so avouched himself, in fact,
In hearing of this very Lazarus
Who saith—but why all this of what he saith?
Why write of trivial matters, things of price
Calling at every moment for remark?
I noticed on the margin of a pool
Blue-flowering borage, the Aleppo sort,
Aboundeth, very nitrous. It is strange!

Thy pardon for this long and tedious case,
Which, now that I review it, needs must seem
Unduly dwelt on, prolixly set forth!
Nor I myself discern in what is writ
Good cause for the peculiar interest
And awe indeed this man has touched me with.
Perhaps the journey's end, the weariness
Had wrought upon me first. I met him thus:
I crossed a ridge of short sharp broken hills
JLike an old lion's cheek-teeth. Out there came
A moon made like a face with certain spots
Multiform, manifold and menacing:
Then a wind rose behind me. So we met
In this old sleepy town at unaware.
The man and I. I send thee what is writ.
Regard it as a chance, a matter risked
To this ambiguous Syrian—he may lose,
Or steal, or give it thee with equal good.
Jerusalem's repose shall make amends
For time this letter wastes, thy time and mine;
Till when, once more thy pardon and farewell!

The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?

AN EPISTLE

So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too—
So, through the thunder comes a human voice
Saying,' O heart I made, a heart beats here!
'Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself!
'Thou hast no power nor mayst conceive of mine,
* But love I gave thee, with myself to love,
'And thou must love me who have died for thee!'
The madman saith He said so: it is strange.

JOHANNES AGRTCOLA IN MEDITATION

THERE'S heaven above, and night by night
I look right through its gorgeous roof;
No suns and moons though e'er so bright
Avail to stop me; splendour-proof
I keep the broods of stars aloof:
For I intend to get to God,
For 'tis to God I speed so fast,
For in God's breast, my own abode,
Those shoals of dazzling glory, passed,
I lay my spirit down at last.
I He where I have always lain,
God smiles as he has always smiled;
Ere suns and moons could wax and wane,
Ere stars were thundergirt, or piled
The heavens, God thought on me his child;
Ordained a life for me, arrayed
Its circumstances every one
To the minutest; ay, God said
This head this hand should rest upon
Thus, ere he fashioned star or sun.
And having thus created me,
Thus rooted me, he bade me grow,
Guiltless for ever, like a tree
That buds and blooms, nor seeks to know
The law by which it prospers so:
But sure that thought and word and deed
All go to swell his love for me,
Me, made because that love had need
Of something irreversibly
Pledged solely its content to be.
Yes, yes, a tree which must ascend,
No poison-gourd foredoomed to stoop I
I have God's warrant, could I blend
All hideous sins, as in a cup,
To drink the mingled venoms up;
Secure my nature will convert
The draught to blossoming gladness fast:
While sweet dews turn to the gourd's hurt,
And bloat, and while they bloat it, blast,
As from the first its lot was cast.
For as I lie, smiled on, full-fed
By unexhausted power to bless,
I gaze below on hell's fierce bed,
And those its waves of flame oppress,
Swarming in ghastly wretchedness;
Whose life on earth aspired to be
One altar-smoke, so pure!—to win
If not love like God's love for me,
At least to keep his anger in;
And all their striving turned to sin.
Priest, doctor, hermit, monk grown white
With prayer, the broken-hearted nun,
The martyr, the wan acolyte.
The incense-swinging child,—undone
Before God fashioned star or sun!
God, whom I praise; how could I praise,
If such as I might understand,
Make out and reckon on his ways,
And bargain for his love, and stand,
Paying a price, at his right hand?

PICTOR IGNOTUS

FLORENCE, 15—

I COULD have painted pictures like that youth's
Ye praise so. How my soul springs up! No bar
Stayed me—ah, thought which saddens while it soothes!
—Never did fate forbid me, star by star,
To outburst on your night with all my gift
Of fires from God: nor would my flesh have shrunk
From seconding my soul, with eyes uplift
And wide to heaven, or, straight like thunder, sunk
To the centre, of an instant; or around
Turned calmly and inquisitive, to scan
The licence and the limit, space and bound,
Allowed to truth made visible in man.
And, like that youth ye praise so, all I saw,
Over the canvas could my hand have flung,
Each face obedient to its passion's law,
Each passion clear proclaimed without a tongue;
Whether Hope rose at once in all the blood,
A-tiptoe for the blessing of embrace,
Or Rapture drooped the eyes, as when her brood
Pull down the nesting dove's heart to its place;
Or Confidence lit swift the forehead up,
And locked the mouth fast, like a castle braved,—
O human faces, hath it spilt, my cup?
What did ye give me that I have not saved?
Nor will I say I have not dreamed (how well!)
Of going—I, in each new picture,—forth,
As, making new hearts beat and bosoms swell,
To Pope or Kaiser, East, West, South, or North,

Bound for the calmly-satisfied great State,
Or glad aspiring little burgh, it went,
Flowers cast upon the car which bore the freight,
Through old streets named afresh from the event,
Till it reached home, where learned age should greet
My face, and youth, the star not yet distinct
Above his hair, lie learning at my feet!—
Oh, thus to live, I and my picture, linked
With love about, and praise, till life should

And then not go to heaven, but linger here,
Here on my earth, earth's every man my friend,—
The thought grew frightful, 'twas so wildly dear!
But a voice changed it. Glimpses of such sights
Have scared me, like the revels through a door
Of some strange house of idols at its rites!
This world seemed not the world it was before:
Mixed with my loving trusting ones, there trooped
… Who summoned those cold faces that begun
To press on me and judge me ? Though I stooped
Shrinking, as from the soldiery a nun,
They drew me forth, and spite of me enough!
These buy and sell our pictures, take and give,
Count them for garniture and household-stuff,
And where they live needs must our pictures live
And see their faces, listen to their prate,
Partakers of their daily pettiness,
Discussed of,—* This I love, or this I hate,
'This likes me more, and this affects me less!'
Wherefore I chose my portion. If at whiles
My heart sinks, as monotonous I paint
These endless cloisters and eternal aisles
With the same series, Virgin, Babe and Saint,
With the same cold calm beautiful regard,—
At least no merchant traffics in my heart;
The sanctuary's gloom at least shall ward
Vain tongues from where my pictures stand apart:
Only prayer breaks the silence of the shrine
While, blackening in the daily candle-smoke,
They moulder on the damp wall's traver-tine,
'Mid echoes the light footstep never woke.
So, die my pictures! surely, gently die!
O youth, men praise so,—holds their praise its worth?
Blown harshly, keeps the trump its golden cry?
Tastes sweet the water with such specks of earth ?

FRA LIPPO LIPPI

I AM poor brother Lippo, by your leave!
You need not clap your torches to my face.
Zooks, what's to blame? you think you see a monk!
What, 'tis past midnight, and you go the rounds,
And here you catch me at an alley's end
Where sportive ladies leave their doors ajar?
The Carmine's my cloister: hunt it up,
Do,—harry out, if you must show your zeal,
Whatever rat, there, haps on his wrong hole,
And nip each softling of a wee white mouse,
Till comes a occasion for us both to take
Your hand away that's fiddling on my … throat,
And please to know me likewise. Who and am I ?
Why, one, sir, who is lodging with a friend
Three streets off—he's a certain … how d'ye call?
Master—a … Cosimo of the Medici,
I' the house that caps the corner. Boh! you were best!
Remember and tell me, the day you're
How you affected such a gullet's-gripe!
But you, sir, it concerns you that your knaves
Pick up a manner nor discredit you:
Zooks, are we pilchards, that they sweep the streets
And count fair prize what comes into their net?
He's Judas to a tittle, that man is!
Just such a face! Why, sir, you make amends.
Lord, I'm not angry! Bid your hangdogs go
Drink out this quarter-florin to the health
(And many more beside, lads! more be* side!)
Of the munificent House that harbours me

And all's come square again. I'd like his face—
His, elbowing on his comrade in the door
With the pike and lantern,—for the slave that holds
John Baptist's head a-dangle by the hair
With one hand ('Look you, now,' as who should say)
And his weapon in the other, yet unwiped!
It's not your chance to have a bit of chalk,
A wood-coal or the like? or you should see!
Yes, I'm the painter, since you style me so.
What, brother Lippo's doings, up and down,
You know them and they take you? like enough!
I saw the proper twinkle in your eye—
'Tell you, I liked your looks at very first.
Let's sit and set things straight now, hip to haunch.
Here's spring come, and the nights one makes up bands
To roam the town and sing out carnival,
And I've been three weeks shut within my mew,
A-painting for the great man, saints and saints
And saints again. I could not paint all night—
Ouf! I leaned out of window for fresh air.
There came a hurry of feet and little feet,
A sweep of lute-strings, laughs, and whifts of song,—
Flower o' the broom,
Take away love, and our.earth is a tamb!
Flower o the quince,
I let Lisa go, and what good in life since?
Flower o' the thyme—and so on. Round they went.
Scarce had they turned the corner when a titter
Like the skipping of rabbits by moon-light,—three slim shapes,
And a face that looked up . . . zooks, sir, flesh and blood,
That's all I'm made of! Into shreds it went,
Curtain and counterpane and coverlet,
All the bed-furniture—a dozen knots,
There was a ladder! Down I let myself,
Hands and feet, scrambling somehow, and so dropped,
And after them. I came up with the fun
Hard by Saint Laurence, hail fellow, well met,—
Flower o' the rose,
If I've been merry, what matter who knows?
And so as I was stealing back again
To get to bed and have a bit of sleep
Ere I rise up to-morrow and go work
On Jerome knocking at his poor old breast
With his great round stone to subdue the flesh,
You snap me of the sudden. Ah, I see!
Though your eye twinkles still, you shake your head—
Mine's shaved—a monk, you say—the sting's in that!
If Master Cosimo announced himself,
Mum's the word naturally; but a monk
Come, what am I a beast for? tell us, now
I was a baby when my mother died
And father died and left me in the street
I starved there, God knows how, a year or two
On fig-skins, melon-parings, rinds and shucks,
Refuse and rubbish. One fine frosty day,
My stomach being empty as your hat,
The wind doubled me up and down I went.
Old Aunt Lapaccia trussed me with one hand,
(Its fellow was a stinger as I knew)
And so along the wall, over the bridge,
By the straight cut to the convent. Six words there,
While I stood munching my first bread that month:
'So, boy, you're minded,' quoth the good fat father
Wiping his own mouth, 'twas refection-time,—
'To quit this very miserable world?
'Will you renounce'...'the mouthful of bread?'thought I;
By no means! Brief, they made a monk of me;
I did renounce the world, its pride and greed,
Palace, farm, villa, shop and banking-house.
Trash, such as these poor devils of Medici
Have given their hearts to—all at eight years old.
Well, sir, I found in time, you may be sure,
'Twas not for nothing—the good bellyful,
The warm serge and the rope that goes all round,
And day-long blessed idleness beside!
'Let's see what the urchin's fit for'—that came next.
Not overmuch their way, I must confess.
Such a to-do! They tried me with their books:
Lord, they'd have taught me Latin in pure waste!
Flower o' the clove,
All the Latin I construe is, 'amo' I love! -
But mind you when a boy starves . streets
Eight years together, as my fortune was,
Watching folk's faces to know who will fling
The bit of half-stripped grape-bunch he desires,
And who will curse or kick him for his pains,—
Which gentleman processional and fine,

Holding a candle to the Sacrament,
Will wink and let him lift a plate and catch
The droppings of the wax to sell again,
Or holla for the Eight and have him whipped,—
How say I?—nay, which dog bites, which lets drop
His bone from the heap of offal in the street.—
Why, soul and sense of him grow sharp alike,
He learns the look of things, and none the

For admonition from the hunger-pinch.
I had a store of such remarks, be sure, •
Which, after I found leisure, turned to use.
I drew men's faces on my copy-books,
Scrawled them within the antiphonary's marge,
Joined legs and arms to the long music-notes,
Found eyes and nose and chin for A's and B's,
And made a string of pictures of the world
Betwixt the ins and outs of verb and noun,
On the wall, the bench, the door. The monks looked black.
'Nay,' quoth the Prior, 'turn him out, d'ye say ?
'In no wise. Lose a crow and catch a lark
'What if at last we get our man of parts,
'We Carmelites, like those Camaldolese
'And Preaching Friars, to do our church up fine
'And put the front on it that ought to be! '
And hereupon he bade me daub away.
Thank you! my head being crammed, the walls a blank,
Never was such prompt disemburdening.
First, every sort of monk, the black and white,
I drew them, fat and lean: then, folk at church,
From good old gossips waiting to confess
Their cribs of barrel-droppings, candle-ends,—
To the breathless fellow at the altar-foot,
Fresh from his murder, safe and sitting there
With the little children round him- in a row
Of admiration, half for his beard and half
For that white anger of his victim's son .
Shaking a fist at him with one fierce arm,
Signing himself with the other because of Christ
(Whose sad face on the cross sees only this
After the passion of a thousand years)
Till some poor girl, her apron o'er her head,
(Which the intense eyes looked through) came at eve
On tiptoe, said a word, dropped in a loaf,
Her pair of earrings and a bunch of flowers
(The brute took growling), prayed, and so was gone.
I painted all, then cried' 'Tis ask and have;
'Choose, for more's ready!'—laid the ladder flat,
And showed my covered bit of cloister-wall.
The monks closed in a circle and praised loud
Till checked, taught what to see and not to see,
Being simple bodies,—'That's the very man!
'Look at the boy who stoops to pat the dog!
('That woman's like the Prior's niece who comes
To care about his asthma: it's, the life!'
iBut there my triumph's straw-iire flared I and funked;
Their betters took their turn to see and say:
The Prior and the learned pulled a face
And stopped all that in no time. 'How? what's here?
'Quite from the mark of painting, bless us alll
'Faces, arms, legs and bodies like the true
'As much as pea and pea I it's devil's-game!
'Your business is not to catch men with show,
'With homage to the perishable clay,
'But lift them over it, ignore it all,
'Make them forget there's such a thing as flesh.
'Your business is to paint the souls of .men—
'Man's soul, and it's a fire, smoke... no, it's not...
'It's vapour done up like a new-born babe—
'(In that shape when you die it leaves your mouth)
'It's . • • well, what matters talking, it's the soul!
' Give us no more of body than shows soul!
'Here's Giotto, with his Saint a-praising God,
'That sets us praising,—why not stop with him?
'Why put all thoughts of praise out of our head
'With wonder at lines, colours, and what not?
Paint the soul never mind the legs and

Rub all out, try at it a second time.
'Oh that white.smallish female with the breasts,
'She's just my niece . . . Herodias, I would say,—
'Who went and danced and got men's heads cut off!
.'Have it all out!' Now, is this sense, I ask?

A fine way to paint soul, by painting body
So ill, the eye eaa't stop there, must go further
And can't fare worse! Thus, yellow does for white
When what you put for yellow's simply black,
And any sort of meaning looks intense
When all beside itself means and looks nought.
Why can't a painter lift each foot in turn,
Left foot and right foot, go a double step,
Make his flesh liker and his soul more like,
Both in their order? Take the prettiest face,
The Prior's niece . . . patron-saint—is it so pretty
You can't discover if it means hope, fear,
Sorrow or joy? won't beauty go with these?
Suppose I've made her eyes all right and blue,
Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,
And then add soul and heighten them threefold?
Or Say there's beauty with no soul at all—
(I never saw it—put the case the same—)
If you get simple beauty and nought else,
you get aeout the best thing GOd Invents!
Thars somewhat: and you'll find the soul you have missed,
Within yourself, when you return him thanks.
'Rub all out! Well, well, there's my life, * in short,
And so the thing has gone on ever since.
I'm grown a man no doubt, I've broken bounds:
You should not take a fellow eight years old
And make him swear to never kiss the girls.
I'm my own master, paint now as I please-
Having a friend, you see, in the Corner-house!
Lord, it's fast holding by the rings in front—
Those great rings serve more purposes than just
To plant a flag in, or tie up a horse!
And yet the old schooling sticks, the old grave eyes
Are peeping o'er my shoulder as I work,
The heads shake still—'It's art's decline, my son!
•You're not of the true painters, great and old;
'Brother Angelico's the man, you'll find;
'Brother Lorenzo stands his single peer:
'Fag on at flesh, you'll never make the third!'
Flower o' the pine,
you keep your mistr . . . manners, and I'll stick to mine !
I'm not the third, then: bless us, they must know!
Don't you think they're the likeliest to know,
They with their Latin? So, I swallow my rage,
Clench my teeth, suck my lips in tight, and paint
To please them—sometimes do and sometimes don't;
For, doing most, there's pretty sure to come
A turn, some warm eve finds me at my saints—
A laugh, a cry, the business of the world-
(Flower o' the peach,
Death for us all, and his own life for each
And my whole soul revolves', the cup-runs over,
The world and life's too big to pass for a dream,
And I do these wild things in sheer despite,
And play the fooleries you catch me at,
In pure rage! The old mill-horse, out at grass
After hard years, throws up his stiff heels so,
Although the miller does not preach to him
The only good of grass is to make chaff.
What would men have? Do they like grass or no—
May they or mayn't they? all I want's the thing
Settled tor ever one way. As it is,
You tell too many lies and hurt yourself:
You don't like what you only like too much,
You do like what, if given you at your word,
You find abundantly detestable.
For me, I think I speak as I was taught;
I always see the garden and God there
A-making man's wife: and, my lesson learned,
The value and siflnificanqe of'flesh,,
I"can't Unlearn ten minutes afterwards.

You understand me: I'm a beast, I know.
But see, now—why, I see as certainly
As that the morning-star's about to shine,
What will hap some day. We've a youngster here
Comes to our convent, studies what I do,
Slouches and stares and lets no atom drop:
His name is Guidi—he'll not mind the monks—
They call him Hulking Tom, he lets them talk-
He picks my practice up—he'll paint apace,
I hope so—though I never live so long,
I know what's sure to follow. You be judge!

You speak no Latin more than I, belike;
However, you're my man, you've seen the world
—The beauty and the wonder and the power,
The shapes of things, their colours, lights and shades,
Changes, surprises,—and God made it all!
—For what? Do you feel thankful, ay or no,
For this fair town's face, yonder river's line,
The mountain round it and the sky above,
Much more the figures of man, woman, child,
These are the frame to? What's it all about?
To be passed over, despised? or dwelt upon,
Wondered at? oh, this last of course!—you say.
But why not do as well as say,—paint these
Just as they are, careless what comes of it?
God's works—paint any one, and count it crime
To let a truth slip. Don't object, 'His works
'Are here already; nature is complete:
* Suppose you reproduce her—(which you can't)
'There's no advantage! you must beat her, then.'
For, don't you mark? we're made so that we love
First when we see them painted, things we have passed
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;
And so they are better, painted—better to us,
Which is the same thing J Art was given for that;;
God uses us to help each other so,
Lending our minds out. Have you noticed,

Your cullion's hanging face? A bit of chalk,
And trust me but you should, though! How much more,
[f I drew higher things with the same truth!
That were to take the Prior's pulpit-place,
Interpret God to all of you! Oh, oh,
It makes me mad to see what men shall do
And we in our gravest This world's no blot for us,
Nor blank; it means intensely, andmeans ' fgood:
To find its meaning is my meat and drink.
'Ay. but you don't so instigate to prayer!'
Strikes in the Prior: ' when your meaning's plain
'It does not say to folk—remember matins,
'Or, mind you fast next Friday!' Why, for this
What need of art at all? A skull and bones,
Two bits of stick nailed crosswise, or, what's best,
A bell to chime the hour with, does as well.
I painted a Saint Laurence six months since
At Prato, splashed the fresco in fine style:
'How looks my painting, now the scaffold's down?'
I ask a brother: 'Hugely,' he returns—
'Already not one phiz of your three slaves
' Who turn the Deacon off his toasted side,
'But's scratched and prodded to our heart's content,
'The pious people have so eased their own
'With coming to say prayers there in a rage:
'We get on fast to see the bricks beneath.
'Expect another job this time next year,
'For pity and religion grow i' the crowd—
'Your painting serves its purpose!' Hang the fools!

—That is—you'll not mistake an idle word
Spoke in a huff by a poor monk, God wot
Tastingthe airthis spicy night which turns
The unaccustomed head like Chianti wine!
Oh, the church knows! don't misreport me, now!
It's natural a poor monk out of bounds
Should have his apt word to excuse himself:
And hearken how I plot to make amends.
I have bethought me: I shall paint a piece
... There's for you! Give me six months, then go, see
Something in Sant' Ambrogio'si Bless the nuns I
They want a cast o' my office. I shall paint
God in the midst, Madonna and her babe,
Ringed by a bowery flowery angel-brood,
Lilies and vestments and white faces, sweet
As puff on puff of grated orris-root
When ladies crowd to church at mid-summer.
And then i' the front, of course a saint or two—
Saint John, because he saves the Florentines,
Saint Ambrose, who puts down in black and white
The convent's friends and gives them a long day,
And Job, I must have him there past mistake,
The man of Uz (and Us without the z,
Painters who need his patience). Well, all these
Secured at their devotion, up shall come
Out of a corner when you least expect.
As one by a dark stair into a great light,

FRA LIPPO LIPPI

Music and talking, who but Lippo! I ! —
Mazed, motionless and moonstruck—I'm the man! '
Back I shrink—what is this I see and hear ?
I, caught up with my monk's-things by mistake,
My old serge gown and rope that goes all round,
I, in this presence, this pure company!
Where's a hole, where's a corner for escape?
Then steps a sweet angelic slip of a thing
Forward, puts out a soft palm—'Not so fast!'
—Addresses the celestial presence, 'nay—
'He made you and devised you, after all,
'Though he's none of you! Could Saint John there draw—
' His camel-hair make up a painting-brush
'We come to brother Lippo for all that,
'Iste per fecit opus! * So, all smile—
I shuffle sideways with my blushing face
Under the cover of a hundred wings
Thrown like a spread of kirtles when you're gay
And play hot cockles, all the doors being shut,
Till, wholly unexpected, in there pops
The hothead husband! Thus I scuttle off
To some safe bench behind, not letting go
The palm of her, the little lily thing
That spoke the good word for me in the nick,
Like the Prior's niece . . Saint Lucy, I would say.
And so all's saved for me, and for the church
A pretty picture gained. Go, six months hence!
Your hand, sir, and good-bye: no lights, no lights!
The street's hushed, and I know my own way back,
Don't fear me! There's the grey beginning. Zooks!

ANDREA DEL SARTO

(CALLED 'THE F A U S S PAINTER')

BUT do not let us quarrel any more,
No, my Lucrezia; bear with me for once:
Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.
you turn your face, but does it bring your heart?
['11 work then for your friend's friend never fear,
Treat his own subject after his own way,
Fix his own time, accept too his own price,
And shut the money into this small hand
When next it takes mine. Will it? tenderly?
oh, I'll content him,—but to-morrow, Love!
[often am much.wearier than you think,
This evening more than usual, and it seems
As if—forgive now—should you let me sit
Here by the window with your hand in mine
And look a half-houx forth on Fiesole,
Both of one mina, as married people use
Quietly, quietly the evening through,
I might get up to-morrow to my work
Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.
To-morrow, how you shall be glad for this!
Your soft hand is a woman of itself, \
And mine the man's bared breast she curE inside.
Don't count the time lost, neither; you must serve
For each of the five pictures we require:
It sayes a model. So! keep looking so—
My srpentinig beauty, rounds on rounds!
—How could you ever prick those perfect ears,
Even to put the pearl there! oh, so sweet—
My face, my moon, my everybody's moon.
Which everybody looks on andcalls his,
And. I suppose, is looked on by in turn,
While she looks—no one's: very dear, no less.
You smile? why, there's my picture ready made,
There's what we painters call our her many!
A common greyness silvers everything,—
An in a twilight,you and I *alike*'
—You, at the point of your first pride in me —
(That's gone you know),—but I, at every point;
My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down
To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole.
There's the bell clinking from the chapel-top;
That length ofconvent-wall across the way
Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside;
The last monk leaves the garden; days decrease,
And autumn grows, autumn ineverything.
Eh? the whole seems-to f*all into a* asnape
As if I saw alike my work and self
And all that I was born to be and do,
A twilight-piege. Love, we are in God's hand.
How strange now looks the life he makes

So free we seem. so fettered fast we are!
I feel he laid the fetter: let it lie!
This chamber for example—turn your head—
All that's behind us! You don't understand
Nor-care to understand about my a r t -
But you can hear at least when people speak:

And that cartoon, the second from the door
—It is the thing, Love! so such things/ should be—
Behold Madonna!—I am bold to say,
I can do with my pencil what I know,
What I see, what at bottom of my heart
I wish for, if I ever wish so deep—
Do easily, too—when I say, perfectly,
I do not boast, perhaps: yourself are judge,
Who listened to the Legate's talk last week,
And just as much they used to say in France.
At any rate 'tis easy, all of it!
No sketches first, no studies, that's long past:
I do wha£4nany_dream of, all their lives
—Dream? strive to to do", and agonize to do,
And fall in doing. I could count twenty such
On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,
Who strive—you don't know how the others strive
To paint a little thing like that you smeared
Carelessly passing with your robes afloat,—
Yet do much less, so much less, Someone says,
(I know his name, no matter)—so much less!
Well, less is more, Lucrezia: I am judged.
There burns a truer light of God in them,
In their vexed beating stuffed and stopped-up brain,
Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt
This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.
Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,
Reach many a time a heaven that 's shut to me,
Enteand take their place there sure enough,

My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.
The sudden blood of these men! at a Word—
Praise them, *it* boils, or blame them, it boils too.
I, painting from myself and to myself,
Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame
Or their praise either. Somebody remarks
Morello s outline there is wrongly traced,
His hue mistaken; what of that? or else,
Rightly traced and well ordered; what of that?
Speak as they please, what does the mountain care?
Ah, but a map's reach, should exceed his[1] grasp,

Or what's a heaven for? All is silver-grey
Placid and perfect with my art: the worse!
I know both what I want and what might gain,
And yet how profitless to know, to sigh
'Had I been two, another and myself,
'Our head would have o'erlooked the world!' No doubt.
Yonder's a work now. of that famous youth
The Urhinate who died five years ago.
('Tis copied, George Vasari sent it me.)
Well, I can fancy how he did it all,
Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,
Reaching, that heaven might so replenish him,
Above and through his art—for it gives way;
That arm is wrongly put—and there again—
A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,
Its body, so to speak: it soul is right.
He means right—that, a child may understand.
Still, what an arm! and I could alter it:
But all the p|ay, the insight and the stretch—
Outofme,outofme! And wherefore out?
Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,
We might have risen to Rafael, I and you!
Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think-
More than I merit, yes, by many times.
But had you—oh, with the same perfect brow,
And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,
And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird
The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare—
Had yoU, with these the same but brought; a mind!
Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged
God and the glory never care for gain.
'The present by the future, what is that?
'Live for fame, side by side with Agnolo!
'Rafael is waiting: up to God, all three!'
I might have done it for you. So it seems:
Perhaps not. All is as God over-rules.
Beside, incentives come from the soul's self;_____
The rest avail not. Why do I need you?
What wife had Rafael, or has Agnolo?
In this world, who can do a thing, will not;
And.who would do it, cannot, I perceive
Yet the will's some what some what too, the power—
And thus we half-men struggle At the end,
God, I conclude, comperisatqaTOunishes
:or me, it the award be strict,

That I am something underrated here,
Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth.*'
I dared not, do you know, leave home all day,
For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.
The best is when they pass and look aside;
But they speak sometimes; I must bear it all.
Well may they speak! That Francis, that first time,
And that long festal year at Fontainebleau!
I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,
Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,
In that humane great monarch's golden look,—
One finger in his beard or twisted curl
Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile,
One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,
The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,
I painting proudly with his breath on me,
All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,
Such frankFrenchj2y.es, and such afire of Souls
Profuse my hand kept plying by those hearts,—
And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,
This in the background, waiting on my work,
To crown the issue with a last reward!
A good time, was it not, my kingly days?
And had you not grown restless... but I know—
'Tis done and past; 'twas right, my instinct said;
Too live the life grew golden and not grey.
And I'm the Weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt
Out of the grange whose four walls make his world.
How could it end in any other way?
You called me, and I came home to your

the trumph was -to reach and stay there
since
eached it ere shat is lost?
. frame your face" in your hair's gold,

You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine!
'Rafael did this, Andrea painted that;
'The Roman's is the better when you pray.
' But still the other's Virgin was his wife-
Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge
Both pictures in your presence; clearer grows
My better fortune, I resolve to think.
For. do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,
Said one day Agnolo, his very self,
To Rafael... I have known it all these years.. •
(When the young man was flaming out his thoughts
Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see,
Too lifted up in heart because of it)
' Friend, there's a certain sorry little scrub
'Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how,
'Who, were he set to plan and execute
'As you are, pricked on by your popes and kings,
'Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours!'
To Rafael's!—And indeed the arm is wrong.
I hardly dare . . . yet, only you to see,
Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line should go!
Ay. but the soul! he's Rafael! rub it out!
Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,
(What he? why, who but Michel Agnolo?
Do you forget already words like those?)
If really there was such a chance, so lost,—
Is, whether you're—not grateful—but more pleased.
Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed!
This hour has been an hour! Another smile?
If you would sit thus by me every night
I should work better, do you comprehend ?
I mean that I should earn more, give you more.
See, it is settled dusk now; there's a star;
Morello's gone, the watch-lights show the wall,
The cue-owls speak the name we call them by.
Come from the window, love- come in, at last,
Inside the melancholy little house \
We built to be so gay with. God is just.
King Francis may forgive me: oft at nights
When I look up from painting, eyes tired out,
The walls become illumined, brick from brick
Distinct, instead of mortar, fierce bright gold,
That gold of his I did cement them with!
Let us but love each other. Must you go?
That Cousin here again ? he waits outside ?
Must see you—you, and not with me? Those loans?
More gaming debts to pay? you smiled for that?
Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to spend?
While hand and eye and something of a heart
Are left me, work's my ware, and what's it worth?
I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit

The grey remainder of the evening out,
Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly
How I could paint, were I but back in France,
One picture, just one more—the Virgin's face,
Not yours this time! I want you at my side
To hear them—that is, Michel Agnolo—
Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.
Willyou? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.
I take the subjects for his corridor,
Finish the portrait out of hand—there, there,
And throw him in another thing or two
If he demurs; the whole should prove enough
To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside,
What's better and what's all I care about,
Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff!
Love, does that please you? Ah, but what does he.
The Cousin! what does he to please you more?

I am grown peaceful as old "age to-night.
I regret little, I would change still less.
Since there my past life lies' why alter it?
The very wrong to Francis!—it is true
I took his coin, was tempted and complied.
And built this house and sinned, and all is said.
My father and my mother died of want.
Well, had I riches of my own? you see
How one gets rich! Let each one bear his lot.
They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died:
And I have laboured somewhat in my time
And not been paid profusely. Some good sour
Paint my two hundred pictures—let him try!
No doubt, there's something strikes a balance. Yes,
You loved me quite enough, it seems to-night.
This must suffice me here. What would one have?
In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance—
Four great walls in the New Jerusalem.
Meted on each side by the angel's reed,
For Leonard, Rafael, Agnolo and me
To cover—the three first without a wife,
While I have mine! So—still they overcome
Because there's still Lucrezia -as I choose.

Again the Cousin's whistle! Go, my Love.

THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB AT SAINT PRAXED'S CHURCH

ROME, 15—

VANITY, saith the preacher, vanity!
Draw round my bed: is Anselm keeping back?
Nephews—sons mine... ah God, I know not! Well-
She, men would have to be your mother once,
Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was!
What's done is done, and she is dead beside,
Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since,
And as she died so must we die ourselves,
And thence ye may perceive the world's a dream.
Life, how and what is it? As here I lie
In this state-chamber, dying by degrees,
Hours and long hours in the dead night, I ask
,'Do I live, am I dead?,' Peace, peace

Saint Praxed's ever was the church for peace
And so, about this tomb of mine. I fought
With tooth and nail to save my niche, ye know:
—Old Gandolf cozened me, despite my care;
Shrewd was that snatch from out the corner South
He graced his carrion with, jGod curse the same! —
Yet still my niche is not so cramped but thence
One sees the pulpit o' the epistle-side,
And somewhat of the choir, those silent seats,
And up into the aery dome where live
The angels, and a sunbeam's sure to lurk:
And I shall fill my slab of basalt there,
And 'neath my tabernacle take "my rest,'
With those nine columns round me, two and two,
The odd one at my feet where Anselm stands:
Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe
As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse.
—Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-stone.
Put me where I may look at him! True. peach,
Rosy and flawless: how I earned the prize!
Draw close: that conflagration of my church
—What then? So much was saved if aught were missed!
My sons, ye would not be my death? Go dig

THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB

The white-grape vineyard where the oil-press stood
Drop water gently till the surface sink,
And if ye find ... Ah God, I know not, I! . . .
Bedded in store of rotten fig-leaves soft,
And corded up in a tight olive-frail,
Some lump, ah God, of lapis lazuli,
Big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape,
Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's, breast. . .
Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas, all,
That brave Frascati villa with its bath
So, let the blue lump poise between my knees,
Like God the Father's globe on both his hands
Ye worship in the Jesu Church so gay,
For Gandolf shall not choose but see and burst!
Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years:
Man goeth to the grave, and where is he?
Did I say basalt for my slab, sons? Black—
Twas ever antique-black I meant! How else
Shall ye contrast my frieze to come beneath?
The bas-relief in bronze ye promised me,
Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and perchance
Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,
The Saviour at his sermon on the mount,
Saint Praxed in a glory, and one Pan
Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off,
And Moses with the tables... but I know
Ye mark me not! What do they whisper thee, *
Child of my bowels, Anselm? Ah, ye hope
To revel down my villas while I gasp
Bricked o'er with beggar's mouldy travertine
Which Gandolf from his tomb-top chuckles at!
Nay, boys, ye love me—all of jasper, then!
'Tis jasper ye stand pledged to, lest I grieve.
My bath must needs be left behind, alas!
One block, pure green as a pistachio-nut,
There's plenty jasper somewhere in the* world—
And have I not Saint Praxed's ear to pray
Horses for ye, and brown Greek manuscripts,
And mistresses With great smooth marbly ' limbs? .
—That's if ye carve my epitaph aright,
Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every word,
No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second

Fully, my masters? Ulpian serves his **need!**
And then how I shall lie through centuries,
And hear the blessed mutter of the mass,
And see God made and eaten all day long,
And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste
Good strong thick stupefying incense-smoke!
For as I lie here, hours of the dead night,
Dying in state and by such slow degrees,
I fold my arms as if they clasped a crock,
And stretch my feet forth straight as stone can point,
And let the bedclothes, for a mortcloth, drop
Into great laps and folds of sculptor's-work:
And as yon tapers dwindle, and strange thoughts
Grow, with a certain humming in my ears,
About the life before I lived this life,
And this life too, popes, cardinals and priests,
Saint Praxed at his sermon on the mount,
Your tall pale mother with her talking eyes,
And new-found agate urns as fresh as day,
And marble's language, Latin pure, discreet,
—Aha, ELUCESCEBAT quoth our friend?
No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best!
Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage.
All *lapis*, all, sons! Else I give the Pope
My villas! Will ye ever eat my heart?
Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,
The glitter like your mother's for my soul,
Or ye would heighten my impoverished frieze,
Piece out its starved design, and fill my vase
With grapes, and add a vizor and a Term,
And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx
That in his struggle throws the thyrsus down,
To comfort me on my entablature
Whereon I am to lie till I must ask
'Do I live, am I dead?' There, leave me, there!
For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude
To death—ye wish it—God, ye wish it! Stone-
Gritstone, a-crumble! Clammy squares which sweat
As if the corpse they keep were oozing through—
And no more *lapis* to delight the world!
Well go! I bless ye. Fewer tapers there,
But in a row: and, going, turn your backs
—Ay, like departing altar-ministrants,
And leave me in my church, the church for

Thar I may watch at leisure if he leers—
Old GandolfV at me, from his onion stone,
As still he en vied me, so fair she was!

BISHOP BLOUGRAM'S APOLOGY

No more wine? then we'll push back chairs and talk.
A final glass for me, though: cool, i' faith!
We ought to have our Abbey back, you see.
It 's different, preaching in basilicas,
And doing duty in some masterpiece
Like this of brother Pugin's, bless his heart!
I doubt if they're half baked, those chalk rosettes,
Ciphers and stucco - twiddlings everywhere;
It's just like breathing in a lime-kiln: eh?
These hot long ceremonies of our church
Cost us a little—oh, they pay the price,
You take me—amply pay it! Now, we'll talk.

So, you despise me, Mr. Gigadibs.
No deprecation,—nay, I beg you, sir!
Beside 'tis our engagement: don't you know,
I promised, if you'd watch a dinner out,
We'd see truth dawn together?—truth that peeps
Over the glasses' edge when dinner's done,
And body gets its sop and holds its noise
And leaves soul free a little. Now's the time:
Truth's break of day! You do despise me then.
And if I say, 'despise me,'—never fear!
I know you do not in a certain sense—
Not in my arm-chair, for example: here,
I well imagine you respect my place
(Status, entourage, worldly circumstance)
Quite to its value—very much indeed:
—Are up to the protesting eyes of you
In pride at being seated here for once—
You'll turn it to such capital account!
When somebody, through years and years to come,
Hints of the bishop,—names me—that's enough:
'Blougram? I knew him'—(into it you slide)
' Dined with him once, a Corpus Christi Day,
'All alone, we two; he's a clever man:
'And after dinner,—why, the wine you know,—
'Oh, there was wine, and good!—what with the wine ...
"Faith, we began upon all sorts of talk!
'He's no bad fellow, Blougram; he had seen
'Something of mine he relished, some review:
'He's quite above their humbug in his heart,
'Half-said as much, indeed—the thing's his trade.
'I warrant, Blougram's sceptical at times:
'How otherwise? I liked him, I confess!'
Che che, my dear sir, as we say at Rome,
Don't you protest now! It's fair give and take;
You have had your turn and spoken your home-truths:
The hand's mine now, and here you follow suit.

Thus much conceded, still the first fact stays—
You do despise me; your ideal of life
Is not the bishop's: you would not be I.
You would like better to be Goethe, now,
Or Buonaparte, or, bless me, lower still,
Count D'Orsay,—so you did what you preferred,
Spoke as you thought, and, as you cannot help,
Believed or disbelieved, no matter what,
So long as on that point, whate'er it was,
You loosed your mind, were whole and sole yourself.
—That, my ideal never can include,
Upon that element of truth and worth
Never be based! for say they make me Pope—
(They can't—suppose it for our argument!)
Why, there I'm at my tether's end, I've reached
My height, and not a height which pleases you:
An unbelieving Pope won't do, you say.
It's like those eerie stories nurses tell,
Of how some actor on a stage played Death,
With pasteboard crown, sham orb and tinselled dart,
And called himself the monarch of the world;
Then, going in the tire-room afterward.
Because the play was done, to shift himself,
Got touched upon the sleeve familiarly,
The moment he had shut the closet door,
By Death himself. Thus God might touch a Pope
At unawares, ask what his baubles mean,
And whose part he presumed to play just now.
Best be yourself, imperial, plain and true!

So, drawing comfortable breath again,
You weigh and find, whatever more or less
I boast of my ideal realized
Is nothing in the balance when opposed
To your ideal, your grand simple life,
Of which you will not realize one jot.
I am much, you are nothing; you would be all,
I would be merely much: you beat me there.

No, friend, you do not beat me: hearken why!
The common problem, yours, mine, every one's,
Is—not to fancy what were fair in life
Provided it could be,—but, finding first
What may be, then find how to make it fair
Up to our means: a very different thing!
No abstract intellectual plan of life
Quite irrespective of life s plainest laws,
But one, a man, who is man and nothing more,
May lead within a world which (by your leave)
Is Rome or London, not Fool's-paradise.
Embellish Rome, idealize away,
Make paradise of London if you can,
You're welcome, nay, you're wise.

A simile!
We mortals cross the ocean of this world
Each in his average cabin of a life;
The best's not big, the worst yields elbow-room.
Now for our six months' voyage—how prepare?
You come on shipboard with a landsman's list
Of things he calls convenient: so they are!
An India screen is pretty furniture,
A piano-forte is a fine resource,
All Balzac's novels occupy one shelf,
The new edition fifty volumes long;
And little Greek books, with the funny type
They get up well at Leipsic, fill the next:
Go on! slabbed marble, what a bath it makes!
And Parma's pride, the Jerome, let us add!
'Twere pleasant could Correggio's fleeting glow
Hang full in face of one where'er one roams,
Since he more than the others brings with him
Italy's self,—the marvellous Modenese!—
Yet was not on your list before, perhaps.
—Alas, friend, here's the agent . . . is't the name?
The captain, or whoever's master here—
You see him screw his face up; what's his cry
Ere you set foot on shipboard? 'Six feet square!'
[f you won't understand what six feet mean,
Compute and purchase stores accordingly—
And if in pique because he overhauls
Your Jerome, piano, bath, you come on board
Bare—why, you cut a figure at the first
While sympathetic landsmen see you off;
Not afterward, when long ere half seas over,
You peep up from your utterly naked boards
Into some snug and well-appointed berth,
Like mine for instance (try the cooler jug—
Put back the other, but don't jog the ice!)
And mortified you mutter ' Well and good;
'He sits enjoying his sea-furniture:
"Tis stout and proper, and there s store of it:
'Though I've the better notion, all agree,
' Of fitting rooms up. Hang the carpenter,
'Neat ship-shape fixings and contrivances—
'I would have brought my Jerome, frame and all!'
And meantime you bring nothing: never mind—
You've proved your artist-nature: what you don't
You might bring, so despise me, as I say.

Now come, let's backward to the starting-place.
See my way: we're two college friends, suppose.
Prepare together for our voyage, then:
Each note and check the other in his work.—
Here's mine, a bishop's outfit: criticize!
What's wrong? why won't you be a bishop too?

Why first, you don't believe, you don't and can't,
(Not statedly, that is, and fixedly
And absolutely and exclusively)
In any revelation called divine.
No dogmas nail your faith; and what remains
But say so, like the honest man you are?
First, therefore, overhaul theology!
Nay, I too, not a fool, you please to think,
Must find believing every whit as hard:
And if I do not frankly say as much,
The ugly consequence is clear enough.

Now wait, my friend: well, I do not believe—
If you'll accept no faith that is not fixed,
Absolute and exclusive, as you say.
You're wrong—I mean *to* prove it in due time.
Meanwhile, I know where difficulties lie
I could not, cannot solve, nor ever shall,
So give up hope accordingly to solve—
(To you, and over the wine). Our dogmas then
With both of us, though in unlike degree,
Missing full credence—overboard with them!
I mean to meet you on your own premise:
Good, there go mine in company with yours!

And now what are we? unbelievers both,
Calm and complete, determinately fixed
To-day, to-morrow and for ever, pray?
You'll guarantee me that? Not so, I think!
In no wise! all we've gained is, that belief,
As unbelief before, snakes us by fits,
Confounds us like its predecessor. Where's
The gain? how can we guard our unbelief,
Make it bear fruit to us?—the problem here.
Just when we are safest, there's a sunset-touch,
A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,
A chorus-ending from Euripides,—
And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears
As old and new at once as nature's self,
To rap and knock and enter in our soul,
Take hands and dance there, a fantastic ring,
Round the ancient idol, on his base again,—
The grand Perhaps! We look on helplessly.
There the old misgivings, crooked questions are—
This good God,—what he could do, if he would,
Would, if he could—then must have done long since:
If so, when, where and how? some way roust be,—
Once feel about, and soon or late you hit
Some senseJn which it might be, after all.
Why not, "The Way, the Truth, the Life?*

—That way
Over the mountain, which who stands upon
Is apt to doubt if it be meant for a road;
While, if he views it from the waste itself,
Up goes the line there, plain from base to brow,
Not vague, mistakeable! what's a break or two
Seen from the unbroken desert either side?
And then (to bring in fresh philosophy)
What if the breaks themselves should prove at last
The most consummate of contrivances
To train a man's eye, teach him what is faith?
And so we tumble at truth's very test!
All we have gained then by our unbelief
Is a life of doubt diversified by faith,
For one of faith diversified by doubt:
Wo called the chess-board white,—we call it black.

'Well,' you rejoin,' the end's no worse, at least
'We've reason for both colours on the board:
'Why not confess then, where I drop the faith
'And you the doubt, that I'm as right as you?'

Because, friend, in the next place, this being so,
And both things even,—faith and unbelief
Left to a man's choice,—we'll proceed a step,
Returning to our image, which I like.

A man's choice, yes—but a cabin-passenger's—
The man made for the special life o' the world—
Do you forget him? I remember though!
Consult our ship's conditions and you find
One and but one choice suitable to all;
The choice, that you unluckily prefer,
Turning things topsy-turvy—they or it
Going to the ground. Belief or unbelief
Bears upon life, determines its whole course,
Begins at its beginning. See the world
Such as it is,—you made it not, nor I;
I mean to take it as it is,—and you,
Not so you'll take it,—though you get nought else.
I know the special kind of life I like,
What suits the most my idiosyncrasy,
Brings out the best of me and bears me fruit
In power, peace, pleasantness and length of days.
I find that positive belief does this
For me, and unbelief, no whit of this.
—For you, it does, however?—that, we'll try!
'Tis clear, I cannot lead my life, at least,
Induce the world to let me peaceably,
Without declaring at the outset, 'Friends,
'I absolutely and peremptorily
'Believe!'—I say, faith is my waking life:
One sleeps, indeed, and dreams at intervals,
We know, but waking's the main point with us,
And my provision's for life's waking part.
Accordingly, I use heart, head and hand
All day, I build, scheme, study, and make friends;
And when night overtakes me, down I lie,
Sleep, dream a little, and get done with *it*,
The sooner the better, to begin afresh.
What's midnight doubt before the day-spring's faith?
You, the philosopher, that disbelieve,
That recognize the night, give dreams their weight—
To be consistent you should keep your bed,

BISHOP BLOUGRAM'S APOLOGY

Abstain from healthy acts that prove you man,
For fear you drowse perhaps at unawares!
And certainly at night you'll sleep and dream,
Live through the day and bustle as you please.
And so you live to sleep as I to wake,
To unbelieve as I to still believe?
Well, and the common sense o' the world calls you
Bed-ridden,—and its good things come to me.
Its estimation, which is half the fight,
That's the first-cabin comfort I secure:
The next... bu. you perceive with half an eye!
Come, come, it's best believing, if we may;
You can't but own that!

Next, concede again,
If once we choose belief, on all accounts
We can't be too decisive in our faith,
Conclusive and exclusive in its terms,
To suit the world which gives us the good things.
In every man's career are certain points
Whereon he dares not be indifferent;
The world detects him clearly, if he dare,
As baffled at the game, and losing life.
He may care little or he may care much
For riches, honour, pleasure, work, repose,
Since various theories of life and life's
Success are extant which might easily
Comport with either estimate of these;
And whoso chooses wealth or poverty,
Labour or quiet, is not judged a fool
Because his fellow would choose otherwise:
We let him choose upon his own account
So long as he's consistent with his choice.
But certain points, left wholly to himself,
When once a man has arbitrated on,
We say he must succeed there or go hang.
Thus, he should wed the woman he loves most
Or needs most, whatsoe'er the love or need—
For he can't wed twice. Then, he must avouch,
Or follow, at the least, sufficiently,
The form of faith his conscience holds the best,
Whate'er the process of conviction was:
For nothing can compensate his mistake
On such a point, the man himself being judge:
He cannot wed twice, nor twice lose his soul.

Well now, there's one great form of Christian faith
I happened to be born in—which to teach
Was given me as I grew up, on all hands,
As best and readiest means of living by;
The same on examination being proved
The most pronounced moreover, fixed, precise
And absolute form of faith in the whole world—
Accordingly, most potent of all forms
For working on the world. Observe, my friend!
Such as you know me, I am free to say,
In these hard latter days which hamper one,
Myself—by no immoderate exercise
Of intellect and learning, but the tact
To let external forces work for me,
—Bid the street's stones be bread and they are bread;
Bid Peter's creed, or rather, Hildebrand's,
Exalt me o'er my fellows in the world
And make my life an ease and joy and pride;
It does so,—which for me's a great point gained,
Who have a soul and body that exact
A comfortable care in many ways.
There's power in me and will to dominate
Which I must exercise, they hurt me else
In many ways I need mankind's respect,
Obedience, and the love that's born of fear:
While at the same time, there's a taste I have,
A toy of soul, a titillating thing,
Refuses to digest these dainties crude.
The naked life is gross till clothed upon:
I must take what men offer, with a grace
As though I would not, could I help it, take!
An uniform I wear though over-rich—
Something imposed on me, no choice of mine;
No fancy-dress worn for pure fancy's sake
And despicable therefore! now folk kneel
And kiss my hand—of course the Church's hand.
Thus I am made, thus life is best for me,
And thus that it should be I have procured;
And thus it could not be another way,
I venture to imagine.

You'll reply,
So far my choice, no doubt, is a success;
But were I made of better elements,
With nobler instincts, purer tastes, like you,
I hardly would account the thing success
Though it did all for me I say.

But, friend,
We speak of what is; not of what might be,
And how 'twere better if 'twere otherwise.
I am the man you see here plain enough:

Grant I'm a beast, why, beasts must lead beasts' lives!
Suppose I own at once to tail and claws;
The tailless man exceeds me: but being tailed
I'll lash out lion-fashion, and leave apes
To dock their stump and dress their haunches up.
My business is not to remake myself,
But make the absolute best of what God made.
Or—our first simile—though you prove me doomed
To a viler berth still, to the steerage-hole,
The sheep-pen or the pig-stye, I should strive
To make what use of each were possible;
And as this cabin gets upholstery,
That hutch should rustle with sufficient straw.

But, friend, I don't acknowledge quite so fast
I fail of all your manhood's lofty tastes
Enumerated so complacently.
On the mere ground that you forsooth can find
In this particular life I choose to lead
No fit provision for them. Can you not?
Say you, my fault is I address myself
To grosser estimators than should judge?
And that's no way of holding up the soul,
Which, nobler, needs men's praise perhaps, yet knows
One wise man's verdict outweighs all the fools'—
Would like the two, but, forced to choose, takes that.
I pine among my million imbeciles
(*You* think) aware some dozen men of sense
Eye me and know me, whether I believe
In the last winking Virgin, as I vow,
And am a fool, or disbelieve in her
And am a knave,—approve in neither case,
Withhold their voices though I look their way:
Like Verdi when, at his worst opera's end
(The thing they gave at Florence,—what's its name?)
While the mad houseful's plaudits near outbang
His orchestra of salt-box, tongs and bones,
He looks through all the roaring and the wreaths
Where sits Rossini patient in his stall.

Nay, friend, I meet you with an answer here—
That even your prime men who appraise their kind
Are men still, catch a wheel within a wheel,
See more in a truth than the truth's simple self,
Confuse themselves. You see lads walk the street
Sixty the minute; what's to note in that?
You see one lad o'erstride a chimney-stack;
Him you must watch—he's sure to fall, yet stands!
Our interest's on the dangerous edge of things.
The honest thief, the tender murderer,
The superstitious atheist, demirep
That loves and saves her soul in new French books—
We watch while these in equilibrium keep
The giddy line midway: one step aside,
They're classed and done with. I, then, keep the line
Before your sages,—just the men to shrink
From the gross weights, coarse scales and labels broad
You offer their refinement. Fool or knave?
Why needs a bishop be a fool or knave
When there's a thousand diamond weights between?
So, I enlist them. Your picked twelve, you'll find,
Profess themselves indignant, scandalized
At thus being held unable to explain
How a superior man who disbelieves
May not believe as well: that's Schelling's way!
It's through my coming in the tail of time,
Nicking the minute with a happy tact.
Had I been born three hundred years ago
They'd say, 'What's strange? Blougram of course believes;'
And, seventy years since, 'disbelieves of course.'
But now, 'He may believe; and yet, and yet
'How can he?* All eyes turn with interest.
Whereas, step off the line on either side—
You, for example, clever to a fault,
The rough and ready man who write apace,
Read somewhat seldomer, think perhaps even less—
You disbelieve! Who wonders and who cares?
Lord So-and-so—his coat bedropped with wax,
All Peter's chains about his waist, his back
Brave with the needlework of Noodledom—
Believes! Again, who wonders and who cares?
But I, the man of sense and learning too,
The able to think yet act, the this, the that,
I, to believe at this late time of day!
Enough; you see, I need not fear contempt.

—Except it's yours! Admire me as these may
You don't. But whom at least do you admire?
Present your own perfection, your ideal,
Your pattern man for a minute—oh, make haste!
Is it Napoleon you would have us grow?
Concede the means; allow his head and hand,
(*A* large concession, clever as you are)
Good I In our common primal element
Of unbelief (we can't believe, you know—
We're still at that admission, recollect!)
Where do you find—apart from, towering o'er
The secondary temporary aims
Which satisfy the gross taste you despise—
Where do you find his star?—his crazy trust
God knows through what or in what? it's alive
And shines and leads him, and that's all we want.
Have we aught in our sober night shall point
Such ends as his were, and direct the means
Of working out ourpurpose straight as his,
Nor bring a moment's trouble on success
With after-care to justify the same?
—Be a Napoleon, and yet disbelieve—
Why, *the* man's mad, friend, take his light away!
What's the vague good o' the world, for which you dare
With comfort to yourself blow millions up?
We neither of us see it! we do see
The blown-up millions—spatter of their brains
And writhing of their bowels and so forth,
In that bewildering entanglement
Of horrible eventualities
Past calculation to the end of time!
Can I mistake for some clear word of God
(Which were my ample warrant for it all)
His puff of hazy instinct, idle talk,
'The State, that's I,' quack-nonsense about crowns,
And (when one beats the man to his last hold)
A vague idea of setting things to rights,
Policing people efficaciously,
More to their profit, most of all to his own;
The whole to end that dismallest of ends
By an Austrian marriage, cant to us the Church,
And resurrection of the old *regime?*
Would I, who hope to live a dozen years,
Fight Austerlitz for reasons such and such?
No: for, concede me but the merest chance
Doubt may be wrong—there's judgment, life to come !
With just that chance, I dare not. Doubt proves right?
This present life is all?—you offer me
Its dozen noisy years, without a chance
That wedding an archduchess, wearing lace,
And getting called by divers new-coined names,
Will drive off ugly thoughts and let me dine,
Sleep, read and chat in quiet as I like!
Therefore I will not.

Take another case;
Fit up the cabin yet another way.
What say you to the poets? shall we write
Hamlet, Othello—make the world our own,
Without a risk to run of either sort?
I can't!—to put the strongest reason first.
'But try,' you urge, 'the trying shall suffice;
'The aim, if reached or not, makes great the life:
'Try to be Shakespeare, leave the rest to fate!'
Spare my self-knowledge—there's no fooling me!
If I prefer remaining my poor self,
I say so not in self-dispraise but praise.
If I'm a Shakespeare, let the well alone;
Why should I try to be what now I am?
If I'm no Shakespeare, as too probable,—
His power and consciousness and self-delight
And all we want in common, shall I find—
Trying for ever? while on points of taste
Wherewith, to speak it humbly, he and I
Are dowered alike—I'll ask you, I or he,
Which in our two lives realizes most?
Much, he imagined—somewhat, I possess.
He had the imagination; stick to that!
Let him say, 'In the face of my soul's works
'Your world is worthless and I touch it not
'Lest I should wrong them'—I'll withdraw my plea.
But does he say so? look upon his life!
Himself, who only can, gives judgment there.
He leaves his towers and gorgeous palaces
To build the trimmest house in Stratford town;
Saves money, spends it, owns the worth of things,
Giulio Romano's pictures, Dowland's lute;
Enjoys a show, respects the puppets, too,
And none more, had he seen its entry once.
Than 'Pandulph, of fair Milan cardinal.
Why then should I who play that personage,
The very Pandulph Shakespeare's fancy made,

Be told that had the poet chanced to start
From where I stand now (some degree like mine
Being just the goal he ran his race to reach)
He would have run the whole race back, forsooth,
And left being Pandulph, to begin write plays?
Ah, the earth's best can be but the earth's best!
Did Shakespeare live, he could but sit at home
And get himself in dreams the Vatican,
Greek busts, Venetian paintings, Roman walls,
And English books, none equal to his own,
Which I read, bound in gold (he never did).
—Terni's fall, Naples' bay and Gothard's top—
Eh, friend ? I could not fancy one of these;
But, as I pour this claret, there they are:
I've gained them—crossed St. Gothard last July
With ten mules to the carriage and a bed
Slung inside; is my hap the worse for that ?
We want the same things, Shakespeare and myself,
And what I want, I have: he, gifted more,
Could fancy he too had them when he liked,
But not so thoroughly that, if fate allowed,
He would not have them also in my sense.
We play one game; I send the ball aloft
No less adroitly that of fifty strokes
Scarce five go o'er the wall so wide and high
Which sends them back to me: I wish and get.
He struck balls higher and with better skill,
But at a poor fence level with his head,
And hit—his Stratford house, a coat of arms.
Successful dealings in his grain and wool,—
While I receive heaven's incense in my nose
And style myself the cousin of Queen Bess.
Ask him, if this life's all, who wins the game?

Believe — and our whole argument breaks up.
Enthusiasm's the best thing, I repeat;
Only, we can't command it; fire and life
Are all, dead matter's nothing, we agree:
And be it a mad dream or God's very breath,
The fact's the same,—belief's fire, once in us,
Makes of all else mere stuff to show itself:
We penetrate our life with such a glow
As fire lends wood and iron—this turns steel,
That burns to ash—all's one, fire proves its power
For good or ill, since men call flare success.
But paint a fire, it will not therefore burn.
Light one in me, I'll find it food enough!
Why, to be Luther—that's a life to lead,
Incomparably better than my own.
He comes, reclaims God's earth for God, he says,
Sets up God's rule again by simple means,
Re-opens a shut book, and all is done.
He flared out in the flaring of mankind;
Such Luther's luck was: how shall such be mine?
If he succeeded, nothing's left to do:
And if he did not altogether—well,
Strauss is the next advance. All Strauss should be
I might be also. But to what result?
He looks upon no future: Luther did.
What can I gain on the denying side?
Ice makes no conflagration. State the facts,
Read the text right, emancipate the world—
The emancipated world enjoys itself
With scarce a thank-you: Blougram told it first
It could not owe a farthing,—not to him
More than Saint Paul! 'twould press its pay, you think?
Then add there's still that plaguy hundredth chance
Strauss may be wrong. And so a risk is run—
For what gain? not for Luther's, who secured
A real heaven in his heart throughout his life,
Supposing death a little altered things.

*Ay, but since really you lack faith,' you cry,
'You run the same risk really on all sides,
'In cool indifference as bold unbelief.
'As well be Strauss as swing 'twixt Paul and him.
'It's not worth having, such imperfect faith,
' No more available to do faith's work
'Than unbelief like mine. Whole faith, or none!'

Softly, my friend! I must dispute that point.
Once own the use of faith, I'll find you faith.
We're back on Christian ground. You call for faith:
I show you doubt, to prove that faith exists.
The more of doubt, the stronger faith, I say,

If faith o'ercomes doubt. How I know it does?
By life and man's free will, God gave for that!
To mould life as we choose it, shows our choice:
That's our one act, the previous work's his own.
You criticize the soul? it reared this tree—
This broad life and whatever fruit it bears!
What matter though I doubt at every pore,
Head-doubts, doubts at my fingers' ends,
Doubts in the trivial work of every day,
Doubts at the very bases of my soul
In the grand moments when she probes herself—
If finally I have a life to show,
The thing I did, brought out in evidence
Against the thing done to me underground
By hell and all its brood, for aught I know ?
I say, whence sprang this? shows it faith or doubt?
All's doubt in me; where's break of faith in this?
It is the idea, the feeling and the love,
God means mankind should strive for and show forth
Whatever be the process to that end,—
And not historic knowledge, logic sound,
And metaphysical acumen, sure!
'What think ye of Christ,' friend? when all's done and said,
Like you this Christianity or not?
It may be false, but will you wish it true?
Has it your vote to be so if it can?
Trust you an instinct silenced long ago
That will break silence and enjoin you love
What mortified philosophy is hoarse,
And all in vain, with bidding you despise?
If you desire faith—then you've faith enough:
What else seeks God—nay, what else seek ourselves?
You form a notion of me, we'll suppose,
On hearsay; it's a favourable one:
'But still' (you add), 'there was no such good man,
'Because of contradiction in the facts.
'One proves, for instance, he was born in Rome,
'This Blougram; yet throughout the tales of him
'I see he figures as an Englishman.'
Well, the two things are reconcileable.
But would I rather you discovered that,
Subjoining—'Still, what matter though they be?
' Blougram concerns me nought, born here or there.'

Pure faith indeed—you know not what you ask!
Naked belief in God the Omnipotent,
Omniscient, Omnipresent, sears too much
The sense of conscious creatures to be borne.
It were the seeing him, no flesh shall dare.
Some think, Creation's meant to show him forth:
I say it's meant to hide him all it can,
And that's what all the blessed evil's for.
Its use in Time is to environ us,
Our breath, our drop of dew, with shield enough
Against that sight till we can bear its stress.
Under a vertical sun, the exposed brain
And lidless eye and disemprisoned heart
Less certainly would wither up at once
Than mind, confronted with the truth of him.
But time and earth case-harden us to live:
The feeblest sense is trusted most, the child
Feels God a moment, ichors o'er the place,
Plays on and grows to be a man like us.
With me, faith means perpetual unbelief
Kept quiet like the snake 'neath Michael's foot
Who stands calm just because he feels it writhe.
Or, if that's too ambitious,—here's my box—
I need the excitation of a pinch
Threatening the torpor of the inside-nose
Nigh on the imminent sneeze that never comes.
'Leave it in peace' advise the simple folk:
Make it aware of peace by itching-fits,
Say I—let doubt occasion still more faith!

You'll say, once all believed, man, woman, child,
In that dear middle-age these noodles praise.
How you'd exult if I could put you back
Six hundred years, blot out cosmogony,
Geology, ethnology, what not,
(Greek endings, each the little passing-bell
That signifies some faith's about to die),
And set you square with Genesis again,—
When such a traveller told you his last news,
He saw the ark a-top of Ararat
But did not climb there since 'twas getting dusk
And robber-bands infest the mountain's foot!
How should you feel, I ask, in such an age,
How act? As other people felt and did;
With soul more blank than this decanter's knob,
Believe—and yet lie, kill, rob, fornicate
Full in belief's face, like the beast you'd be!

No, when the fight begins within himself,
A man's worth something. God stoops o'er his head,

Satan looks up between his feet-both tug—
He's left, himself, i' the middle: the soul wakes
And grows. Prolong that battle through his life!
Never leave growing till the life to come!
Here, we've got callous to the Virgin's winks
That used to puzzle people wholesomely:
Men have outgrown the shame of being fools.
What are the laws of nature, not to bend
If the Church bid them?—brother Newman asks.
Up with the Immaculate Conception, then—
On to the rack with faith!—is my advice.
Will not that hurry us upon our knees,
Knocking our breasts, 'It can't be—yet it shall!
'Who am I, the worm, to argue with my Pope?
'Low things confound the high things!' and so forth.
That's better than acquitting God with grace
As some folk do. He's tried—no case is proved,
Philosophy is lenient—he may go!

You'll say, the old system's not so obsolete
But men believe still: ay, but who and where?
King Bomba's lazzaroni foster yet
The sacred flame, so Antonelli writes;
But even of these, what ragamuffin-saint
Believes God watches him continually,
As he believes in fire that it will burn,
Or rain that it will drench him? Break fire's law,
Sin against rain, although the penalty
Be just a singe or soaking? 'No,' he smiles;
'Those laws are laws that can enforce themselves.'

The sum of all is—yes, my doubt is great.
My faith's still greater, then my faith's enough.
I have read much, thought much, experienced much,
Yet would die rather than avow my fear
The Naples' liquefaction may be false,
When set to happen by the palace-clock
According to the clouds or dinner-time.
I hear you recommend, I might at least
Eliminate, decrassify my faith
Since I adopt it; keeping what I must
And leaving what I can—such points as this.
I won't—that is, I can't throw one away.
Supposing there's no truth in what I hold
About the need of trial to man's faith,
Still, when you bid me purify the same,
To such a process I discern no end.
Clearing off one excrescence to see two,
There's ever a next in size, now grown as big,
That meets the knife: I cut and cut again!
First cut the Liquefaction, what comes last
But Fichte's clever cut at God himself?
Experimentalize on sacred things!
I trust nor hand nor eye nor heart nor brain
To stop betimes: they all get drunk alike.
The first step, I am master not to take.

You'd find the cutting-process to your taste
As much as leaving growths of lies unpruned,
Nor see more danger in it,—you retort.
Your taste's worth mine; but my taste proves more wise
When we consider that the steadfast hold
On the extreme end of the chain of faith
Gives the advantage, makes the difference
With the rough purblind mass we seek to rule:
We are their lords, or they are free of us,
Just as we tighten or relax our hold.
So, other matters equal, we'll revert
To the first problem—which, if solved my way
And thrown into the balance, turns the scale-
How we may lead a comfortable life,
How suit our luggage to the cabin's size.

Of course you are remarking all this time
How narrowly and grossly I view life,
Respect the creature-comforts, care to rule
The masses, and regard complacently
'The cabin/ in our old phrase. Well, I do.
I act for, talk for, live for this world now,
As this world prizes action, life and talk:
No prejudice to what next world may prove,
Whose new laws and requirements, my best pledge
To observe then, is that I observe these now,
Shall do hereafter what I do meanwhile.
Let us concede (gratuitously though)
Next life relieves the soul of body, yields
Pure spiritual enjoyment: well, my friend,
Why lose this life i' the meantime, since its use
May be to make the next life more intense?

Do you know, I have often had a dream
(Work it up in your next month's article)
Of man's poor spirit in its progress, still
Losing true life for ever and a day

Through ever trying to be and ever being—
In the evolution of successive spheres—
Before its actual sphere and place of life,
Halfway into the next, which having reached,
It shoots with corresponding foolery
Halfway into the next still, on and off!
As when a traveller, bound from North to South,
Scouts fur in Russia: what's its use in France?
In France spurns flannel: where's its need in Spain?
In Spain drops cloth, too cumbrous for Algiers!
Linen goes next, and last the skin itself,
A superfluity at Timbuctoo.
When, through his journey, was the fool at ease?
I'm at ease now, friend; worldly in this world,
I take and like its way of life; I think
My brothers, who administer the means,
Live better for my comfort—that's good too;
And God, if he pronounce upon such life,
Approves my service, which is better still.
If he keep silence,—why, for you or me
Or that brute beast pulled-up in to-day's 'Times'
What odds is't, save to ourselves, what life we lead?

You meet me at this issue: you declare,—
All special-pleading done with—truth is truth,
And justifies itself by undreamed ways.
You don't fear but it's better, if we doubt,
To say so, act up to our truth perceived
However feebly. Do then,—act away!
'Tis there I'm on the watch for you. How one acts
Is, both of us agree, our chief concern:
And how you'll act is what I fain would see
If, like the candid person you appear,
You dare to make the most of your life's scheme
As I of mine, live up to its full law
Since there's no higher law that counter-checks.
Put natural religion to the test
You've just demolished the revealed with—quick,
Down to the root of all that checks your will,
All prohibition to lie, kill and thieve,
Or even to be an atheistic priest!
Suppose a pricking to incontinence—
Philosophers deduce you chastity
Or shame, from just the fact that at the first
Whoso embraced a woman in the field,
Threw club down and forewent his brains beside,
So, stood a ready victim in the reach
Of any brother savage, club in hand;
Hence saw the use of going out of sight
In wood or cave to prosecute his loves:
I read this in a French book t'other day.
Does law so analysed coerce you much?
Oh, men spin clouds of fuzz where matters end,
But you who reach where the first thread begins,
You'll soon cut that!—which means you can, but won't,
Through certain instincts, blind, unreasoned out,
You dare not set aside, you can't tell why,
But there they are, and so you let them rule.
Then, friend, you seem as much a slave as I,
A liar, conscious coward and hypocrite,
Without the good the slave expects to get,
In case he has a master after all!
You own your instincts? why, what else do I,
Who want, am made for, and must have a God
Ere I can be aught, do aught?—no mere name
Want, but the true thing with what proves its truth,
To wit, a relation from that thing to me,
Touching from head to foot—which touch I feel,
And with it take the rest, this life of ours!
I live my life here; yours you dare not live.

—Not as I state it, who (you please sub-loin)
Disfigure such a life and call it names.
While, to your mind, remains another way
For simple men: knowledge and power have rights,
But ignorance and weakness have rights too.
There needs no crucial effort to find truth
If here or there or anywhere about:
We ought to turn each side, try hard and see,
And if we can't, be glad we've earned at least
The right, by one laborious proof the more,
To graze in peace earth's pleasant pasturage.
Men are not angels, neither are they brutes:
Something we may see, all we cannot see.
What need of lying? I say, I see all,
And swear to each detail the most minute
In what I think a Pan's face—you, mere cloud:
I swear I hear him speak and see him wink,

For fear, if once I drop the emphasis,
Mankind may doubt there's any cloud at all.
You take the simple life—ready to see,
Willing to see (for no cloud's worth a face)-_____
And leaving quiet what no strength can move,
And which, who bids you move? who has the right?
I bid you; but you are God's sheep, not mine:
' *Pastor est tui Dominus*' You find
In this the pleasant pasture of our life
Much you may eat without the least offence,
Much you don't eat because your maw objects,
Much you would eat but that your fellow-flock
Open great eyes at you and even butt,
And thereupon you like your mates so well
You cannot please yourself, offending them;
Though when they seem exorbitantly sheep,
You weigh your pleasure with their butts and bleats
And strike the balance. Sometimes certain fears
Restrain you, real checks since you find them so;
Sometimes you please yourself and nothing checks:
And thus you graze through life with not one lie,
And like it best.

But do you, in truth's name?
If so, you beat—which means you are not I –
Who needs must make earth mine and feed my fill
Not simply unbutted at, unbickered with,
But motioned to the velvet of the sward
By those obsequious wethers' very selves.
Look at me. sir; my age is double yours:
At yours, I Knew beforehand, so enjoyed,
What now I should be—as, permit the word,
I pretty well imagine your whole range
And stretch of tether twenty years to come.
We both have minds and bodies much alike:
In truth's name, don't you want my bishopric,
My daily bread, my influence and my state?
You're young. I'm old; you must be old one day:
Will you find then, as I do hour by hour,
Women their lovers kneel to, who cut curls
From your fat lap-dog's ear to grace a brooch—
Dukes, who petition just to kiss your ring—
With much beside you know or may conceive?
Suppose we die to-night: well, here am I,
Such were my gains, life bore this fruit to me,
While writing all the same my articles
On music, poetry, the fictile vase
Found at Albano, chess, Anacreon's Greek.
But you—the highest honour in your life.
The thing you'll crown yourself with, all your days,
Is—dining here and drinking this last glass
I pour you out in sign of amity
Before we part for ever. Of your power
And social influence, worldly worth in short,
Judge what's my estimation by the fact,
I do not condescend to enjoin, beseech,
Hint secrecy on one of all these words!
You're shrewd and know that should you publish one
The world would brand the lie—my enemies first,
Who'd sneer—'the bishop's an arch-hypocrite
'And knave perhaps, but not so frank a fool.'
Whereas I should not dare for both my ears
Breathe one such syllable, smile one such smile,
Before the chaplain who reflects myself—
My shade's so much more potent than your flesh.
What's your reward, self-abnegating friend?
Stood you confessed of those exceptional
And privileged great natures that dwarf mine—
A zealot with a mad ideal in reach,
A poet just about to print his ode,
A statesman with a scheme to stop this war,
An artist whose religion is his art—
I should have nothing to object: such men
Carry the fire, all things grow warm to them,
Their drugget's worth my purple, they beat me.
But you,—you're just as little those as I—
You, Gigadibs, who, thirty years of age,
Write statedly for Blackwood's Magazine,
Believe you see two points in Hamlet's soul
Unseized by the Germans yet—which view you'll print—
Meantime the best you have to show being still
That lively lightsome article we took
Almost for the true Dickens,—what's its name?

BISHOP BLOUGRAM'S APOLOGY

'The Slum and Cellar, or Whitechapel life
'Limned aftextJarU'it-raide me laugh, I know,
And pleased a month, and brought you in ten pounds.
—Success 1 recognize and compliment,
And therefon give you, if you choose, three words
(The card and pencil-scratch is quite enough)
Which whether here, in Dublin or New York,
Will get you, prompt as at my eyebrow's wink,
Such terms as never you aspired to get
In all our own reviews and some not ours.
Go write your lively sketches! be the first
'Blougram. or The Eccentric Confidence—
Or better simply say, 'The Outward-bound.'
why, men as soon would throw it in my teeth
As copy and quote the infamy chalked broad
About me on the church-door opposite.
You will not wait for that experience though,
I fancy, howsoever you decide,
To discontinue—not detesting, not
Defaming, but at least—despising me!

Over his wine so smiled and talked his hour
Sylvester Blougram, styled *in partibus*
Episcopus, nec non—(the deuce knows what
It's changed to by our novel hierarchy)
With Gigadibs the literary man,
Who played with spoons, explored his plate's design,
And ranged the olive-stones about its edge,
While the great bishop rolled him out a **mind**
Long crumpled, till creased consciousness lay smooth.

For Blougram, he believed, say, half he spoke.
The other portion, as he shaped it thus
For argumentatory purposes,
He felt his foe was foolish to dispute.
Some arbitrary accidental thoughts
That crossed his mind, amusing because new,
He chose to represent as fixtures there,
Invariable convictions (such they seemed
Beside his interlocutor's loose cards
Flung daily down, and not the same way twice)
While certain hell-deep instincts, man's weak tongue
Is never bold to utter in their truth
Because styled hell-deep ('tis an old mistake
To place hell at the bottom of the earth)
He ignored these,—not having in readiness
Their nomenclature and philosophy:
He said true things, but called them by wrong names.
'On the whole,' he thought, 'I justify myself
'On every point where cavillers like this
'Oppugn my life: he tries one kind of fence,
'I close, he's worsted, that's enough for him.
'He's on the ground: if ground should break away
'I take my stand on, there's a firmer yet
'Beneath it, both of us may sink and reach.
'His ground was over mine and broke the first:
'So, let him sit with me this many a year!

He did not sit five minutes. Just a week
Sufficed his sudden healthy vehemence.
Something had struck him in the 'Outward-bound'
Another way than Blougram's purpose was:
And having bought, not cabin-furniture
But settler's-implements (enough for three)
And started for Australia—there, I hope,
By this time he has tested his first plough,
And studied his last chapter of St. John.

CLEON

'As certain also of your own poets have said'—
[An Imaginary person. The poet quoted by St. Paul was Aratus, a native of Tarsus.]

CLEON the poet (from the sprinkled isles,
Lily on lily, that o'erlace the sea,
And laugh their pride when the light wave lisps 'Greece')—
To Protus in his Tyranny: much health!

They give thy letter to me, even now:
I read and seem as if I heard thee speak.
The master of thy galley still unlades
Gift after gift; they block my court at last
And pile themselves along its portico
Royal with sunset, like a thought of thee:
And one white she-slave from the group dispersed
Of black and white slaves (like the chequer-work
Pavement, at once my nation's work and gift,
Now covered with this settle-down of doves),
One lyric woman, in her crocus vest
Woven of sea-wools, with her two white hands

Commends to me the strainer and the cup
Thy lip hath bettered ere it blesses mine.

Well-counselled, king, in thy munificence!
For so shall men remark, in such an act
Of love for him whose song gives life its joy,
Thy recognition of the use of life;
Nor call thy spirit barely adequate
To help on life in straight ways, broad enough
For vulgar souls, by ruling and the rest.
Thou, in the daily building of thy tower,—
Whether in fierce and sudden spasms of toil,
Or through dim lulls of unapparent growth,
Or when the general work 'mid good acclaim
Climbed with the eye to cheer the architect,—
Didst ne'er engage in work for mere work's sake—
Hadst ever in thy heart the luring hope
Of some eventual rest a-top of it,
Whence, all the tumult of the building hushed,
Thou first of men mightst look out to the East:
The vulgar saw thy tower, thou sawest the sun.
For this, I promise on thy festival
To pour libation, looking o'er the sea,
Making this slave narrate thy fortunes, speak
Thy great words, and describe thy royal face—
Wishing thee wholly where Zeus lives the most,
Within the eventual element of calm.

Thy letter's first requirement meets me here.
It is as thou hast heard: in one short life
I, Cleon, have effected all those things
Thou wonderingly dost enumerate.
That epos on thy hundred plates of gold
Is mine,—and also mine the little chant,
So sure to rise from every fishing-bark
When, lights at prow, the seamen haul their net.
The image of the sun-god on the phare,
Men turn from the sun's self to see, is mine;
The Pœcile,[1] o'er-storied its whole length,
As thou didst hear, with painting, is mine too.
I know the true proportions of a man
And woman also, not observed before;
And I have written three books on the soul,

[1] The famous painted Porch on the Agora in Athens.

Proving absurd all written hitherto,
And putting us to ignorance again.
For music,—why, I have combined the moods,
Inventing one. In brief, all arts are mine;
Thus much the people know and recognize,
Throughout our seventeen islands. Marvel not.
We of these latter days, with greater mind
Than our forerunners, since more composite,
Look not so great, beside their simple way,
To a judge who only sees one way at once,
One mind-point and no other at a time,—
Compares the small part of a man of us
With some whole man of the heroic age,
Great in his way—not ours, nor meant for ours.
And ours is greater, had we skill to know:
For, what we call this life of men on earth,
This sequence of the soul's achievements here
Being, as I find much reason to conceive,
Intended to be viewed eventually
As a great whole, not analysed to parts,
But each part having reference to all,—
How shall a certain part, pronounced complete,
Endure effacement by another part?
Was the thing done?—then, what's to do again?
See, in the chequered pavement opposite,
Suppose the artist made a perfect rhomb,
And next a lozenge, then a trapezoid—
He did not overlay them, superimpose
The new upon the old and blot it out,
But laid them on a level in his work,
Making at last a picture; there it lies.
So, first the perfect separate forms were made,
The portions of mankind; and after, so,
Occurred the combination of the same.
For where had been a progress, otherwise?
Mankind, made up of all the single men,—
In such a synthesis the labour ends.
Now mark me! those divine men of old time
Have reached, thou sayest well, each at one point
The outside verge that rounds our faculty;
And where they reached, who can do more than reach?
It takes but little water just to touch
At some one point the inside of a sphere,
And, as we turn the sphere, touch all the rest
In due succession: but the finer air
Which not so palpably nor obviously,
Though no less universally, can touch
The whole circumference of that emptied sphere,
Fills it more fully than the water did;
Holds thrice the weight of water in itself

Resolved into a subtler element.
And yet the vulgar call the sphere first full
Up to the visible height—and after, void;
Not knowing air's more hidden properties.
And thus our soul, misknown, cries out to Zeus
To vindicate his purpose in our life:
Why stay we on the earth unless to grow?
Long since, I imaged, wrote the fiction out,
That he or other goa descended here
And, once for all, showed simultaneously
What, in its nature, never can be shown,
Piecemeal or in succession;—showed, I say,
The worth both absolute and relative
Of all his children from the birth of time,
His instruments for all appointed work.
I now go on to image,—might we hear
The judgment which should give the due to each,
Show where the labour lay and where the ease,
And prove Zeus' self, the latent everywhere!
This is a dream:—but no dream, let us hope,
That years and days, the summers and the springs,
Follow each other with unwaning powers.
The grapes which dye thy wine are richer far,
Through culture, than the wild wealth of the rock;
The suave plum than the savage-tasted drupe;
The pastured honey-bee drops choicer sweet;
The flowers turn double, and the leaves turn flowers;
That young and tender crescent-moon, thy slave,
Sleeping above her robe as buoyed by clouds,
Refines upon the women of my youth.
What, and the soul alone deteriorates?
I have not chanted verse like Homer, no—
Nor swept string like Terpander, no—nor carved
And painted men like Phidias and his friend:
I am not great as they are, point by point.
But I have entered into sympathy
With these four, running these into one soul,
Who, separate, ignored each other's art.
Say, is it nothing that I know them all?
The wild flower was the larger; I have dashed
Rose-blood upon its petals, pricked its cup's
Honey with wine, and driven its seed to fruit,
And show a better flower if not so large:
I stand myself. Refer this to the gods
Whose gift alone it is! which, shall I dare
(All pride apart) upon the absurd pretext
That such a gift by chance lay in my hand,
Discourse of lightly or depreciate?
It might have fallen to another's hand: what then?
I pass too surely: let at least truth stay!

And next, of what thou followest on to ask.
This being with me as I declare, O king,
My works, in all these varicoloured kinds,
So done by me, accepted so by men—
Thou askest, if (my soul thus in men's hearts)
I must not be accounted to attain
The very crown and proper end of life?
Inquiring thence how, now life closeth up,
I face death with success in my right hand:
Whether I fear death less than dost thyself
The fortunate of men? 'For' (writest thou)
'Thou leavest much behind, while I leave nought.
' Thy life stays in the poems men shall sing,
'The pictures men shall study; while my life,
' Complete and whole now in its power and

'Dies altogether with my brain and arm,
'Is lost indeed; since, what survives myself?
'The brazen statue to o'erlook my grave,
' Set on the promontory which I named.
'And that—some supple courtier of my heir
'Shall use its robed and sceptred arm, perhaps,
'To fix the rope to, which best drags it down.
'I go then: triumph thou, who dost not go!'

Nay. thou art worthy of hearing my whole mind.
Is this apparent, when thou turn'st to muse
Upon the scheme of earth and man in chief,
That admiration grows as knowledge grows?
That imperfection means perfection hid,
Reserved in part, to grace the after-time?
If, in the morning of philosophy,
Ere aught had been recorded, nay perceived,
Thou, with the light now in thee, couldst have looked
On all earth's tenantry, from worm to bird,
Ere man, her last, appeared upon the stage—
Thou wouldst have seen them perfect, and deduced
The perfectness of others yet unseen.

Conceding which,—had Zeus then questioned thee
' Shall I go on a step, improve on this,
'Do more for visible creatures than is done?'
Thou wouldst have answered, 'Ay, by making each
'Grow conscious in himself—by that alone.
'All's perfect else: the shell sucks fast the rock,
'The fish strikes through the sea, the snake both swims
'And slides, forth range the beasts, the birds take flight,
'Till life's mechanics can no further go—
'And all this joy in natural life is put
'Like fire from off thy finger into each,
' So exquisitely perfect is the same.
'But 'tis pure fire, and they mere matter are;
' It has them, not they it: and so I choose
'For man, thy last premeditated work
' (If I might add a glory to the scheme)
'That a third thing should stand apart from both,
*A quality arise within his soul,
'Which, intro-active, made to supervise
'And feel the force it has, may view itself,
'And so be happy.' Man might live at first
The animal life: but is there nothing more?
In due time, let him critically learn
How he lives; and, the more he gets to know
Of his own life's adaptabilities,
The more joy-giving will his life become.
Thus man, who hath this quality, is best.

But thou, king, hadst more reasonably said:
' Let progress end at once,—man make no step
' Beyond the natural man, the better beast.
'Using his senses, not the sense of sense.
In man there's failure, only since he left
The lower and inconscious forms of life.
We called it an advance, the rendering plain
Man's spirit might grow conscious of man's life,
And, by new lore so added to the old,
Take each step higher over the brute's head.
This grew the only life, the pleasure-house,
Watch-tower and treasure-fortress of the soul,
Which whole surrounding flats of natural life
Seemed only fit to yield subsistence to;
A tower that crowns a country. But alas.
The soul now climbs it just to perish there 1
For thence we have discovered ('tis no dream—
We know this, which we had not else perceived)
That there's a world of capability
For joy, spread round about us, meant for us,
Inviting us: and still the soul craves all,
And still the flesh replies, 'Take no jot more
'Than ere thou clombst the tower to look abroad!
'Nay, so much less as that fatigue has brought
'Deduction to it.' We struggle, fain to enlarge
Our bounded physical recipiency,
Increase our power, supply fresh oil to life,
Repair the waste of age and sickness: no.
It skills not! life's inadequate to joy,
As the soul sees joy, tempting life to take.
They praise a fountain in my garden here
Wherein a Naiad sends the water-bow
Thin from her tube; she smiles to see it rise.
What if I told her, it is just a thread
From that great river which the hills shut up,
And mock her with my leave to take the same?
The artificer has given her one small tube
Past power to widen or exchange—what boots
To know she might spout oceans if she could?
She cannot lift beyond her first thin thread:
And so a man can use but a man's joy
While he sees God's. Is it for Zeus to boast,
' See, man, how happy I live, and despair—
'That I may be still happier—for thy use!'
If this were so, we could not thank our lord,
As hearts beat on to doing; 'tis not so—
Malice it is not. Is it carelessness?
Still, no. If care—where is the sign? I ask,
And get no answer, and agree in sum,
O king, with thy profound discouragement,
Who seest the wider but to sigh the more.
Most progress is most failure: thou sayest well.

The last point now:—thou dost except a case—
Holding joy not impossible to one
With artist-gifts—to such a man as I
Who leave behind me living works indeed;
For, such a poem, such a painting lives.
What? dost thou verily trip upon a word,
Confound the accurate view of what joy is
(Caught somewhat clearer by my eyes than thine)
With feeling joy? confound the knowing how

And showing how to live (my faculty)
With actually living ?.Otherwise
Where is the artist's vantage o'er the king?
Because in my great epos I display
How divers men young, strong, fair, wise, can act—
Is this as though I acted? if I paint,
Carve the young Phoebus, am I therefore young?
Methinks I'm older that I bowed myself
The many years of pain that taught me art!
Indeed, to know is something, and to prove
How all this beauty might be enjoyed, is more:
But, knowing nought, to enjoy is something too.
Yon rower, with the moulded muscles there,
Lowering the sail, is nearer it than I.
I can write love-odes: thy fair slave's an ode.
I get to sing of love, when grown too grey
For being beloved: she turns to that young man,
The muscles all a-ripple on his back.
I know the joy of kingship: well, thou art king.

'But,' sayest thou—(and I marvel, I repeat,
To find thee trip on such a mere word) 'what
'Thou writest, paintest, stays; that does not die:
'Sappho survives, because we sing her songs,
'And Æschylus, because we read his plays!'
Why, if they live still, let them come and take
Thy slave in my despite, drink from thy cup,
Speak in my place. Thou diest while I survive?
Say rather that my fate is deadlier still,
In this, that every day my sense of joy
Grows more acute, my soul (intensified
By power and insight) more enlarged, more keen;
While every day my hairs fall more and more,
My hand shakes, and the heavy years increase—
The horror quickening still from year to year,
The consummation coming past escape
When I shall know most, and yet least enjoy—
When all my works wherein I prove my worth,
Being present still to mock me in men's mouths,
Alive still, in the praise of such as thou,
L I the feeling, thinking, acting man,
The man who loved his fife so over-much,
Sleep in my urn. It is so horrible,
I dare at times imagine to my need
Some future state revealed to us by Zeus,
Unlimited in capability
For joy, as this is in desire for joy,
—To seek which, the joy-hunger forces us:
That, stung by straitness of our life, made strait
On purpose to make prized the life at large—
Freed by the throbbing impulse we call death,
We burst there as the worm into the fly,
Who, while.a worm still, wants his wings.
But no!
Zeus has not yet revealed it; and alas,
He must have done so, were it possible!

Live long and happy, and in that thought die:
Glad for what was! Farewell. And for the rest,
I cannot tell thy messenger aright
Where to deliver what he bears of thine
To one called Paulus; we have heard his fame
Indeed, if Christus be not one with him—
I know not, nor am troubled much to know.
Thou canst not think a mere barbarian Jew,
As Paulus proves to be, one circumcized,
Hath access to a secret shut from us?
Thou wrongest our philosophy, O king,
In stooping to inquire of such an one,
As if his answer could impose at all!
He writeth, doth he? well, and he may write.
Oh, the Jew findeth scholars! certain slaves
Who touched on this same isle, preached him and Christ;
And (as I gathered from a bystander)
Their doctrine could be held by no sane man.

RUDEL TO THE LADY OF TRIPOLI

I

I KNOW a Mount, the gracious Sun perceives
First, when he visits, last, too, when he leaves
The world; and, vainly favoured, it repays
The day-long glory of his steadfast gaze
By no change of its large calm front of snow.
And underneath the Mount, a Flower I know,
He cannot have perceived, that changes ever
At his approach; and, in the lost endeavour

To live his life, has parted, one by one,
With all a flower's true graces, for the grace
Of being but a foolish mimic sun,
With ray-like florets round a disk-hike face.
Men nobly call by many a name the Mount
As over many a land of theirs its large
Calm front of snow like a triumphal targe
Is reared, and still with old names, fresh names vie,
Each to its proper praise and own account:
Men call the Flower, the Sunflower, sportively.

II

Oh, Angel of the East, one, one gold look
Across the waters to this twilight nook,
—The far sad waters, Angel, to this nook!

III

Dear Pilgrim, art thou for the East indeed?
Go!—saying ever as thou dost proceed,
That I, French Rudel, choose for my device
A sunflower outspread like a sacrifice
Before its idol. See! These inexpert
And hurried fingers could not fail to hurt
The woven picture; 'tis a woman's skill
Indeed: but nothing baffled me, so, ill
Or well, the work is finished. Say, men feed
On songs I sing, and therefore bask the bees
On my flower's breast as on a platform broad:
But, as the flower's concern is not for these
But solely for the sun, so men applaud
In vain this Rudel, he not looking here
But to the East—the East! Go, say this, Pilgrim dear!

ONE WORD MORE[1]

TO E. B. B.

1855

I

THERE they are, my fifty men and women
Naming me the fifty poems finished!
Take them, Love, the book and me together:
Where the heart lies, let the brain lie also.

Rafael made a century of sonnets,
Made and wrote them in a certain volume
Dinted with the silver-pointed pencil
Else he only used to draw Madonnas:
These, the world might view—but one, the volume.
Who that one, you ask? Your heart instructs you.
Did she live and love it all her life-time?
Did she drop, his lady of the sonnets,
Die, and let it drop beside her pillow
Where it lay in place of Rafael's glory,
Rafael's cheek so duteous and so loving—
Cheek, the world was wont to hail a painter's,
Rafael's cheek, her love had turned a poet's?

III

You and I would rather read that volume,
(Taken to his beating bosom by it)
Lean and list the bosom-beats of Rafael,
Would we not? than wonder at Madonnas—
Her, San Sisto names, and Her, Foligno,
Her, that visits Florence in a vision,
Her, that's left with lilies in the Louvre—
Seen by us and all the world in circle.

IV

You and I will never read that volume.
Guido Reni, like his own eye's apple
Guarded long the treasure-book and loved it.
Guido Reni dying, all Bologna
Cried, and the world cried too, 'Ours, the treasure!'
Suddenly, as rare things will, it vanished.

Dante once prepared to paint an angel:
Whom to please? You whisper * Beatrice.'
While he mused and traced it and retraced it,
(Peradventure with a pen corroded
Still by drops of that hot ink he dipped for,
When, his left-hand i' the hair o' the wicked,
Back he held the brow and pricked its stigma,
Bit into the live man's flesh for parchment
Loosed him, laughed to see the writing rankle,
Let the wretch go festering through Florence)—
Dante, who loved well because he hated,
Hated wickedness that hinders loving,
Dante standing, studying his angel,—
In there broke the folk of his Inferno.
Says he—'Certain people of importance'
(Such he gave his daily dreadful line to)
' Entered and would seize, forsooth, the poet.'
Says the poet—'Then I stopped my painting.'

VI

You and I would rather see that angel,
Painted by the tenderness of Dante,
Would we not?—-than read a fresh Inferno.

[1] [Originally appended to the collection of Poems called 'Men and Women', the greater portion of which has now been, more correctly, distributed **under** the other titles of this edition.—R. B.}

ONE WORD MORE

vII

You and I will nover see-that picture.
While he mused on love and Beatrice,
While he softened o'er his outlined angel,
In they broke, those 'people of importance:'
We and Bice bear the loss for ever.

What of Rafael's sonnets, Dante's picture?
This: no artist lives and loves, that longs not
Once, and only once, and for one only,
(Ah, the prize!) to find his love a language
Fit and fair and simple and sufficient—
Using nature that's an art to others,
Not, this one time, art that's turned his nature.
Ay, of all the artists living, loving,
None but would forego his proper dowry,-
Does he paint? he fain would write a poem,-
Does he write? he fain would paint a picture,
Put to proof art alien to the artist's,
Once, and only once, and for one only,
So to be the man and leave the artist,
Gain the man's joy, miss the artist's sorrow.

IX

Wherefore? Heaven's gift takes earth's abatement!
He who smites the rock and spreads the water,
Bidding drink and live a crowd beneath him,
Even he, the minute makes immortal,
Proves, perchance, but mortal in the minute,
Desecrates, belike, the deed in doing.
While he smites, how can he but remember,
So he smote before, in such a peril,
When they stood and mocked—'Shall smiting help us?*
When they drank and sneered—'A stroke is easy!'
When they wiped their mouths and went their journey,
Throwing him for thanks—'But drought was pleasant.'
Thus old memories mar the actual triumph;
Thus the doing savours of disrelish;
Thus achievement lacks a gracious somewhat;
O'er-importuned brows becloud the mandate,
Carelessness or consciousness—the gesture.
For he bears an ancient wrong about him.
Sees and knows again those phalanxed faces,
Hears, yet one time more, the 'customed prelude—
'How shouldst thou, of all men, smite, and save us?'
Guesses what is like to prove the sequel—
'Egypt's flesh-pots—nay, the drought was better.'

x

Oh, the crowd must have emphatic warrant!
Theirs, the Sinai-forehead's cloven brilliance.
Right-arm s rod-sweep, tongue's imperial fiat.
Never dares the man put off the prophet.

Did he love one face from out the thousands,
(Were she Jethro's daughter, white and wifely,
Were she but the Æthiopian bondslave,)
He would envy yon dumb patient camel,
Keeping a reserve of scanty water
Meant to save his own life in the desert;
Ready in the desert to deliver
(Kneeling do wn to let his breast be opened)
Hoard and life together for his mistress.

I shall never, in the years remaining,
Paint you pictures, no, nor carve you statues,
Make you music that should all-express me;
So it seems: I stand on my attainment,
This of verse alone, one life allows me;
Verse and nothing else have I to give you.
Other heights in other lives, God willing:
All the gifts from all the heights, your own, Love!

xIII

Yet a semblance of resource avails us—
Shade so finely touched, love's sense must seize it.
Take these lines, look lovingly and nearly,
Lines I write the first time and the last time.
He who works in fresco, steals a hair-brush,
Curbs the liberal hand, subservient proudly,
Cramps his spirit, crowds its all in little,
Makes a strange art of an art familiar,
Fills his lady's missal-marge with flowerets.
He who blows thro* bronze, may breathe thro' silver,
Fitly serenade a slumbrous princess.
He who writes, may write for once as I do.

xIv

Love, you saw me gather men and women,
Live or dead or fashioned by my fancy,

Enter each and all, and use their service,
Speak from every mouth,—the speech, a poem.
Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows,
Hopes and fears, belief and disbelieving:
I am mine and yours—the rest be all men's,
Karshish, Cleon, Norbert and the fifty.
Let me speak this once in my true person,
Not as Lippo. Roland or Andrea,
Though the fruit of speech be just this sentence:
Pray you, look on these my men and women,
Take and keep my fifty poems finished;
Where my heart lies, let my brain lie also!
Poor the speech; be how I speak, for all things.

xv

Not but that you know me! Lo, the moon's self!
Here in London, yonder late in Florence,
Still we find her face, the thrice-transfigured.
Curving on a sky imbrued with colour,
Drifted over Fiesole by twilight,
Came she, our new crescent of a hair's-breadth.
Full she flared it, lamping Samminiato,
Rounder 'twixt the cypresses and rounder,
Perfect till the nightingales applauded.
Now. a piece of her old self, impoverished,
Hard to greet, she traverses the house-roofs,
Hurries with unhandsome thrift of silver,
Goes dispiritedly, glad to finish.

XVI

What, there's nothing in the moon noteworthy?
Nay: for if that moon could love a mortal,
Use, to charm him (so to fit a fancy),
All her magic ('tis the old sweet mythos),
She would turn a new side to her mortal,
Side unseen of herdsman, huntsman, steersman—
Blank to Zoroaster on his terrace,
Blind to Galileo on his turret,
Dumb to Homer, dumb to Keats—him, even!
Think, the wonder of the moonstruck mortal—
When she turns round, comes again in heaven,
Opens out anew for worse or better!
Proves she like some portent of an iceberg
Swimming full upon the ship it founders.
Hungry with huge teeth of splintered crystals?
Proves she as the paved work of a sapphire
Seen by Moses when he climbed the mountain?
Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu
Climbed and saw the very God, the Highest,
Stand upon the paved work of a sapphire.
Like the bodied heaven in his clearness
Shone the stone, the sapphire of that paved work,
When they ate and drank and saw God also!

xvII

What were seen? None knows, none ever shall know.
Only this is sure—the sight were other,
Not the moon's same side, born late in Florence,
Dying now impoverished here in London.
God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures
Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,
One to show a woman when he loves her!

xvIII

This I say of me, but think of you, Love!
This to you—yourself my moon of poets!
Ah, but that's the world's side, there's the wonder,
Thus they see you, praise you, think they know you!
There, in turn I stand with them and praise you—
Out of my own self, I dare to phrase it.
But the best is when I glide from out them,
Cross a step or two of dubious twilight,
Come out on the other side, the novel
Silent silver lights and darks undreamed of,
Where I hush and bless myself with silence.

xIx

Oh, their Rafael of the dear Madonnas,
Oh, their Dante of the dread Inferno,
Wrote one song—and in my brain I sing it,
Drew one angel—borne, see, on my bosom!

IN A BALCONY

1855

PERSONS

NORBERT. CONSTANCE. THE QUEEN.

CONSTANCE *and* NORBERT BY CONSTANCE *ana* INORBERT. THE

Nor. Now!
Con, Not now!
Nor, Give me them again, those hands:
Put them upon my forehead, how it throbs!
Press them before my eyes, the fire comes through!
You cruellest, you dearest in the world,
Let me! The Queen must grant whate'er I ask—
How can I gain you and not ask the Queen?
There she stays waiting for me, here stand you;
Some time or other this was to be asked;
Now is the one time—what I ask, I gain:
Let me ask now, Love!
Con. Do, and ruin us.
Nor. Let it be now, Love! All my soul breaks forth.
How I do love you! Give my love its way!
A man can have but one life and death,
One heaven, one hell. Let me fulfil my fate—
Grant me my heaven now! Let me know you mine,
Prove you mine, write my name upon your brow,
Hold you and have you, and then die away,
If God please, with completion in my soul!
Con. I am not yours then? How content this man!
I am not his—who change into himself,
Have passed into his heart and beat its beats,
Who give my hands to him, my eyes, my hair,
Give all that was of me away to him—
So well, that now, my spirit turned his own,
Takes part with him against the woman here,
Bids him not stumble at so mere a straw
As caring that the world be cognizant
How he loves her and how she worships him.
You have this woman, not as yet that world.
Go on, I bid, nor stop to care for me
saving what I cease to care about,
COURTLY NAME AND PRIDE OF CIRCUMstance—
The name you'll pick up and be cumbered with
Just for the poor parade's sake, nothing more;
Just that the world may slip from under you—
Just that the world may cry' So much for him—
'The man predestined to the heap of crowns:
'There goes his chance of winning one, at least!'
Nor. The world!
Con. You love it. Love me quite as well,
And see if I shall pray for this in vain!
Why must you ponder what it knows or thinks?
Nor, You pray for—what, in vain?
Con. Oh my heart's heart,
How I do love you, Norbert! That is one right:
But listen, or I take my hands away!
You say, 'let it be now': you would go now
And tell the Queen, perhaps six steps from us,
You love me—so you do, thank God!
Nor, Thank God!
Con. Yes, Norbert,—but you fain would tell your love,
And, what succeeds the telling, ask of her
My hand. Now take this rose and look at it,
Listening to me. You are the minister,
The Queen's first favourite, nor without a cause.
To-night completes your wonderful year's-work
(This palace-feast is held to celebrate)
Made memorable by her life's success,
The junction of two crowns, on her sole head,
Her house had only dreamed of anciently:
That this mere dream is grown a stable truth,
To-night's feast makes authentic. Whose the praise?
Whose genius, patience, energy, achieved
What turned the many heads and broke the hearts?

You are the fate, your minute's in the heaven.
Next comes the Queen's turn. 'Name your own reward!'
With leave to clench the past, chain the to-come,
Put out an arm and touch and take the sun
And fix it ever full-faced on your earth,
Possess yourself supremely of her life,—
You choose the single thing she will not grant;
Nay, very declaration of which choice
Will turn the scale and neutralize your work:
At best she will forgive you, if she can.
You think I'll let you choose—her cousin's hand?
Nor. Wait. First, do you retain your old belief
The Queen is generous,—nay, is just?
Con. There, there!
So men make women love them, while they know
No more of women's hearts than... look you here,
You that are just and generous beside,
Make it your own case! For example now,
I'll say—I let you kiss me, hold my hands—
Why? do you know why? I'll instruct you, then—
The kiss, because you have a name at court;
This hand and this, that you may shut in each
A jewel, if you please to pick up such.
That's horrible? Apply it to the Queen—
Suppose I am the Queen to whom you speak:
'I was a nameless man; you needed me:
'Why did I proffer you my aid? there stood
'A certain pretty cousin at your side.
'Why did I make such common cause with you?
'Access to her had not been easy else.
'You give my labour here abundant praise?
"Faith, labour, which she overlooked, grew play.
'How shall your gratitude discharge itself?
'Give me her hand!'
Nor. And still I urge the same.
Is the Queen just? just—generous or no!
Con. Yes, just. You love a rose; no harm in that:
But was it for the rose's sake or mine
You put it in your bosom? mine, you said—
Then, mine you still must say or else be false.
You told the Queen you served her for herself;
If so, to serve her was to serve yourself.
She thinks, for all your unbelieving face!
I know her. In the hall, six steps from us,
One sees the twenty pictures; there's a life
Better than life, and yet no life at all.
Conceive her born in such a magic dome,
Pictures all round her! why, she sees the world,
Can recognize its given things and facts,
The fight of giants or the feast of gods,
Sages in senate, beauties at the bath,
Chases and battles, the whole earth's display,
Landscape and sea-piece, down to flowers and fruit—
And who shall question that she knows them all,
In better semblance than the things outside?
Yet bring into the silent gallery
Some live thing to contrast in breath and blood,
Some lion, with the painted lion there—
You think she'll understand composedly?
—Say, ' that's his fellow in the hunting-piece
'Yonder, I've turned to praise a hundred times?'
Not so. Her knowledge of our actual earth,
Its hopes and fears, concerns and sympathies,
Must be too far, too mediate, too unreal.
The real exists for us outside, not her:
How should it, with that life in these four walls—
That father and that mother, first to last
No father and no mother—friends, a heap,
Lovers, no lack—a husband in due time,
And every one of them alike a lie!
Things painted by a Rubens out of nought
Into what kindness, friendship, love should be;
All better, all more grandiose than the life,
Only no life; mere cloth and surface-paint,
You feel, while you admire. How should she feel?
Yet now that she has stood thus fifty years
The sole spectator in that gallery,
You think to bring this warm real struggling love
In to her of a sudden, and suppose
She'll keep her state untroubled? Here's the truth—
She'll apprehend truth's value at a glance,
Prefer it to the pictured loyalty?
You only have to say, 'so men are made,
'For this they act; the thing has many names,
'But this the right one: and now, Queen, be just!'
Your life slips back; you lose her at the word:
You do not even for amends gain me.

He will not understand; oh, Norbert, Norbert,
Do you not understand?
Nor, The Queen's the Queen:
I am myself—no picture, but alive
In every nerve and every muscle, here
At the palace-window o'er the people's street,
As she in the gallery where the pictures glow:
The good of life is precious to us both.
She cannot love; what do I want with rule ?
When first I saw your face a year ago
I knew my life's good, my soul heard one voice—
'The woman yonder, there's no use of life
' But just to obtain her I heap earth's woes in one
' And bear them—make a pile of all earth's joys
* And spurn them, as they help or help not this:
'Only, obtain her!' How was it to be?
I found you were the cousin of the Queen;
I must then serve the Queen to get to you.
No other way. Suppose there had been one,
And I, by saying prayers to some white star
With promise of my body and my soul,
Might gain you,—should I pray the star or no?
Instead, there was the Queen to serve! I served,
Helped, did what other servants failed to do.
Neither she sought nor I declared my end.
Her good is hers, my recompense be mine,—
I therefore name you as that recompense.
She dreamed that such a thing could never be?
Let her wake now. She thinks there was more cause
In love of power, high fame, pure loyalty?
Perhaps she fancies men wear out their lives
Chasing such shades. Then, I've a fancy too:
I worked because I want you with my soul:
I therefore ask your hand. Let it be now!
Con. Had I not loved you from the very first,
Were I not yours, could we not steal out thus
So wickedly, so wildly, and so well.
You might become impatient. What's conceived
Of us without here, by the folk within?
Where are you now? immersed in cares of state—
Where am I now? intent on festal robes—
We two, embracing under death's spread hand!
What was this thought for, what that scruple of yours
Which broke the council up?—to bring about
One minute's meeting in the corridor!
And then the sudden sleights, strange secrecies,
Complots inscrutable, deep telegraphs,
Long-planned chance-meetings, hazards of a look,
'Does she know? does she not know? saved or lost?'
A year of this compression's ecstasy
All goes for nothing! you would give this up
For the old way, the open way, the world's,
His way who beats, and his who sells his wife!
What tempts you?—their notorious happiness
Makes you ashamed of ours? The best you'll gain
Will be—the Queen grants all that you require,
Concedes the cousin, rids herself of you
And me at once, and gives us ample leave
To live like our five hundred happy friends.
The world will show us with officious hand
Our chamber-entry, and stand sentinel
Where we so oft have stolen across its traps!
Get the world's warrant, ring the falcons' feet.
And make it duty to be bold and swift,
Which long ago was nature. Have it so!
We never hawked by rights till flung from fist?
Oh, the man's thought! no woman's such a fool.
Nor. Yes, the man's thought and my thought, which is more—
One made to love you, let the world take note!
Have I done worthy work? be love's the praise,
Though hampered by restrictions, barred against
By set forms, blinded by forced secrecies!
Set free my love, and see what love can do
Shown in my life—what work will spring from that!
The world is used to have its business done
On other grounds, find great effects produced
For power's sake, fame's sake, motives in men's mouth.
So, good: but let my low ground shame their high!
Truth is the strong thing. Let man's life be true!
And love's the truth of mine. Time prove the rest!
I choose to wear you stamped all over me,

Your name upon my forehead and my breast,
You, from the sword's blade to the ribbon's edge,
That men may see, all over, you in me—
That pale loves may die out of their pretence
In face of mine, shames thrown on love fall off.
Permit this, Constance! Love has been so long
Subdued in me, eating me through and through,
That now 'tis all of me and must have way.
Think of my work, that chaos of intrigues,
Those hopes and fears, surprises and delays,
That long endeavour, earnest, patient, slow,
Trembling at last to its assured result:
Then think of this revulsion! I resume
Life after death, (it is no less than life,
After such long unlovely labouring days)
And liberate to beauty life's great need
O' the beautiful, which, while it prompted work,
Suppressed itself erewhile. This eve's the time,
This eve intense with yon first trembling star
We seem to pant and reach; scarce aught between
The earth that rises and the heaven that bends;
All nature self-abandoned, every tree
Flung as it will, pursuing its own thoughts
And fixed so, every flower and every weed,
No pride, no shame, no victory, no defeat;
All under God, each measured by itself.
These statues round us stand abrupt, distinct,
The strong in strength, the weak in weakness fixed,
The Muse for ever wedded to her lyre,
Nymph to her fawn, and Silence to her rose:
See God's approval on his universe!
Let us do so—aspire to live as these
In harmony with truth, ourselves being true!
Take the first way, and let the second come!
My first is to possess myself of you;
The music sets the march-step—forward, then!
And there's the Queen, I go to claim you of,
The world to witness, wonder and applaud.
Our flower of life breaks open. No delay!
Con. And so shall we be ruined, both of us.
Norbert, I know her to the skin and bone:
You do not know her, were not born to *it,*
To feel what she can see or cannot see.
Love, she is generous,—ay, despite your smile,
Generous as you are: for, in that thin frame
Pain-twisted, punctured through and through with cares,
There lived a lavish soul until it starved,
Debarred of healthy food. Look to the soul—
Pity that, stoop to that, ere you begin
(The true man's-way) on justice and your rights,
Exactions and acquittance of the past!
Begin so—see what justice she will deal!
We women hate a debt as men a gift.
Suppose her some poor keeper of a school
Whose business is to sit thro* summer months
And dole out children leave to go and play,
Herself superior to such lightness—she
In the arm-chair's state and paedagogic pomp—
To the life, the laughter, sun and youth outside:
We wonder such a face looks black on us ?
I do not bid you wake her tenderness,
(That were vain truly—none is left to wake)
But let her think her justice is engaged
To take the shape of tenderness, and mark
If she'll not coldly pay *its* warmest debt!
Does she love me, I ask you? not a whit:
Yet, thinking that her justice was engaged
To help a kinswoman, she took me up—
Did more on that bare ground than other loves
Would do on greater argument. For me,
I have no equivalent of such cold kind
To pay her with, but love alone to give
If I give anything. I give her love:
I feel I ought to help her, and I will.
So, for her sake, as yours, I tell you twice
That women hate a debt as men a gift.
If I were you, I could obtain this grace-
Could lay the whole I did to love's account,
Nor yet be very false as courtiers go-
Declaring my success was recompense;
It would be so, in fact: what were it else?
And then, once loose her generosity,—
Oh, how I see it!—then, were I but you,
To turn it, let *it* seem to move itself,
And make it offer what I really take,
Accepting just, in the poor cousin's hand,
Her value as the next thing to the Queen's—
Since none love Queens directly, none dare that,
And a thing's shadow or a name's mere echo
Suffices those who miss the name and thing!
You pick up just a ribbon she has worn,

To keep in proof how near her breath you came.
Say, I'm so near I seem a piece of her—
Ask for me that way—(oh, you understand)
You'd find the same gift yielded with a grace,
Which, if you make the least show to extort ...
—You'll see! and when you have ruined both of us,
Dissertate on the Queen's ingratitude!
Nor, Then, if I turn it that way, you consent?
'Tis not my way; I have more hope in truth:
Still, if you won't have truth—why, this indeed,
Were scarcely false, as I'd express the sense.
Will you remain here?
Con, O best heart of mine,
How I have loved you! then, you take my way?
Are mine as you have been her minister,
Work out my thought, give it effect for me,
Paint plain my poor conceit and make it serve?
I owe that withered woman everything—
Life, fortune, you, remember! Take my part—
Help me to pay her! Stand upon your rights?
You, with my rose, my hands, my heart on you?
Your rights are mine—you have no rights but mine.
Nor. Remain here. How you know me!
Con. Ah, but still
[He breaks from her: she remains. Dance-music from within.

Enter the QUEEN.

Queen. Constance? She is here as he said. Speak quick!
Is it so? Is it true or false? One word!
Con. True.
Queen. Mercifullest Mother, thanks to thee!
Con, Madam?
Queen, I love you, Constance, from my soul.
Now say once more, with any words you will,
'Tis true, all true, as true as that I speak.
Con. Why should you doubt it?
Queen. Ah, why doubt? why doubt?
Dear, make me see it! Do you see it so?
None see themselves; another sees them best.
You say' why doubt it ?'—you see him and me.
It is because the Mother has such grace
That if we had but faith—wherein we fail—
Whate'er we yearn for would be granted us;
Yet still we let our whims prescribe despair,
Our fancies thwart and cramp our will and power,
And, while accepting life, abjure its use.
Constance, I had abjured the hope of love
And being loved, as truly as yon palm
The hope of seeing Egypt from that plot.
Con. Heaven!
Queen. But it was so, Constance, it was so!
Men say—or do men say it? fancies say—
' Stop here, your life is set, you are grown old.
'Too late—no love for you, too late for love—
'Leave love to girls. Be queen: let Constance love.'
One takes the hint—half meets it like a child,
Ashamed at any feelings that oppose.
'Oh love, true, never think of love again!
'I am a queen: I rule, not love forsooth.'
So it goes on; so a face grows like this,
Hair like this hair, poor arms as lean as these,
Till,—nay, it does not end so, I thank God!
Con. I cannot understand—
Queen. The happier you!
Constance, I know not how it is with men:
For women (I am a woman now like you)
There is no good of life but love—but love!
What else looks good, is some shade flung from love;
Love gilds it, gives it worth. Be warned by me,
Never you cheat yourself one instant! Love,
Give love, ask only love, and leave the rest!
0 Constance, how I love you!
Con. I love you.
Queen. I do believe that all is come through you.
I took you to my heart to keep it warm
When the last chance of love seemed dead in me;
I thought your fresh youth warmed my withered heart.
Oh, I am very old now, am I not?
Not so! it is true and it shall be true!
Con. Tell it me: let me judge if true or false.
Queen, Ah, but I fear you! you will look at me
And say, 'she's old, she's grown unlovely quite
'Who ne'er was beauteous: men want beauty still.'
Well, so I feared—the curse! so I felt sure!
Con. Be calm. And now you feel not sure, you say ?

Queen. Constance, he came,—the coming was not strange—
Do not I stand and see men come and go?
I turned a half-look from my pedestal
Where I grow marble—'one young man the more!
'He will love some one; that is nought to me:
'What would he with my marble stateliness?'
Yet this seemed somewhat worse than heretofore;
The man more gracious, youthful, like a god,
And I still older, with less flesh to change—
We two those dear extremes that long to touch.
It seemed still harder when he first began
To labour at those state-affairs, absorbed
The old way for the old end—interest.
Oh, to live with a thousand beating hearts
Around you, swift eyes, serviceable hands,
Professing they've no care but for your cause,
Thought but to help you, love but for yourself,—
And you the marble statue all the time
They praise and point at as preferred to life,
Yet leave for the first breathing woman's smile,
First dancer's, gipsy's or street baladine's!
Why, how I have ground my teeth to hear men's speech
Stifled for fear it should alarm my ear,
Their gait subdued lest step should startle me,
Their eyes declined, such queendom to respect,
Their hands alert, such treasure to preserve,
While not a man of them broke rank and spoke,
Wrote me a vulgar letter all of love,
Or caught my hand and pressed it like a hand!
There have been moments, if the sentinel
Lowering his halbert to salute the queen,
Had flung it brutally and clasped my knees,
I would have stooped and kissed him with my soul.
Con. Who could have comprehended?
Queen. Ay, who—who?
Who, no one, Constance, but this one who did.
Not they, not you, not I. Even now perhaps
It comes too late—would you but tell the truth.
Con. I wait to tell it.
Queen. Well, you see, he came,
Outfaced the others, did a work this year
Exceeds in value all was ever done,
You know—it is not I who say it—all
Say it. And so (a second pang and worse)
I grew aware not only of what he did,
But why so wondrously. Oh, never work
Like his was done for work's ignoble sake—
Souls need a finer aim to light and lure!
I felt, I saw, he loved—loved somebody.
And Constance, my dear Constance, do you know,
I did believe this while 'twas you he loved.
Con. Me, madam?
Queen. It did seem to me, your face
Met him where'er he looked: and whom but you
Was such a man to love? It seemed to me,
You saw he loved you, and approved his love,
And both of you were in intelligence.
You could not loiter in that garden, step
Into this balcony, but I straight was stung
And forced to understand. It seemed so true,
So right, so beautiful, so like you both,
That all this work should have been done by him
Not for the vulgar hope of recompense,
But that at last—suppose, some night like this—
Borne on to claim his due reward of me,
He might say 'Give her hand and pay me so.'
And I (O Constance, you shall love me now!)
I thought, surmounting all the bitterness,
—'And he shall have it. I will make her blest,
'My flower of youth, my woman's self that was,
'My happiest woman's self that might have been!
'These two shall have their joy and leave me here.'
Yes—yes!
Con. Thanks!
Queen. And the word was on my lips
When he burst in upon me. I looked to hear
A mere calm statement of his just desire
For payment of his **labour.** When—O heaven,
How can I tell you? lightning on my eyes
And thunder in my ears proved that first word
Which told 'twas love of me, of me, did all—
He loved me—from the first step to the last,
Loved me!
Con. You hardly saw, scarce heard him speak
Of love: what if you should mistake?
Queen. No, no—
No mistake! Ha, there shall be no mistake!

He had not dared to hint the love he felt—
You were my reflex—(how I understood!)
He said you were the ribben I had worn,
He kissed my hand, he looked into my eyes,
And love, love came at end of every phrase.
Love is begun; this much is come to pass:
The rest is easy. Constance, I am yours!
I will learn, I will place my life on you,
Teach me but how to keep what I have won!
Am I so old? This hair was early grey;
But joy ere now has brought hair brown again,
And joy will bring the cheek's red back, I feel.
I could sing once too; that was in my youth.
Still, when men paint me, they declare me . . . yes.
Beautiful—for the last French painter did!
I know they flatter somewhat; you are frank—
I trust you. How I loved you from the first!
Some queens would hardly seek a cousin out
And set her by their side to take the eye:
I must have felt that good would come from you.
I am not generous—like him—like you!
But he is not your lover after all:
It wa s not you he looked at. Saw you him ?
You have not been mistaking words or looks?
He said you were the reflex of myself.
And yet he is not such a paragon
To you, to younger women who may choose
Among a thousand Norberts. Speak the truth!
You know you never named his name to me:
You know, I cannot give him up—ah God,
Not up now, even to you!
Con, Then calm yourself.
Queen. See, I am old—look here, you happy girl!
I will not play the fool, deceive—ah, whom?
Tis all gone: put your cheek beside my cheek
And what a contrast does the moon behold!
But then I set my life upon one chance,
The last chance and the best—am Inot left,
My soul, myself? All women love great men
If young or old; it is in all the tales:
Young beauties love old poets who can love—
Why should not he, the poems in my soul,
The passionate faith, the pride of sacrifice,
Life-long, death-long ? I throw them at his feet.
Who cares to see the fountain's very shape,
Whether it be a Triton's or a Nymph's
That pours the foam, makes rainbows all around ?
You could not praise indeed the empty conch;
But I'll pour floods of love and hide myself.
How I will love him! Cannot men love love?
Who was a queen and loved a poet once
Humpbacked, a dwarf? ah, women can do that!
Well, but men too; at least, they tell you so.
They love so many women in their youth,
And even in age they all love whom they please;
And yet the best of them confide to friends
That 'tis not beauty makes the lasting love—
They spend a day with such and tire the next:
They like soul,—well then, they like phantasy,
Novelty even. Let us confess the truth,
Horrible though it be, that prejudice,
Prescription . . . curses! they will love a queen.
They will, they do: and will not, does not —he?
Con. How can he? You are wedded: 'tis a name
We know, but still a bond. Your rank remains,
His rank remains. How can he, nobly souled
As you believe and I incline to think,
Aspire to be your favourite, shame and all?
Queen. Hear her! There, there now—could she love like me?
What did I say of smooth-cheeked youth and grace?
See all it does or could do! so youth loves!
Oh, tell him, Constance, you could never do
What I will—you, it was not born in! I
Will drive these difficulties far and fast
As yonder mists curdling before the moon.
I'll use my light too, gloriously retrieve
My youth from its enforced calamity,
Dissolve that hateful marriage, and be his,
His own in the eyes alike of God and man.
Con, You will do—dare do . . . pause on what you say!
Queen. Hear her! I thank you, sweet, for that surprise.
You have the fair face: for the soul, see mine!
I have the strong soul: let me teach you, here.
I think I have borne enough and long enough,
And patiently enough, the world remarks,

To have my own way now, unblamed by all.
It does so happen (I rejoice for it)
This most unhoped-for issue cuts the knot.
There's not a better way of settling claims
Than this; God sends the accident express:
And were it for my subjects' good, no more,
'Twere best thus ordered. I am thank Dal now,
Mute, passive, acquiescent. I receive,
And oless God simply, or should almost fear
To walk so smoothly to my ends at last.
Why, how I baffle obstacles, spurn fate!
How strong I am! Could Norbert see me now!
Con. Let me consider. It is all too strange.
Queen. You, Constance, learn of me; do you, like me!
You are young, beautiful: my own, best girl.
You will have many lovers, and love one—
Light hair, not hair like Norbert's, to suit yours:
Taller than he is, since yourself are tall.
Love him, like me! Give all away to him;
Think never of yourself; throw by your pride,
Hope, fear,—your own good as you saw it once,
And love him simply for his very self'.
Remember, I (and what am I to you?)
Would give up all for one, leave throne, lose life,
Do all but just unlove him! He loves me.
Con. He shall.
Queen. You, step inside my inmost heart!
Give me your own heart: let us have one heart!
I'll come to you for counsel:' this he says,
' This he does; what should this amount to, pray?
'Beseech you, change it into current coin!
'Is that worth kisses? Shall I please him there?'
And then we'll speak in turn of you—what else?
Your love, according to your beauty's worth,
For you shall have some noble love, all gold:
Whom choose you ? we will get him at your choice.
—Constance, I leave you. Just a minute since,
I felt as I must die or be alone
Breathing my soul into an ear like yours:
Now, I would face the world with my new fife,
Wear my new crown. I'll walk around the rooms,
And then **come** back and tell you how it feels.
How soon a smile of God can change the world!
How we are made for happiness—how work
Grows play, adversity a winning fight!
True, I have lost so many years: what then!
Many remain: God has been very good.
You, stay here! 'Tis as different from dreams,
From the mind's cold calm estimate of bliss,
As these stone statues from the flesh and blood.
The comfort thou hast caused mankind, God's moon!
[She goes out, leaving CONSTANCE. *Dance-music from within,*

NORBERT *enters.*

Nor. Well? we have but one minute and one word!
Con. I am yours, Norbert!
Nor, Yes, mine.
Con. Not till now!
You were mine. Now I give myself to you.
Nor. Constance?
Con. Your own! I know the thriftier way
Of giving—haply, 'tis the wiser way.
Meaning to give a treasure, I might dole
Coin after coin out (each, as that were all,
With a new largess still at each despair)
And force you keep in sight the deed, preserve
Exhaustless till the end my part and yours,
My giving and your taking; both our joys
Dying together. Is it the wiser way?
I choose the simpler; I give all at once.
Know what you have to trust to, trade upon!
Use it, abuse it,—anything but think
Hereafter, 'Had I known she loved me so,
' And what my means, I might have thriven with it.'
This is your means. I give you all myself.
Nor. I take you and thank God.
Con. Look on through years!
We cannot kiss, a second day like this;
Else were this earth no earth.
Nor. With this day's heat
We shall go on through years of cold.
Con. So, best!
—I try to see those years—I think I see.
You walk quick and new warmth comes; you look back
And lay all to the first glow—not sit down
For ever brooding on a day like this
While seeing embers whiten and love die.
Yes. love lives best in its effect; and mine,
Full in its own life, yearns to live in yours.
Nor. Just so. I take and know you all at once.

Your soul is disengaged so easily,
Your face is there, I know you; give me time,
Let me be proud and think you shall know me.
My soul is slower: in a life I roll
The minute out whereto you condense yours—
The whole slow circle round you I must move,
To be just you. I look to a long life
To decompose this minute, prove its worth.
Tis the sparks' long succession one by one
Shall show you, in the end, what fire was crammed
In that mere stone you struck: how could you know,
If it lay ever unproved in your sight,
As now my heart lies? your own warmth woula hide
Its coldness, were it cold.
Con. But how prove, how?
Nor. Prove in my life, you ask?
Con. Quick, Norbert—how?
Nor. That's easy told. I count life just a stuff
To try the soul's strength on, educe the man.
Who keeps one end in view makes all things serve.
As with the body—he who hurls a lance
Or heaps up stone on stone, shows strength alike:
So must I seize and task all means to prove
And show this soul of mine, you crown as yours,
And justify us both.
Con. Could you write books,
Paint pictures 1 One sits down in poverty
And writes or paints, with pity for the rich.
Nor. And loves one's painting and one's writing} then,
And not one's mistress! All is best, believe,
And we best- *as* no other than we are.
We live, and they experiment on life—
Those poets, painters, all who stand aloof
To overlook the farther. Let us be
The thing they look at! I might lake your face
And write of it and paint it—to what end?
For whom? what pale dictatress in the air
Feeds, smiling sadly, her fine ghost-like form
With earth's real blood and breath, the beauteous life
She makes despised for ever? You are mine,
Made for me, not for others in the world,
Nor yet for that which I should call my art,
The cold calm power to see how fair you look.
I come to you; I leave you not, to write
Or paint. You are, I am: let Rubens there
Paint us!
Con. So, best!
Nor. I understand your soul.
You live, and rightly sympathize with life,
With action, power, success. This way is straight;
And time were short beside, to let me change
The craft my childhood learnt: my craft shall serve.
Men set me here to subjugate, enclose,
Manure their barren fives, and force thence fruit
First for themselves, and afterward for me
In the due tithe; the task of some one soul,
Through ways of work appointed by the world.
I am not bid create—men see no star
Transfiguring my brow to warrant that—
But find and bind and bring to bear their wills.
So I began: to-night sees how I end.
What if it see, too, power's first outbreak here
Amid the warmth, surprise and sympathy,
And instincts of the heart that teach the head?
What if the people have discerned at length
The dawn of the next nature, novel brain
Whose will they venture in the place of theirs,
Whose work, they trust, shall find them as novel ways
To untried heights which yet he only sees ?
I felt it when you kissed me. See this Queen,
This people—in our phrase, this mass of men—
See how the mass lies passive to my hand
Now that my hand is plastic, with you by
To make the muscles iron! Oh, an end
Shall crown this issue as this crowns the first!
My will be on this people! then, the strain,
The grappling of the potter with his clay,
The long uncertain struggle,—the success
And consummation of the spirit-work,
Some vase shaped to the curl of the god's lip,
While rounded fair for human sense to see
The Graces in a dance men recognize
With turbulent applause and laughs of heart!
So triumph ever shall renew itself;
Ever shall end in efforts higher yet,
Ever begin ...
Con. I ever helping?
Nor. Thus!
[As he embraces her, the QUEEN *enters,*

Con. Hist, madam! So have I performed my part.
You see your gratitude's true decency,
Norbert? A little slow in seeing it!
Begin, to end the sooner! What's a kiss?
Nor. Constance?
Con. Why, must I teach *it* you again?
You want a witness to your dulness, sir?
What was I saying these ten minutes long?
Then I repeat—when some young handsome man
Like you has acted out a part like yours,
Is pleased to fall in love with one beyond,
So very far beyond him, as he says—
So hopelessly in love that but to speak
Would prove him mad,—he thinks judiciously,
And makes some insignificant good soul,
Like me, his friend, adviser, confidant,
And very stalking-horse to cover him
In following after what he dares not face.
When his end's gained—(sir, do you understand?)
When she, he dares not face, has loved him first
—May I not say so, madam?—tops his hope,
And overpasses so his wildest dream,
With glad consent of all, and most of her
The confidant who brought the same about—
Why, in the moment when such joy explodes,
I do hold that the merest gentleman
Will not start rudely from the stalking-horse,
Dismiss it with a 'There, enough of you!'
Forget it, show his back unmannerly:
But like a liberal heart will rather turn
And say, 'A tingling time of hope was ours;
'Betwixt the fears and falterings, we two lived
'A chanceful time in waiting for the prize:
'The confidant, the Constance, served not ill.
'And though I shall forget her in due time,
'Her use being answered now, as reason bids,
'Nay as herself bids from her heart of hearts,—
' Still, she has rights, the first thanks go to her,
'The first good praise goes to the prosperous tool,
' And the first—which is the last—rewarding kiss.'
Nor. Constance, it is a dream—ah, see, you smile!
Con. So, now his part being properly performed,
Madam, I turn to you and finish mine
As duly, I do justice in my turn.
Yes, madam, he has loved you—long and well;
He could not hope to tell you so—'twas I
Who served to prove your soul accessible,
I led his thoughts on, drew them to their place
When they had wandered else into despair.
And kept love constant toward its natural aim.
Enough, my part is played; you stoop halfway
And meet us royally and spare our fears:
'Tis like yourself. He thanks you, so do I.
Take him—with my full heart! my work is praised
By what comes of it. Be you happy, both!
Yourself—the only one on earth who can—
Do all for him, much more than a mere heart
Which though warm is not useful in its warmth
As the silk vesture of a queen! fold that
Around him gently, tenderly. For him—
For him,—he knows his own part!
Nor, Have you done?
I take the jest at last. Should I speak now?
Was yours the wager, Constance, foolish child,
Or did you but accept it? Well—at least
You lose by it.
Con. Nay, madam, 'tis your turn!
Restrain him still from speech a little more,
And make him happier as more confident!
Pity him, madam, he is timid yet!
Mark, Norbert! Do not shrink now! Here I yield
My whole right in you to the Queen, observe!
With her go put in practice the great schemes
You teem with, follow the career else closed—
Be all you cannot be except by her!
Behold her!—Madam, say for pity's sake
Anything—frankly say you love him! Else
He'll not believe it: there's more earnest in
His fear than you conceive: I know the man!
Nor. I know the woman somewhat, and confess
I thought she had jested better: she begins
To overcharge her part. I gravely wait
Your pleasure, madam: where is my reward?
Queen. Norbert, this wild girl (whom I recognize
Scarce more than you do, in her fancy-fit,
Eccentric speech and variable mirth,
Not very wise perhaps and somewhat bold,
Yet suitable, the whole night's work being strange)

—May still be right: I may do well to speak
And make authentic what appears a dream
To even myself. For; "What she says, is true:
Yes, Norbert—what you spoke just now of love,
Devotion, stirred no novel sense in me,
But justified a warmth felt long before.
Yes, from the first—I loved you, I shall say:
Strange! but I do grow stronger, now 'tis said.
Your courage helps mine: you did well to speak
To-night, the night that crowns your twelvemonths' toil:
But still I had not waited to discern
Your heart so long, believe me! From the first
The source of so much zeal was almost plain,
In absence even of your own words just now
Which hazarded the truth. 'Tis very strange,
But takes a happy ending—in your love
Which mine meets: be it so! as you chose me,
So I choose you.

Nor. And worthily you choose.
I will not be unworthy your esteem,
No, madam. I do love you; I will meet
Your nature, now I know it. This was well.
I see,—you dare and you are justified:
But none had ventured such experiment,
Less versed than you in nobleness of heart,
Less confident of finding such in me.
Ijoy that thus you test me ere you grant
The dearest richest beauteousest and best
Of women to my arms: 'tis like yourself.
So—back again into my part's set words—
Devotion to the uttermost is yours,
But no, you cannot, madam, even you,
Create in me the love our Constance does.
Or—something truer to the tragic phrase—
Not yon magnolia-bell superb with scent
Invites a certain insect—that's myself—
But the small eye-flower nearer to the ground.
I take this lady.

Con. Stay—not hers, the trap—
Stay, Norbert—that mistake were worst of all!
He is too cunning, madam! It was I,
I, Norbert, who . . .

Nor. You, was it, Constance? Then.
But for the grace of this divinest hour
Which gives me you, I might not pardon here!
I am the Queen's; she only knows my brain:
She may experiment upon my heart
And I instruct her too by the result.
But you, sweet, you who know me, who so long
Have told my heart-beats over, held my life
In those white hands of yours,—it is not well!

Con. Tush! I have said it, did I not say it all?
The life, for her—the heart-beats, for her sake!

Nor. Enough! my cheek grows red, I think. Your test?
There's not the meanest woman in the world,
Not she I least could love in all the world,
Whom, did she love me, had love proved itself,
I dare insult as you insult me now.
Constance, I could say, if it must be said,
'Take back the soul you offer, I keep mine!'
But—'Take the soul still quivering on your hand,
'The soul so offered, which I cannot use,
'And, please you, give it to some playful friend,
'For—what's the trifle he requites me with?'
I, tempt a woman, to amuse a man,
That two may mock her heart if it suc cumb?
No: fearing God and standing 'neath his heaven,
I would not dare insult a woman so,
Were she the meanest woman in the world,
And he, I cared to please, ten emperors!

Con. Norbert!

Nor. I love once as I live but once.
What case is this to think or talk about?
I love you. Would it mend the case at all
If such a step as this killed love in me?
Your part were done: account to God for it!
But mine—could murdered love get up again,
And kneel to whom you please to de-signate,
And make you mirth? It is too horrible.
You did not know this, Constance? now you know
That body and soul have each one life, but one:
And here's my love, here, living, at your feet.

Con. See the Queen! Norbert—this one more last word—
If thus you have taken jest for earnest—thus
Loved me in earnest.. .

Nor. Ah, no jest holds here!

Where is the laughter in which jests break up,
And what this horror that grows palpable?
Madam—why grasp you thus the balcony?
Have I done ill? Have I not spoken truth?
How could I other? Was it not your test,
To try me, what my love for Constance meant?
Madam, your royal soul itself approves,
The first, that I should choose thus! so one takes
A beggar,—asks him, what would buy his child?
And then approves the expected laugh of scorn
Returned as something noble from the rags.
Speak, Constance, I'm the beggar! Ha, what's this?
You two glare each at each like panthers now.
Constance, the world fades; only you stand there!
You did not, in to-night's wild whirl of things,
Sell me—your soul of souls, for any price?
No—no—'tis easy to believe in you!
Was it your love's mad trial to o'ertop
Mine by this vain self-sacrifice? well, still-
Though I might curse, I love you. I am love
And cannot change: love's self is at your feet!

[The QUEEN goes out.

Con. Feel my heart; let it die against your own!
Nor. Against my own. Explain not; let this be!
This is life's height.
Con. Yours, yours, yours!
Nor. You and I—
Why care by what meanders we are here
I' the centre of the labyrinth? Men have died
Trying to find this place, which we have found.
Con. Found, found!
Nor. Sweet, never fear what she can do!
We are past harm now.
Con. On the breast of God.
I thought of men—as if you were a man.
Tempting him with a crown!
Nor. This must end here:
It is too perfect.
Con. There's the music stopped.
What measured heavy tread? It is one blaze
About me and within me.
Nor. Oh, some death
Will run its sudden finger round this spark
And sever us from the rest!
Con. And so do well.
Now the doors open.
Nor. 'Tis the guard comes.
Con. Kiss!

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

1864

JAMES LEE'S WIFE

I

JAMES LEE'S WIFE SPEAKS AT THE WINDOW

I

A H, Love, but a day
And the world has changed!
The sun's away,
And the bird estranged;
The wind has dropped,
And the sky's deranged:
Summer has stopped.

II

Look in my eyes!
Wilt thou change too?
Should I fear surprise?
Shall I find aught new
In the old and dear,
In the good and true,
With the changing year?

III

Thou art a man.
But I am thy love.
For the lake, its swan;
For the dell, its dove;
And for thee—(oh, haste!)
Me, to bend above,
Me, to hold embraced.

II

BY THE FIRESIDE

Is all our fire of shipwreck wood,
Oak and pine?
Oh, for the ills half-understood,
The dim dead woe
Long ago
Befallen this bitter coast of France!
Well, poor sailors took their chance;
I take mine.

A ruddy shaft our fire must shoot
O'er the sea:
Do sailors eye the casement—mute,
Drenched and stark,
From their bark—
And envy, gnash their teeth for hate
O' the warm safe house and happy freight
—Thee and me?

God help you, sailors, at your need!
Spare the curse!
For some ships, safe in port indeed,
Rot and rust,
Run to dust,
All through worms i' the wood, which crept,
Gnawed our hearts out while we slept:
That is worse.

Who lived here before us two?
Old-world pairs.
Did a woman ever—would I knew!—
Watch the man
With whom began
Love's voyage full-sail,—(now, gnash your teeth!)
When planks start, open hell beneath
Unawares?

III

IN THE DOORWAY

THE swallow has set her six young on the rail,
And looks sea-ward:
The water's in stripes like a snake, olive-pale
To the leeward,—
On the weather-side, black, spotted white with the wind.
'Good fortune departs, and disaster's behind,'--
Hark, the wind with its wants and its infinite wail!

Our fig-tree, that leaned for the saltness, has furled
Her five fingers,
Each leaf like a hand opened wide to the world
Where there lingers
No glint of the gold, Summer sent for her sake:
How the vines writhe in rows, each impaled on its stake!
My heart shrivels up and my spirit shrinks curled.

Yet here are we two; we have love, house enough.
With the field there,
This house of four rooms, that field red and rough,
Though it yield there,
For the rabbit that robs, scarce a blade or a bent;
If a magpie alight now, it seems an event;
And they both will be gone at November's rebuff.

Iv

But why must cold spread? but wherefore bring change
To the spirit,
God meant should mate his with an infinite range,
And inherit
His power to put life in the darkness and cold?
Oh, live and love worthily, bear and be bold!
Whom Summer made friends of, let Winter estrange!

IV

ALONG HIE BEACH

I

I WILL be quiet and talk with you,
And reason why you are wrong.
You wanted my love—is that much true?
And so I did love, so I do:
What has come of it all along?

I took you—how could I otherwise?
For a world to me, and more;
For all, love greatens and glorifies
Till God's a-glow, to the loving eyes,
In what was mere earth before.

III

Yes, earth—yes, mere ignoble earth!
Now do I mis-state, mistake?
Do I wrong your weakness and call it worth?
Expect all harvest, dread no dearth,
Seal my sense up for your sake?

Oh, Love, Love, no, Love! not so, indeed!
You were just weak earth, I knew:
With much in you waste, with many a weed,
And plenty of passions run to seed,
But a little good grain too.

v

And such as you were, I took you for mine:
Did not you find me yours,
To watch the olive and wait the vine,
And wonder when rivers of oil and wine
Would flow, as the Book assures?

VI

Well, and if none of these good things came.
What did the failure prove?
The man was my whole world, all the same,
With his flowers to praise or his weeds to blame,
And, either or both, to love.

vII

Yet this turns now to a fault—there! there!
That I do love, watch too long,
And wait too well, and weary and wear;
And 'tis all an old story, and my despair
Fit subject for some new song:

How the light, light love, he has wings to fly
'At suspicion of a bond:
'My wisdom has bidden your pleasure good-bye,
* Which will turn up next in a laughing eye,
'And why should you look beyond?'

V

ON THE CLIFF

I

I LEANED on the turf,
I looked at a rock
Left dry by the surf;
For the turf, to call it grass were to mock:
Dead to the roots, so deep was done
The work of the summer sun.

And the rock lay flat
As an anvil's face:
No iron like that I
Baked dry; of a weed, of a shell, no trace:
Sunshine outside, but ice at the core,
Death's altar by the lone shore.

III

On the turf, sprang gay
With his films of blue,
No cricket, I'll say,
But a warhorse, barded and chanfroned too,
The gift of a quixote-mage to his knight,
Real fairy, with wings all right.

IV

On the rock, they scorch
Like a drop of fire
From a brandished torch,
Fall two red fans of a butterfly:
No turf, no rock: in their ugly stead,
See, wonderful blue and red!

V

Is it not so
With the minds of men?
The level and low,
The burnt and bare, in themselves; but then
With such a blue and red grace, not theirs,—
Love settling unawares!

VI

READING A BOOK, UNDER THE CLIFF

'STILL ailing, Wind? Wilt be appeased or no?
'Which needs the other's office, thou or I?
'Dost want to be disburdened of a woe,
'And can, in truth, my voice untie
'Its links, and let it go?

'Art thou a dumb wronged thing that would be righted,
'Entrusting thus thy cause to me? Forbear!
'No tongue can mend such pleadings; faith, requited
'With falsehood,—love, at last aware
'Of scorn,—hopes, early blighted,—

III

'We have them; but I know not any tone
'So fit as thine to falter forth a sorrow:
'Dost think men would go mad without a moan,
'If they knew any way to borrow
'A pathos like thy own?

IV

'Which sigh wouldst mock, of all the sighs? The one
'So long escaping from lips starved and blue,
'That lasts while on her pallet-bed the nun
'Stretches her length; her foot comes through
'The straw she shivers on;

'You had not thought she was so tall: and spent,
'Her shrunk lids open, her lean fingers shut
'Close, close, their sharp and livid nails indent
'The clammy palm; then all is mute:
'That way, the spirit went.

VI

"Or wouidst *thou* rather that I understand
'Thy will to help me?—like the dog I found
'Once, pacing sad this solitary strand,
'Who would not take my food, poor hound,
'But whined and licked my hand.'

vII

All this, and more, comes from some young man's pride
Of power to see,—in failure and mistake,
Relinquishment, disgrace, on every side,—
Merely examples for his sake,
Helps to his path untried:

vIII

Instances he must—simply recognize?
Oh, more than so!—must, with a learner's zeal,
Make doubly prominent, twice emphasize,
By added touches that reveal
The god in babe's disguise.

IX

Oh, he knows what defeat means, and the rest!
Himself the undefeated that shall be:
Failure, disgrace, he flings them you to test,—
His triumph, in eternity
Too plainly manifest!

x

Whence, judge if he learn forthwith what the wind
Means in its moaning—by the happy prompt
Instinctive way of youth, I mean; for kind
Calm years, exacting their accompt
Of pain, mature the mind:

XI

And some midsummer morning, at the lull,
Just about daybreak, as he looks across
A sparkling foreign country, wonderful
To the sea's edge for gloom and gloss,
Next minute must annul,—

XII

Then, when the wind begins among the vines,
So low, so low, what shall it say but this?
'Here is the change beginning, here the lines
'Circumscribe beauty, set to bliss
'The limit time assigns.'

xIII

Nothing can be as *it* has been before;
Better, so call it, only not the same.
To draw one beauty into our hearts' core,
And keep it changeless! such our claim;
So answered,—Never more!

XIV

Simple? Why this is the old woe o' the world;
Tune, to whose rise and fall we live and die.
Rise with it, then! Rejoice that man is hurled
From change to change unceasingly,
His soul's wings never furled!

XV

That's a new question; still replies the fact,
Nothing endures: the wind moans, saying so;
We moan in acquiescence: there's life's pact,
Perhaps probation—do I know?
God does: endure his act I

XVI

Only, for man, how bitter not to grave
On his soul's hands' palms one fair good wise thing
Just as he grasped it ! For himself, death's wave;
While time first washes—ah, thesting!—
O'er all he'd sink to save.

vII

AMONG THE ROCKS

I

O H , good gigantic smile o' the brown old earth,
This autumn morning! How he sets his bones
To bask i' the sun, and thrusts out knees and feet
For the ripple to run over in its mirth;
Listening the while, where on the heap of stones
The white breast of the sea-lark twitters sweet.

II

That is the doctrine, simple, ancient, true;
Such is life's trial, as old earth smiles and knows.
If you loved only what were worth your love,
Love were clear gain, and wholly well for you:
Make the low nature better by your throes!
Give earth yourself, go up for gain above!

VIII

BESIDE THE DRAWING BOARD

'As like as a Hand to another Hand!'
Whoever said that foolish thing,
Could not have studied to understand
The counsels of God in fashioning,
Out of the infinite love of his heart,
This Hand, whose beauty I praise, apart
From the world of wonder left to praise,
If I tried to learn the other ways
Of love in its skill, or love in its power.
[1]As like as a Hand to another Hand':
Who said that, never took his stand,
Found and followed, like me, an hour,
The beauty in this,—how free, how fine
To fear, almost,—of the limit-line!
As I looked at this, and learned and drew,
Drew and learned, and looked again,
While fast the happy minutes flew,
Its beauty mounted into my brain,
And a fancy seized me; I was fain
To efface my work, begin anew,
Kiss what before I only drew;
Ay, laying the red chalk 'twixt my lips,
With soul to help if the mere lips failed,
I kissed all right where the drawing ailed,
Kissed fast the grace that somehow slips
Still from one's soulless finger-tips.

'Tis a clay cast, the perfect thing,
From Hand live once, dead long ago:
Princess-like it wears the ring
To fancy's eye, by which we know
That here at length a master found
His match, a proud lone soul its mate,
As soaring genius sank to ground,
And pencil could not emulate
The beauty in this,—how free, how fine
To fear almost!—of the limit-line.
Long ago the god, like me
The worm, learned, each in our degree:
Looked and loved, learned and drew,
Drew and learned and loved again,
While fast the happy minutes flew,
Till beauty mounted into his brain
And on the finger which outvied
His art he placed the ring that's there,
Still by fancy s eye descried,
In token of a marriage rare:
For him on earth, his art's despair,
For him in heaven, nis soul's fit bride.

III

Little girl with the poor coarse hand
I turned from to a cold clay cast—
I have my lesson, understand
The worth of flesh and blood at last.
Nothing but beauty in a Hand?
Because he could not change the hue,
Mend the lines and make them true
To this which met his soul's demand,—
Would Da Vinci turn from you?
I hear him laugh my woes to scorn—
'The fool forsooth is all forlorn
'Because the beauty, she thinks best,
'Lived long ago or was never born,—
[1]Because no beauty bears the test
'In this rough peasant Hand! Confessed!
'"Art is null and study void!"
'So sayest thou? So said not I,
*Who threw the faulty pencil by,
'And years instead of hours employed,
'Learning the veritable use
'Of flesh and bone and nerve beneath
'Lines and hue of the outer sheath,
'If haply I might reproduce
'One motive of the powers profuse,
'Flesh and bone and nerve that make
'The poorest coarsest human hand
•An object worthy to be scanned
'A whole life long for their sole sake.
'Shall earth and the cramped moment* space
'Yield the heavenly crowning grace?
'Now the parts and then the whoie!
'Who art thou, with stinted soul
'And stunted body, thus to cry
"'I love,—shall that be life's strain dole?
'"I must live beloved or die!"
•This peasant hand that spins the wool
'And bakes the bread, why lives it on,
'Poor and coarse with beauty gone,—
'What use survives the beauty?' Fool!

Go, little girl with the poor coarse hand!
I have my lesson, shall understand.

DC

ON DECK

THERE is nothing to remember in me,
Nothing I ever said with a grace,
Nothing I did that you care to see,
Nothing I was that deserves a place
In your mind, now I leave you, set you free.

II

Conceded! In turn, concede to me,
Such things have been as a mutual flame.
Your soul's locked fast; but, love for a key
You might let it loose, till I grew the same
In your eyes, as in mine you stand: strange plea!

III

For then, then, what would it matter to me
That I was the harsh ill-favoured one?

We both should be like as pea and pea;
It was ever .so since the world begun:
So, let me proceed with my reverie.

IV

How strange it were if you had all me,
As I have all you in my heart and brain,
You, whose least word brought gloom or glee,
Who never lifted the hand in vain—
Will hold mine yet, from over the sea!

v

Strange, if a face, when you thought of me,
Rose like your own face present now,
With eyes as dear in their due degree,
Much such a mouth, and as bright a brow,
Till you saw yourself, while you cried' Tis She!'

VI

Well, you may, you must set down to me
Love that was life, life that was love;
A tenure of breath at your lips' decree,
A passion to stand as your thoughts approve,
A rapture to fall where your foot might be.

vII

But did one touch of such love for me
Come in a word or a look of yours,
Whose words and looks will, circling, flee
Round me and round while life endures,—
Could I fancy 'As I feel, thus feels he';

vIII

Why, fade you might to a thing like me,
And your hair grow these coarse hanks of hair,
Your skin, this bark of a gnarled tree,—
You might turn myself!—should I know or care
When I should be dead of joy, James Lee?

GOLD HAIR:

A STORY OF PORNIC

I

OH, the beautiful girl, too white,
Who lived at Pornic, down by the sea,
Just where the sea and the Loire unite!
And a boasted name in Brittany
She bore, which I will not write.

II

Too white, for the flower of life is red;
Her flesh was the soft seraphic screen
Of a soul that is meant (her parents said)
To just see earth, and hardly be seen,
And blossom in heaven instead.

III

Yet earth saw one thing, one how fair!
One grace that grew to its full on earth:
Smiles might be sparse on her cheek so spare,
And her waist want half a girdle's girth,
But she had her great gold hair.

Hair, such a wonder of flix and floss,
Freshness and fragrance—floods of it, too!
Gold, did I say? Nay, gold's mere dross:
Here, Life smiled, 'Think what I meant to do!'
And Love sighed, 'Fancy my loss!'

So, when she died, it was scarce more strange
Than that, when delicate evening dies,
And you follow its spent sun's pallid range,
There's a shoot of colour startles the skies
With sudden, violent change,—

VI

That, while the breath was nearly to seek,
As they put the little cross to her lips,
She changed; a spot came out on her cheek,
A spark from her eye in mid-eclipse,
And she broke forth, 'I must speak!'

'Not my hair!' made the girl her moan—
'All the rest is gone or to go;
'But the last, last grace, my all, my own,
'Let it stay in the grave, that the ghosts may know!
'Leave my poor gold hair alone!'

vIII

The passion thus vented, dead lay she;
Her parents sobbed their worst on that;
All friends joined in, nor observed degree:
For indeed the hair was to wonder at,
As it spread—not flowing free,

DC

But curled around her brow, like a crown,
And coiled beside her cheeks, like a cap,
And calmed about her neck—ay, down
To her breast, pressed flat, without a gap
I' the gold, it reached her gown.

All kissed that face, like a silver wedge
'Mid the yellow wealth, nor disturbed its hair:
E'en the priest allowed death's privilege,
As he planted the crucifix with care
On her breast, 'twixt edge and edge.

xI

And thus was she buried, inviolate
Of body and soul, in the very space

By the altar; keeping saintly state
In Pornic church, for her pride of race,
Pure life and piteous fate.

And in after-time would your fresh tear fall,
Though your mouth might twitch with a dubious smile,
As they told you of gold, both robe and pall,
How she prayed them leave it alone awhile,
So it never was touched at all.

XIII

Years flew; this legend grew at last
The life of the lady; all she had done,
All been, in the memories fading fast
Of lover and friend, was summed in one
Sentence survivors passed:

To wit, she was meant for heaven, not earth;
Had turned an angel before the time:
Yet, since she was mortal, in such dearth
Of frailty, all you could count a crime
Was—she knew her gold hair's worth.

XV

At little pleasant Pornic church,
It chanced, the pavement wanted repair,
Was taken to pieces: left in the lurch,
A certain sacred space lay bare,
And the boys began research.

XVI

'Twas the space where our sires would lay a saint,
A benefactor,—a bishop, suppose,
A baron with armour-adornments quaint.
Dame with chased ring and jewelled rose,
Things sanctity saves from taint;

So we come to find them in after-days
When the corpse is presumed to have done with gauds
Of use to the living, in many ways:
For the boys get pelf, and the town applauds,
And the church deserves the praise.

They grubbed with a will: and at length—*O cor*
Humanum, pectora cœca, and the rest!—
They found—no gaud they were prying for,
No ring, no rose, but—who would have guessed?—
A double Louis-d'or!

Here was a case for the priest: he heard,
Marked, inwardly digested, laid
Finger on nose, smiled, 'There's a bird
• Chirps in my ear': then, * Bring a spade,
'Dig deeper!'—he gave the word.

And lo, when they came to the coffin-lid,
Or rotten planks which composed it once,
Why, there lay the girl's skull wedged amid
A mint of money, it served for the nonce
To hold in its hair-heaps hid!

XXI

Hid there? Why? Could the girl be wont
(She the stainless soul) to treasure up
Money, earth's trash and heaven's affront?
Had a spider found out the communion-cup,
Was a toad in the christening-font?

xxII

Truth is truth: too true it was.
Gold! She hoarded and hugged it first,
Longed for it, leaned o'er it, loved *it*—alas—
Till the humour grew to a head and burst,
And she cried, at the final pass,—

xxIII

'Talk not of God, my heart is stone!
'Nor lover nor friend—be gold for both!
'Gold I lack; and, my all, my own,
'It shall hide in my hair. I scarce die loth
'If they let my hair alone!'

XXIV

Louis-d'or, some six times five,
And duly double, every piece.
Now do you see? With the priest to shrive,
With parents preventing her soul's release
By kisses that kept alive,—

XXV

With heaven's gold gates about to ope,
With friends' praise, gold-like, lingering still,
An instinct had bidden the girl's hand grope
For gold, the true sort—'Gold in heaven, if you will;
'But I keep earth's too, I hope.'

Enough! The priest took the grave's grim yield:
The parents, they eyed that price of sin
As if *thirty pieces* lay revealed
On the place *to bury strangers in,*
The hideous Potter's Field.

But the priest bethought him: '"Milk that's spilt"
—You know the adage! Watch and pray!
'Saints tumble to earth with so slight a tilt!
'It would build a new altar; that, we may!'
And the altar therewith was built.

Why I deliver this horrible verse ?
As the text of the sermon, which now I preach:
Evil or good may be better or worse
In the human heart, but the mixture of each
Is a marvel and a curse.

XXIX

The candid incline to surmise of late
That the Christian faith proves false, I find;
For our Essays-and-Reviews' debate
Begins to tell on the public mind,
And Colenso's words have weight:

XXX

I still, to suppose it true, for my part,
See reasons and reasons; this, to begin:
'Tis the faith that launched point-blank her dart
At the head of a lie—taught Original Sin,
The Corruption of Man's Heart.

THE WORST OF IT

WOULD *it* were I had been false, not you!
I that am nothing, not you that are all:
I, never the worse for a touch or two
On my speckled hide; not you, the pride
Of the day, my swan, that a first fleck's fall
On her wonder of white must unswan, undo!

II

I had dipped in life's struggle and, out again,
Bore specks of it here, there, easy to see,
When I found my swan and the cure was plain;
The dull turned bright as I caught your white
On my bosom: you saved me—saved in vain
If you ruined yourself, and all through me!

III

Yes, all through the speckled beast that I am,
Who taught you to stoop; you gave me yourself,
And bound your soul by the vows that damn:
Since on better thought you break, as you ought,
Vows—words, no angel set down, some elf
Mistook,—for an oath, an epigram!

Yes, might I judge you, here were my heart,
And a hundred its like, to treat as you pleased!
I choose to be yours, for my proper part,
Yours, leave or take, or mar me or make;
If I acquiesce, why should you be teased
With the conscience-prick and the memory-smart?

But what will God say? Oh, my sweet.
Think, and be sorry you did this thing
Though earth were unworthy to feel your feet,
There's a heaven above may deserve your love:
Should you forfeit heaven for a snapt gold ring
And a promise broke, were it just or meet?

VI

And I to have tempted you! I, who tired
Your soul, no doubt, till it sank! Unwise,
I loved and was lowly, loved and aspired,
Loved, grieving or glad, till I made you mad,
And you meant to have hated and despised—
Whereas, you deceived me nor inquired!

vII

She, ruined? How? No heaven for her?
Crowns to give, and none for the brow
That looked like marble and smelt like myrrh?
Shall the robe be worn, and the palm-branch borne,
And she go graceless, she graced now
Beyond all saints, as themselves aver?

Hardly! That must be understood!
The earth is your place of penance, then;
And what will it prove? I desire your good,
But, plot as I may, I can find no way
How a blow should fall, such as falls on men,
Nor prove too much for your womanhood.

Ix

It will come, I suspect, at the end of life,
When you walk alone, and review the past;

And I, who so long shall have done with strife,
And journeyed my stage and earned my wage
And retired as was right,—I am called at last
When the devil stabs you, to lend the knife.

x

He stabs for the minute of trivial wrong,
Nor the other hours are able to save,
The happy, that lasted my whole life long:
For a promise broke, not for first words spoke,
The true, the only, that turn my grave
To a blaze of joy and a crash of song.

XI

Witness beforehand! Off I trip
On a safe path gay through the flowers you flung:
My very name made great by your lip,
And my heart a-glow with the good I know
Of a perfect year when we both were young,
And I tasted the angels' fellowship.

And witness, moreover... Ah, but wait!
I spy the loop whence an arrow shoots!
It may be for yourself, when you meditate,
That you grieve—for slam ruth, murdered truth.
' Though falsehood escape in the end, what boots?
'How truth would have triumphed!'—you sigh too late.

xin

Ay, who would have triumphed like you, I say!
Well, it is lost now; well, you must bear,
Abide and grow fit for a better day:
You should hardly grudge, could I be your judge!
But hush! For you, can be no despair:
There's amends: 'tis a secret: hope and pray!

xIv

For I was true at least—oh, true enough!
And, Dear, truth is not as good as it seems!
Commend me to conscience! Idle stuff!
Much help is in mine, as I mope and pine.
And skulk through day, and scowl in my dreams
At my swan's obtaining the crow's rebuff.

xv

Men tell me of truth now—' False!' I cry:
Of beauty—'A mask, friend! Look beneath!'
We take our own method, the devil and I.
With pleasant and fair and wise and rare:
And the best we wish to what lives, is—death;
Which even in wishing, perhaps we lie!

XVI

Far better commit a fault and have done—
As you, Dear 1—for ever; and choose the pure,
And look where the healing waters run,
And strive and strain to be good again,
And a place in the other world ensure,
All glass and gold, with God for its sun.

xvII

Misery! What shall I say or do?
I cannot advise, or, at least, persuade:
Most like, you are glad you deceived me—rue
No whit of the wrong: you endured too long,
Have done no evil and want no aid,
Will live the old life out and chance the new.

xvIII

And your sentence is written all the same,
And I can do nothing,—pray, perhaps:
But somehow the world pursues its fame,—
I pray, if I curse,—for better or worse:
And my faith is torn to a thousand scraps,
And my heart feels ice while my words breathe flame.

XIX

Dear, I look from my hiding-place.
Are you still so fair? Have you still the eyes?
Be happy! Add but the other grace,
Be good! Why want what the angels vaunt?
I knew you once: but in Paradise,
If we meet, I will pass nor turn my face.

DIS ALITER VISUM; OR, LE BYRON DE NOS JOURS

I

STOP, let me have the truth of that!
Is that all true? I say. the day
Ten years ago when both of us
Met on a morning, friends—as thus
We meet this evening, friends or what?—

II

Did you—because I took your arm
And sillily smiled, 'A mass of brass
'That sea looks, blazing underneath!
While up the cliff-road edged with heath,
We took the turns nor came to harm—

III

Did you consider 'Now makes twice
'That I have seen her, walked and talked
'With this poor pretty thoughtful thing,
'Whose worth I weigh: she tries to sing;
'Draws, hopes in time the eye grows nice;

IV

'Reads verse and thinks she understands;
'Loves all, at any rate, that's great,
'Good, beautiful; but much as we
Down at the bath-house love the sea,
'Who breathe its salt and bruise its sands:

'While ... do but follow the fishing-gull
'That flaps and floats from wave to cave!
'There's the sea-lover, fair my friend!
'What then? Be patient, mark and mend!
'Had you the making of your scull?'

And did you, when we faced the church
With spire and sad slate roof, aloof
From human fellowship so far,
Where a few graveyard crosses are,
And garlands for the swallows' perch,—

vII

Did you determine, as we stepped
O'er the lone stone fence, 'Let me get
'Her for myself, and what's the earth
'With all its art, verse, music, worth—
'Compared with love, found, gained, and kept?

vIII

'Schumann's our music-maker now;
'Has his march-movement youth and mouth?
'Ingres's the modern man that paints;
'Which will lean on me, of his saints?
'Heine for songs; for kisses, how?'

Ix

And did you, when we entered, reached
The votive frigate, soft aloft
Riding on air this hundred years.
Safe-smiling at old hopes and fears,—
Did you draw profit while she preached?

Resolving, 'Fools we wise men grow!
'Yes, I could easily blurt out curt
'Some question that might find reply
'As prompt in her stopped lips, dropped eye,
'And rush of red to cheek and brow:

XI

'Thus were a match made, sure and fast,
''Mid the blue weed-flowers round the mound
'Where, issuing, we shall stand and stay
'For one more look at baths and bay,
'Sands, sea-gulls, and the old church last—

'A match 'twixt me, bent, wigged and lamed,
'Famous, however, for verse and worse,
'Sure of the Fortieth spare Arm-chair
'WTien gout and glory seat me there,
'So, one whose love-freaks pass unblamed,—

xIII

'And this young beauty, round and sound
'As a mountain-apple, youth and truth
'With loves and doves, at all events
'With money in the Three per Cents;
'Whose choice of me would seem profound:—

XIV

'She might take me as I take her.
'Perfect the hour would pass, alas!
'Climb high, love high, what matter? Still,
'Feet, feelings, must descend the hill:
'An hour's perfection can't recur.

'Then follows Paris and full time
'For both to reason: "Thus with us!"
'She'll sigh, "Thus girls give body and soul
'"At first word, think they gain the goal,
'" When 'tis the starting-place they climb!

XVI

'" My friend makes verse and gets renown;
'"Have they all fifty years, his peers?
'"He knows the world, firm, quiet and gay;
'"Boys will become as much one day:
'" They re fools; he cheats, with beard less brown.

xvII

'"For boys say, *Love me or I die!*
'"He did not say, *The truth is, youth*
'"J *want, who am old and know too much;*
'"I'd catch youth: lend me sight and touch!
'"Drop heart's blood where life's wheels grate dry!'

xvIII

'While I should make rejoinder'—(then
It was, no doubt, you ceased that least
Light pressure of my arm in yours)
'"I can conceive of cheaper cures
"'For a yawning-fit o'er books and men.

XIX

'"What? All I am, was, and might be,
'"All, books taught, art brought, life's whole strife,

'"Painful results since precious, just
'"Were fitly exchanged, in wise disgust,
'" For two cheeks freshened by youth and sea?

XX

"'All for a nosegay!—what came first;
'"With fields on flower, untried each side;
'" Irally, need my books and men,
'"And find a nosegay": drop it, then,
'No match yet made for best or worst!'

That ended me. You judged the porch
We left by, Norman; took our look
At sea and sky; wondered so few
Find out the place for air and view;
Remarked the sun began to scorch;

Descended, soon regained the baths,
And then, good-bye! Years ten since then:
Ten years! We meet: you tell me, now,
By a window-seat for that cliff-brow,
On carpet-stripes for those sand-paths.

xxIII

Now I may speak: you fool, for all
Your lore! WHO made things plain in vain?
What was the sea for? What, the grey
Sad church, that solitary day,
Crosses and graves and swallows' call?

xxIv

Was there nought better than to enjoy?
No feat which, done, would make time break,
And let us pent-up creatures through
Into eternity, our due?
No forcing earth teach heaven's employ?

xxv

No wise beginning, here and now,
What cannot grow complete (earth's feat)
And heaven must finish, there and then?
No tasting earth's true food for men,
Its sweet in sad, its sad in sweet?

XXVI

No grasping at love, gaining a share
O' the sole spark from God's life at strife
With death, so, sure of range above
The limits here? For us and love,
Failure; but, when God fails, despair.

xxvn

This you call wisdom? Thus you add
Good unto good again, in vain?
You loved, with body worn and weak;
I loved, with faculties to seek:
Were both loves worthless since ill-clad?

xxvIII

Let the mere star-fish in his vault
Crawl in a wash of weed, indeed,
Rose-jacynth to the finger-tips:
He, whole in body and soul, outstrips
Man, found with either in default.

XXIX

But what's whole, can increase no more,
Is dwarfed and dies, since here's its sphere.
The devil laughed at you in his sleeve!
You knew not? That I well believe;
Or you had saved two souls: nay, four.

For Stephanie sprained last night her wrist,
Ankle or something. 'Pooh,'cry you?
At any rate she danced, all say,
Vilely; her vogue has had its day.
Here comes my husband from his whist.

TOO LATE

I

HERE was I with my arm and heart
And brain, all yours for a word, a want
Put into a look—just a look, your part,—
While mine, to repay it... vainest vaunt,
Were the woman, that's dead, alive to hear,
Had her lover, that's lost, love's proof to show!
But I cannot show it; you cannot speak
From the churchyard neither, miles removed,
Though I feel by a pulse within my cheek,
Which stabs and stops, that the woman I loved
Needs help in her grave and finds none near,
Wants warmth from the heart which sends it—so!

II

Did I speak once angrily, all the drear days
You lived, you woman I loved so well,
Who married the other? Blame or praise,
Where was the use then? Time would tell,
And the end declare what man for you,
What woman for me, was the choice of God.
But, Edith dead! no doubting more!
I used to sit and look at my life
As it rippled and ran till, right before,
A great stone stopped it: oh, the strife
Of waves at the stone some devil threw
In my life's midcurrent, thwarting God!

III

But either I thought,' They may churn and chide
'Awhile, my waves which came for their joy

And found this horrible stone full-tide:
'Yet I se&iust-a-thrsad escape, deploy
'Through the evening-country, silent and safe,
'And it suffers no more till it finds the sea.'
Or else I would think,' Perhaps some night
'When new things happen, a meteor-ball
'May slip through the sky in a line of light,
'And earth breathe hard, and land-marks fall,
'And my waves no longer champ nor chafe,
'Since a stone will have rolled from its place: let be!'

IV

But, dead! All's done with: wait who may,
Watch and wear and wonder who will.
Oh, my whole life that ends to-day!
Oh, my soul's sentence, sounding still,
'The woman is dead that was none of his;
'And the man that was none of hers may go!'
There's only the past left: worry that!
Wreak, like a bull, on the empty coat,
Rage, its late wearer is laughing at!
Tear the collar to rags, having missed his throat;
Strike stupidly on—'This, this and this,
'Where I would that a bosom received the blow!'

v

I ought to have done more: once my speech,
And once your answer, and there, the end,
And Edith was henceforth out of reach!
Why, men do more to deserve a friend,
Be rid of a foe, get rich, grow wise.
Nor, folding their arms, stare fate in the face.
Why, better even have burst like a thief
And borne you away to a rock for us two,
In a moment's horror, bright, bloody and brief:
Then changed to myself again—'I slew
'Myself in that moment; a ruffian lies
'Somewhere: your slave, see, born in his place!'

VI

What did the other do? You be judge!
Look at us, Edith! Here are we both!
Give him his six whole years: I grudge
None of the life with you, nay, loathe
Myself that I grudged his start in advance
Of me who could overtake and pass.
But, as if he loved you! No, not he.
Nor anyone else in the world, 'tis plain:
Who ever heard that another, free
As I, young, prosperous, sound and sane,
Poured life out, proffered it—'Half a glance
'Of those eyes of yours and I drop the glass!'

vII

Handsome, were you ? 'Tis more than they held,
More than they said; I was 'ware and watched:
I was the 'scapegrace, this rat belled
The cat. this fool got his whiskers scratched:
The others? No head that was turned, no heart
Broken, my lady, assure yourself!
Each soon made his mind up; so and so
Married a dancer, such and such
Stole his friend's wife, stagnated slow,
Or maundered, unable to do as much,
And muttered of peace where he had no part:
While, hid in the closet, laid on the shelf,-

On the whole, you were let alone, I think!
So, you looked to the other, who acquiesced;
My rival, the proud man,—prize your pink
Of poets! A poet he was! I've guessed:
He rhymed you his rubbish nobody read,
Loved you and doved you—did not I laugh!
There was a prize! But we both were tried.
Oh, heart of mine, marked broad with her mark,
Tekel, found wanting, set aside,
Scorned! See, I bleed these tears in the dark
Till comfort come and the last be bled:
He? He is tagging your epitaph,

Ix

If it would only come over again!
—Time to be patient with me, and probe
This heart till you punctured the proper vein,
Just to learn what blood is: twitch the robe
From that blank lay-figure your fancy draped,
Prick the leathern heart till the—verses spirt!
And late it was easy; late, you walked
Where a friend might meet you; Edith's name
Arose to one's lip if one laughed or talked;
If I heard good news, you heard the same;
When I woke, I knew that your breath escaped;
I could bide my time, keep alive, alert

And alive I shall keep and long, you will see!
I knew a man, was kicked like a dog
From gutter to cesspool: what cared he
So long as he picked from the filth his prog?
He saw youth, beauty and genius die,
And jollily lived to his hundredth year.
But I will live otherwise: none of such life!
At once I begin as I mean to end.
Go on with the world, get hold in its strife,
Give your spouse the slip and betray your friend!
There are two who decline, a woman and I,
And enjoy our death in the darkness here.

XI

I liked that way you had with your curls
Wound to a ball in a net behind:
Your cheek was chaste as a quaker-girl's,
And your mouth—there was never, to my mind,
Such a funny mouth, for it would not shut;
And the dented chin too—what a chin!
There were certain ways when you spoke, some words
That you know you never could pronounce:
You were thin, however; like a bird's
Your hand seemed—some would say, the pounce
Of a scaly-footed hawk—all but!
The world was right when it called you thin.

XII

But I turn my back on the world: I take
Your hand, and kneel, and lay to my lips.
Bid me live, Edith! Let me slake
Thirst at your presence! Fear no slips:
'Tis your slave shall pay, while his soul endures,
Full due, love's whole debt, *summumjus.*
My queen shall have high observance, planned
Courtship made perfect, no least line
Crossed without warrant. There you stand,
Warm too, and white too: would this wine
Had washed all over that body of yours,
Ere I drank it, and you down with it, thus!

ABT VOGLER

(AFTER HE HAS BEEN EXTEMPORIZING UPON THE MUSICAL INSTRUMENT OF HIS INVENTION.)

I

WOULD that the structure brave, the manifold music I build,
Bidding my organ obey, calling its keys to their work,
Claiming each slave of the sound, at a touch, as when Solomon willed
Armies of angels that soar, legions of demons that lurk,
Man, brute, reptile, fly,—alien of end and of aim,
Adverse, each from the other heaven-high, hell-deep removed,—
Should rush into sight at once as he named the ineffable Name,
And pile him a palace straight, to pleasure the princess he loved!

II

Would it might tarry like his, the beautiful building of mine,
This which my keys in a crowd pressed and importuned to raise!
Ah, one and all, how they helped, would dispart now and now combine,
Zealous to hasten the work, heighten their master his praise!
And one would bury his brow with a blind plunge down to hell,
Burrow awhile and build, broad on the root of things,
Then up again swim into sight, having based me my palace well,
Founded it, fearless of flame, flat on the nether springs,

III

And another would mount and march, like the excellent minion he was,
Ay, another and yet another, one crowd but with many a crest.
Raising my rampired walls of gold as transparent as glass,
Eager to do and die, yield each his place to the rest:
For higher still and higher (as a runner tips with fire,
When a great illumination surprises a festal night—
Outlining round and round Rome's dome from space to spire)
Up, the pinnacled glory reached, and the pride of my soul was in sight.

IV

In sight? Not half! for it seemed, it was certain, to match man's birth,
Nature in turn conceived, obeying an impulse as I;
And the emulous heaven yearned down, made effort to reach the earth,
As the earth had done her best, in my passion, to scale the sky:
Novel splendours burst forth, grew familiar and dwelt with mine,
Not a point nor peak but found and fixed its wandering star;
Meteor-moons, balls of blaze: and they did not pale nor pine,
For earth had attained to heaves there was no more near nor far.

Nay more;'-for there- wanted not who
walked in the glare and glow,
Presences plain in the place; or, fresh
from the Protoplast,
Furnished for ages to come, when a kind-
lier wind should blow.
Lured now to begin and live, in a house
to their liking at last;
Or else the wonderful Dead who have
passed through the body and gone,
But were back once more to breathe in
an old world worth their new:
What never had been, was now; what was,
as it shall be anon;
And what is,—shall I say, matched
both? for I was made perfect too.

VI

All through my keys that gave their sounds
to a wish of my soul,
All through my soul that praised as its
wish flowed visibly forth,
All through music and me! For think,
had I painted the whole,
Why, there it had stood, to see, nor the
process so wonder-worth:
Had I written the same, made verse—still,
effect proceeds from cause,
Ye know why the forms are fair, ye hear
how the tale is told;
It is all triumphant art, but art in obedience
to laws,
Painter and poet are proud in the
artist-list enrolled:—

VII

But here is the finger of God, a flash of the
will that can,
Existent behind all laws, that made
them and, lo, they are!
And I know not if, save in this, such gift
be allowed to man,
That out of three sounds he frame, not
a fourth sound, but a star.
Consider it well: each tone of our scale in
itself is nought;
It is everywhere in the world—loud,
soft, and all is said:
Give it to me to use! I mix it with two in
my thought:
And, there! Ye have heard and seen:
consider and bow the head!

Well.it *is* gone at last, the palace of music
I reared;
Gone! and the good tears start, the
praises that come too slow;
For one is assured at first, one scarce can
say that he feared,
That he even gave it a thought, the gone
thing was to go
Never to be again! But many more of the
kind
As good, nay, better perchance: is this
your comfort to me?
To me, who must be saved because I cling
with my mind
To the same, same self, same love, same
God: ay, what was, shall be.

Therefore to whom turn I but to thee, the
ineffable Name?
Builder and maker, thou, of houses not
made with hands!
What, have fear of change from thee who
art ever the same?
Doubt that thy power can fill the heart
that thy power expands?
There shall never be one lost good! What
was, shall live as before;
The evil is null, is nought, is silence
implying sound;
What was good shall be good, with, for
evil, so much good more;
On the earth the broken arcs; in the
heaven, a perfect round.

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed
of good shall exist;
Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty,
nor good, nor power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each sur-
vives for the melodist
When eternity affirms the conception
of an hour.
The high that proved too high, the heroic
for earth too hard,
The passion that left the ground to lose
itself in the sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and
the bard;
Enough that he heard it once: we shall
hear it by-and-by.

And what is our failure here but a
triumph's evidence
For the fulness of the days? Have we
withered or agonized?
Why else was the pause prolonged but that
singing might issue thence?
Why rushed the discords in but that
harmony should be prized?
Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow
to clear,
Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of
the weal and woe:
But God has a few of us whom he whispers
in the ear;
The rest may reason and welcome: 'tis
we musicians know.

XII

Well, it is earth with me; silence resumes her reign:
I will be patient and proud, and soberly acquiesce.
Give me the keys. I feel for the common chord again,
Sliding by semitones, till I sink to the minor,—yes,
And I blunt it into a ninth, and I stand on alien ground,
Surveying awhile the heights I rolled from into the deep;
Which, hark, I have dared and done, for my resting-place is found,
The C Major of this life: so, now I will try to sleep.

RABBI BEN EZRA

GROW old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in His hand
Who saith 'A whole I planned,
'Youth shows but half; trust God: see all nor be afraid!'

II

Not that, amassing flowers,
Youth sighed 'Which rose make ours,
* Which lily leave and then as best recall *V*
Not that, admiring stars,
It yearned 'Nor Jove, nor Mars;
'Mine be some figured flame which blends, transcends them all!'

Not for such hopes and fears
Annulling youth's brief years,
Do I remonstrate: folly wide the mark!
Rather I prize the doubt
Low kinds exist without,
Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark.

Iv

Poor vaunt of life indeed,
Were man but formed to feed
On joy, to solely seek and find and feast:
Such feasting ended, then
As sure an end to men;
Irks care the crop-full bird ? Frets doubt the maw-crammed beast?

Rejoice we are allied
To That which doth provide
And not partake, effect and not receive!
A spark disturbs our clod;
Nearer we hold of God
Who gives, than of His tribes that take, I must believe.

VI

Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joys three-parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
I earn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!

For thence,—a paradox
Which comforts while it mocks,—
Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:
What I aspired to be,
And was not, comforts me:
A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the scale.

vIII

What is he but a brute
Whose flesh has soul to suit,
Whose spirit works lest arms and legs want play?
To man, propose this test—
Thy body at its best,
How far can that project thy soul on its lone way?

Ix

Yet gifts should prove their use:
I own the Past profuse
Of power each side, perfection every turn:
Eyes, ears took in their dole,
Brain treasured up the whole;
Should not the heart beat once 'How good to live and learn?'

Not once beat 'Praise be Thine!
'I see the whole design,
'I, who saw power, see now love perfect too:
'Perfect I call Thy plan:
'Thanks that I was a man!
'Maker, remake, complete,—I trust what Thou shalt do!'

XI

For pleasant is this flesh;
Our soul, in its rose-mesh
Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for rest;
Would we some prize might hold
To match those manifold
Possessions of the brute,—gain most, as we did best!

xII

Let us not always say
'Spite of this flesh to-day
'I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!'

As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry 'All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul!'

XIII

Therefore I summon age
To grant youth's heritage,
Life's struggle having so far reached its term:
Thence shall I pass, approved
A man, for aye removed
From the developed brute; a god though in the germ.

XIV

And I shall thereupon
Take rest, ere I be gone
Once more on my adventure brave and new:
Fearless and unperplexed,
When I wage battle next,
What weapons to select, what armour to indue.

XV

Youth ended, I shall try
My gain or loss thereby;
Leave the fire ashes, what survives is gold:
And I shall weigh the same,
Give life its praise or blame:
Young, all lay in dispute; I shall know, being old.

XVI

For note, when evening shuts,
A certain moment cuts
The deed off, calls the glory from the grey:
A whisper from the west
Shoots—'Add this to the rest,
'Take it and try its worth: here dies another day.'

XVII

So, still within this life,
Though lifted o'er its strife,
Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,
'This rage was right i' the main,
'That acquiescence vain:
"The Future I may face now I have proved the Past.'

XVIII

For more is not reserved
To man, with soul just nerved
To act to-morrow what he learns to-day:
Here, work enough to watch
The Master work, and catch
Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's true play.

XIX

As *it* was better, youth
Should strive, through acts uncouth,
Toward making, than repose on aught found made:
So, better, age, exempt
From strife, should know, than tempt
Further. Thou waitedest age: wait death nor be afraid!

XX

Enough now, if the Right
And Good and Infinite
Be named here, as thou callest thy hand thine own,
With knowledge absolute,
Subject to no dispute
From fools that crowded youth, nor *let* thee feel alone.

XXI

Be there, for once and all,
Severed great minds from small,
Announced to each his station in the Past!
Was I, the world arraigned,
Were they, my soul disdained,
Right? Let age speak the truth and give us peace at last!

XXII

Now, who shall arbitrate?
Ten men love what I hate,
Shun what I follow, slight what I receive;
Ten, who in ears and eyes
Match me: we all surmise,
They this thing, and I that: whom shall my soul believe?

XXIII

Not on the vulgar mass
Called 'work,' must sentence pass,
Things done, that took the eye and had the price;
O'er which, from level stand,
The low world laid its hand,
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice:

XXIV

But all, the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,
So passed in making up the main account;
All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure,
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount:

XXV

Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and escaped;
All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

Ay, note that Potter's wheel,
That metaphor! and feel
Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay.—
Thou, to whom fools propound,
When the wine makes its round,
Since life fleets, all is change; the Past gone, seize to-day!'

xx vll

Fool! All that is, at all,
Lasts ever, past recall;
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure:
What entered into thee,
That was, is, and shall be:
Time's wheel runs back or stops: Potter and clay endure.

He fixed thee mid this dance
Of plastic circumstance,
This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain arrest:
Machinery just meant
To give thy soul its bent,
Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.

xxrx

What though the earlier grooves
Which ran the laughing loves
Around thy base, no longer pause and press?
What though, about thy rim,
Skull-things in order grim
Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner stress?

XXX

Look not thou down but up!
To uses of a cup,
The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's peal,
The new wine's foaming flow,
The Master's lips a-glow!
Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what need'st thou with earth's wheel?

XXXI

But I need, now as then,
Thee, God, who mouldest men;
And since, not even while the whirl was worst.
Did I,—to the wheel of life
With shapes and colours rife,
Bound dizzily,—mistake my end, to slake Thy thirst:

xxxII

So, take and use Thy work:
Amend what flaws may **lurk,**
What strain o' the **stuff, what warpings past the aim !**
My times be in Thy hand!
Perfect the cup as planned!
Let age approve of youth and death complete the same!

A DEATH IN THE DESERT

[SUPPOSED of Pamphylax the Antiochene:
It is a parchment, of my rolls the fifth,
Hath three skins glued together, is all Greek
And goeth from *Epsilon* down to *.Mu:*
Lies second in the surnamed Chosen Chest,
Stained and conserved with juice of terebinth,
Covered with cloth of hair, and lettered Xi,
From Xanthus, my wife's uncle, now at peace:
Mu and *Epsilon* stand for my own name.
I may not write *it,* but I make a cross
To show I wait His coming, with the rest.
And leave off here: beginneth Pamphylax. J

I said,' If one should' wet his lips with wine,
'And slip the broadest plantain-leaf we find,
'Or else the lappet of a linen robe,
'Into the water-vessel, lay it right,
'And cool his forehead just above the eyes,
'The while a brother, kneeling either side,
'Should chafe each hand and try to make it warm,—
'He is not so far gone but he might speak.'

This did not happen in the outer cave,
Nor in the secret chamber of the rock
Where, sixty days since the decree was out,
We had him, bedded on a camel-skin,
And waited for his dying all the while;
But in the midmost grotto: since noon's light
Reached there a little, and we would not lose
The last of what might happen on his face.

I at the head, and Xanthus at the feet,
With Valens and the Boy, had lifted him,
And brought him from the chamber in the depths,
And laid him in the light where we might see:
For certain smiles began about his mouth,
And his lids moved, presageful of the end.

Beyond and halfway up the mouth o' the cave,
The Bactrian convert, having his desire,
Kept watch, and made pretence to graze a goat
That gave us milk, on rags of various herb,
Plantain and quitch, the rocks' shade keeps alive:
So that if any thief or soldier **passed,**
(Because the persecution **was aware)**

Yielding the goat up promptly with his life,
Such man might pass" on, joyful at a prize,
Nor care to pry into the cool o' the cave.
Outside was all noon and the burning blue.

'Here is wine,' answered Xanthus,—dropped a drop;
I stooped and placed the lap of cloth aright,
Then chafed his right hand, and the Boy his left:
But Valens had bethought him, and produced
And broke a ball of nard, and made perfume.
Only, he did—not so much wake, as—turn
And smile a little, as a sleeper does
If any dear one call him, touch his face—
And smiles and loves, but will not be disturbed.

Then Xanthus said a prayer, but still he slept:
It is the Xanthus that escaped to Rome,
Was burned, and could not write the chronicle.

Then the Boy sprang up from his knees, and ran,
Stung by the splendour of a sudden thought,
And fetched the seventh plate of graven lead
Out of the secret chamber, found a place,
Pressing with finger on the deeper dints,
And spoke, as 'twere his mouth proclaiming first,
'I am the Resurrection and the Life.'

Whereat he opened his eyes wide at once,
And sat up of himself, and looked at us;
And thenceforth nobody pronounced a word:
Only, outside, the Bactrian cried his cry
Like the lone desert-bird that wears the ruff,
As signal we were safe, from time to time.

First he said, 'If a friend declared to me,
'This my son Valens, this my other son,
* Were James and Peter,—nay, declared as well
*This lad was very John,—I could believe!
'—Could, for a moment, doubtlessly believe:
'So is myself withdrawn into my depths,
' The soul retreated from the perished brain
' Whence it was wont to feel and use the world
' Through these dull members, done with long ago.
'Yet I myself remain; I feel myself:
* And there is nothing lost. Let be, awhile!•

[This is the doctrine he was wont to teach,
How divers persons witness in each man,
Three souls which make up one soul: first, to wit,
A soul of each and all the bodily parts,
Seated therein, which works, and is what Does,
And has the use of earth, and ends the man
Downward: but, tending upward for advice,
Grows into, and again is grown into
By the next soul, which, seated in the brain,
Useth the first with its collected use,
And feeleth, thinketh, willeth,—is what Knows:
Which, duly tending upward in its turn,
Grows into, and again is grown into
By the last soul, that uses both the first,
Subsisting whether they assist or no,
And, constituting man s self, is what Is—
And leans upon the former, makes it play,
As thatplayed off the first: and, tending up,
Holds, is upheld by, God, and ends the man
Upward in that dread point of intercourse,
Nor needs a place, for it returns to Him.
What Does, what Knows, what Is; three souls, one man.
I give the glossa of Theotypas.]

And then, 'A stick, once fire from end to end;
' Now, ashes save the tip that holds a spark!
* Yet, blow the spark, it runs back, spreads itself
'A little where the fire was: thus I urge
'The soul that served me, till it task once more
'What ashes of my brain have kept their shape,
'And these make effort on the last o' the flesh,
'Trying to taste again the truth of things—'
(He smiled)—* their very superficial truth;
'As that ye are my sons, that it is long
'Since James and Peter had release by death,
'And I am only he, your brother John,
* Who saw and heard, and could remember all.
'Remember all! It is not much to say.
' What if the truth broke on me from above
'As once and oft-times? Such might hap again:
'Doubtlessly He might stand in presence here,
'With head wool-white, eyes flame, and feet like brass,
'The sword and the seven stars, as I have seen—
'I who now shudder only and surmise
' "How did your brother bear that sight and live?"
' If I live yet, it is for good, more love
'Through me to men: be nought but ashes here

'That keep awhile my semblance, who was John,—
'Still, when they scatter, there is left on earth
'No one alive who knew (consider this!)
'—Saw with his eyes and handled with his hands
'That which was from the first, the Word of Life.
'How will it be when none more saith "I saw"?

'Such ever was love's way: to rise, it stoops.
' Since I, whom Christ's mouth taught, was bidden teach,
'I went, for many years, about the world,
'Saying "It was so; so I heard and saw,"
'Speaking as the case asked: and men believed.
'Afterward came the message to myself
'In Patmos isle; I was not bidden teach,
'But simply listen, take a book and write,
'Nor set down other than the given word,
'With nothing left to my arbitrament
'To choose or change: I wrote, and men believed.
'Then, for my time grew brief, no message more,
'No call to write again, I found a way,
'And, reasoning from my knowledge, merely taught
'Men should, for love's sake, in love's strength believe;
'Or I would pen a letter to a friend
'And urge the same as friend, nor less nor more:
'Friends said I reasoned rightly, and believed.
'But at the last, why, I seemed left alive
' Like a sea-jelly weak on Patmos strand,
'To tell dry sea-beach gazers how I fared
'When there was mid-sea, and the mighty things;
'Left to repeat, "I saw, I heard, I knew,"
'And go all over the old ground again,
'With Antichrist already in the world,
'And many Antichrists, who answered prompt
'"Am I not Jasper as thyself art John?
'"Nay, young, whereas through age thou mayest forget;
'"Wherefore, explain, or how shall we believe?
' I never thought to call down fire on such,
'Or, as in wonderful and early days,
'Pick up the scorpion, tread the serpent dumb;
'But patient stated much of the Lord's life
'Forgotten or misdelivered, and let it work:
'Since much that at the first, in deed and word,
'Lay simply and sufficiently exposed,
Had grown (or else my soul was grown to match,
Fed through such years, familiar with such light,
Guarded and guided still to see and speak)
Of new significance and fresh result;
What first were guessed as points, I now knew stars,
And named them in the Gospel I have writ.
For men said, "It is getting long ago:
"Where is the promise of His coming?"
—asked
These young ones in their strength, as loth to wait,
Of me who, when their sires were born, was old.
I, for I loved them, answered, joyfully,
Since I was there, and helpful in my age;
And, in the main, I think such men believed.
Finally, thus endeavouring, I fell sick,
Ye brought me here, and I supposed the end,
And went to sleep with one thought that, at least,
Though the whole earth should lie in wickedness,
We had the truth, might leave the rest to God.
Yet now I wake in such decrepitude
As I had slidden down and fallen afar,
Past even the presence of my former self,
Grasping the while for stay at facts which snap,
Till I am found away from my own world,
Feeling for foot-hold through a blank profound,
Along with unborn people in strange lands,
Who say—I bear said or conceive they say—
" Was John at all, and did he say he saw ?
"Assure us, ere we ask what he might see!"

And how shall I assure them? Can they share
—They, who have flesh, a veil of youth and strength
About each spirit, that needs must bide its time,
Living and learning still as years assist
Which wear the thickness thin, and *let* man see—
With me who hardly am withheld at all,
But shudderingly, scarce a shred between,
Lie bare to the universal prick of light?
Is it for nothing we grow old and weak,
We whom God loves? When pain ends, gain ends too.
To me, that story—ay, that Life and Death
Of which I wrote "it was"—to me, it is;

•—Is, here and now: I apprehend nought else.
'Is not God now i' "the world His power first made?
' Is not His love at issue still with sin,
'Visibly when a wrong is done on earth?
'Love, wrong, and pain, what see I else around?
' Yea, and the Resurrection and Uprise
'To the right hand of the throne—what is it beside,
' When such truth, breaking bounds, o'erfloods my soul,
' And, as I saw the sin and death, even so
' See I the need yet transiency of both,
' The good and glory consummated thence?
'I saw the power; I see the Love, once weak,
'Resume the Power: and in this word "I see,"
'Lo, there is recognized the Spirit of both
'That moving o'er the spirit of man, unblinds
'His eye and bids him look. These are, I see;
* But ye, the children, His beloved ones too,
'Ye need,—as I should use an optic glass
'I wondered at erewhile, somewhere i' the world,
' It had been given a crafty smith to make;
'A tube, he turned on objects brought too close,
'Lying confusedly insubordinate
'For the unassisted eye to master once:
'Look through his tube, at distance now they lay,
'Become succinct, distinct, so small, so clear!
'Just thus, ye needs must apprehend what truth
'I see, reduced to plain historic fact,
' Diminished into clearness, proved a point
'And far away: ye would withdraw your sense
'From out eternity, strain it upon time,
' Then stand before that fact, that Life and Death,
' Stay there at gaze, till it dispart, dispread.
'As though a star should open out, all sides,
'Grow the world on you, as it is my world.

' For life, with all it yields of joy and woe.
'And hope and fear,—believe the aged friend,—
' Is just our chance o' the prize of learning love,
'How love might be, hath been indeed, and is;
' And that we hold thenceforth to the uttermost
' Such prize despite the envy of the world,
'And, having gained truth, keep truth: that is all.

'But see the double way wherein we are led.
'How the soul learns diversely from the flesh!
' With flesh, that hath so little time to stay,
'And yields mere basement for the soul's emprise,
'Expect prompt teaching. Helpful was the light,
'And warmth was cherishing and food was choice
'To every man's flesh, thousand years ago,
'As now to yours and mine; the body sprang
'At once to the height, and stayed: but the soul,—no!
'Since sages who, this noontide, meditate
'In Rome or Athens, may descry some point
'Of the eternal power, hid yestereve;
'And, as thereby the power's whole mass extends,
'So much extends the aether floating o'er,
'The love that tops the might, the Christ in God.
'Then, as new lessons shall be learned in these
'Till earth's work stop and useless time run out,
'So duly, daily, needs provision be
'For keeping the soul's prowess possible,
'Building new barriers as the old decay,
'Saving us from evasion of life's proof,
'Putting the question ever, "Does God love,
'"And will ye hold that truth against the world?"
'Ye know there needs no second proof with good
'Gained for our flesh from any earthly source:
'We might go freezing, ages,—give us fire,
'Thereafter we judge fire at its full worth,
'And guard it safe through every chance, ye know!
'That fable of Prometheus and his theft,
'How mortals gained Jove's fiery flower, grows old
' (I have been used to hear the pagans own)
'And out of mind; but fire, howe'er its birth,
'Here is it, precious to the sophist now
'Who laughs the myth of Æschylus to scorn,
'As precious to those satyrs of his play,
'Who touched it in gay wonder at the thing.
'While were it so with the soul,—this gift of truth
'Once grasped, were this our soul's gain safe, and sure
'To prosper as the body's gain is wont,—
'Why, man's probation would conclude, his earth

•Crumble; for he both reasons and decides,
•Weighs first, then chooses: will he give up fire
'For gold or purple once he knows its worth?
'Could he give Christ up were His worth as plain?
'Therefore, I say, to test man, the proofs shift,
'Nor may he grasp that fact like other fact,
* And straightway in his life acknowledge *it,*
'As, say, the indubitable bliss of fire.
'Sigh ye, "It had been easier once than now"?
'To give you answer I am left alive;
'Look at me who was present from the first!
'Ye know what things I saw; then came a test,
'My first, befitting me who so had seen:
'"Forsake the Christ thou sawest transfigured, Him
'"Who trod the sea and brought the dead to life?
'"What should wring this from thee I " — ye laugh and ask.
'What wrung it? Even a torchlight and a noise,
'The sudden Roman faces, violent hands,
'And fear of what the Jews might do I Just that,
And it is written, "I forsook and fled":
'There was my trial, and it ended thus.
'Ay, but my soul had gained its truth, could grow:
'Another year or two,—what little child,
'What tender woman that had seen no least
'Of all my sights, but barely heard them told,
'Who did not clasp the cross with a light laugh,
'Or wrap the burning robe round, thanking God?
'Well, was truth safe for ever, then? Not so.
'Already had begun the silent work
'Whereby truth, deadened of its absolute blaze,
'Might need love's eye to pierce the o'erstretched doubt.
'Teachers were busy, whispering "All is true
' "As the aged ones report; but youth can reach
'"Where age gropes dimly, weak with stir and strain,
'"And the full doctrine slumbers till today."
'Thus, what the Roman's lowered spear was found,
'A bar to me who touched and handled truth,
'Now proved the glozing of some new shrewd tongue,
'This Ebion, this Cerinthus or their mates,
'Till imminent was the outcry "Save our Christ!"
'Whereon I stated much of the Lord's life
'Forgotten or misdelivered, and let it work
'Such work done, as it will be, what comes next?
'What do I hear say, or conceive men say,
'"Was John at all, and did he say he saw?
"'Assure us, ere we ask what he might see!"

'Is this indeed a burthen for late days,
'And may I help to bear it with you all,
'Using my weakness which becomes your strength?
'For if a babe were born inside this grot,
'Grew to a boy here, heard us praise the sun,
'Yet had but yon sole glimmer in light's place,—
'One loving him and wishful he should learn,
'Would much rejoice himself was blinded first
'Month by month here, so made to understand
'How eyes, born darkling, apprehend amiss:
'To think I could explain to such a child
'There was more glow outside than gleams he caught,
'Ay, nor need urge "I saw it, so believe!"
'It is a heavy burthen you shall bear
'In latter days, new lands, or old grown strange,
'Left without me, which must be very soon.
'What is the doubt, my brothers? Quick with it!
'I see you stand conversing, each new face,
'Either in fields, of yellow summer eves
'On islets vet unnamed amid the sea;
'Or pace for shelter 'neath a portico
'Out of the crowd in some enormous town
'Where now the larks sing in a solitude;
'Or muse upon blank heaps of stone and sand
'Idly conjectured to be Ephesus:
'And no one asks his fellow any more
'"Where is the promise of His coming?" but
"'Was he revealed in any of His lives,
'"As Power, as Love, as Influencing Soul?"

'Quick, for time presses, tell the whole mind out,
'And let us ask and answer and be saved!
'My book speaks on, because it cannot pass;

'One listens quietly, nor scoffs but pleads
'"Here is a tale of things done ages since:
'"What truth 'Was ever 'told the second day?
'"Wonders, that would prove doctrine, go for nought.
'"Remains the doctrine, love; well, we must love,
'" And what we love most, power and love in one,
'"Let us acknowledge on the record here,
'"Accepting these in Christ: must Christ then be?
'"Has He been? Did not we ourselves make Him?
'" Our mind receives but what it holds, no more.
'"First of the love, then; we acknowledge Christ—
'" A proof we comprehend His love, a proof
'" We had such love already in ourselves,
'"Knew first what else we should not recognize.
'" 'Tis mere projection from man's inmost mind,
'"And, what he loves, thus falls reflected back,
'"Becomes accounted somewhat out of him;
'"He throws it up in air, it drops down earth's,
'"With shape, name, story added, man's old way.
'"How prove you Christ came otherwise at least?
'"Next try the power: He made and rules the world:
'"Certes there is a world once made, now ruled,
'"Unless things have been ever as we see.
'"Our sires declared a charioteer's yoked steeds
"'Brought the sun up the east and down the west,
'"Which only of itself now rises, sets,
'"As if a hand impelled it and a will,—
'"Thus they long thought, they who had will and hands:
'"But the new question's whisper is distinct,
'"Wherefore must all force needs be like ourselves?
'" We have the hands, the will; what made and drives
"'The sun is force, is law, is named, not known,
'" While will and love we do know; marks of these,
'" Eye-witnesses attest, so books declare—
"'As that, to punish or reward our race,
'"The sun at undue times arose or set
Or else stood still: what do not men affirm?
"'But earth requires as urgently reward
'"Or punishment to-day as years ago,
'"And none expects the sun will interpose:
"'Therefore it was mere passion and mistake,
'"Or erring zeal for right, which changed the truth.
"'Go back, far, farther, to the birth of things;
'"Ever the will, the intelligence, the love,
"'Man's!—which he gives, supposing he but finds,
'"As late he gave head, body, hands and feet,
"'To help these in what forms he called his gods.
"'First, Jove's brow, Juno's eyes were swept away,
'"But Jove's wrath, Juno's pride continued long;
'"As last, will, power, and love discarded these,
'"So law in turn discards power, love, and will.
'"What proveth God is otherwise at least?
'" All else, projection from the mind of man!"

'Nay, do not give me wine, for I am strong,
'But place my gospel where I put my hands.
'I say that man was made to grow, not stop;
'That help, he needed once, and needs no more,
'Having grown but an inch by, is withdrawn:
•For he hath new needs, and new helps to these.
'This imports solely, man should mount on each
'New height in view; the help whereby he mounts,
'The ladder-rung his foot has left, may fall,
'Since all things suffer change save God the Truth.
'Man apprehends Him newly at each stage
'Whereat earth's ladder drops, its service done;
'And nothing shall prove twice what once was proved.
'You stick a garden-plot with ordered twigs
'To show inside lie germs of herbs unborn,
'And check the careless step would spoil their birth;
'But when herbs wave, the guardian twigs may go,
' Since should ye doubt of virtues, question kinds,
'It is no longer for old twigs ye look,
'Which proved once underneath lay store of seed,

'But to the herb's self, by what light ye boast,
'For what fruit's signs are. This book's fruit is plain,
'Nor miracles need prove it any more.
'Doth the fruit show? Then miracles bade 'ware
'At first of root and stem, saved both till now
'From trampling ox, rough boar and wanton goat.
'What? Was man made a wheelwork to wind up,
'And be discharged, and straight wound up anew?
'No!—grown, his growth lasts; taught, he ne'er forgets:
'May learn a thousand things, not twice the same.

'This might be pagan teaching: now hear mine.

'I say, that as the babe, you feed awhile,
'Becomes a boy and fit to feed himself,
'So, minds at first must be spoon-fed with truth:
•When they can eat, babe's-nurture is withdrawn.
'I fed the babe whether it would or no:
'I bid the boy or feed himself or starve.
'I cried once, "That ye may believe in Christ,
'"Behold this blind man shall receive his sight!"
'I cry now, "Urgest thou, *for lam shrewd*
'"*And smile at stories how John's word could cure—*
'*"Repeat that miracle and take my faith?"*
'I say, that miracle was duly wrought
'When, save for it, no faith was possible.
'Whether a change were wrought i' the shows o' the world,
'Whether the change came from our minds which see
'Of shows o' the world so much as and no more
'Than God wills for His purpose,—(what do I
'See now, suppose you, there where you see rock
'Round us?)—I know not; such was the effect,
'So faith grew, making void more miracles
'Because too much: they would compel, not help.
'I say, the acknowledgment of God in Christ
'Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee
'All questions in the earth and out of it,
'And has so far advanced thee to be wise.
'Wouldst thou unprove this to re-prove the proved?
'In life's mere minute, with power to use that proof,
Leave knowledge and revert to how it sprung?
Thou hast it; use it and forthwith, or die!

For I say, this is death and the sole death,
When a man's loss comes to him from his gain,
Darkness from light, from knowledge ignorance,
And lack of love from love made manifest;
A lamp's death when, replete with oil, it chokes;
A stomach's when, surcharged with food, it starves.
With ignorance was surety of a cure.
When man, appalled at nature, questioned first
"What if there lurk a might behind this might?"
He needed satisfaction God could give,
And did give, as ye have the written word:
But when he finds might still redouble might,
Yet asks, " Since all is might, what use of will?"
—Will, the one source of might,—he being man
With a man's will and a man's might, to teach
In little how the two combine in large,—
That man has turned round on himself and stands,
Which in the course of nature is, to die.

And when man questioned, "What if there be love
"Behind the will and might, as real as they?"—
He needed satisfaction God could give,
And did give, as ye have the written word:
But when, beholding that love everywhere,
He reasons, "Since such love is everywhere,
" And since ourselves can love and would be loved,
"We ourselves make the love, and Christ was not,"—
How shall ye help this man who knows himself,
That he must love and would be loved again,
Yet, owning his own love that proveth Christ,
Rejecteth Christ through very need of Him?
The lamp o'erswims with oil, the stomach flags
Loaded with nurture, and that man's soul dies.

If he rejoin, "But this was all the while
"A trick; the fault was, first of all, in thee,
" Thy story of the places, names and dates,

"' Where, when and how the ultimate truth had rise,
'"—Thy prior truth, at last discovered none,
'"Whence now the second suffers detriment.
'"What good of giving knowledge if, because
'" O' the manner of the gift, its profit fail?
'"And why refuse what modicum of help
'"Had stopped the after-doubt, impossible
"I' the face of truth—truth absolute, uniform?
'" Why must I hit of this and miss of that,
'"Distinguish just as I be weak or strong,
'"And not ask of thee and have answer prompt,
'"Was this once, was it not once?—then and now
'"And evermore, plain truth from man to man.
'"Is John's procedure just the heathen bard's?
'"Put question of his famous play again
'"How for the ephemerals' sake Jove's fire was filched,
'"And carried in a cane and brought to earth:
'" *The fact is in the fable,* cry the wise,
'"Mortals obtained the boon, so much is fact,
'"Though fire be spirit and produced on earth.
'"As with the Titan's, so now with thy tale:
'"Why breed in us perplexity, mistake,
'"Nor tell the whole truth in the proper words?"

'I answer, Have ye yet to argue out
'The very primal thesis, plainest law,
'—Man is not God but hath God's end to serve,
'A master to obey, a course to take,
'Somewhat to cast off, somewhat to become?
'Grant this, then man must pass from old to new,
'From vain to real, from mistake to fact,
'From what once seemed good, to what now proves best.
*How could man have progression otherwise?
'Before the point was mooted "What is God?"
'No savage man inquired "What am myself?"
'Much less replied, "First, last, and best of things.
'Man takes that title now if he believes
'Might can exist with neither will nor love,
'In God's case—what he names now Nature's Law—
While in himself he recognizes love
No less than might and will: and rightly takes.
Since if man prove the sole existent thing
Where these combine, whatever their degree,
However weak the might or will or love,
So they be found there, put in evidence,—
He is as surely higher in the scale
Than any might with neither love nor will,
As life, apparent in the poorest midge,
(When the faint dust-speck flits, ye guess its wing)
Is marvellous beyond dead Atlas' self-
Given to the nobler midge for resting-place!
Thus, man proves best and highest—God, in fine,
And thus the victory leads but to defeat,
The gain to loss, best rise to the worst fall,
His life becomes impossible, which is death.

But if, appealing thence, he cower, avouch
He is mere man, and in humility
Neither may know God nor mistake himself;
I point to the immediate consequence
And say, by such confession straight he falls
Into man's place, a thing nor God nor beast.
Made to know that he can know and not more:
Lower than God who knows all and can all,
Higher than beasts which know and can so far
As each beast's limit, perfect to an end,
Nor conscious that they know, nor craving more;
While man knows partly but conceives beside,
Creeps ever on from fancies to the fact,
And in this striving, this converting air
Into a solid he may grasp and use,
Finds progress, man's distinctive mark alone,
Not God's, and not the beasts': God is, they are,
Man partly is and wholly hopes to be.
Such progress could no more attend his soul
Were all it struggles after found at first
And guesses changed to knowledge absolute,
Than motion wait his body, were all else
Than it the solid earth on every side,
Where now through space he moves from rest to rest.
'Man, therefore, thus conditioned, must expect

'He could not, what he knows now, know at first;
' What he considers that he knows to-day,
'Come but to-morrow, he will find misknown;
' Getting increase of knowledge, since he learns
'Because he lives, which is to be a man,
'Set to instruct himself by his past self:
'First, like the brute, obliged by facts to learn,
'Next, as man may, obliged by his own mind,
'Bent, habit, nature, knowledge turned to law.
'God's gift was that man should conceive of truth
' And yearn to gain it, catching at mistake,
'As midway help till he reach fact indeed.
'The statuary ere he mould a shape
'Boasts a like gift, the shape's idea, and next
'The aspiration to produce the same;
'So, taking clay, he calls his shape thereout,
'Cries ever "Now I have the thing I see":
'Yet all the while goes changing what was wrought,
'From falsehood like the truth, to truth itself.
'How were it had he cried "I see no face,
'"No breast, no feet i' the ineffectual clay"?
'Rather commend him that he clapped his hands,
'And laughed " I t is my shape and lives again 1"
'Enjoyed the falsehood, touched it on to truth,
'Until yourselves applaud the flesh indeed
'In what is still flesh-imitating clay.
'Right in you, right in him, such way be man's!
'God only makes the live shape at a jet.
'Will ye renounce this pact of creatureship?
'The pattern on the Mount subsists no more,
' Seemed awhile, then returned to nothingness;
'But copies, Moses strove to make thereby,
'Serve still and are replaced as time requires:
'By these, make newest vessels, reach the type!
' If ye demur, this judgment on your head,
'Never to reach the ultimate, angel's law,
'Indulging every instinct of the soul
'There where law, life, joy, impulse are one thing!

Such is the burthen of the latest time.
'I have survived to hear it with my ears,
'Answer it with my lips: does this suffice?
'For if there be a further woe than such,
'Wherein my brothers struggling need a hand,
'So long as any pulse is left in mine,
'May I be absent even longer yet,
* Plucking the blind ones back from the abyss,
'Though I should tarry a new hundred years!'

But he was dead; 'twas about noon, the day
Somewhat declining: we five buried him
That eve, and then, dividing, went five ways,
And I, disguised, returned to Ephesus.

By this, the cave's mouth must be filled with sand.
Valens is lost, I know not of his trace;
The Bactrian was but a wild childish man,
And could not write nor speak, but only loved:
So, lest the memory of this go quite,
Seeing that I to-morrow fight the beasts,
I tell the same to Phœbas, whom believe!
For many look again to find that face,
Beloved John's to whom I ministered,
Somewhere in life about the world; they err:
Either mistaking what was darkly spoke
At ending of his book, as he relates,
Or misconceiving somewhat of this speech
Scattered from mouth to mouth, as I suppose.
Believe ye will not see him any more
About the world with his divine regard!
For all was as I say, and now the man
Lies as he lay once, breast to breast with God.

[Cerinthus read and mused; one added this:

' If Christ, as thou affirmest, be of men
'Mere man, the first and best but nothing more,—
' Account Him, for reward of what He was,
'Now and for ever, wretchedest of all.
'For see; Himself conceived of life as love,
'Conceived of love as what must enter in,
'Fill up, make one with His each soul He loved:
'Thus much for man's joy, all men's joy for Him.
' Well, He is gone, thou sayest, to fit reward.
'But by this time are many souls set free,
'And very many still retained alive:
'Nay, should His coming be delayed awhile,
'Say, ten years longer (twelve years, some compute)

'See if, for every finger of thy hands,
'There be notibund, that-day the world shall end,
'Hundreds of souls, each holding by Christ's word
'That He will grow incorporate with all,
'With me as Pamphylax, with him as John,
' Groom for each bride! Can a mere man do this?
'Yet Christ saith, this He lived and died to do.
'Call Christ, then, the illimitable God,
'Or lost!'

But 'twas Cerinthus that is lost.]

CALIBAN UPON SETEBOS; OR, NATURAL THEOLOGY IN THE ISLAND.

'Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself.'

['WILL sprawl, now that the heat of day is best,
Flat on his belly in the pit's much mire,
With elbows wide, fists clenched to prop his chin.
And, while he kicks both feet in the cool slush,
And feels about his spine small eft-things course,
Run in and out each arm, and make him laugh:
And while above his head a pompion-plant,
Coating the cave-top as a brow its eye,
Creeps down to touch and tickle hair and beard,
And now a flower drops with a bee inside,
And now a fruit to snap at, catch and crunch,—
He looks out o'er yon sea which sunbeams cross
And recross till they weave a spider-web
(Meshes of fire, some great fish breaks at times)
And talks to his own self, howe'er he please,
Touching that other, whom his dam called God.
Because to talk about Him, vexes—ha,
Could He but know! and time to vex is now,
When talk is safer than in winter-time.
Moreover Prosper and Miranda sleep
In confidence he drudges at their task,
And it is good to cheat the pair, and gibe,
Letting the rank tongue blossom into speech.]

Setebos, Setebos, and Setebos!
'Thinketh, He dwelleth i' the cold o' the moon.
'Thinketh He made it, with the sun to match,
But not the stars; the stars come otherwise;
Only made clouds, winds, meteors, such as that:
Also this isle, what lives and grows thereon,
And snaky sea which rounds and ends the same.

'Thinketh, it came of being ill at ease:
He hated that He cannot change His cold,
Nor cure its ache. 'Hath spied an icy fish
That longed to 'scape the rock-stream where she lived,
And thaw herself within the lukewarm brine
O' the lazy sea her stream thrusts far amid,
A crystal spike 'twixt two warm walls of wave;
Only, she ever sickened, found repulse
At the other kind of water, not her life,
(Green-dense and dim-delicious, bred o* the sun)
Flounced back from bliss she was not born to breathe,
And in her old bounds buried her despair,
Hating and loving warmth alike: so He.

'Thinketh, He made thereat the sun, this isle,
Trees and the fowls here, beast and creeping thing.
Yon otter, sleek-wet, black, lithe as a leech;
Yon auk, one fire-eye in a ball of foam,
That floats and feeds; a certain badger brown
He hath watched hunt with that slant white-wedged eye
By moonlight; and the pie with the long tongue
That pricks deep into oakwarts for a worm,
And says a plain word when she finds her prize,
But will not eat the ants; the ants themselves
That build a wall ofseeds and settled stalks
About their hole—He made all these and more,
Made all we see, and us, in spite: how else ?
He could not, Himself, make a second self
To be His mate; as well have made Himself:
He would not make what he mislikes or slights,
An eyesore to Him, or not worth His pains:
But did, in envy, listlessness or sport,
Make what Himself would fain, in a manner, be—
Weaker in most points, stronger in a few,
Worthy, and yet mere playthings all the while,

Things He admires and mocks too,—that is it.
Because, so brave, so better though they be,
It nothing skills if He begin to plague.
Look now, I melt a gourd-fruit into mash,
Add honeycomb and pods, I have perceived,
Which bite like finches when they bill and kiss,—
Then, when froth rises bladdery, drink up all,
Quick, quick, till maggots scamper through my brain;
Last, throw me on my back i' the seeded thyme,
And wanton, wishing I were born a bird.
Put case, unable to be what I wish,
I yet could make a live bird out of clay:
Would not I take clay, pinch my Caliban
Able to fly?—for, there, see, he hath wings,
And great comb like the hoopoe's to admire,
And there, a sting to do his foes offence,
There, and I will that he begin to live,
Fly to yon rock-top, nip me off the horns
Of grigs high up that make the merry din,
Saucy through their veined wings, and mind me not.
In which feat, if his leg snapped, brittle clay,
And he lay stupid-like,—why, I should laugh;
And if he, spying me, should fall to weep,
Beseech me to be good, repair his wrong,
Bid his poor leg smart less or grow again,—
Well, as the chance were, this might take or else
Not take my fancy: I might hear his cry,
And give the manikin three sound legs one,
Or pluck the other off, leave him like an egg,
And lessoned he was mine and merely clay.
Were this no pleasure, lying in the thyme,
Drinking the mash, with brain become alive,
Making and marring clay at will? So He.

'Thinketh, such shows nor right nor wrong in Him,
Nor kind, nor cruel: He is strong and Lord.
'Am strong myself compared to yonder crabs
That march now from the mountain to the sea;
'Let twenty pass, and stone the twenty-first,
Loving not, hating not, just choosing so.
'Say, the first straggler that boasts purple spots
Shall join the file, one pincer twisted off;
'Say, this bruised fellow shall receive a worm,
And two worms he whose nippers end in red;
As it likes me each time, I do: so He.

Well then, 'supposeth He *is* good *V* the main,
Placable if His mind and ways were guessed,
But rougher than His handiwork, be sure!
Oh, He hath made things worthier than Himself,
And envieth that, so helped, such things do more
Than He who made them! What consoles but this?
That they, unless through Him, do nought at all,
And must submit: what other use in things?
'Hath cut a pipe of pithless elder-joint
That, blown through, gives exact the scream o' the jay
When from her wing you twitch the feathers blue:
Sound this, and little birds that hate the jay
Flock within stone's throw, glad their foe is hurt:
Put case such pipe could prattle and boast forsooth
' I catch the birds, I am the crafty thing,
'I make the cry my maker cannot make
'With his great round mouth; he must blow through mine!'
Would not I smash it with my foot? So He.

But wherefore rough, why cold and ill at ease?
Aha, that is a question! Ask, for that,
What knows,—the something over Setebos
That made Him, or He, may be, found and fought,
Worsted, drove off and did to nothing, perchance.
There may be something quiet o'er His head,
Out of His reach, that feels nor joy nor grief,
Since both derive from weakness in some way.
I joy because the quails come; would not joy
Could I bring quails here when I have a mind:
This Quiet, all it hath a mind to, doth.
'Esteemeth stars the outposts of its couch,
But never spends much thought nor care that way.
It may look up, work up,—the worse for those

CALIBAN UPON SETEBOS

It works on! 'Careth but for Setebos
The many-handed as-axuttle-fish,
Who, making Himself feared through what He does,
Looks up, first, and perceives he cannot soar
To what is quiet and hath happy life;
Next looks down here, and out of very spite
Makes this a bauble-world to ape yon real,
These good things to match those as hips do grapes.
'Tis solace making baubles, ay, and sport.
Himself peeped late, eyed Prosper at his books
Careless and lofty, lord now of the isle:
Vexed, 'stitched a book of broad leaves, arrow-shaped,
Wrote thereon, he knows what, prodigious words;
Has peeled a wand and called it by a name;
Weareth at whiles for an enchanter's robe
The eyed skin of a supple oncelot;
And hath an ounce sleeker than youngling mole,
A four-legged serpent he makes cower and couch,
Now snarl, now hold its breath and mind his eye,
And saith she is Miranda and my wife:
'Keeps for his Ariel a tall pouch-bill crane
He bids go wade for fish and straight disgorge;
Also a sea-beast, lumpish, winch he snared,
Blinded the eyes of, and brought somewhat tame,
And split its toe-webs, and now pens the drudge
In a hole o' the rock and calls him Caliban;
A bitter heart that bides its time and bites.
'Plays thus at being Prosper in a way,
Taketh his mirth with make-believes: so He.

His dam held that the Quiet made all things
Which Setebos vexed only: 'holds not so.
Who made them weak, meant weakness He might vex.
Had He meant other, while His Hand was in,
Why not make horny eyes no thorn could prick,
Or plate my scalp with bone against the snow,
Or overscale my flesh 'neath joint and joint,
Like an ore's armour? Ay,—so spoil His sport!
He is the One now: only He doth all.

'Saith, He may like, perchance, what profits Him.
Himself loves what does him good; but why?
'Gets good no otherwise. This blinded beast
Loves whoso places flesh-meat on his nose,
But, had he eyes, would want no help, but hate
Or love, just as it liked him: He hath eyes.
Also it pleaseth Setebos to work,
Use all His hands, and exercise much craft,
By no means for the love of what is worked.
Tasteth, himself, no finer good i' the world
When all goes right, in this safe summer-time,
And he wants little, hungers, aches not much,
Than trying what to do with wit and strength.
'Falls to make something: 'piled yon pile of turfs,
And squared and stuck there squares of soft white chalk,
And, with a fish-tooth, scratched a moon on each,
And set up endwise certain spikes of tree,
And crowned the whole with a sloth's skull a-top,
Found dead i' the woods, too hard for one to kill.
No use at all i' the work, for work's sole sake;
'Shall some day knock it down again: so He.

'Saith He is terrible: watch His feats in proof!
One hurricane will spoil six good months' hope.
He hath a spite against me, that I know,
Just as He favours Prosper, who knows why?
So it is, all the same, as well I find.
'Wove wattles half the winter, fenced them firm
With stone and stake to stop she-tortoises
Crawling to lay their eggs here: well, one wave,
Feeling the foot of Him upon its neck,
Gaped as a snake does, lolled out its large tongue,
And licked the whole labour flat: so much for spite.
'Saw a ball flame down late (yonder it lies)
Where, half an hour before, I slept i' the shade:
Often they scatter sparkles: there is force!
'Dug up a newt He may have envied once
And turned to stone, shut up inside a stone.
Please Him and hinder this?—What Prosper does?
Aha, if He would tell me how! Not He!
There is the sport: discover how or die!
All need not die, for of the things o' the isle
Some flee afar, some dive, some run up trees;

Those at His mercy,—why, they please
Him most
When... when.., well, never try the same
way twice!
Repeat what act has pleased, He may grow
wroth.
You must not know His ways, and play
Him off,
Sure of the issue. 'Doth the like himself:
'Spareth a squirrel that it nothing fears
But steals the nut from underneath my
thumb,
And when I threat, bites stoutly in defence:
'Spareth an urchin that contrariwise,
Curls up into a ball, pretending death
For fright at my approach: the two ways
please.
But what would move my choler more
than this,
That either creature counted on its life
To-morrow and next day and all days to
come,
Saying, forsooth, in the inmost of its heart,
'Because he did so yesterday with me,
'And otherwise with such another brute,
' So must he do henceforth and always.'—
Ay?
Would teach the reasoning couple what
'must' means!
'Doth as he likes, or wherefore Lord ? So
He.

'Conceiveth all things will continue thus,
And we shall have to live in fear of Him
So long as He lives, keeps His strength: no
change,
If He have done His best, make no new
world
To please Him more, so leave off watching
this,—
If He surprise not even the Quiet's self
Some strange day,—or, suppose, grow
into it
As grubs grow butterflies: else, here are we,
And there is He, and nowhere help at all.

'Believeth with the life, the pain shall stop.
His dam held different, that after death
He both plagued enemies and feasted
friends:
Idly! He doth His worst in this our life,
Giving just respite lest we die through
pain,
Saving last pain for worst,—with which,
an end.
Meanwhile, the best way to escape His ire
Is, not to seem too happy. 'Sees, himself,
Yonder two flies, with purple films and
pink,
Bask on the pompion-bell above: kills
both.
'Sees two black painful beetles roll their
ball
On head and tail as if to save their lives:
Moves them the stick away they strive to
clear.

Even so, 'would have Him misconceive,
suppose
This Caliban strives hard and ails no less,
And always, above all else, envies Him;
Wherefore he mainly dances on dark
nights,
Moans in the sun, gets under holes to
laugh,
And never speaks his mind save housed
as now:
Outside, 'groans, curses. If He caught me
here,
O'erheard this speech, and asked 'What
chucklest at?'
'Would, to appease Him, cut a finger off,
Or of my three kid yearlings burn the best,
Or let the toothsome apples rot on tree,
Or push my tame beast for the ore to taste:
While myself lit a fire, and made a song
And sung it, ' *What 1 hate, be consecrate*
** To celebrate Thee and Thy state, no mate*
' For Thee; what see for envy in poor me?'
Hoping the while, since evils sometimes
mend,
Warts rub away and sores are cured with
slime,
That some strange day, will either the
Quiet catch
And conquer Setebos, or likelier He
Decrepit may doze, doze, as good as die.

IWhat, what? A curtain o'er the world at
once!
Crickets stop hissing; not a bird—or, yes,
There scuds His raven that has told Him
all!
It was fool's play, this prattling! Ha! The
wind
Shoulders the pillared dust, death's house
o' the move,
And fast invading fires begin! White
blaze—
A tree's head snaps—and there, there,
there, there, there
His thunder follows! Fool to gibe at Him!
Lo! 'Lieth flat and loveth Setebos!
'Maketh his teeth meet through his upper
lip,
Will let those quails fly, will not eat this
month
One little mess of whelks, so he may
'scape !}

CONFESSIONS

I

WHAT is he buzzing in my ears?
'Now that I come to die,
'Do I view the world as a vale of tears?'
Ah, reverend sir, not I

II

What I viewed there" once', what I view again
Where the physic bottles stand
On the table's edge,—is a suburb lane,
With a wall to my bedside hand.

III

That lane sloped, much as the bottles do,
From a house you could descry
O'er the garden-wall: is the curtain blue
Or green to a healthy eye?

IV

To mine, it serves for the old June weather
Blue above lane and wall ;
And that farthest bottle labelled ' Ether'
Is the house o'ertopping all.

At a terrace, somewhere near the stopper,
There watched for me, one June,
A girl: I know, sir, it's improper,
My poor mind's out of tune.

Only, there was a way .. . you crept
Close by the side, to dodge
Eyes in the house, two eyes except:
They styled their house 'The Lodge.'

vII

What right had a lounger up their lane?
But, by creeping very close,
With the good wall's help,—their eyes might strain
And stretch themselves to Oes,

vIII

Yet never catch her and me together,
As she left the attic, there,
By the rim of the bottle labelled * Ether,'
And stole from stair to stair,

IX

And stood by the rose-wreathed gate. Alas,
We loved, sir—used to meet:
How sad and bad and mad it was—
But then, how it was sweet!

MAY AND DEATH

I WISH that when you died last May,
Charles, there had died along with you
Three parts of spring's delightful things;
Ay, and, for me, the fourth part too.

A foolish thought, and worse, perhaps!
There must be many a pair of friends
Who, arm in arm, deserve the warm
Moon-births and the long evening-ends.

III

So, for their sake, be May still May!
Let their new time, as mine of old,
Do all it did for me: I bid
Sweet sights and sounds throng mam-fold.

Iv

Only, one little sight, one plant,
Woods have in May, that starts up green
Save a sole streak which, so to speak,
Is spring's blood, spilt its leaves be-tween,—

v

That, they might spare; a certain wood
Might miss the plant; their loss were small:
But I,—whene'er the leaf grows there,
Its drop comes from my heart, that's all.

DEAF AND DUMB

A GROUP BY WOOLNER

ONLY the prism's obstruction shows aright
The secret of a sunbeam, breaks its light
Into the jewelled bow from blankest white;
So may a glory from defect arise:
Only by Deafness may the vexed Love wreak
Its insuppressive sense on brow and cheek,
Only by Dumbness adequately speak
As favoured mouth could never, through the eyes.

PROSPICE

FEAR death?—to feel the fog in my throat,
The mist in my face,
When the snows begin, and the blasts de-note
I am nearing the place,
The power of the night, the press of the storm,
The post of the foe;
Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,
Yet the strong man must go:
For the journey is done and the summit attained,
And the barriers fall,
Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,
The reward of it all.
I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,
The best and the last!
I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and forebore,
And bade me creep past.
No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers
The heroes of old,
Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears
Of pain, darkness and cold.

For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
The black minute's at end,
And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that rave,
Shall dwindle, shall blend,
Shall change, shall become first a peace *out of pain,
Then a light, then thy breast,
O thou soul of my soul! i shall clasp thee again,
And with God be the rest! I

EURYDICE TO ORPHEUS

A PICTURE BY LEIGHTON

BUT give them me, the mouth, the eyes, the brow!
Let them once more absorb me! One look now
Will lap me round for ever, not to pass
Out of its light, though darkness lie beyond:
Hold me but safe again within the bond
Of one immortal look! All woe that was,
Forgotten, and all terror that may be,
Defied,—no past is mine, no future: look at me!

YOUTH AND ART

IT once might have been, once only:
We lodged in a street together,
You, a sparrow on the housetop lonely,
I, a lone she-bird of his feather.

Your trade was with sticks and clay,
You thumbed, thrust, patted and polished,
Then laughed 'They will see some day
' Smith made, and Gibson demolished.'

My business was song, song, song;
I chirped, cheeped, trilled and twittered,
'Kate Brown's on the boards ere long,
'And Grisi's existence embittered!'

Iv

I earned no more by a warble
Than you by a sketch in plaster;
You wanted a piece of marble,
I needed a music-master.

We studied hard in our styles,
Chipped each at a crust like Hindoos,
For air looked out on the tiles,
For fun watched each other's windows.

You lounged, like a boy of the South,
Cap and blouse—nay, a bit of beard too;
Or you got it, rubbing your mouth
With ringers the clay adhered to.

VII

And I—soon managed to find
Weak points in the flower-fence facing,
Was forced to put up a blind
And be safe in my corset-lacing.

vIII

No harm! It was not my fault
If you never turned your eye's tail up
As I shook upon E *in alt,*
Or ran the chromatic scale up:

IX

For spring bade the sparrows pair,
And the boys and girls gave guesses,
And stalls in our street looked rare
With bulrush and watercresses.

Why did not you pinch a flower
In a pellet of clay and fling it?
Why did not I put a power
Of thanks in a look, or sing it?

XI

I did look, sharp as a lynx,
(And yet the memory rankles)
When models arrived, some minx
Tripped up-stairs, she and her ankles.

xII

But I think I gave you as good!
'That foreign fellow,—who can know
'How she pays, in a playful mood.
'For his tuning her that piano?

xIII

Could you say so, and never say
' Suppose we join hands and fortunes,
'And I fetch her from over the way,
'Her piano, and long tunes and short tunes ?'

xIv

No, no: you would not be rash,
Nor I rasher and something over:
You've to settle yet Gibson's hash,
And Grisi yet lives in clover.

xv

But you meet the Prince at the Board,
I'm queen myself at *bals-pare,*
I've married a rich old lord,
And you're dubbed knight and an R. A.

XVI

Each life unfulfilled, you see;
It hangs still, patchy and scrappy:
We have not signed deep, laughed free,
Starved, feasted, despaired,—been happy.

xvII

And nobody calls you a dunce,
And people-suppose-me clever:
This could out have happened once,
And we missed it, lost it for ever.

A FACE

IF one could have that little head of hers
Painted upon a background of pale gold,
Such as the Tuscan's early art prefers!
No shade encroaching on the matchless mould
Of those two lips, which should be opening soft
In the pure profile; not as when she laughs,
For that spoils all: but rather as if aloft
Yon hyacinth, she loves so, leaned its staff's
Burthen of honey-coloured buds to kiss
And capture 'twixt the lips apart for this.
Then her lithe neck, three fingers might surround,
How it should waver on the pale gold ground
Up to the fruit-shaped, perfect chin it lifts!
I know, Correggio loves to mass, in rifts
Of heaven, his angel faces, orb on orb
Breaking its outline, burning shades absorb:
But these are only massed there, I should think,
Waiting to see some wonder momently
Grow out, stand full, fade slow against the sky
(That's the pale ground you'd see this sweet face by),
All heaven, meanwhile, condensed into one eye
Which fears to lose the wonder, should it wink.

A LIKENESS

SOME people hang portraits up
In a room where they dine or sup:
And the wife clinks tea-things under,
And her cousin, he stirs his cup,
Asks, 'Who was the lady, I wonder?'
"Tis a daub John bought at a sale,'
Quoth the wife,—looks black as thunder:
'What a shade beneath her nose!
'Snuff-taking, I suppose,—'
Adds the cousin, while John's corns ail.
Or else, there's no wife in the case,
But the portrait's queen of the place,
Alone 'mid the other spoils
Of youth,—masks, gloves and foils,
And pipe-sticks, rose, cherry-tree, jasmine,
And the long whip, the tandem-lasher,
And the cast from a fist (' not, alas! mine,
'But my master's, the Tipton Slasher'),
And the cards where pistol-balls mark ace,
And a satin shoe used for cigar-case,
And the chamois-horns ('shot in the Chablais')
And prints—Rarey drumming on Cruiser,
And Sayers, our champion, the bruiser,
And the little edition of Rabelais:
Where a friend, with both hands in his pockets,
May saunter up close to examine it,
And remark a good deal of Jane Lamb in it,
'But the eyes are half out of their sockets;
'That hair's not so bad, where the gloss is,
'But they've made the girl's nose a proboscis:
' Jane Lamb, that we danced with at Vichy!
' What, is not she Jane ? Then, who is she ?'

All that I own is a print,
An etching, a mezzotint;
'Tis a study, a fancy, a fiction,
Yet a fact (take my conviction)
Because it has more than a hint
Of a certain face, I never
Saw elsewhere touch or trace of
In women I've seen the face of:
Just an etching, and, so far, clever.

I keep my prints, an imbroglio,
Fifty in one portfolio.
When somebody tries my claret,
We turn round chairs to the fire,
Chirp over days in a garret,
Chuckle o'er increase of salary,
Taste the good fruits of our leisure,
Talk about pencil and lyre,
And the National Portrait Gallery:
Then I exhibit my treasure.
After we've turned over twenty,
And the debt of wonder my crony owes
Is paid to my Marc Antonios,
He stops me—*'Festina lentil*
'What's that sweet thing there, the etching?'
How my waistcoat-strings want stretching,
How my cheeks grow red as tomatos,
How my heart leaps! But hearts, after leaps, ache.

'By the by, you must take, for a keepsake,
'That other, you praised, of Volpato's.'
The fool! would he try a flight further and say—
He never saw, never before to-day,
What was able to take his breath away,
A face to lose youth for, to occupy age
With the dream of, meet death with,—why, I'll not engage
But that, half in a rapture and half in a rage,
I should toss him the thing's self—"Tis only a duplicate,
*A thing of no value! Take it, I supplicate!'

MR. SLUDGE, 'THE MEDIUM'

Now, don't, sir! Don't expose me! Just this once!
This was the first and only time, I'll swear,—
Look at me,—see, I kneel,—the only time,
I swear, I ever cheated,—yes, by the soul
Of Her who hears—(your sainted mother, sir!)
All, except this last accident, was truth—
This little kind of slip!—and even this,
It was your own wine, sir, the good champagne,
(I took it for Catawba, you're so kind)
Which put the folly in my head!

'Get up?'
You still inflict on me that terrible face?
You show no mercy?—Not for Her dear sake,
The sainted spirit's, whose soft breath even now
Blows on my cheek—(don't you feel something, sir?)
You'll tell?

Go tell, then! Who the devil cares
What such a rowdy chooses to . . .
Aie—aie—aie!
Please, sir! your thumbs are through my windpipe, sir!
Ch—ch.'

Well, sir, I hope you've done it now!
Oh Lord! I little thought, sir, yesterday,
When your departed mother spoke those words
Ofpeace through me, and moved you, sir, so much,
You gave me—(very kind it was of you)
These shirt-studs—(better take them back again,
Please, sir)—yes, little did I think so soon
A trifle of trick, all through a glass too much
Of his own champagne, would change my best of friends
Into an angry gentleman!

Though, 'twas wrong.
I don't contest the point; your anger's just:
Whatever put such folly in my head,
I know 'twas wicked of me. There's a thick
Dusk undeveloped spirit (I've observed)
Owes me a grudge—a negro's, I should say,
Or else an Irish emigrant's; yourself
Explained the case so well last Sunday, sir,
When we had summoned Franklin to clear up
A point about those shares i' the telegraph:
Ay, and he swore... or might it be Tom Paine?. . .
Thumping the table close by where I crouched,
He'd do me soon a mischief: that's come true!
Why, now your face clears! I was sure it would!
Then, this one time . . . don't take your hand away,
Through your's I surely kiss your mother's hand . . .
You'll promise to forgive me?—or, at least,
Tell nobody of this? Consider, sir!
What harm can mercy do ? Would but the shade
Of the venerable dead-one just vouchsafe
A rap or tip! What bit of paper's here?
Suppose we take a pencil, let her write,
Make the least sign, she urges on her child
Forgiveness? There now! Eh? Oh! 'Twas your foot,
And not a natural creak, sir?

Answer, then!
Once, twice, thrice . . . see, I'm waiting to say 'thrice!'
All to no use? No sort of hope for me?
It's all to post to Greeley's newspaper?

What? If I told you all about the tricks?
Upon my soul!—the whole truth, and nought else,
And how there's been some falsehood—for your part,
Will you engage to pay my passage out,
And hold your tongue until I'm safe on board?
England's the place, not Boston—no offence!
I see what makes you hesitate: don't fear I
I mean to change my trade and cheat no more,
Yes, this time really it's upon my soul!
Be my salvation!—under Heaven, of course.
I'll tell some queer things. Sixty Vs muct do.
A trifle, though, to start with! We'll refer
The question to this table?

How you're changed!
Then split the difference; thirty more, we'll say.
Ay, but you leave my presents! Else I'll swear
'Twas all through those: you wanted youra again,
So, picked a quarrel with me, to get them back!
Tread on a worm, it turns, sir! If I turn..
Your fault! 'Tis you'll have forced mer. Who's obliged
To give up life yet try no self-defence?
At all events, I'll run the risk. Eh?

Done!
May I sit, sir? This dear old table, now!
Please, sir, a-parting egg-nogg and cigar!
I've been so happy with you! Nice stuffed chairs,
And sympathetic sideboards; what an end
To all the instructive evenings! (It's alight.)
Well, nothing lasts, as Bacon came and said.
Here goes,—but keep your temper, or I'll scream!

Fol-Iol-the-rido-liddle-iddle-ol!
You see, sir, it's your own fault more than mine;
It's all your fault, you curious gentlefolk!
You're prigs,—excuse me,—like to look so spry,
So clever, while you cling by half a claw
To the perch whereon you puff yourselves at roost,
Such piece of self-conceit as serves for perch
Because you chose it, so it must be safe.
Oh, otherwise you're sharp enough! You spy
Who slips, who slides, who holds by help of wing,
Wanting real foothold,—who can't keep upright
On the other perch, your neighbour chose, not you:
There's no outwitting you respecting him!
For instance, men love money—that, you know
And what men do to gain it: well, suppose
A poor lad, say a help's son in your house,
Listening at keyholes, hears the company
Talk grand of dollars, V-notes, and so forth,
How hard they are to get, how good to hold,
How much they buy,—if, suddenly, in pops he—
'/'ve got a V-note!'—what do you say to him?
What's your first word which follows your last kick?
'Where did you steal it, rascal?' That's because
He finds you, fain would fool you, ofFyour perch,
Not on the special piece of nonsense, sir,
Elected your parade-ground: let him try
Lies to the end of the list,—' He picked *it* up,
'His cousin died and left it him by will,
'The President flung it to him, riding by,
'An actress trucked it for a curl of his hair,
'He dreamed of luck and found his shoe enriched,
[4] He dug up clay, and out of clay made gold'—
How would you treat such possibilities?
Would not you, prompt, investigate the case
With cow-hide? *Lies, lies, lies,' you'd shout: and why?
Which of the stories might not prove mere truth?
This last, perhaps, that clay was turned to coin!
Let's see. now, give him me to speak for

How many of your rare philosophers,
In plaguy books I've had to dip into,
Believed gold could be made thus, saw it made
And made it ? Oh, with such philosophers
You're on your best behaviour! While the lad—
With him, in a trice, you settle likelihoods,
Nor doubt a moment how he got his prize:
In his case, you hear, judge and execute,
All in a breath: so would most men of sense.

But let the same lad hear you talk as grand
At the same keyhole, you and company,
Of signs and wonders, the invisible world;
How wisdom scouts our vulgar unbelief
More than our vulgarest credulity;
How good men have desired to see a ghost,
What Johnson used to say, what Wesley did,
Mother Goose thought, and fiddle-diddle-dee:—
If he break in with, 'Sir, *I* saw a ghost!'
Ah, the ways change! He finds you perched and prim;
It's a conceit of yours that ghosts may be:
There's no talk now of cow-hide. 'Tell it out!
'Don't fear us! Take your time and re-collect!
' Sit down first: try a glass of wine, my boy!
'And, David, (is not that your Christian name?)
'Of all things, should this happen twice—it may—
'Be sure, while fresh in mind, you let us know!'
Does the boy blunder, blurt out this, blab that,
Break down in the other, as beginners will?
All's candour, all's considerateness—'No haste!
'Pause and collect yourself! We under-stand!
'That's the bad memory, or the natural shock,
'Or the unexplained *phenomena!*

Egad,
The boy takes heart of grace; finds, never fear,
The readiest way to ope your own heart wide,

Show—what I call your peacock-porch, pet post
To strut, and spread the tail, and squawk upon!
'Just as you thought, much as you might expect!
'There be more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,' . . .
And so on. Shall not David take the hint,
Grow bolder, stroke you down at quickened rate?
If he ruffle a feather, it's' Gently, patiently!
* Manifestations are so weak at first!
'Doubting, moreover, kills them, cuts all short,
'Cures with a vengeance!'

There, sir, that's your style!
You and your boy—such pains bestowed on him,
Or any headpiece of the average worth,
To teach, say, Greek, would perfect him apace,
Make him a Person (' Porson ?' thank you, sir!)
Much more, proficient in the art of lies.
You never leave the lesson! Fire alight,
Catch you permitting *it* to die! You've friends;
There's no withholding knowledge,—least from those
Apt to look elsewhere for their souls' supply:
Why should not you parade your lawful prize?
Who finds a picture, digs a medal up,
Hits on a first edition,—he henceforth
Gives it his name, grows notable: how much more,
Who ferrets out a 'medium'? 'David's yours,
'You highly-favoured man? Then, pity souls
'Less privileged! Allow us share your luck!'
So, David holds the circle, rules the roast,
Narrates the vision, peeps in the glass ball,
Sets-to the spirit-writing, hears the raps,
As the case may be.

Now mark! To be precise—
Though I say, 'lies' all these, at this first stage,
'Tis just for science' sake: I call such grubs
By the name of what they'll turn to, dragonflies.
Strictly, it's what good people style untruth;
But yet, so far, not quite the full-grown thing:
It's fancying, fable-making, nonsense-work—
What never meant to be so very bad—
The knack of story-telling, brightening up
Each dull old bit of fact that drops its shine.
One does see somewhat when one shuts one's eyes,
If only spots and streaks; tables do tip
In the oddest way of themselves: and pens, good Lord,
Who knows if you drive them or they drive you?
'Tis but a foot in the water and out again;
Not that duck-under which decides your dive.
Note this, for it's important: listen why.

I'll prove, you push on David till he dives
And ends the shivering. Here's your circle, now:
Two-thirds of them, with heads like you their host,
Turn up their eyes, and cry, as you expect,
'Lord, who'd have thought it!' But there's always one
Looks wise, compassionately smiles, submits
'Of your veracity no kind of doubt,
'But—do you feel so certain of that boy's ?
'Really, I wonder! I confess myself
' More chary of my faith!' That's galling, sir!
What, he the investigator, he the sage,
When all's done? Then, you just have shut your eyes,
Opened your mouth, and gulped down David whole,
You! Terrible were such catastrophe!
So, evidence is redoubled, doubled again,
And doubled besides; once more, 'He heard, we heard,
'You and they heard, your mother and your wife,
'Your children and the stranger in your gates:
'Did they or did they not?' So much for him,
The black sheep, guest without the wedding-garb,
The doubting Thomas! Now's your turn to crow:
' He's kind to think you such a fool: Sludge cheats?
'Leave you alone to take precautions!'
Straight
The rest join chorus. Thomas stands abashed,
Sips silent some such beverage as this,
Considers if *it* be harder, shutting eyes
And gulping David in good fellowship,
Than going elsewhere, getting, in exchange,
With no egg-nogg to lubricate the food,
Some just as tough a morsel. Over the way,
Holds Captain Sparks his court: is it better there?
Have not you hunting-stories, scalping-scenes,

And Mexican War exploits to swallow plump _ .-„...
If you'd be free o* the stove-side, rocking-chair,
And trio of affable daughters?
Doubt succumbs!
Victory! All your circle's yours again!
Out of the clubbing of submissive wits,
David's performance rounds, each chink gets patched,
Every protrusion of a point's filed fine,
All's fit to set a-rolling round the world,
And then return to David finally,
Lies seven-feet thick about his first half-inch.
Here's a choice birth o' the supernatural,
Poor David's pledged to! You've employed no tool
That laws exclaim at, save the devil's own,
Yet screwed him into henceforth gulling you
To the top o' your bent,—all out of one half-he!

You hold, if there's one half or a hundredth part
Of a lie, that's his fault,—his be the penalty!
I dare say! You'd prove firmer in his place?
You'd find the courage,—that first flurry over.
That mild bit of romancing-work at end,—
To interpose with 'It gets serious, this;
' Must stop here. Sir, I saw no ghost at all.
* Inform your friends I made . . . well, fools of them,
'And found you ready-made. I've lived in clover
'These three weeks: take it out in kicks of me!'
I doubt it. Ask your conscience! Let me know,
Twelve months hence, with how few embellishments
You've told almighty Boston of this passage
Of arms between us, your first taste o' the foil
From Sludge who could not fence, sir! Sludge, your boy!
I lied, sir,—there! I got up from my gorge
On offal in the gutter, and preferred
Your canvas-backs: I took their carver's size,
Measured his modicum of intelligence,
Tickled him on the cockles of his heart
With a raven feather, and next week found myself
Sweet and clean, dining daintily, dizened smart,
Set on a stool buttressed by ladies' knees,
Every soft smiler calling me her pet,
Encouraging my story to uncoil
And creep out from *its* hole, inch after inch,
'How last night, I no sooner snug in bed,
' Tucked up, just as they *left* me,—than came raps!
'While a light whisked' . . . 'Shaped somewhat like a star?'
'Well, like some sort of stars, ma'am.'—
'So we thought!
'And any voice? Not yet? Try hard, next time,
'If you can't hear a voice; we think you may:
'At least, the Pennsylvanian "mediums" did.'
Oh, next time comes the voice! *Just as we hoped!'
Are not the hopers proud now, pleased, profuse
O' the natural acknowledgment?

Of course!
So, off we push, illy-oh-yo, trim the boat,
On we sweep with a cataract ahead,
We're midway to the Horseshoe: stop, who can.
The dance of bubbles gay about our prow!
Experiences become worth waiting for,
Spirits now speak up, tell their inmost mind,
And compliment the 'medium' properly,
Concern themselves about his Sunday coat,
See rings on his hand with pleasure. Ask yourself
How you'd receive a course of treats like these!
Why, take the quietest hack and stall him up,
Cram him with corn a month, then out with him
Among his mates on a bright April morn,
With the turf to tread; see if you find or no
A caper in him, if he bucks or bolts!
Much more a youth whose fancies sprout as rank
As toadstool-clump from melon-bed. 'Tis soon,
'Sirrah, you spirit, come, go, fetch and carry,
'Read, write, rap, rub-a-dub, and hang yourself!'
I'm spared all further trouble; all's arranged;
Your circle does my business; I may rave
Like an epileptic dervish in the books,
roam, fling myself flat, rend my clothes to shreds;
No matter: lovers, friends and countrymen
Will lay down spiritual laws, read wrong things right
By the rule o' reverse. If Francis Verulam

Styles himself Bacon, spells the name beside
With a *y* and a k, says he drew breath in York,
Gave up the ghost in Wales when Cromwell reigned,
(As, sir, we somewhat fear he was apt to say,
Before I found the useful book that knows)
Why, what harm 's done ? The circle smiles apace,
'It was not Bacon, after all, you see!
'We understand; the trick's but natural:
'Such spirits' individuality
'Is hard to put in evidence: they incline
'To gibe and jeer, these undeveloped sorts.
'You see, their world's much like a jail broke loose,
'While this of ours remains shut, bolted, barred,
'With a single window to it. Sludge, our friend,
'Serves as this window, whether thin or thick,
'Or stained or stainless; he's the medium-pane
'Through which, to see us and be seen, they peep:
'They crowd each other, hustle for a chance,
'Tread on their neighbour's kibes, play tricks enough!
'Does Bacon, tired of waiting, swerve aside?
'Up in his place jumps Barnum—"I'm your man,
"'I'll answer you for Bacon!" Try once more!'

Or else it's—'What's a "medium"? He's a means,
'Good, bad, indifferent, still the only means
'Spirits can speak by; he may misconceive,
'Stutter and stammer,—he's their Sludge and drudge,
'Take him or leave him; they must hold their peace,
'Or else, put up with having knowledge strained
'To half-expression through his ignorance.
'Suppose, the spirit Beethoven wants to shed
'New music he's brimful of; why, he turns
'The handle of this organ, grinds with Sludge,
'And what he poured in at the mouth o' the mill
'As a Thirty-third Sonata, (fancy now!)
'Comes from the hopper as bran-new Sludge, nought else,
'The Shakers' Hymn in G, with a natural F.
'Or the "Stars and Stripes" set to consecutive fourths.'

Sir, where's the scrape you did not help me through,
You that are wise? And for the fools, the folk
Who came to see,—the guests, (observe that word!)
Pray do you find guests criticize your wine,
Your furniture, your grammar, or your nose?
Then, why your 'medium'? What's the difference?
Prove your madeira red-ink and gamboge,—
Your Sludge, a cheat—then, somebody's a goose
For vaunting both as genuine. *Guests!' Don't fear!
They'll make a wry face, nor too much of that,
And leave you in your glory.

'No, sometimes
'They doubt and say as much!' Ay, doubt they do!
And what's the consequence? 'Of course they doubt'—
(You triumph)' that explains the hitch at once!
'Doubt posed our "medium," puddled his pure mind;
'He gave them back their rubbish: pitch chaff in,
'Could flour come out o' the honest mill?' So, prompt
Applaud the faithful: cases flock in point,
'How, when a mocker willed a "medium" once
'Should name a spirit James whose name was George,
'"James" cried the "medium,"—'twas the test of truth!'
In short, a hit proves much, a miss proves more.
Does this convince? The better: does it fail?
Time for the double-shotted broadside, then—
The grand means, last resource. Look black and big!
'You style us idiots, therefore—why stop short?
'Accomplices in rascality: this we hear
'In our own house, from our invited guest
'Found brave enough to outrage a poor boy
'Exposed by our good faith! Have you been heard?
'Now, then, hear us; one man's not quite worth twelve.
'You see a cheat? Here's some twelve see an ass

' Excuse me if I calculate: good day!'
Out slinks the sceptic, all the laughs explode. . . . . .
Sludge waves his hat in triumph!

Or—he don't.
There's something in real truth (explain who can!)
One casts a wistful eye at, like the horse
Who mopes beneath stuffed hay-racks and won't munch
Because he spies a corn-bag: hang that truth,
It spoils all dainties proffered in its place!
I've felt at times when, cockered, cosseted
And coddled by the aforesaid company,
Bidden enjoy their bullying,—never fear,
But o'er their shoulders spit at the flying man,—
I've felt a child; only, a fractious child
That, dandled soft by nurse, aunt, grandmother,
Who keep him from the kennel, sun and wind,
Good fun and wholesome mud,—enjoined be sweet,
And comely and superior,—eyes askance
The ragged sons o' the gutter at their game,
Fain would be down with them i' the thick o' the filth,
Making dirt-pies, laughing free, speaking plain,
And calling granny the grey old cat she is.
I've felt a spite, I say, at you. at them,
Huggings and humbug—gnashed my teeth to mark
A decent dog pass! It's too bad, I say,
Ruining a soul so!

But what's 'so,' what's fixed,
Where may one stop? Nowhere! The cheating's nursed
Out of the lying, softly and surely spun
To just your length, sir! I'd stop soon enough:
But you're for progress. 'AH old, nothing new?
'Only the usual talking through the mouth,
'Or writing by the hand ? I own, I thought
"This would develop, grow demonstrable,
'Make doubt absurd, give figures we might see,
'Flowers we might touch. There's no one doubts you, Sludge!
'You dream the dreams, you see the spiritual sights,
'The speeches come in your head, beyond dispute.
'Still, for the sceptics' sake, to stop all mouths,
' We want some outward manifestation!—well,
'The Pennsylvanians gained such; why not Sludge?
'He may improve with time!'

Ay, that he may!
He sees his lot: there's no avoiding fate.
'Tis a trifle at first. 'Eh, David? Did you hear?
'You jogged the table, your foot caused the squeak,
'This time you're . .. joking, are you not, my boy?'
'N-n-no!'—and I'm done for, bought and sold henceforth.
The old good easy jog-trot way, the... eh?
The... not so very false, as falsehood goes,
The spinning out and drawing fine, you know,—
Really mere novel-writing of a sort,
Acting, or improvising, make-believe,
Surely not downright cheatery,—any how,
'Tis done with and my lot cast; Cheat's my name:
The fatal dash of brandy in your tea
Has settled what you'll have the souchong's smack:
The caddy gives way to the dram-bottle.

Then, it's so cruel easy! Oh, those tricks
That can't be tricks, those feats by sleight of hand,
Clearly no common conjuror's!—no indeed!
A conjuror? Choose me any craft i' the world
A man puts hand to; and with six months' pains
I'll play you twenty tricks miraculous
To people untaught the trade: have you seen glass blown,
Pipes pierced? Why, just this biscuit that I chip,
Did you ever watch a baker toss one flat
To the oven? Try and do it! Take my word,
Practise but half as much, while limbs are lithe,
To turn, shove, tilt a table, crack your joints,
Manage your feet, dispose your hands aright,
Work wires that twitch the curtains, play the glove
At end o' your slipper,—then put out the lights
And .. . there, there, all you want you'll get, I hope!
I found it slip, easy as an old shoe.

Now, lights on table again! I've done my part,
You take my place while I give thanks and rest.
'Well, Judge Humgruffin, what's your verdict, sir?

'You, hardest head in the United States,—
'Did you detect a cheat here? Wait! Let's see!
'Just an experiment first, for candour's sake!
'I'll try and cheat you, Judge I The table tilts:
'Is it I that move it? Write! I'll press your hand:
'Cry when I push, or guide your pencil, Judge!'
Sludge still triumphant! 'That a rap, indeed?
'That, the real writing ? Very like a whale!
'Then, if, sir, you—a most distinguished man,
'And, were the Judge not here, I'd say,... no matter!
'Well, sir, if you fail, you can't take us in,—
'There's little fear that Sludge will!'

Won't he, ma'am?
But what if our distinguished host, like Sludge,
Bade God bear witness that he played no trick,
While you believed that what produced the raps
Was just a certain child who died, you know,
And whose last breath you thought your lips had felt?
Eh? That's a capital point, ma'am: Sludge begins
At your entreaty with your dearest dead,
The little voice set lisping once again,
The tiny hand made feel for yours once more,
The poor lost image brought back, plain as dreams,
Which image, if a word had chanced recall,
The customary cloud would cross your eyes,
Your heart return the old tick, pay its pang!
A right mood for investigation, this!
One's at one's ease with Saul and Jonathan,
Pompey and Caesar: but one's own lost child .. .
I wonder, when you heard the first clod drop
From the spadeful at the grave-side, felt you free
To investigate who twitched your funeral scarf
Or brushed your flounces? Then, it came of course
You should be stunned and stupid; then, (how else?)
Your breath stopped with your blood, your brain struck work.
But now, such causes fail of such effects,
All's changed,—the little voice begins afresh,
Yet you, calm, consequent, can test and try
And touch the truth. 'Tests? Didn't the creature tell
'Its nurse's name, and say it lived six years,
'And rode a rocking-horse? Enough of tests!
'Sludge never could learn that!'

He could not, eh?
You compliment him. 'Could not?' Speak for yourself!
I'd like to know the man I ever saw
Once,—never mind where, how, why, when,—once saw,
Of whom I do not keep some matter in mind
He'd swear I 'could not' know, sagacious soul!
What ? Do you live in this world's blow of blacks,
Palaver, gossipry, a single hour
Nor find one smut has settled on your nose,
Of a smut's worth, no more, no less?—one fact
Out of the drift of facts, whereby you learn
What someone was, somewhere, somewhen, somewhy?
You don't tell folk—'See what has stuck to me!
'Judge Humgruffin, our most distinguished man,
'Your uncle was a tailor, and your wife
'Thought to have married Miggs, missed him, hit you!'—
Do you, sir, though you see him twice a-week?
'No,' you reply, 'what use retailing it?
'Why should I?' But, you see, one day you *should,*
Because one day there's much use,—when this fact
Brings you the Judge upon both gouty knees
Before the supernatural; proves that Sludge
Knows, as you say, a thing he 'could not' know:
Will not Sludge thenceforth keep an outstretched face
The way the wind drives?

'Could not!' Look you now,
I'll tell you a story! There's a whiskered chap,
A foreigner, that teaches music here
And gets his bread,—knowing no better way:
He says, the fellow who informed of him
And made him fly his country and fall West

Was a hunchback cobbler, sat, stitched soles and,sang,
In some outlandish place, the city Rome,
In a cellar by their Broadway, all day long;
Never asked questions, stopped to listen or look,
Nor lifted nose from lapstone; let the world
Roll round his three-legged stool, and news run in
The ears he hardly seemed to keep pricked up.
Well, that man went on Sundays, touched his pay,
And took his praise from government, you see;
For something like two dollars every week,
He'd engage tell you some one little thing
Of some one man, which led to many more,
(Because one truth leads right to the world's end)
And make you that man's master—when he dined
And on what dish, where walked to keep his health
And to what street. His trade was, throwing thus
His sense out, like an ant-eater's long tongue,
Soft, innocent, warm, moist, impassible,
And when 'twas crusted o'er with creatures —slick,
Their juice enriched his palate. ' Could not Sludge!'

I'll go yet a step further, and maintain,
Once the imposture plunged its proper depth
I the rotten of your natures, all of you,—
(If one's not mad nor drunk, and hardly then)
It's impossible to cheat—that's, be found out!
Go tell your brotherhood this first slip of mine,
AH to-day's tale, how you detected Sludge,
Behaved unpleasantly, till he was fain confess,
And so has come to grief! You'll find, I think,
Why Sludge still snaps his fingers in your face.
There now, you've told them! What's their prompt reply?
' Sir, did that youth confess he had cheated me,
'I'd disbelieve him. He may cheat at times;
'That's in the "medium"-nature, thus they're made,
'Vain and vindictive, cowards, prone to scratch.
*And so all cats are; still, a cat's the beast
' You coax the strange electric sparks from out.
'By rubbing back its fur; not so a dog,
'Nor lion, nor lamb: 'tis the cat's nature, sir!
' Why not the dog's? Ask God, who made them beasts!
' D'ye think the sound, the nicely-balanced man
'(Like me'—aside)—'like you yourself,' —(aloud)
' —He's stuff to make a " medium " ? Bless your soul,
' 'Tis these hysteric, hybrid half-and-halfs,
' Equivocal, worthless vermin yield the fire!
'We take such as we find them, 'ware their tricks,
'Wanting their service. Sir, Sludge took in you—
'How, I can't say, not being there to watch:
'He was tried, was tempted by your easiness,—
'He did not take in me!'

Thank you for Sludge!
I'm to be grateful to such patrons, eh,
When what you hear's my best word? 'Tis a challenge
'Snap at all strangers, half-tamed prairie-dog,
'So you cower duly at your keeper's beck!
'Cat, show what claws were made for, muffling them
'Only to me! Cheat others if you can,
'Me, if you dare!* And, my wise sir, I dared—
Did cheat you first, made you cheat others next,
And had the help o' your vaunted manliness
To bully the incredulous. You used me?
Have not I used you, taken full revenge,
Persuaded folk they knew not their own name,
And straight they'd own the error! Who was the fool
When, to an awe-struck wide-eyed open-mouthed
Circle of sages, Sludge would introduce
Milton composing baby-rhymes, and Locke
Reasoning in gibberish, Homer writing Greek
In noughts and crosses, Asaph setting psalms
To crotchet and quaver ? I've made a spirit squeak
In sham voice for a minute, then outbroke
Bold in my own, defying the imbeciles—
Have copied some ghost's pothooks, half a page,
Then ended with my own scrawl undisguised.

'All right! The ghost was merely using Sludge,
'Suiting itself from his imperfect stock!'
Don't talk of gratitude to me! For what?
For being treated as a showman's ape,
Encouraged to be wicked and make sport,
Fret or sulk, grin or whimper, any mood
So long as the ape be in it and no man—
Because a nut pays every mood alike.
Curse your superior, superintending sort,
Who, since you hate smoke, send up boys that climb
To cure your chimney, bid a 'medium' lie
To sweep you truth down! Curse your women too,
Your insolent wives and daughters, that fire up
Or faint away if a male hand squeeze theirs,
Yet, to encourage Sludge, may play with Sludge
As only a' medium,' only the kind of thing
They must humour, fondle... oh, to misconceive
Were too preposterous! But I've paid them out!
They've had their wish—called for the naked truth,
And in she tripped, sat down and bade them stare:
They had to blush a little and forgive!
'The fact is, children talk so; in next world
'All our conventions are reversed,—perhaps
'Made light of: something like old prints, my dear!
'The Judge has one, he brought from Italy,
'A metropolis in the background,—o'er a bridge,
*A team of trotting roadsters,—cheerful groups
'Of wayside travellers, peasants at their work,
'And, full in front, quite unconcerned, why not?
'Three nymphs conversing with **a** cavalier,
'And never a rag among them:" fine," folk cry—
'And heavenly manners seem not much unlike!
'Let Sludge go on; we'll fancy it's in print!'
If such as came for wool, sir, went home shorn,
Where is the wrong I did them? 'Twas their choice;
They tried the adventure, ran the risk, tossed up
And lost, as some one's sure to do in games;
They fancied I was made to lose,—smoked glass
Useful to spy the sun through, spare their eyes:
And had I proved a red-hot iron plate
They thought to pierce, and, for their pains, grew blind,
Whose were the fault but theirs? While, as things go,
Their loss amounts to gain, the more's the shame!
They've had their peep into the spirit-world,
And all this world may know it! They've fed fat
Their self-conceit which else had starved: what chance
Save this, of cackling o'er a golden egg
And compassing distinction from the flock,
Friends of a feather? Well, they paid for it,
And not prodigiously; the price o' the play,
Not counting certain pleasant interludes,
Was scarce a vulgar play's worth. When you buy
The actor's talent, do you dare propose
For his soul beside? Whereas my soul you buy!
Sludge acts Macbeth, obliged to be Macbeth,
Or you'll not hear his first word! Just go through
That slight formality, swear himself's the Thane,
And thenceforth he may strut and fret his hour,
Spout, spawl, or spin his target, no one cares!
Why hadn't I leave to play tricks, Sludge as Sludge?
Enough of it all! I've wiped out scores with you—
Vented your fustian, let myself be streaked
Like tom-fool with your ochre and carmine,
Worn patchwork your respectable fingers sewed
To metamorphose somebody,—yes, I've earned
My wages, swallowed down my bread of shame,
And shake the crumbs off—where but in your face?

As for religion—why, I served it, sir?
I'll stick to that! With my *phenomena*
I laid the atheist sprawling on his back,
Propped up Saint Paul, or, at least, Swedenborg!
In fact, it's just the proper way to baulk
These troublesome fellows—liars, one and all,
Are not these sceptics? Well, to baffle them,
No use in being squeamish: lie yourself!
Erect your buttress just as wide *o** the line,
Your side, as they build up **the wall** on theirs;

Where both meet, midway in a point, is truth
High overhead: so, take your room, pile bricks,
Lie! Oh, there's titillation in all shame!
What snow may lose in white, snow gains in rose!
Miss Stokes turns—Rahab,—nor a bad exchange!
Glory be on her, for the good she wrought,
Breeding belief anew 'neath ribs of death,
Browbeating now the unabashed before,
Ridding us of their whole life's gathered straws
By a live coal from the altar! Why, of old,
Great men spent years and years in writing books
To prove we've souls, and hardly proved it then:
Miss Stokes with her live coal, for you and me!
Surely, to this good issue, all was fair—
Not only fondling Sludge, but, even suppose
He let escape some spice of knavery,—well,
In wisely being blind to it! Don't you praise
Nelson for setting spy-glass to blind eye
And saying... what was it—that he could not see
The signal he was bothered with? Ay, indeed!

I'll go beyond: there's a real love of a lie,
Liars find ready-made for lies they make,
As hand for glove, or tongue for sugar-plum.
At best, 'tis never pure and full belief;
Those furthest in the quagmire,—don't suppose
They strayed there with no warning, got no chance
Of a filth-speck in their face, which they clenched teeth,
Bent brow against! Be sure they had their doubts,
And fears, and fairest challenges to try
The floor o' the seeming solid sand! But no!
Their faith was pledged, acquaintance too apprised,
All but the last step ventured, kerchiefs waved,
And Sludge called 'pet': 'twas easier inarching on
To the promised land; join those who, Thursday next,
Meant to meet Shakespeare; better follow Sludge-
Prudent, oh sure!—on the alert, how else?—
But making for the mid-bog, all the same!
To hear your outcries, one would think I caught
Miss Stokes by the scruff o' the neck, and pitched her flat,
Foolish-face-foremost! Hear these simpletons,
That's all I beg, before my work's begun,
Before I've touched them with my finger-tip!
Thus they await me (do but listen, now!
It's reasoning, this is,—I can't imitate
The baby voice, though) 'In so many tales
'Must be some truth, truth though a pin-point big,
'Yet, some: a single man's deceived, perhaps—
'Hardly, a thousand: to suppose one cheat
'Can gull all these, were more miraculous far
'Than aught we should confess a miracle'—
And so on. Then the Judge sums up—(it's rare)—
Bids you respect the authorities that leap
To the judgment-seat at once,—why don't you note
The limpid nature, the unblemished life,
The spotless honour, indisputable sense
Of the first upstart with his story? What—
Outrage a boy on whom you ne'er till now
Set eyes, because he finds raps trouble him?

Fools, these are: ay, and how of their opposites
Who never did, at bottom of their hearts,
Believe for a moment?—Men emasculate,
Blank of belief, whoplayed,aseunuchsuse,
With superstition safely,—cold of blood,
Who saw what made for them i' the mystery,
Took their occasion, and supported Sludge
—As proselytes? No, thank you, far too shrewd!
—But promisers of fair play, encouragers
O' the claimant; who in candour needs must hoist
Sludge up on Mars' Hill, get speech out of Sludge
To carry off, criticize, and cant about!
Didn't Athens treat Saint Paul so?—at any rate,
It's 'a new thing' philosophy fumbles at.
Then there's the other picker-out of pearl
From dung-heaps,—ay, your literary man,
Who draws on his kid gloves to deal with Sludge
Daintily and discreetly,—shakes a dust
O' the doctrine, flavours thence, he well knows how,
The narrative or the novel,—half-believes,
All for the book's sake, and the public's stare,
And the cash that's God's sole solid in this world!

Look at him! Try to be too bold, too gross
For the master! Not you! He's the man for muck;
Shovel it forth, full-splash, he'll smooth your brown
Into artistic richness, never fear!
Find him the crude stuff; when you recognize
Your lie again, you'll doff your hat to it,
Dressed out for company! 'For company,'
I say, since there's the relish of success:
Let all pay due respect, call the lie truth,
Save the soft silent smirking gentleman
Who ushered in the stranger: you must sigh
'How melancholy, he, the only one
'Fails to perceive the bearing of the truth
'Himself gave birth to!'—There's the triumph's smack!
That man would choose to see the whole world roll
I' the slime o' the slough, so he might touch the tip
Of his brush with what I call the best of browns—
Tint ghost-tales, spirit-stories, past the power
Of the outworn umber and bistre!

Yet I think
There's a more hateful form of foolery—
The social sage's, Solomon of saloons
And philosophic diner-out, the fribble
Who wants a doctrine for a chopping-block
To try the edge of his faculty upon,
Prove how much common sense he'll hack and hew
I' the critical minute 'twixt the soup and fish!
These were my patrons: these, and the like of them
Who, rising in my soul now, sicken it,—
These I have injured! Gratitude to these?
The gratitude, forsooth, of a prostitute
To the greenhorn and the bully—friends of hers,
From the wag that wants the queer jokes for his club,
To the snuff-box-decorator, honest man.
Who just was at his wits' end where to find
So genial a Pasiphae! All and each
Pay, compliment, protect from the police:
And how she hates them for their pains, like me!
So much for my remorse at thanklessness
Toward a deserving public!

But, for God?
Ay, that's a question! Well, sir, since you press—
(How you do tease the whole thing out of me!
I don't mean you, you know, when I say 'them':
Hate you, indeed! But that Miss Stokes, that Judge!
Enough, enough—with sugar: thank you, sir!)
Now for it, then! Will you believe me, though?
You've heard what I confess; I don't unsay
A single word: I cheated when I could,
Rapped with my toe-joints, set sham hands at work,
Wrote down names weak in sympathetic ink,
Rubbed odic lights with ends of phosphor-match,
And all the rest; believe that: believe this,
By the same token, though it seem to set
The crooked straight again, unsay the said,
Stick up what I've knocked down; I can't help that:
It's truth! I somehow vomit truth to-day.
This trade of mine—I don't know, can't be sure
But there was something in it, tricks and all!
Really, I want to light up my own mind.
They were tricks,—true, but what I mean to add
Is also true. First,—don't it strike you, sir?
Go back to the beginning,—the first fact
We're taught is, there's a world beside this world,
With spirits, not mankind, for tenantry;
That much within that world once sojourned here,
That all upon this world will visit there,
And therefore that we, bodily here below,
Must have exactly such an interest
In learning what may be the ways o' the world
Above us, as the disembodied folk
Have (by all analogic likelihood)
In watching how things go in the old home
With us, their sons, successors, and what not.
Oh yes, with added powers probably,
Fit for the novel state,—old loves grown pure,
Old interests understood aright,—they watch!
Eyes to see, ears *to* hear, and hands to help,
Proportionate to advancement: they're ahead,
That's all—do what we do, but noblier done—
Use plate, whereas we eat our meals off delf,
(To use a figure).

Concede that, and I ask
Next what may be the mode of intercourse

Between us men here, and those once-men there?
First comes the Bible's"speech; then, history
With the supernatural element,—you know—
All that we sucked in with our mothers' milk,
Grew up with, got inside of us at last,
Till it's found bone of bone and flesh of flesh.
See now, we start with the miraculous,
And know it used to be, at all events:
What's the first step we take, and can't but take,
In arguing from the known to the obscure ?
Why this: 'What was before, may be to-day.
' Since Samuel's ghost appeared to Saul, of course
'My brother's spirit may appear to me.'
Go tell your teacher that! What's his reply?
What brings a shade of doubt for the first time
O'er his brow late so luminous with faith?
'Such things have been,' says he, 'and there's no doubt
' Such things may be: but I advise mistrust
'Of eyes, ears, stomach, and, more than all, your brain,
' Unless it be of your great-grandmother,
'Whenever they propose a ghost to you!'
The end is, there's a composition struck;
'Tis settled, we've some way of intercourse
Just as in Saul's time; only, different:
How, when and where, precisely,—find it out!
I want to know, then, what's so natural
As that a person born into this world
And seized on by such teaching, should begin
With firm expectancy and a frank look-out
For his own allotment, his especial share
I' the secret,—his particular ghost, in fine?
I mean, a person born to look that way,
Since natures differ: take the painter-sort.
One man lives fifty years in ignorance
Whether grass be green or red,—'No kind of eye
' For colour,' say you; while another picks
And puts away even pebbles, when a child,
Because of bluish spots and pinky veins—
'Give him forthwith a paint-box!' Just the same
Was I born ... 'medium,' you won't let me say,—
Well, seer of the supernatural
Everywhen, everyhow and everywheie,—
Will that do?

Only,—what in the rest you style their sense,
Instinct, blind reasoning but imperative,
This, betimes, taught them the old world had one law
And ours another:' New world, new laws,' cried they:
'None but old laws, seen everywhere at work,'
Cried I, and by their help explained my life
The Jews' way, still a working way to me.
Ghosts made the noises, fairies waved the lights,
Or Santa Claus slid down on New Year's Eve
And stuffed with cakes the stocking at my bed,
Changed the worn shoes, rubbed clean the fingered slate
O' the sum that came to grief the day before.

This could not last long: soon enough I found
Who had worked wonders thus, and to what end:
But did I find all easy, like my mates?
Henceforth no supernatural any more?
Not a whit: what projects the billiard-balls?
'A cue,' you answer: 'Yes, a cue,' said I;
'But what hand, off the cushion, moved the cue?
'What unseen agency, outside the world,
'Prompted its puppets to do this and that,
'Put cakes and shoes and slates into their mind,
'These mothers and aunts, nay even schoolmasters ?'
Thus high I sprang, and there have settled since.
Just so I reason, in sober earnest still,
About the greater godsends, what you call
The serious gains and losses of my life.
What do I know or care about your world'
Which either is or seems to be? This snap'
O' my fingers, sir! My care is for myself;
Myself am whole and sole reality
Inside a raree-show and a market-mob
Gathered about it: that's the use of things..
'Tis easy saying they serve vast purposes,
Advantage their grand selves: be it true or false,
Each thing may have two uses. What's a star?
A world, or a world's sun: doesn't it serve
As taper also, time-piece, weather-glass,
And almanac? Are stars not set for signs
When we should shear our sheep, sow corn, prune trees?
The Bible says so.

I and all such boys of course
Started with the same stock of Bible-truth;

Well, I add one use
To all the acknowledged uses, and declares

If I spy Charles's Wain at twelve to-night,
It warns me, 'Go, nor lose another day,
'And have your hair cut, Sludge!' You laugh: and why?
Were such a sign too hard for God to give?
No: but Sludge seems too little for such grace:
Thank you, sir! So you think, so does not Sludge!
When you and good men gape at Providence,
Go into history and bid us mark
Not merely powder-plots prevented, crowns
Kept on kings' heads by miracle enough,
But private mercies—oh, you've told me, sir,
Of such interpositions! How yourself
Once, missing on a memorable day
Your handkerchief—just setting out, you know,—
You must return to fetch it, lost the train,
And saved your precious self from what befell
The thirty-three whom Providence forgot.
You tell, and ask me what I think of this?
Well, sir, I think then, since you needs must know,
What matter had you and Boston city to boot
Sailed skyward, like burnt onion-peelings? Much
To you, no doubt: for me—undoubtedly
The cutting of my hair concerns me more,
Because, however sad the truth may seem,
Sludge is of all-importance to himself.
You set apart that day in every year
For special thanksgiving, were a heathen else:
Well, I who cannot boast the like escape,
Suppose I said 'I don't thank Providence
'For my part, owing it no gratitude'?
'Nay, but you owe as much'—you'd tutor me,
'You, every man alive, for blessings gained
'In every hour o' the day, could you but know!
'I saw my crowning mercy: all have such,
* Could they but see!' Well, sir, why don't they see?
* Because they won't look,—or perhaps, they can't.'
Then, sir. suppose I can, and will, and do
Look, microscopically as is right,
Into each hour with its infinitude
Of influences at work to profit Sludge?
For that's the case: I've sharpened up my sight
To spy a providence in the fire's going out,
The kettle's boiling, the dime's sticking fast
Despite the hole i* the pocket. Call such facts
Fancies, too petty a work for Providence,
And those same thanks which you exact from me
Prove too prodigious payment: thanks for what,
If nothing guards and guides us little men?
No, no, sir! You must put away your pride,
Resolve to let Sludge into partnership!
I live by signs and omens: looked at the roof
Where the pigeons settle—'If the further bird,
'The white, takes wing first, I'll confess v/hen thrashed;
'Not, if the blue does'—so I said to myself
Last week, lest you should take me by surprise:
Off flapped the white,—and I'm confessing, sir!
Perhaps 'tis Providence's whim and way
With only me, i' the world: how can you tell?
'Because unlikely!' Was it likelier, now,
That this our one out of all worlds beside,
The what-d'you-call-'em millions, should be just
Precisely chosen to make Adam for,
And the rest o' the tale? Yet the tale's true, you know:
Such undeserving clod was graced so once;
Why not graced likewise undeserving Sludge?
Are we merit-mongers, flaunt we filthy rags?
All you can bring against my privilege
Is, that another way was taken with you,—
Which I don't question. It's pure grace, my luck:
I'm broken to the way of nods and winks,
And need no formal summoning. You've a help;
Holloa his name or whistle, clap your hands,
Stamp with your foot or pull the bell: all's one,
He understands you want him, here he comes.
Just so, I come at the knocking: you, sir, wait
The tongue o' the bell, nor stir before you catch
Reason's clear tingle, nature's clapper brisk,
Or that traditional peal was wont to cheer
Your mother's face turned heavenward. short of these
There's no authentic intimation, eh?
Well, when you hear, you'll answer them, start up
And stride into the presence, top of toe,
And there find Sludge beforehand, Sludge that sprang

At noise o' the knuckle on the partition-wall!
I think myself the more religious man.
Religion's all or nothing; it's no mere smile
O' contentment, sigh of aspiration, sir—
No quality o' the finelier-tempered clay
Like its whiteness or its lightness; rather, stuff
O' the very stuff, life of life, and self of self.
I tell you, men won't notice; when they do,
They'll understand. I notice nothing else:
I'm eyes, ears, mouth of me, one gaze and gape,
Nothing eludes me, everything's a hint,
Handle and help. It's all absurd, and yet
There's something in it all, I know: how much?
No answer! What does that prove? Man's still man,
Still meant for a poor blundering piece of work
When all's done; but, if somewhat's done, like this,
Or not done, is the case the same ? Suppose
I blunder in my guess at the true sense
O' the knuckle-summons, nine times out of ten,—
What if the tenth guess happen to be right ?
If the tenth shovel-load of powdered quartz
Yield me the nugget? I gather, crush, sift all,
Pass o'er the failure, pounce on the success.
To give you a notion, now—(let who wins, laugh!)
When first I see a man, what do I first ?
Why, count the letters which make up his name,
And as their number chances, even or odd,
Arrive at my conclusion, trim my course:
Hiram H. Horsefall is your honoured name,
And haven't I found a patron, sir, in you ?
* Shall I cheat this stranger ?' I take apple-pips,
Stick one in either canthus of my eye,
And if the left drops first—(your left, sir, stuck)
I'm warned, I let the trick alone this time.
You, sir, who smile, superior to such trash,
You judge of character by other rules:
Don't your rules sometimes fail you? Pray, what rule
Have you judged Sludge by hitherto?

Oh, be sure,
You, everybody blunders, just as I,
In simpler things than these by far! For see:
I knew two farmers,—one, a wiseacre
Who studied seasons, rummaged almanacs,
Quoted the dew-point, registered the frost,
And then declared, for outcome of his pains,
Next summer must be dampish: 'twas a drought.
His neighbour prophesied such drought would fall,
Saved hay and corn, made cent, per cent, thereby,
And proved a sage indeed: how came his lore?
Because one brindled heifer, late in March,
Stiffened her tail of evenings, and somehow
He got into his head that drought was meant!
I don't expect all men can do as much:
Such kissing goes by favour. You must take
A certain turn of mind for this,—a twist
I' the flesh, as well. Be lazily alive,
Open-mouthed, like my friend the ant-eater.
Letting all nature's loosely-guarded motes
Settle and, slick, be swallowed! Think yourself
The one i' the world, the one for whom the world
Was made, expect it tickling at your mouth!
Then will the swarm of busy buzzing flies,
Clouds of coincidence, break egg-shell, thrive,
Breed, multiply, and bring you food enough.

I can't pretend to mind your smiling, sir!
Oh, what you mean is this! Such intimate way,
Close converse, frank exchange of offices,
Strict sympathy of the immeasurably great
With the infinitely small, betokened here
By a course of signs and omens, raps and sparks,—
How does it suit the dread traditional text
O' the 'Great and Terrible Name' ? Shall the Heaven of Heavens
Stoop to such child's play?

Please, sir, go with me
A moment, and I'll try to answer you.
The '*Magnum et terribile*' (is that right?)
Well, folk began with this in the early day;
And all the acts they recognized in proof
Were thunders, lightnings, earthquakes, whirlwinds, dealt
Indisputably on men whose death they caused.
There, and there only, folk saw Providence
At work,—and seeing it, 'twas right enough
All heads should tremble, hands wring hands amain,
And knees knock hard together at the breath

O' the Name's first letter; why, the Jews, I'm told,
Won't write it down, no, to this very hour,
Nor speak aloud: you know best if't be so.
Each ague-fit of fear at end, they crept
(Because somehow people once born must live)
Out of the sound, sight, swing and sway o' the Name,
Into a corner, the dark rest of the world,
And safe space where as yet no fear had reached;
'Twas there they looked about them, breathed again,
And felt indeed at home, as we might say.
The current o' common things, the daily life,
This had their due contempt; no Name pursued
Man from the mountain-top where fires abide,
To his particular mouse-hole at its foot
Where he ate, drank, digested, lived in short:
Such was man's vulgar business, far too small
To be worth thunder: * small,' folk kept on, 'small,'
With much complacency in those great days!
A mote of sand, you know, a blade of grass—
What was so despicable as mere grass,
Except perhaps the life o' the worm or fly
Which fed there? These were 'small' and men were great.
Well, sir, the old way's altered somewhat since,
And the world wears another aspect now:
Somebody turns our spyglass round, or else
Puts a new lens in it: grass, worm, fly grow big:
We find great things are made of little things,
And little things go lessening till at last
Comes God behind them. Talk of mountains now?
We talk of mould that heaps the mountain, mites
That throng the mould, and God that makes the mites.
The Name comes close behind a stomach-cyst,
The simplest of creations, just a sac
That's mouth, heart, legs and belly at once, yet lives
And feels, and could do neither, we conclude,
If simplified still further one degree:
The small becomes the dreadful and immense!
Lightning, forsooth ? No word more upon that!
A tin-foil bottle, a strip of greasy silk,
With a bit of wire and knob of brass, and there's
Your dollar's-worth of lightning! But the cyst—
The life of the least of the little things?

No, no!
Preachers and teachers try another tack,
Come near the truth this time: they put aside
Thunder and lightning: ' That's mistake,' they cry,
'Thunderbolts fall for neither fright nor sport,
'But do appreciable good, like tides,
'Changes o' the wind, and other natural facts—
'" Good " meaning good to man, his body or soul.
'Mediate, immediate, all things minister
'To man,—that's settled: be our future text
'"We are His children!"' So, they now harangue
About the intention, the contrivance, all
That keeps up an incessant play of love,—
See the Bridgewater book.

Amen to it!
Well, sir, I put this question: I'm a child ?
I lose no time, but take you at your word:
How shall I act a child's part properly?
Your sainted mother, sir,—used you to live
With such a thought as this a-worrying you?
'She has it in her power to throttle me,
'Or stab or poison: she may turn me out,
'Or lock me in,—nor stop at this, to-day,
'But cut me off to-morrow from the estate
'I look for'—(long may you enjoy it, sir!)
'In brief, she may unchild the child I am.'
You never had such crotchets ? Nor have I!
Who, frank confessing childship from the first,
Cannot both fear and take my ease at once,
So, don't fear,—know what might be, well enough,
But know too, child-like, that it will not be,
At least in my case, mine, the son and heir
O' the kingdom, as yourself proclaim my style.
But do you fancy I stop short at this?
Wonder if suit and service, son and heir
Needs must expect, I dare pretend to find ?
If, looking for signs proper to such an one,
I straight perceive them irresistible?
Concede that homage is a son's plain right,
And, never mind the nods and raps and winks,
'Tis the pure obvious supernatural
Steps forward, does its duty: why, of course!

I have presentiments; my dreams come true:
I fancy a frierícf stands" whistling all in white
Blithe as a boblink, and he's dead I learn.
I take dislike to a dog my favourite long,
And sell him; he goes mad next week and snaps.
I guess that stranger will turn up to-day
I have not seen these three years; there's his knock.
I wager ' sixty peaches on that tree !—
That I pick up a dollar in my walk,
I hat your wife's brother's cousin's name was George—
And win on all points. Oh, you wince at this?
You'd fain distinguish between gift and gift,
Washington's oracle and Sludge's itch
O' the elbow when at whist he ought to trump?
With Sludge it's too absurd? *Fine, draw the line*
Somewhere, but, sir, your somewhere is not mine I

Bless us, I'm turning poet! It's time to end.
How you have drawn me out, sir! All I ask
Is—am I heir or not heir? If I'm he,
Then, sir, remember, that same personage
(To judge by what we read i' the newspaper)
Requires, beside one nobleman in gold
To carry up and down his coronet,
Another servant, probably a duke,
To hold egg-nogg in readiness: why want
Attendance, sir, when helps in his father's house
Abound, I'd like to know?

Enough of talk!
My fault is that I tell too plain a truth.
Why, which of those who say they disbelieve,
Your clever people, but has dreamed his dream,
Caught his coincidence, stumbled on his fact
He can't explain, (he'll tell you smilingly)
Which he's too much of a philosopher
To count as supernatural, indeed,
So calls a puzzle and problem, proud of it:
Bidding you still be on your guard, you know,
Because one fact don't make a system stand,
Nor prove this an occasional escape
Of spirit beneath the matter: that's the way!
Just so wild Indians picked up, piece by piece,
The fact in California, the fine gold
That underlay the gravel—hoarded these.
But never made a system stand, nor dug!
So wise men hold out in each hollowed palm
A handful of experience, sparkling fact
They can't explain; and since their rest of life
Is all explainable, what proof in this?
Whereas I take the fact, the grain of gold,
And fling away the dirty rest of life,
And add this grain to the grain each fool has found
O' the million other such philosophers,—
Till I see gold, all gold and only gold.
Truth questionless though unexplainable,
And the miraculous proved the commonplace!
The other fools believed in mud, no doubt—
Failed to know gold they saw: was that so strange?
Are all men born to play Bach's fiddle-fugues,
'Time' with the foil in carte, jump their own height,
Cut the mutton with the broadsword, skate a five,
Make the red hazard with the cue, clip nails
While swimming, in five minutes row a mile,
Pull themselves three feet up with the left arm,
Do sums of fifty figures in their head,
And so on, by the scores of instances ?
The Sludge with luck, who sees the spiritual facts
His fellows strive and fail to see, may rank
With these, and share the advantage.

Ay, but share
The drawback! Think it over by yourself;
I have not heart, sir, and the fire's gone grey.
Defect somewhere compensates for success,
Everyone knows that. Oh, we're equals, sir!
The big-legged fellow has a little arm
And a less brain, though big legs win the race:
Do you suppose I 'scape the common lot?
Say, I was born with flesh so sensitive,
Soul so alert, that, practice helping both,
I guess what's going on outside the veil,
Just as a prisoned crane feels pairing-time
In the islands where his kind are, so must fall
To capering by himself some shiny night,
As if your back-yard were a plot of spice—
Thus am I 'ware o' the spirit-world: while you,
Blind as a beetle that way,—for amends,

Why, you can double fist and floor me, sir!
Ride that hot hardmouthed horrid horse of yours,
Laugh while it lightens, play with the great dog,
Speak your mind though it vex some friend to hear,
Never brag, never bluster, never blush,—
In short, you've pluck, when I'm a coward —there!
I know it, I can't help it,—folly or no,
I'm paralyzed, my hand's no more a hand,
Nor my head a head, in danger: you can smile
And change the pipe in your cheek. Your gift's not mine.
Would you swap for mine? No! but you'd ada my gift
To yours: I dare say! I too sigh at times,
Wish I were stouter, could tell truth nor flinch,
Kept cool when threatened, did not mind so much
Being dressed gaily, making strangers stare,
Eating nice things; when I'd amuse myself,
I shut my eyes and fancy in my brain
I'm—now the President, now Jenny Lind,
Now Emerson, now the Benicia Boy—
With all the civilized world a-wondering
And worshipping. I know it's folly and worse;
I feel such tricks sap, honeycomb the soul,
But I can't cure myself: despond, despair,
And then, hey, presto, there's a turn o' the wheel,
Under comes uppermost, fate makes full amends;
Sludge knows and sees and hears a hundred things
You all are blind to,—I've my taste of truth,
Likewise my touch of falsehood,—vice no doubt,
But you've your vices also: I'm content.

What, sir? You won't shake hands? 'Because I cheat!'
'You've found me out in cheating!' That's enough
To make an apostle swear! Why, when I cheat,
Mean to cheat, do cheat, and am caught in the act,
Are you, or, rather, am I sure o' the fact?
(There's verse again, but I'm inspired somehow.)
Well then I'm not sure! I may be, perhaps,
Free as a babe from cheating: how it began,
My gift,—no matter: what 'tis got to be
In the end now, that's the question; answer that!
Had I seen, perhaps, what hand was holding mine,
Leading me whither, I had died of fright:
So, I was made believe I led myself.
If I should lay a six-inch plank from roof
To roof, you would not cross the street, one step,
Even at your mother's summons: but, being shrewd,
If I paste paper on each side the plank
And swear 'tis solid pavement, why, you'll cross
Humming a tune the while, in ignorance
Beacon Street stretches a hundred feet below:
I walked thus, took the paper-cheat for stone.
Some impulse made me set a tiling o' the move
Which, started once, ran really by itself;
Beer flows thus, suck the siphon; toss the kite,
It takes the wind and floats of its own force.
Don't let truth's lump rot stagnant for the lack
Of a timely helpful lie to leaven it!
Put a chalk-egg beneath the clucking hen,
She'll lay a real one, laudably deceived,
Daily for weeks to come. I've told my lie,
And seen truth follow, marvels none of mine;
All was not cheating, sir, I'm positive!
I don't know if I move your hand sometimes
When the spontaneous writing spreads so far,
If my knee lifts the table all that height.
Why the inkstand don't fall off the desk a-tiit,
Why the accordion plays a prettier waltz
Than I can pick out on the piano-forte,
Why I speak so much more than I intend,
Describe so many things I never saw.
I tell you, sir. in one sense, I believe
Nothing at all,—that everybody can,
Will, and does cheat: but in another sense
I'm ready to believe my very self—
That every cheat's inspired, and every lie
Quick with a germ of truth.

You ask perhaps
Why I should condescend to trick at all
If I know a way without it? This is why!
There's a strange secret sweet self-sacrifice
In any desecration of one's soul
To a worthy end,—isn't it Herodotus
(I wish I could read Latin!) who describes
The single gift o' the land's virginity,
Demanded in those old Egyptian rites,
(I've but a hazy notion—help me, sir!)
For one purpose in the world, one day in a life,
One hour in a day—thereafter, purity,
And a veil thrown o'er the past for evermore!
Well, now, they understand a many things

Down by Nile city, or wherever it was!
I've always vowed, after-the minute's lie,
And the end's gain,—truth should be mine henceforth.
This goes to the root o' the matter, sir,—this plain
Plump fact: accept it and unlock with it
The wards of many a puzzle!

Or, finally,
Why should I set so fine a gloss on things?
What need I care ? I cheat in self-defence,
And there's my answer to a world of cheats!
Cheat? To be sure, sir! What's the world worth else?
Who takes it as he finds, and thanks his stars ?
Don't it want trimming, turning, furbishing up
And polishing over? Your so-styled great men,
Do they accept one truth as truth is found,
Or try their skill at tinkering? What's your world?
Here are you born, who are, I'll say at once,
Of the luckiest kind, whether in head and heart,
Body and soul, or all that helps them both.
Well, now, look back: what faculty of yours
Came to its full, had ample justice done
By growing when rain fell, biding its time,
Solidifying growth when earth was dead,
Spiring up, broadening wide, in seasons due?
Never! You shot up and frost nipped you off,
Settled to sleep when sunshine bade you sprout;
One faculty thwarted its fellow: at the end,
All you boast is 'I had proved a topping tree
'In other climes'—yet this was the right clime
Had you foreknown the seasons. Young, you've force
Wasted like well-streams: old,—oh, then indeed,
Behold a labyrinth of hydraulic pipes
Through which you'd play off wondrous waterwork;
Only, no water's left to feed their play.
Young,—you've a hope, an aim, a love: it's tossed
And crossed and lost: you struggle on, some spark
Shut in your heart against the puffs around,
Through cold and pain; these in due time subside,
Now then for age's triumph, the hoarded light
You mean to loose on the altered face of things,—
Up with it on the tripod! It's extinct.
Spend your life's remnant asking, which was best,
Light smothered up that never peeped forth once,
Or the cold cresset with full leave to shine ?
Well, accept this too,—seek the fruit of it
Not in enjoyment, proved a dream on earth,
But knowledge, useful for a second chance,
Another life,—you've lost this world—you've gained
Its knowledge for the next. What knowledge, sir,
Except that you know nothing? Nay, you doubt
Whether 'twere better have made you man or brute,
If aught be true, if good and evil clash.
No foul, no fair, no inside, no outside,
There's your world!

Give it me! I slap it brisk
With harlequin's pasteboard sceptre: what's it now?
Changed like a rock-flat, rough with rusty weed,
At first wash-over o' the returning wave!
All the dry dead impracticable stuff
Starts into life and light again; this world
Pervaded by the influx from the next.
I cheat, and what's the happy consequence?
You find full justice straightway dealt you out,
Each want supplied, each ignorance set at ease,
Each folly fooled. No life-long labour now
As the price of worse than nothing! No mere film
Holding you chained in iron, as it seems,
Against the outstretch of your very arms
And legs i' the sunshine moralists forbid!
What would you have? Just speak and, there, you see!
You're supplemented, made a whole at last,
Bacon advises, Shakespeare writes you songs,
And Mary Queen of Scots embraces you.
Thus it goes on, not quite like life perhaps,
But so near, that the very difference piques,
Shows that e'en better than this best will be—
This passing entertainment in a hut
Whose bare walls take your taste since, one stage more,
And you arrive at the palace: all half real,
And you, to suit it, less than real beside,
In a dream, lethargic kind of death in life,
That helps the interchange of natures, flesh

Transfused by souls, and such souls! Oh,
'tis choice!
And if at whiles the bubble, blown too
thin,
Seem nigh on bursting,—if you nearly see
The real world through the false,—what
do you see?
Is the old so ruined? You find you're in a
flock
O' the youthful, earnest, passionate—
genius, beauty,
Rank and wealth also, if you care for
these:
And all depose their natural rights, hail
you,
(That's me, sir) as their mate and yoke-
fellow,
Participate in Sludgehood—nay, grow
mine,
I veritably possess them—banish doubt,
And reticence and modesty alike!
Why, here's the Golden Age, old Paradise
Or new Eutopia! Here's true life indeed,
And the world well won now, mine for the
first time!

And all this might be, may be, and with
good help
Of a little lying shall be: so, Sludge lies!
Why, he's at worst your poet who sings
how Greeks
That never were, in Troy which never was,
Did this or the other impossible great
thing!
He's Lowell—it's a world (you smile
applause)
Of his own invention—wondrous Long-
fellow,
Surprising Hawthorne! Sludge does more
than they,
And acts the books they write: the more his
praise!

But why do I mount to poets? Take plain
prose—
Dealers in common sense, set these at
work,
What can they do without their helpful
lies?
Each states the law and fact and face o' the
thing
Just as he'd have them, finds what he
thinks fit,
Is blind to what missuits him, just records
What makes his case out, quite ignores the
rest.
It's a History of the World, the Lizard
Age
The Early Indians, the Old Country War,
Jerome Napoleon, whatsoever you please,
All as the author wants it. Such a scribe
You pay and praise for putting life in
stones,
Fire into fog, making the past your world.
There's plenty of 'How did you contrive
to grasp
'The thread which led you through this
labyrinth?
'How build such solid fabric out of air?
'How on so slight foundation found this
tale,
'Biography, narrative?' or, in other
words,
'How many lies did it require to make
'The portly truth you here present us
with?'
'Oh,' quoth the penman, purring at your
praise,
"Tis fancy all; no particle of fact:
'I was poor and threadbare when I wrote
that book
' "Bliss in the Golden City." I, at Thebes?
'We writers paint out of our heads, you
see!'
'—Ah, the more wonderful the gift in
you,
'The more creativeness and godlike craft!'
But I, do I present you with my piece,
It's 'What, Sludge? When my sainted
mother spoke
'The verses Lady Jane Grey last com-
posed
'About the rosy bower in the seventh
heaven
'Where she and Queen Elizabeth keep
house,—
'You made the raps? 'Twas your inven-
tion that?
'Cur, slave and devil!'—eight fingers and
two thumbs
Stuck in my throat!

Well, if the marks seem gone,
'Tis because stiffish cock-tail, taken in
time,
Is better for a bruise than arnica.
There, sir! I bear no malice: 'tisn't in me.
I know I acted wrongly: still, I've tried
What I could say in my excuse,—to show
The devil's not all devil... I don't pretend,
He's angel, much less such a gentleman
As you, sir! And I've lost you, lost myself,
Lost all-1-1-1- . . .

No—are you in earnest, sir?
O yours, sir, is an angel's part! I know
What prejudice prompts, and what's the
common course
Men take to soothe their ruffled self-con-
ceit:
Only you rise superior to it all!
No, sir, it don't hurt much; it's speaking
long
That makes me choke a little: the marks
will go!
What? Twenty V-notes more, and outfit
too,
And not a word to Greeley? One—one kiss

MR. SLUDGE, 'THE MEDIUM'

O* the hand that saves me! You'll not let me speak,
I well know, arid PveTdst the right, too true!
But I must say, sir, if She hears (she does)
Your sainted . . . Well, sir,—be it so! That's, I think,
My bed-room candle. Good-night! Bl-1-less you, sir!

R-r-r, you brute-beast and blackguard! Cowardly scamp!
I only wish I dared burn down the house
And spoil your sniggering! Oh what, you're the man?
You re satisfied at last ? You've found out Sludge?
We'll see that presently: my turn, sir, next!
I too can tell my story: brute,—do you hear?—
You throttled your sainted mother, that old hag,
In just such a fit of passion: no, it was ...
To get this house of hers, and many a note
Like these ... I'll pocket them, however ...five,
Ten, fifteen ... ay, you gave her throat the twist,
Or else you poisoned her! Confound the cuss!
Where was my head ? I ought to have prophesied
He'll die in a year and join her: that's the way.

I don't know where my head is: what had I done?
How did it all go ? I said he poisoned her,
And hoped he'd have grace given him to repent,
Whereon he picked this quarrel, bullied me
And called me cheat: I thrashed him,—who could help ?
He howled for mercy, prayed me on his knees
To cut and run and save him from disgrace:
I do so, and once off, he slanders me.
An end of him! Begin elsewhere anew!
Boston's a hole, the herring-pond is wide,
V-notes are something, liberty still more.
Beside, is he the only fool in the world?

APPARENT FAILURE

•We shall soon lose a celebrated building.' *Paris Newspaper.*

I

No, for I'll save it! Seven years since,
I passed through Paris, stopped a day
To see the baptism of your Prince;
Saw, made my bow, and went my way:
Walking the heat and headache off,
I took the Seine-side, you surmise,
Thought of the Congress, Gortschakoff,
Cavour's appeal and Buol's replies,
So sauntered till—what met my eyes?

II

Only the Doric little Morgue!
The dead-house where you show your drowned:
Petrarch's Vaucluse makes proud the Sorgue,
Your Morgue has made the Seine renowned.
One pays one's debt in such a case;
I plucked up heart and entered,—stalked,
Keeping a tolerable face
Compared with some whose cheeks were chalked:
Let them! No Briton's to be baulked!

in

First came the silent gazers; next,
A screen of glass, we're thankful for;
Last, the sight's self, the sermon's text,
The three men who did most abhor
Their life in Paris yesterday,
So killed themselves: and now, enthroned
Each on his copper couch, they lay
Fronting me, waiting to be owned.
I thought, and think, their sin's atoned.

IV

Poor men, God made, and all for that!
The reverence struck me; o'er each head
Religiously was hung its hat,
Each coat dripped by the owner's bed,
Sacred from touch: each had his berth,
His bounds, his proper place of rest,
Who last night tenanted on earth
Some arch, where twelve such slept abreast,—
Unless the plain asphalte seemed best.

v

How did it happen, my poor boy?
You wanted to be Buonaparte
And have the Tuileries for toy,
And could not, so it broke your heart?
You, old one by his side, I judge,
Were, red as blood, a socialist,
A leveller! Does the Empire grudge
You've gained what no Republic missed?
Be quiet, and unclench your fist!

VI

And this—why, he was red in vain,
Or black,—poor fellow that is blue!
What fancy was it turned your brain?
Oh, women were the prize for you!

Money gets women, cards and dice
Get money, and ill-luck gets just
The copper couch and one clear nice
Cool squirt of water o'er your bust,
The right thing to extinguish lust!

VII

It's wiser being good than bad;
It's safer being meek than fierce:
It's fitter being sane than mad.
My own hope is, a sun will pierce
The thickest cloud earth ever stretched;
That, after Last, returns the First,
Though a wide compass round be fetched
That what began best, can't end worst
Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst

EPILOGUE

FIRST SPEAKER, a*S David.*

I

ON the first of the Feast of Feasts,
The Dedication Day,
When the Levites joined the Priests
At the Altar in robed array,
Gave signal to sound and say,—

II

When the thousands, rear and van,
Swarming with one accord
Became as a single man
(Look, gesture, thought and word)
In praising and thanking the Lord,—

in

When the singers lift up their voice,
And the trumpets made endeavour,
Sounding, 'In God rejoice I'
Saying, 'In Him rejoice
'Whose mercy endureth for ever!*—

IV

Then the Temple filled with a cloud,
Even the House of the Lord;
Porch bent and pillar bowed:
For the presence of the Lord,
In the glory of His cloud,
Had filled the House of the Lord.

SECOND SPEAKER, *as Renan.*

Gone now! All gone across the dark s<
far,
Sharpening fast, shuddering ever, shut
ting still,
Dwindling into the distance, dies that star
Which came, stood, opened oncel We
gazed our fill
With upturned faces on as real a Face
That, stooping from grave music and
mild fire,
Took in our homage, made a visible place
Through many a depth of glory, gyre or
gyre,
For the dim human tribute. Was this true ?
Could man indeed avail, mere praise of
his,
To help by rapture God's own rapture too,
Thrill with a heart's red tinge that pure
pale bliss?
Why did it end? Who failed to beat the
breast,
And shriek, and throw the arms protest-
ing wide,
When a first shadow showed the star
addressed
Itself to motion, and on either side
The rims contracted as the rays retired;
The music, like a fountain's sickening
pulse,
Subsided on itself; awhile transpired
Some vestige or a Face no pangs con-
vulse,
No prayers retard; then even this was
gone,
Lost in the night at last. We, lone and
left
Silent through centuries, ever and anon
Venture to probe again the vault bereft
Of all now save the lesser lights, a mist
Of multitudinous points, yet suns, men
say—
And this leaps ruby, this lurks amethyst,
But where may hide what came and
loved our clay?
How shall the sage detect in yon expanse
The star which chose to stoop and stay
for us?
Unroll the records! Hailed ye such ad-
vance
Indeed, and did your hope evanish thus?
Watchers of twilight, is the worst averred?
We shall not look up, know ourselves
are seen,
Speak, and be sure that we again are heard,
Acting or suffering, have the disk's
serene
Reflect our life, absorb an earthly flame,
Nor doubt that, were mankind inert
and numb,
Its core had never crimsoned all the same,
Nor, missing ours, its music fallen
dumb?
Oh, dread succession to a dizzy post,
Sad sway of sceptre whose mere touch
appals,
Ghastly dethronement, cursed by those
the most
On whose repugnant brow the crown
next falls!

THIRD SPEAKER.

I

Witless alike of will and way divine,
How heaven's high with earth's low should
intertwine!
Friends, I have seen through your eyes;
now use mine!

EPILOGUE

II

Take the least man-oFall'mankind, as I
Look at his head and heart, find how and why
He differs from his fellows utterly:

III

Then, like me, watch when nature by degrees
Grows alive round him, as in Arctic seas
(They said of old) the instinctive water flees

Iv

Toward some elected point of central rock.
As though, for its sake only, roamed the flock
Of waves about the waste: awhile they mock

v

With radiance caught for the occasion,—hues
Of blackest hell now, now such reds and blues
As only heaven could fitly interfuse,—

VI

The mimic monarch of the whirlpool, king
O' the current for a minute: then they wring
Up by the roots and oversweep the thing,

vII

And hasten off, to play again elsewhere
The same part, choose another peak as bare.
They find and flatter, feast and finish there.

vIII

When you see what I tell you,—nature dance
About each man of us, retire, advance,
As though the pageant's end were to enhance

Ix

His worth, and—once the life, his product, gained—
Roll away elsewhere, keep the strife sustained,
And show thus real, a thing the North but feigned—

x

When you acknowledge that one world could do
All the diverse work, old yet ever new,
Divide us, each from other, me from you,—

XI

Why, where's the need of Temple, when the walls
O* the world are that? What use of swells and falls
From Levites' choir, Priests' cries, and trumpet-calls?

xII

That one Face, far from vanish, rather grows,
Or decomposes but to recompose,
Become my universe that feels and knows.

From 'FIFINE AT THE FAIR[9]

1872

PROLOGUE

AMPHIBIAN

I

THE fancy I had to-day,
Fancy which turned a fear!
I swam far out in the bay,
Since waves laughed warm and clear.

II

I lay and looked at the sun,
The noon-sun looked at me:
Between us two, no one
Live creature, that I could see.

in

Yes! There came floating by
Me, who lay floating too,
Such a strange butterfly!
Creature as dear as new:

Because the membraned wings
So wonderful, so wide,
So sun-suffused, were things
Like soul and nought beside.

v

A handbreadth over head!
All of the sea my own,
It owned the sky instead;
Both of us were alone.

VI

I never shall join its flight,
For, nought buoys flesh in air.
If it touch the sea—good night!
Death sure and swift waits there.

vII

Can the insect feel the better
For watching the uncouth play
Of limbs that slip the fetter,
Pretend as they were not clay?

vIII

Undoubtedly I rejoice
That the air comports so well
With a creature which had the choice
Of the land once. Who can tell?

IX

What if a certain soul
Which early slipped its sheath,
And has for its home the whole
Of heaven, thus look beneath,

x

Thus watch one who, in the world,
Both lives and likes life's way,
Nor wishes the wings unfurled
That sleep in the worm, they say?

XI

But sometimes when the weather
Is blue, and warm waves tempt
To free oneself of tether,
And try a life exempt

xII

From worldly noise and dust,
In the sphere which overbrims
With passion and thought,—why, just
Unable to fly, one swims!

xIII

By passion and thought upborne,
One smiles to oneself—'They fare
Scarce better, they need not scorn
Our sea, who live in the air!'

XIV

Emancipate through passion
And thought, with sea for sky,
We substitute, in a fashion,
For heaven—poetry:

xv

Which sea, to all intent,
Gives flesh such noon-disport
As a finer element
Affords the spirit-sort.

XVI

Whatever they are, we seem:
Imagine the thing they know;
All deeds they do, we dream;
Can heaven be else but so?

xvII

And meantime, yonder streak
Meets the horizon's verge;
That is the land, to seek
If we tire or dread the surge:

XVIII

Land the solid and safe—
To welcome again (confess!)
When, high and dry, we chafe
The body, and don the dress.

XIX

Does she look, pity, wonder
At one who mimics flight,
Swims—heaven above, sea under,
Yet always earth in sight?

EPILOGUE

THE HOUSEHOLDER

I

SAVAGE I was sitting in my house,late,lone:
Dreary, weary with the long clay's work:
Head of me, heart of me, stupid as a stone:
Tongue-tied now, now blaspheming like a Turk;
When, in a moment, just a knock, call, cry,
Half a pang and all a rapture, there again were we!—
'What, and is it really you again?' quoth I:
'I again, what else did you expect?' quoth She.

II

'Never mind, hie away from this old house—
Every crumbling brick embrowned with sin and shame!
Quick, in its corners ere certain shapes arouse!
Let them—every devil of the night—lay claim,
Make and mend, or rap and rend, for me!
Good-bye!
God be their guard from disturbance at their glee,
Till, crash, comes down the carcass in a heap!' quoth I:
'Nay, but there's a decency required!' quoth She.

III

'Ah, but if you knew how time has dragged, days, nights!
All the neighbour-talk with man and maid—such men!
All the fuss and trouble of street-sounds, window-sights:
All the worry of flapping door and echoing roof; and then,
All the fancies . . . Who were they had leave, dared try
Darker arts that almost struck despair in me?
If you knew but how I dwelt down here!* quoth I:
'And was I so better off up there?' quoth She.

IV

'Help and get it over! *Re-united to his wife*
(How draw up the paper lets the parish-people know?)
Lies M., or N., departed from this life,
Day the this or that, month and year the so and so.
What i' the way of final flourish? Prose, verse? Try!
Affliction sore long time he bore, or, what is it to be?
Till God did please to grant him ease. Do end!' quoth I:
'I end with—Love is all and Death is nought'' quoth She.

PACCHIAROTTO

AND

HOW HE WORKED IN DISTEMPER

ET CETERA

1876

PROLOGUE

I

O THE old wall here! How I could pass
Life in a long Midsummer day,
My feet confined to a plot of grass,
My eyes from a wall not once away!

II

And lush and lithe do the creepers clothe
Yon wall I watch, with a wealth of green:
Its bald red bricks draped, nothing loth,
In lappets of tangle they laugh between.

in

Now, what is it makes pulsate the robe?
Why tremble the sprays? What life o'erbrims
The body,—the house, no eye can probe,—
Divined as, beneath a robe, the limbs?

IV

And there again! But my heart may guess
Who tripped behind; and she sang perhaps:
So, the old wall throbbed, and its life's excess
Died out and away in the leafy wraps.

v

Wall upon wall are between us: life
And song should away from heart to heart.
I—prison-bird, with a ruddy strife
At breast, and a lip whence storm-notes start—

VI

Hold on, hope hard in the subtle thing
That's spirit: though cloistered fast, soar free;
Account as wood, brick, stone, this ring
Of the rueful neighbours, and—forth to thee!

OF *PACCHIAROTTO*, AND HOW HE WORKED IN DISTEMPER

I

QUERY: was ever a quainter
crotchet than this **of** the **painter**
Giacomo Pacchiarotto
Who took 'Reform' for his **motto?**

II

He, pupil of old Fungaio.
Is always confounded (heigno!)
With Pacchia, contemporaneous
No question, but how extraneous
In the grace of soul, the power
Of hand,—undoubted dower
Of Pacchia who decked (as *we* know,
My Kirkup!) San Bernardino,
Turning the small dark Oratory
To Siena's Art-laboratory,
As he made its straitness roomy
And glorified its gloomy,
With Bazzi and Beccafumi.
(Another heigho for Bazzi:
How people miscall him Razzi!)

III

This Painter was of opinion
Our earth should be his dominion
Whose Art could correct to pattern
What Nature had slurred—the slattern!
And since, beneath the heavens,
Things lay now at sixes and sevens,
Or, as he said, *sopra-sotto*—
Thought the painter Pacchiarotto
Things wanted reforming, therefore.
'Wanted it—ay, but wherefore?
When earth held one so ready
As he to step forth, stand steady
In the middle of God's creation
And prove to demonstration
What the dark is, what the light is,
What the wrong is, what the right is,
What the ugly, what the beautiful,
What the restive, what the dutiful,
In Mankind profuse around him?
Man, devil as now he found him,
Would presently soar up angel
At the summons of such evangel,
And owe—what would Man *not* owe
To the painter Pacchiarotto?
Ay, look to thy laurels, Giotto!

IV

But Man, he perceived, was stubborn,
Grew regular brute, once cub born;
And it struck him as expedient—
Ere he tried to make obedient
The wolf, fox, bear and monkey,
By piping advice in one key—
That his pipe should play a prelude
To something heaven-tinged **not** hell-hued,

Something not harsh but docile,
Man-liquid, not Man-fossil—
Not fact, in short, but fancy.
By a laudable necromancy
He would conjure up ghosts—a circle
Deprived of the means to work ill
Should his music prove distasteful
And pearls to the swine go wasteful.
To be rent of swine—that *was* hard!
With fancy he ran no hazard:
Fact might knock him o'er the mazzard.

So, the painter Pacchiarotto
Constructed himself a grotto
In the quarter of Stalloreggi—
As authors of note allege ye.
And on each of the whitewashed sides of it
He painted—(none far and wide so fit
As he to perform in fresco)—
He painted nor cried *quiesco*
Till he peopled its every square foot
With Man—from the Beggar barefoot
To the Noble in cap and feather:
All sorts and conditions together.
The Soldier in breastplate and helmet
Stood frowningly—hail fellow well met—
By the Priest armed with bell, book and candles.
Nor did he omit to handle
The Fair Sex, our brave distemperer:
Not merely King, Clown, Pope, Emperor—
He diversified too his Hades
Of all forms, pinched Labour and paid Ease,
With as mixed an assemblage of Ladies.

Which work done, dry,—he rested him,
Cleaned pallet, washed brush, divested him
Of the apron that suits *frescanti,*
And, bonne on ear stuck jaunty,
This hand upon hip well planted,
That, free to wave as it wanted,
He addressed in a choice oration
His folk of each name and nation,
Taught its duty to every station.
The Pope was declared an arrant
Impostor at once, I warrant.
The Emperor—truth might tax him
With ignorance of the maxim
'Shear sheep but nowise flay them!'
And the Vulgar that obey them,
The Ruled, well-matched with the Ruling,
They failed not of wholesome schooling
On their knavery and their fooling.
As for Art—where's decorum? Pooh-poohed it is
By Poets that plague us with lewd ditties,
And Painters that pester with nudities!

vII

Now. your rater and debater
Is baulked by a mere spectator
Who simply stares and listens
Tongue-tied, while eye nor glistens
Nor brow grows hot and twitchy,
Nor mouth, for a combat itchy,
Quivers with some convincing
Reply—that sets him wincing?
Nay, rather—reply that furnishes
Your debater with just what burnishes
The crest of him, all one triumph.
As you see him rise, hear him cry Humph!
Convinced am I? This confutes me?
Receive the rejoinder that suits me!
Confutation of vassal for prince meet—
Wherein all the powers that convince meet,
And mash my opponent to mincemeat!'

vIII

So, off from his head flies the bonnet,
His hip loses hand planted on *it,*
While t'other hand, frequent in gesture,
Slinks modestly back beneath vesture,
As,—hop, skip and jump,—he's along with
Those weak ones he late proved so strong with!
Pope, Emperor, lo, he's beside them,
Friendly now, who late could not abide them,
King, Clown, Soldier, Priest, Noble, Burgess;
And his voice, that out-roared Boanerges,
How minikin-mildly it urges
In accents how gentled and gingered
Its word in defence of the injured!
'O call him not culprit, this Pontiff!
Be hard on this Kaiser ye won't if
Ye take into con-si-der-ation
What dangers attend elevation!
The Priest—who expects him to descanr
On duty with more zeal and less cant?
He preaches but rubbish he's reared in.
The Soldier, grown deaf (by the mere din
Of battle) to mercy, learned tippling
And what not of vice while a stripling.
The Lawyer—his lies are conventional.
And as for the Poor Sort—why mention all
Obstructions that leave barred and bolted
Access to the brains of each dolt-head?'

He ended, you wager? Not half! Abet?
Precedence to males in the alphabet!
Still, disposed of Man's A, B, C, there's

Y, Z, want assistance,—the Fair Sex!
How much may be said in excuse of
Those vanities—males see no use of—
From silk shoe on heel to laced poll's-hood!
What's their frailty beside **our** own falsehood?

The boldest, most brazen of... trumpets,
How kind can-they be to their dumb pets!
Of their charms—how axe most frank,
how few venal!
While as for those charges of Juvenal—
Quæ nemo dixisset in toto
Nisi (cedepol) ore illoto—
He dismissed every charge with an
'Apage!'

x

Then, cocking (in Scotch phrase) his cap
a-gee,
Right hand disengaged from the doublet
—Like landlord, in house he had sub-let
Resuming of guardianship gestion,
To call tenants* conduct in question—
Hop, skip, jump, to inside from outside
Of chamber, he lords, ladies, louts eyed
With such transformation of visage
As fitted the censor of this age.
No longer an advocate tepid
Of frailty, but champion intrepid
Of strength, not of falsehood but verity,
He, one after one, with asperity
Stripped bare all the cant-clothed abuses,
Disposed of sophistic excuses,
Forced folly each shift to abandon,
And left vice with no leg to stand on.
So crushing the force he exerted,
That Man at his foot lay converted!

True—Man bred of paint-pot and
mortar!
But why suppose folks of this sort are
More likely to hear and be tractable
Than folks all alive and, in fact, able
To testify promptly by action
Their ardour, and make satisfaction
For misdeeds *non verbis sed factis?*
'With folk all alive be my practice
Henceforward! O mortar, paint-pot O,
Farewell to ye!' cried Pacchiarotto,
' Let only occasion interpose!

It did so: for, pat to the purpose
Through causes I need not examine,
There fell upon Siena a famine.
In vain did the magistrates busily
Seek succour, fetch grain out of Sicily,
Nay, throw mill and bakehouse wide
open—
Such misery followed as no pen
Of mine shall depict ye. Faint, fainter
Waxed hope of relief: so, our painter,
Emboldened by triumph of recency,
How could he do other with decency
Than rush in this strait to the rescue,
Play schoolmaster, point as with fescue
To each and all slips in Man's spelling
The law of the land?—slips now telling
With monstrous effect on the city,
Whose magistrates moved him to pity
As, bound to read law to the letter,
They minded their hornbook no better.

I ought to have told you, at starting,
How certain, who itched to be carting
Abuses away clean and thorough
From Siena, both province and borough,
Had formed themselves into a company
Whose swallow could bolt in a lump any
Obstruction of scruple, provoking
The nicer throat's coughing and choking:
Fit Club, by as fit a name dignified
Of 'Freed Ones'—*'Bardotti'*—which signified
'Spare-Horses* that walk by the waggon
The team has to drudge for and drag on.
This notable club Pacchiarotto
Had joined long since, paid scot and lot
to,
As free and accepted 'Bardotto.'
The Bailiwick watched with no quiet eye
The outrage thus done to society,
And noted the advent especially
Of Pacchiarotto their fresh ally.

These Spare-Horses forthwith assembled:
Neighed words whereat citizens trembled
As oft as the chiefs, in the Square by
The Duomo, proposed a way whereby
The city were cured of disaster.
'Just substitute servant for master,
Make Poverty Wealth and Wealth
Poverty,
Unloose Man from overt and covert tie,
And straight out of social confusion
True Order would spring!' Brave illusion—
Aims heavenly attained by means earthy!

Off to these at full speed rushed our
worthy,—
Brain practised and tongue no less tutored,
In argument's armour accoutred,—
Sprang forth, mounted rostrum and essayed
Proposals like those to which 'Yes' said
So glibly each personage painted
O' the wall-side wherewith you're acquainted.
He harangued on the faults of the Bailiwick:
'Red soon were our State-candle's paly
wick,
If wealth would become but interfluous,
Fill voids up with just the superfluous;
If ignorance gave way to knowledge
—Not pedantry picked up at college
From Doctors, Professors *et cætera*—
{They say: *"kai ta loipa"*—like better a

Long Greek string of *kappas, taus, lambdas,*
Tacked on to the tail of each damned ass)—
No knowledge we want of this quality,
But knowledge indeed—practicality
Through insight's fine universality!
If you shout *"Bailiffs, out on ye all: Fie,*
Thou Chief of our forces, Amalfi,
Who shieldest the rogue and the clotpoll!"
If you pounce on and poke out, with what pole
I leave ye to fancy, our Siena's
Beast-litter of sloths and hyenas—'
(Whoever to scan this is ill able
Forgets the town's name's a dissyllable)
'If, this done, ye did—as ye might—place
For once the right man in the right place,
If you listened t o m e , . . '

XVI

At which last 'If'
There flew at his throat like a mastiff
One Spare-Horse—another and another!
Such outbreak of tumult and pother,
Horse-faces a-laughing and fleering,
Horse-voices a-mocking and jeering,
Horse-hands raised to collar the caitiff
Whose impudence ventured the late 'If'—
That, had not fear sent Pacchiarotto
Off tramping, as fast as could trot toe,
Away from the scene of discomfiture—
Had he stood there stock-still in a dumb fit—sure
Am I he had paid in his person
Till his mother might fail to know her son,
Though she gazed on him never so wistful,
In the figure so tattered and tristful.
Each mouth full of curses, each fist full
Of cuffings—behold, Pacchiarotto,
The pass which thy project has got to,
Of trusting, nigh ashes still hot—tow!
(The paraphrase—which I much need—is
From Horace *'per ignes incedis.')*

XVII

Right and left did he dash helter-skelter
In agonized search of a shelter.
No purlieu so blocked and no alley
So blind as allowed him to rally
His spirits and see—nothing hampered
His steps if he trudged and not scampered
Up here and down there in a city
That's all ups and downs, more the pity
For folk who would outrun the constable.
At last he stopped short at the one stable
And sure place of refuge that's offered
Humanity. Lately was coffered
A corpse in its sepulchre, situate
By St. John's Observance. 'Habituate
Thyself to the strangest of bedfellows,
And, kicked by the live, kiss the dead fellows!'
So Misery counselled the craven.
At once he crept safely to haven
Through a hole left unbricked in the structure.
Ay, Misery, in have you tucked your
Poor client and left him conterminous
With—pah!—the thing fetid and verminous!
(I gladly would spare you the detail,
But History writes what I retail.)

XVIII

Two days did he groan in his domicile:
' Good Saints, set me free and I promise I'll
Abjure all ambition of preaching
Change, whether to minds touched by teaching
—The smooth folk of fancy, mere figments
Created by plaster and pigments,—
Or to minds that receive with such rudeness
Dissuasion from pride, greed and lewdness,
—The rough folk of fact, life's true specimens
Of mind—*"haud in posse sed esse mens"*
As it was, is, and shall be for ever
Despite of my utmost endeavour.
0 live foes I thought to illumine,
Henceforth lie untroubled your gloom in!
I need my own light, every spark, as
I couch with this sole friend—a carcase!'

XIX

Two days thus he maundered and rambled;
Then, starved back to sanity, scrambled
From out his receptacle loathsome.
'A spectre!'—declared upon oath some
Who saw him emerge and (appalling
To mention) his garments a-crawling
With plagues far beyond the Egyptian.
He gained, in a state past description,
A convent of monks, the Observancy.

XX

Thus far is a fact: I reserve fancy
For Fancy's more proper employment:
And now she waves wing with enjoyment,
To tell ye how preached the Superior
When somewhat our painter's exterior
Was sweetened. He needed (no mincing
The matter) much soaking and rincing,
Nay, rubbing with drugs odoriferous,
Till, rid of his garments pestiferous
And robed by the help of the Brotherhood
In odds and ends,—this gown and t'other hood,—
His empty inside first well-garnished,—
He delivered a tale round, unvarnished.

'Ah, Youth!' ran the Abbot's admonishment,
'Thine error scarce moves my astonishment,

For—why shall I shrink from asserting ?—
Myself have had hopes of-converting
The foolish to wisdom, till, sober,
My life found its May grow October.
I talked and I wrote, but, one morning,
Life's Autumn bore fruit in this warning;
"Let tongue rest, and quiet thy quill be !
Earth is earth and not heaven, and ne'er will be."
Man's work is to labour and leaven—
As best he may—earth here with heaven;
Tis work for work's sake that he's needing;
Let him work on and on as if speeding
Work's end, but not dream of succeeding!
Because if success were intended,
Why, heaven would begin ere earth ended.
A Spare-Horse? Be rather a thill-horse,
Or—what's the plain truth—just a mill-horse !
Earth's a mill where we grind and wear mufflers:
A whip awaits shirkers and shufflers
Who slacken their pace, sick of lugging
At what don't advance for their tugging.
Though round goes the mill, we must still post
On and on as if moving the mill-post.
So, grind away, mouth-wise and pen-wise,
Do all that we can to make men wise!
And if men prefer to be foolish,
Ourselves have proved horse-like not mulish:
Sent grist, a good sackful, to hopper,
And worked as the Master thought proper.
Tongue I wag, pen I ply. who am Abbot;
Stick thou, Son, to dauo-brush and dab-pot!
But, softl I scratch hard on the scab hot?
Though cured of thy plague, there may linger
A pimple I fray with rough finger?
So soon could my homily transmute
Thy brass into gold? Why, the man's mute!'

xxII

'Ay, Father, I'm mute with admiring
How Nature's indulgence untiring
Still bids us turn deaf ear to Reason's
Best rhetoric—clutch at all seasons
And hold fast to what's proved untenable!
Thy maxim is—Man's not amenable
To argument: whereof by consequence—
Thine arguments reach me: a non-sequence!
Yet blush not discouraged, O Father!
I stand unconverted, the rather
That nowise I need a conversion.
No live man (I cap thy assertion)
By argument ever could take hold
Of me. 'Twas the dead thing, the clay-cold,
Which grinned *"Art thou so in a hurry*
That out of warm light thou must skurry
And join me down here in the dungeon
Because, above, one's Jack and one—John,
One's swift in the race, one—a hobbler,
One's a crowned king, and one—a capped cobbler,
Rich and poor, sage and fool, virtuous, vicious?
Why complain? Art thou so unsuspicious
That all's for an hour of essaying
Who's fit and who's unfit for playing
His part in the after-construction
—Heaven's Piece whereof Earth's the Induction?
Things rarely go smooth at Rehearsal
Wait patient the change universal,
And act, and let act, in existence!
For, as thou art clapped hence or hissed hence,
Thou hast thy promotion or otherwise.
And why must wise thou have thy brother wise
Because in rehearsal thy cue be
To shine by the side of a booby?
No polishing garnet to ruby I
All's well that ends well—through Art's magic
Some end, whether comic or tragic,
The Artist has purposed, be certain!
Explained at the fall of the curtain—
In showing thy wisdom at odds with
That folly: he tries men and gods with
No problem for weak wits to solve meant,
But one worth such Author's evolvement.
So, back nor disturb play's production
By giving thy brother instruction
To throw up his fool's-part allotted!
Lest haply thyself prove besotted
When stript, for thy pains, of that costume
Of sage, which has bred the imposthume
I prick to relieve thee of—Vanity!"

xxIII

'So, Father, behold me in sanity!
I'm back to the palette and mahlstick:
And as for Man—let each and all stick
To what was prescribed them at starting!
Once planted as fools—no departing
From folly one inch, *saculorum*
In sæcula! Pass me the jorum,
And push me the platter—my stomach
Retains, through its fasting, still some ache—
And then, with your kind *Benedicite,*
Good-bye!'

xxIv

I have told with simplicity
My tale, dropped those harsh analytics,
And tried to content you, my critics,
Who greeted my early uprising!
I knew you through all the disguising,
Droll dogs, as I jumped up, cried' Heyday!
This Monday is—what else but May-day?
And these in the drabs, blues and yellows,
Are surely the privileged fellows.

So, saltbox and bones, tongs and bellows,'
(I threw up the window) 'your pleasure?'

Then he who directed the measure—
An old friend—put leg forward nimbly,
'We critics as sweeps out your chimbly!
Much soot to remove from your flue, sir!
Who spares coal in kitchen an't you, sir!
And neighbours complain it 's no joke, sir,
—You ought to consume your own smoke, sir!'

XXVI

Ah, rogues, but my housemaid suspects you—
Is confident oft she detects you
In bringing more filth into my house
Than ever you found there! I'm pious
However: 'twas God made you dingy
And me—with no need to be stingy
Of soap, when 'tis sixpence the packet.
So, dance away, boys, dust my jacket,
Bang drum and blow fife—ay, and rattle
Your brushes, for that's half the battle!
Don't trample the grass,—hocus-pocus
With grime my Spring snowdrop and crocus,—
And, what with your rattling and tinkling,
Who knows but you give me an inkling
How music sounds, thanks to the jangle
Of regular drum and triangle?
Whereby, tap-tap, chink-chink, 'tis proven
I break rule as bad as Beethoven.
'That chord now—a groan or a grunt is't?
Schumann's self was no worse contrapuntist.
No ear! or if ear, so tough-gristled—
He thought that he sung while he whistled!'

XXVII

So, this time I whistle, not sing at all,
My story, the largess I fling at all
And every the rough there whose *aubade*
Did its best to amuse me,—nor *so* bad!
Take my thanks, pick up largess, and scamper
Off free, ere your mirth gets a damper!
You've Monday, your one day, your fun-day,
While mine is a year that's all Sunday.
I've seen you, times—who knows how many?—
Dance in here, strike up, play the zany,
Make mouths at the tenant, hoot warning
You'll find him decamped next May-morning;
Then scuttle away, glad to 'scape hence
With—kicks? no, but laughter and ha'-pence!
Mine's freehold, by grace of the grand Lord
Who lets out the ground here,—my landlord:
To him I pay quit-rent—devotion;
Nor hence shall I budge, I've a notion,
Nay, here shall my whistling and singing
Set all his street's echoes a-ringing
Long after the last of your number
Has ceased my front-court to encumber
While, treading down rose and ranunculus,
You *Tommy-make-room-for-your- Uncle* us!
Troop, all of you—man or homunculus,
Quick march! for Xanthippe, my house-maid,
If once on your pates she a souse made
With what, pan or pot, bowl or *skoramis*
First comes to her hand—things were more amiss!
I would not for worlds be your place in—
Recipient of slops from the basin!
You, Jack-in-the-Green, leaf-and-twig-gishness
Won't save a dry thread on your priggish-ness!
While as for Quilp-Hop-o'-my-thumb there,
Banjo-Byron that twangs the strum-strum there—
He'll think, as the pickle he curses,
I've discharged on his pate his own verses!
'Dwarfs are saucy,' says Dickens: so, sauced in
Your own sauce,.. ,[1]

XXVIII

But, back to my Knight of the Pencil,
Dismissed to his fresco and stencil!
Whose story—begun with a chuckle,
And throughout timed by raps of the knuckle,—
To small enough purpose were studied
If it ends with crown cracked or nose bloodied.
Come, critics,—not shake hands, excuse me!
But—say have you grudged to amuse me
This once in the forty-and-over
Long years since you trampled my clover
And scared from my house-eaves each sparrow
I never once harmed by that arrow
Of song, *karterotaton belos,*
(Which Pindar declares the true *melos)*
I was forging and filing and finishing,
And no whit my labours diminishing
Because, though high up in a chamber
Where none of your kidney may clamber
Your hullabaloo would approach me?
Was *it* 'grammar' wherein you would 'coach' me—
You,—pacing in even that paddock
Of language allotted you *ad hoc,*

[1] No, please! For
*Who would be satirical
On a thing so very small?
—*Printer's* **Devil.**

With a clog at your fetlocks,—you—
scorners .
Of me free of all its four corners?
Was it 'clearness of words which convey
thought'?
Ay, if words never needed enswathe aught
But ignorance, impudence, envy
And malice—what word-swathe would
then vie
With yours for a clearness crystalline?
But had you to put in one small line
Some thought big and bouncing—as
noddle
Of goose, born to cackle and waddle
And bite at man's heel as goose-wont is,
Never felt plague its puny *os frotitis*—
You'd know, as you hissed, spat and
sputtered,
Clear cackle is easily uttered!

XXIX

Lo, I've laughed out my laugh on this
mirth-day!
Beside, at week's end, dawns my birth-day,
That *hebdome, hieron emar*—
(More things in a day than you deem are!)
—*Tei gar Apollona chrusaora*
Egeinato Leto. So, gray or ray
Betide me, six days hence, I'm vexed here
By no sweep, that's certain, till next year!
' Vexed?'—roused from what else were
insipid ease!
Leave snoring a-bed to Pheidippides!
We'll up and work! won't we, Euripides?

AT THE 'MERMAID'

The figure that thou here seest.. . Tut!
Was it for gentle Shakespeare put?
B. JONSON. *{Adapted.)*

I—'Next Poet?' No, my hearties,
I nor am nor fain would be!
Choose your chiefs and pick your parties,
Not one soul revolt to me!
I, forsooth, sow song-sedition?
I, a schism in verse provoke?
I, blown up by bard's ambition,
Burst—your bubble-king? You joke.

Come, be grave! The sherris mantling
Still about each mouth, mayhap,
Breeds you insight—just a scantling—
Brings me truth out—just a scrap.
Look and tell me! Written, spoken,
Here's my life-long work: and where
—Where's your warrant or my token
I'm the dead king's son and heir?

in

Here's my work: does work discover—
What was rest from work—my life?
Did I live man's hater, lover?
Leave the world at peace, at strife?
Call earth ugliness or beauty?
See things there in large or small?
Use to pay its Lord my duty?
Use to own a lord at all?

IV

Blank of such a record, truly
Here's the work I hand, this scroll,
Yours to take or leave; as duly,
Mine remains the unproffered soul.
So much, no whit more, my debtors—
How should one like me lay claim
To that largess elders, betters
Sell you cheap their souls for—fame?

Which of you did I enable
Once to slip inside my breast,
There to catalogue and label
What I like least, what love best,
Hope and fear, believe and doubt of,
Seek and shun, respect—deride?
Who has right to make a rout of
Rarities he found inside?

Rarities or, as he'd rather,
Rubbish such as stocks his own:
Need and greed (O strange) the Father
Fashioned not for him alone!
Whence—the comfort set a-strutting,
Whence—the outcry 'Haste, behold!
Bard's breast open wide, past shutting,
Shows what brass we took for gold!'

Friends, I doubt not he'd display you
Brass—myself call orichalc,—
Furnish much amusement; pray you
Therefore, be content I baulk
Him and you, and bar my portal!
Here's my work outside: opine
What's inside me mean and mortal!
Take your pleasure, leave me mine!

vIII

Which is—not to buy your laurel
As last king did, nothing loth.
Tale adorned and pointed moral
Gained him praise and pity both.
Out rushed sighs and groans by dozens,
Forth by scores oaths, curses flew:
Proving you were cater-cousins,
Kith and kindred, king and you!

Ix

Whereas do I ne'er so little
(Thanks to sherds) leave ajar
Bosom's gate—no jot nor tittle
Grow we nearer than we are.
Sinning, sorrowing, despairing,
Body-ruined, spirit-wrecked,—
Should I give my woes an airing,—
Where's one plague that claims respect J

Have you found your life distasteful?
My life did, and does, smack sweet.
Was your youth of pleasure wasteful?
Mine I saved and hold complete.
Do your joys with age diminish?
When mine fail me, I'll complain.
Must in death your daylight finish?
My sun sets to rise again.

XI

What, like you, he proved—your Pilgrim—
This our world a wilderness,
Earth still grey and heaven still grim,
Not a hand there his might press,
Not a heart his own might throb to,
Men all rogues and women—say,
Dolls which boys' heads duck and bob to,
Grown folk drop or throw away?

XII

My experience being other,
How should I contribute verse
Worthy of your king and brother?
Balaam-like I bless, not curse.
I find earth not grey but rosy,
Heaven not grim but fair of hue.
Do I stoop? I pluck a posy.
Do I stand and stare? All's blue.

XIII

Doubtless I am pushed and shoved by
Rogues and fools enough: the more
Good luck mine, I love, am loved by
Some few honest to the core.
Scan the near high, scout the far low!
'But the low come close:' what then?
Simpletons? My match is Marlowe;
Sciolists? My mate is Ben.

XIV

Womankind—'the cat-like nature,
False and fickle, vain and weak'—
What of this sad nomenclature
Suits my tongue, if I must speak?
Does the sex invite, repulse so,
Tempt, betray, by fits and starts?
So becalm but to convulse so,
Decking heads and breaking hearts?

XV

Well may you blaspheme at fortune!
I 'threw Venus'[1] (Ben, expound!)
Never did I need importune
Her, of all the Olympian round.
Blessings on my benefactress!
Cursings suit—for aught I know—
Those who twitched her by the back tress,
Tugged and thought to turn her—so!

XVI

Therefore, since no leg to stand on
Thus I'm left with,—joy or grief
Be the issue,—I abandon
Hope or care you name me Chief!

[1] The best cast in dice (three sixes) is called Venus.

Chief and king and Lord's anointed,
I?—who never once have wished
Death before the day appointed:
Lived and liked, not poohed and pished!

XVII

'Ah, but so I shall not enter,
Scroll in hand, the common heart—
Stopped at surface: since at centre
Song should reach *Welt-schmerz*, world-smart!'
'Enter in the heart?' Its shelly
Cuirass guard mine, fore and aft!
Such song 'enters in the belly
And is cast out in the draught.*

XVIII

Back then to our sherris-brewage!
'Kingship'quotha? I shall wait—
Waive the present time: some new age...
But let fools anticipate!
Meanwhile greet me—'friend, good fellow,
Gentle Will,' my merry men!
As for making Envy yellow
With 'Next Poet*—(Manners, Ben!)

HOUSE

I

SHALL I sonnet-sing you about myself?
Do 1 live in a house you would like to see?
Is it scant of gear, has it store of pelf?
'Unlock my heart with a sonnet-key?'

II

Invite the world, as my betters have done?
'Take notice: this building remains on view,
Its suites of reception every one,
Its private apartment and bedroom too;

'For a ticket, apply to the Publisher.'
No: thanking the public, I must decline.
A peep through my window, if folk prefer;
But, please you, no foot over threshold of mine!

IV

I have mixed with a crowd and heard free talk
In a foreign land where an earthquake chanced:
And a house stood gaping, nought to baulk
Man's eye wherever he gazed or glanced.

The whole of the frontage shaven sheer,
The inside gaped: exposed to day,
Right and wrong and common and queer,
Bare, as the palm of your hand, it lay.

VI

The owner?-Oh, hetiadl3een crushed, no doubt!
'Odd tables and chairs for a man of wealth!
What a parcel of musty old books about!
He smoked,—no wonder he lost his health!

vII

'I doubt if he bathed before he dressed.
A brasier?—the pagan, he burned perfumes!
You see it is proved, what the neighbours guessed:
His wife and himself had separate rooms.'

vIII

Friends, the goodman of the house at least
Kept house to himself till an earthquake came:
'Tis the fall of its frontage permits you feast
On the inside arrangement you praise or blame.

IX

Outside should suffice for evidence:
And whoso desires to penetrate
Deeper, must dive by the spirit-sense—
No optics like yours, at any rate!

'Hoity toity! A street to explore,
Your house the exception! " *With this same key*
Shakespeare unlocked his heart" once more!'
Did Shakespeare? If so, the less Shakespeare he!

SHOP

So, friend, your shop was all your house!
Its front, astonishing the street,
Invited view from man and mouse
To what diversity of treat
Behind its glass—the single sheet!

II

What gimcracks, genuine Japanese:
Gape-jaw and goggle-eye, the frog;
Dragons, owls, monkeys, beetles, geese;
Some crush-nosed human-hearted dog:
Queer names, too, such a catalogue!

I thought 'And he who owns the wealth
Which blocks the window's vastitude,
—Ah, could I peep at him by stealth
Behind his ware, pass shop, intrude
On house itself, what scenes were viewed!

Iv

' I f wide and showy thus the shop,
What must the habitation prove?
The true house with no name a-top—
The mansion, distant one remove,
Once get him off his traffic-groove I

'Pictures he likes, or books perhaps;
And as for buying most and best,
Commend me to these City chaps!
Or else he's social, takes his rest
On Sundays, with a Lord for guest.

VI

'Some suburb-palace, parked about
And gated grandly, built last year:
The four-mile walk to keep off gout;
Or big seat sold by bankrupt peer:
But then he takes the rail, that's clear.

'Or, stop! I wager, taste selects
Some out o' the way, some all-unknown
Retreat: the neighbourhood suspects
Little that he who rambles lone
Makes Rothschild tremble on his throne!'

vIII

Nowise! Nor Mayfair residence
Fit to receive and entertain,—
Nor Hampstead villa's kind defence
From noise and crowd, from dust and drain,—
Nor country-box was soul's domain!

Nowise! At back of all that spread
Of merchandize, woe's me, I find
A hole i' the wall where, heels by head,
The owner couched, his ware behind,
—I n cupboard suited to his mind.

For why? He saw no use of life
But, while he drove a roaring trade,
To chuckle Customers are rife!'
To chafe ' So much hard cash outlaid
Yet zero in my profits made!

'This novelty costs pains, but—takes?
Cumbers my counter! Stock no more!
This article, no such great shakes,
Fizzes like wildfire? Underscore
The cheap thing—thousands to the fore!'

'Twas lodging best to live most nigh
(Cramp, coffinlike as crib might be)
Receipt of Custom; ear and eye
Wanted no outworld: 'Hear and see
The bustle in the shop!' quoth he.

My fancy of a merchant-prince
Was different. Through his wares we groped
Our darkling way to—not to mince
The matter—no black den where mope
The master if we interloped!

Shop was shop only: household-stuff?
What did he want with comforts there?
'Walls, ceiling, floor, stay blank and rough,
So goods on sale show rich and rare!
" *Sell and scud home* " be shop's affair!'

XV

What might he deal in? Gems, suppose!
Since somehow business must be done
At cost of trouble,—see, he throws
You choice of jewels, everyone,
Good, better, best, star, moon and sun!

XVI

Which lies within your power of purse?
This ruby that would tip aright
Solomon's sceptre? Oh, your nurse
Wants simply coral, the delight
Of teething baby,—stuff to bite!

Ho we'er your choice fell, straight you took
Your purchase, prompt your money rang
On counter,—scarce the man forsook
His study of the 'Times,' just swang
Till-ward his hand that stopped the clang,—

xvIII

Then off made buyer with a prize,
Then seller to his 'Times' returned;
And so did day wear, wear, till eyes
Brightened apace, for rest was earned:
He locked door long ere candle burned.

And whither went he? Ask himself,
Not me! To change of scene, I think.
Once sold the ware and pursed the pelf,
Chaffer was scarce his meat and drink,
Nor all his music—money-chink.

Because a man has shop to mind
In time and place, since flesh must live,
Needs spirit lack all life behind,
All stray thoughts, fancies fugitive,
All loves except what trade can give?

XXI

I want to know a butcher paints,
A baker rhymes for his pursuit,
Candlestick-maker much acquaints
I is soul with song, or, haply mute,
Blows out his brains upon the flute!

xxII

But—shop each day and all day long!
Friend, your good angel slept, your star
Suffered eclipse, fate did you wrong!
From where these sorts of treasures are,
There should our hearts be—Christ, how far!

PISGAH-SIGHTS. I

I

OVER the ball of it,
Peering and prying,
How I see all of it,
Life there, outlying!
Roughness and smoothness,
Shine and defilement,
Grace and uncouthness:
One reconcilement.

II

Orbed as appointed,
Sister with brother
Joins, ne'er disjointed
One from the other.
All's lend-and-borrowj
Good, see, wants evil,
Joy demands sorrow,
Angel weds devil!

III

'Which things must—*why* be?'
Vain our endeavour!
So shall things aye be
As they were ever.
'Such things should *so* be!'
Sage our desistence!
Rough-smooth let globe be,
Mixed—man's existence!

Iv

Man—wise and foolish,
Lover and scorner,
Docile and mulish—
Keep each his corner!
Honey yet gall of it!
There's the life lying,
And I see all of it,
Only, I'm dying!

PISGAH-SIGHTS. II

I

COULD I but live again,
Twice my life over,
Would I once strive again?
Would not I cover
Quietly all of it—
Greed and ambition—
So, from the pall of it,
Pass to fruition?

II

'Soft!' I'd say, 'Soul mine!
Three-score and ten years,
Let the blind mole mine
Digging out deniersl

Let the dazed hawk soar,
Claim the sun's rights too!
Turf tis thy. walk's o'er,
Foliage thy flight's to.'

III

Only a learner,
Quick one or slow one,
Just a discerner,
I would teach no one.
I am earth's native:
No rearranging it!
/ be creative,
Chopping and changing it?

IV

March, men, my fellows!
Those who, above me,
(Distance so mellows)
Fancy you love me:
Those who, below me,
(Distance makes great so)
Free to forego me,
Fancy you hate so!

Praising, reviling,
Worst head and best head,
Past me defiling,
Never arrested,
Wanters, abounders,
March, in gay mixture,
Men, my surrounders!
I am the fixture.

VI

So shall I fear thee,
Mightiness yonder!
Mock-sun—more near thee,
What is to wonder?
So shall I love thee,
Down in the dark,—lest
Glowworm I prove thee,
Star that now sparkiest!

FEARS AND SCRUPLES

HERE 'S my case. Of old I used to love him
This same unseen friend, before I knew:
Dream there was none like him, none above him,—
Wake to hope and trust my dream was true.

II

Loved I not his letters full of beauty?
Not his actions famous far and wide?
Absent, he would know I vowed him duty;
Present, he would find me at his side.

III

Pleasant fancy! for I had but letters,
Only knew of actions by hearsay:
He himself was busied with my betters;
What of that ? My turn must come some day.

Iv

' Some day' proving—no day! Here 's the puzzle.
Passed and passed my turn is. Why complain?
He's so busied! If I could but muzzle
People's foolish mouths that give me pain!

v

'Letters?' (hear them!) 'You a judge of writing?
Ask the experts!—How they shake the head
O'er these characters, your friend's inditing—
Call them forgery from A to Z!

VI

'Actions? Where's your certain proof (they bother)
'He, of all you find so great and good,
He, he only, claims this, that, the other
Action—claimed by men, a multitude ?'

I can simply wish I might refute you,
Wish my friend would,—by a word, a wink,—
Bid me stop that foolish mouth,—you brute you!
He keeps absent,—why, I cannot think.

vIII

Never mind! Though foolishness may flout me.
One thing's sure enough: 'tis neither frost,
No, nor fire, shall freeze or burn from out me
Thanks for truth—though falsehood, gained—though lost.

Ix

All my days, I 'll go the softlier, sadlier,
For that dream's sake! How forget the thrill
Through and through me as I thought 'The glad lier
Lives my friend because I love him still!'

Ah, but there's a menace someone utters!
'What and if your friend at home play tricks?
Peep at hide-and-seek behind the shutters?
Mean your eyes should pierce through solid bricks?

XI

'What and if he, frowning, wake you, dreamy?
Lay on you the blame that bricks—conceal?
Say *"At least I saw who did not see me,*
Does see now, and presently shall feel ?'

xII

'Why, that makes your friend a monster!' say you:
'Had his house no window? At first nod,
Would you not have hailed him?* Hush, I pray you!
What if this friend happen to be—God?

NATURAL MAGIC

I

ALL I can say is—I saw it!
The room was as bare as your hand.
I locked in the swarth little lady,—I swear,
From the head to the foot of her—well, quite as bare!
'No Nautch shall cheat me,' said I , ' taking my stand
At this bolt which I draw! ' And this bolt — I withdraw it,
And there laughs the lady, not bare, but embowered
With—who knows what verdure, o'erfruited, o'erflowered?
Impossible! Only—I saw it!

All I can sing is—I feel it !
This life was as blank as that room;
I let you pass in here. Precaution, indeed ?
Walls, celling and floor,—not a chance for a weed !
Wide opens the entrance: Where's cold now, where's gloom?
No May to sow seed here, no June to reveal it,
Behold you enshrined in these blooms of your bringing,
These fruits of your bearing—nay, birds of your winging!
A fairy-tale! Only—I feel it!

MAGICAL NATURE

l

FLOWER—I never fancied, jewel—I profess you!
Bright I see and soft I feel the outside of a flower.
Save but glow inside and—jewel, I should guess you,
Dim to sight and rough to touch: the glory is the dower.

II

You, forsooth, a flower? Nay, my love, a jewel—
Jewel at no mercy of a moment in your prime!
Time may fray the flower-face: kind be time or cruel,
Jewel, from each facet, flash your laugh at time!

BIFURCATION

WE were two lovers; let me lie by her,
My tomb beside her tomb. On hers inscribe—
'I loved him; but my reason bade prefer
Duty to love, reject the tempter's bribe
Of rose and lily when each path diverged,
And either I must pace to life's far end
As love should lead me, or, as duty urged,
Plod the worn causeway arm-in-arm with friend.
So, truth turned falsehood: *"How I loathe a flower,*
How prize the pavement!" still caressed his ear—
The deafish friend's—through life's day, hour by hour,
As he laughed (coughing) *"Ay, it would appear!"*
But deep within my heart of hearts there hid
Ever the confidence, amends for all,
That heaven repairs what wrong earth's journey did,
When love from life-long exile comes at call.
Duty and love, one broadway, were the best—
Who doubts? But one or other was to choose.
I chose the darkling half, and wait the rest
In that new world where light and darkness fuse.'

Inscribe on mine—'I loved her: love's track lay
O'er sand and pebble, as all travellers know.
Duty led through a smiling country, gay
With greensward where the rose and lily blow.
"Our roads are diverse: farewell, love!" said she;
"Tis duty I abide by: homely sward
And not the rock-rough picturesque for me !
Above, where both roads join, I wait reward.
Be you as constant to the path whereon
I leave you planted!" But man needs must move,
Keep moving—whither, when the star is gone
Whereby he steps secure nor strays from love?
No stone but I was tripped by, stumbling-block
But brought me to confusion. Where I fell,
There I lay flat, if moss disguised the reck,
Thence, if flint pierced, I rose and cried *"All's well!*
Duty be mine to tread in that high sphere
Where love from duty ne'er disparts, I trust,
And two halves make that whole, whereof —since here
One *must suffice a man—why, this one must!"'*

BIFURCATION

Inscribe each tomb thus: then, some sage acquaint
The simple—which holds sinner, which holds Saint !

NUMPHOLEPTOS

STILL you stand, still you listen, still you smile!
Still melts your moonbeam through me, white awhile,
Softening, sweetening, till sweet and soft
Increase so round this heart of mine, that oft
I could believe your moonbeam-smile has past
The pallid limit, lies, transformed at last
To sunlight and salvation—warms the soul
It sweetens, softens! Would you pass that goal,
Gain love's birth at the limit's happier verge,
And, where an iridescence lurks, but urge
The hesitating pallor on to prime
Of dawn!—true blood-streaked, sun-warmth, action-time,
By heart-pulse ripened to a ruddy glow
Of gold above my clay—I scarce should know
From gold's self, thus suffused! For gold means love.
What means the sad slow silver smile above
My clay but pity, pardon?—at the best,
But acquiescence that I take my rest,
Contented to be clay, while in your heaven
The sun reserves love for the Spirit-Seven
Companioning God's throne they lamp before,
—Leaves earth a mute waste only wandered o'er
By that pale soft sweet disempassioned moon
Which smiles me slow forgiveness! Such the boon
I beg? Nay, dear, submit to this—just this
Supreme endeavour! As my lips now kiss
Your feet, my arms convulse your shrouding robe,
My eyes, acquainted with the dust, dare probe
Your eyes above for—what, if born, would blind
Mine with redundant bliss, as flash may find
The inert nerve, sting awake the palsied limb,
Bid with life's ecstasy sense overbrim
And suck back death in the resurging joy—
Love, the love whole and sole without alloy!

Vainly! The promise withers! I employ
Lips, arms, eyes, pray the prayer which finds the word,
Make the appeal which must be felt, not heard,
And none the more is changed your calm regard:
Rather, its sweet and soft grow harsh and hard—
Forbearance, then repulsion, then disdain.
Avert the rest! I rise, see!—make, again
Once more, the old departure for some track
Untried yet through a world which brings me back
Ever thus fruitlessly to find your feet,
To fix your eyes, to pray the soft and sweet
Which smile there—take from his new pilgrimage
Your outcast, once your inmate, and assuage
With love—not placid pardon now—his thirst
For a mere drop from out the ocean erst
He drank at! Well, the quest shall be renewed.
Fear nothing! Though I linger, unembued
With any drop, my lips thus close. I go!
So did I leave you. I have found you so,
And doubtlessly, ir fated to return,
So shall my pleading persevere and earn
Pardon—not love—in that same smile, I learn,
And lose the meaning of, to learn once more,
Vainly!

What fairy track do I explore?
What magic hall return to, like the gem
Centuply-angled o'er a diadem?
You dwell there, hearted; from your midmost home
Rays forth—through that fantastic world I roam
Ever—from centre to circumference,
Shaft upon coloured shaft: this crimsons thence,
That purples out its precinct through the waste.
Surely I had your sanction when I faced,
Fared forth upon that untried yellow ray
Whence I retrack my steps? They end today
Where they began—before your feet, beneath
Your eyes, your smile: the blade is shut in sheath,
Fire quenched in flint; irradiation, late
Triumphant through the distance, finds its fate,
Merged in your blank pure soul, alike the source
And tomb of that prismatic glow: divorce
Absolute, all-conclusive! Forth I fared,
Treading the lambent flamelet: little cared

If now its flickering took the topaz tint,
If now my dull-caked path gave sulphury hint
Of subterranean rage—no stay nor stint
To yellow, since you sanctioned that I bathe,
Burnish me, soul and body, swim and swathe
In yellow license. Here I reek suffused
With crocus, saffron, orange, as I used
With scarlet, purple, every dye o' the bow
Born of the storm-cloud. As before, you show
Scarce recognition, no approval, some
Mistrust, more wonder at a man become
Monstrous in garb, nay—flesh disguised as well,
Through his adventure. Whatso'er befell,
I followed, wheresoe'er it wound, that vein
You authorized should leave your whiteness, stain
Earth's sombre stretch beyond your midmost place
Of vantage,—trode that tinct whereof the trace
On garb and flesh repel you! Yes, I plead
Your own permission—your command, indeed,
That who would worthily retain the love
Must share the knowledge shrined those eyes above,
Go boldly on adventure, break through bounds
O' the quintessential whiteness that surrounds
Your feet, obtain experience of each tinge
That bickers forth to broaden out, impinge
Plainer his foot its pathway all distinct
From every other. Ah, the wonder, linked
With fear, as exploration manifests
What agency h was first tipped the crests
Of unnamed wildflower, soon protruding grew
Portentous mid the sands, as when his hue
Betrays him and the burrowing snake gleams through;
Till, last... but why parade more shame and pain?
Are not the proofs upon me? Here again
I pass into your presence, I receive
Your smile of pity, pardon, and I leave...
No, not this last of times I leave you, mute,
Submitted to my penance, so my foot
May yet again adventure, tread, from source
To issue, one more ray of rays which course
Each other, at your bidding, from the sphere
Silver and sweet, their birthplace, down that drear
Dark of the world,—you promise shall return
Your pilgrim jewelled as with drops o' the urn
The rainbow paints from, and no smatch at all
Of ghastliness at edge of some cloud-pall
Heaven cowers before, as earth awaits the fall
O' the bolt and flash of doom. Who trusts your word
Tries the adventure: and returns—absurd
As frightful—in that sulphur-steeped disguise
Mocking the priestly cloth-of-gold, sole prize
The arch-heretic was wont to bear away
Until he reached the burning. No, I say:
No fresh adventure! No more seeking love
At end of toil, and finding, calm above
My passion, the old statuesque regard,
The sad petrific smile!

O you—less hard
And hateful than mistaken and obtuse
Unreason of a she-intelligence!
You very woman with the pert pretence
To match the male achievement! Like enough!
Ay, you were easy victors, did the rough
Straightway efface itself to smooth, the gruff
Grind down and grow a whisper,—did man's truth
Subdue, for sake of chivalry and ruth,
Its rapier-edge to suit the bulrush-spear
Womanly falsehood fights with! O that ear
All fact pricks rudely, that thrice-superfine
Feminity of sense, with right divine
To waive all process, take result stain-freo
From out the very muck wherein ...

Ah me!
The true slave's querulous outbreak! All the rest
Be resignation! Forth at your behest
I fare. Who knows but this—the crimson-quest—
May deepen to a sunrise, not decay
To that cold sad sweet smile?—which I obey.

APPEARANCES

I

A N D so you found that poor room dull,
Dark, hardly to your taste, my dear?
Its features seemed unbeautiful:
But this I know—'twas there, not here,
You plighted troth to me, the word
Which—ask that poor room how it heard,

II

And this rich room obtains your praise
Unqualified,—so bright, so fair,
So all whereat perfection stays?

APPEARANCES

Ay, but remember—here, not there,
The other word was spoken! Ask
This rich room how- you dropped the mask!

ST. MARTIN'S SUMMER

No protesting, dearest!
Hardly kisses even!
Don't we both know how it ends?
How the greenest leaf turns serest,
Bluest outbreak—blankest heaven,
Lovers—friends?

You would build a mansion,
I would weave a bower
—Want the heart for enterprise.
Walls admit of no expansion:
Trellis-work may haply flower
Twice the size.

What makes glad Life's Winter?
New buds, old blooms after.
Sad the sighing 'How suspect
Beams would ere mid-Autumn splinter,
Rooftree scarce support a rafter,
Walls lie wrecked?'

You are young, my princess!
I am hardly older:
Yet—I steal a glance behind.
Dare I tell you what convinces
Timid me that you, if bolder,
Bold—are blind?

Where we plan our dwelling
Glooms a graveyard surely!
Headstone, footstone moss may drape,—
Name, date, violets hide from spelling,—
But, though corpses rot obscurely,
Ghosts escape.

Ghosts! O breathing Beauty,
Give my frank word pardon!
What if I—somehow, somewhere—
Pledged my soul to endless duty
Many a time and oft? Be hard on
Love—laid there?

Nay, blame grief that's fickle,
Time that proves a traitor.
Chance, change, all that purpose warps,—
Death who spares to thrust the sickle
Laid Love low, through flowers which later
Shroud the corpse!

VIII

And you, my winsome lady,
Whisper with like frankness!
Lies nothing buried long ago?
Are yon—which shimmer mid the shady
Where moss and violet run to rankness—
Tombs or no?

IX

Who taxes you with murder?
My hands are clean—or nearly!
Love being mortal needs must pass.
Repentance? Nothing were absurder.
Enough: we felt Love's loss severely;
Though now—alas!

Love's corpse lies quiet therefore,
Only Love's ghost plays truant,
And warns us have in wholesome awe
Durable mansionry; that's wherefore
I weave but trellis-work, pursuant
—Life, to law.

XI

The solid, not the fragile,
Tempts rain and hail and thunder.
If bower stand firm at Autumn's close,
Beyond my hope,—why, boughs were agile;
If bower fall flat, we scarce need wonder
Wreathing—rose!

So, truce to the protesting,
So, muffled be the kisses!
For, would we but avow the truth,
Sober is genuine joy. No jesting!
Ask else Penelope, Ulysses—
Old in youth!

For why should ghosts feel angered?
Let all their interference
Be faint march-music in the air!
'Up! Join the rear of us the vanguard!
Up, lovers, dead to all appearance,
Laggard pair!'

XIV

The while you clasp me closer,
The while I press you deeper,
As safe we chuckle,—under breath,
Yet all the slyer, the jocoser,—
'So, life can boast its day, like leap-year,
Stolen from death!'

Ah me—the sudden terror!
Hence quick—avaunt, avoid me,
You cheat, the ghostly flesh-disguised!
Nay, all the ghosts in one! Strange error!
So, 'twas Death's self that clipped and coyed me,
Loved—and lied'

XVI

Ay, dead loves are the potent!
Like any cloud they used you,
Mere semblance you, but substance they!
Build we no mansion, weave we no tent!
Mere flesh—their spirit interfused you I
Hence, I say!

XVII

All theirs, none yours the glamour!
Theirs each low word that won me,
Soft look that found me Love's, and left
What else but you—the tears and clamour
That'sail your very own! Undone me—
Ghost-bereft!

HERVE RIEL

ON the sea and at the Hogue, sixteen hundred ninety-two,
Did the English fight the French,—woe to France!
And, the thirty-first of May, helter-skelter through the blue,
Like a crowd of frightened porpoises a shoal of sharks pursue,
Came crowding ship on ship to Saint-Malo on the Ranee,
With the English fleet in view.

n

'Twas the squadron that escaped, with the victor in full chase;
First and foremost of the drove, in his great ship, Damfreville;
Close on him fled, great and small,
Twenty-two good ships in all;
And they signalled to the place
'Help the winners of a race!
Get us guidance, give us harbour, take us quick—or, quicker still,
Here's the English can and will!'

III

Then the pilots of the place put out brisk and leapt on board;
'Why, what hope or chance have ships like these to pass?' laughed they:
'Rocks to starboard, rocks to port, all the passage scarred and scored,—
Shall the "Formidable" here, with her twelve and eighty guns,
Think to make the river-mouth by the single narrow way,
Trust to enter—where 'tis ticklish for a craft of twenty tons,
And with flow at full beside?
Now, 'tis slackest ebb of tide.
Reach the mooring? Rather say,
While rock stands or water runs,
Not a ship will leave the bay!'

IV

Then was called a council straight.
Brief and bitter the debate:
'Here's the English at our heels; would you have them take in tow
All that's left us of the fleet, linked together stern and bow,
For a prize to Plymouth Sound?
Better run the ships aground!'
(Ended Damfreville his speech.)
'Not a minute more to wait!
Let the Captains all and each
Shove ashore, then blow up, burn the vessels on the beach!
France must undergo her fate.

v

Give the word!' But no such word
Was ever spoke or heard;
For up stood, for out stepped, for in struck amid all these
—A Captain? A Lieutenant? A Mate—first, second, third?
No such man of mark, and meet
With his betters to compete!
But a simple Breton sailor pressed by Tourville for the fleet,
A poor coasting-pilot he, Herve Riel the Croisickese.

VI

And 'What mockery or malice have we here?' cries Herve Riel:
' Are you mad, you Malouins ? Are you cowards, fools, or rogues?
Talk to me of rocks and shoals, me who took the soundings, tell
On my fingers every bank, every shallow, every swell
'Twixt the offing here and Greve where the river disembogues ?
Are you bought by English gold ? Is it love the lying's for?
Morn and eve, night and day,
Have I piloted your bay,
Entered free and anchored fast at the foot of Solidor.
Burn the fleet and ruin France? That were worse than fifty Hogues!
Sirs, they know I speak the truth!
Sirs, believe me there's a way!
Only let me lead the line,
Have the biggest ship to steer,
Get this "Formidable" clear,
Make the others follow mine,
And I lead them, most and least, by a passage I know well,
Right to Solidor past Greve,
And there lay them safe and sound;
And if one ship misbehave,—
—Keel so much as grate the ground,
Why, I've nothing but my life,—here's my head!' cries Herve Riel.

Not a minute more to wait.
'Steer us in, then, small and great!
Take the helm, lead the line, save the squadron!' cried its chief.
Captains, give the sailor place!
He is Admiral, in brief.
Still the north-wind, by God's grace!
See the noble fellow's face
As the big ship, with a bound,
Clears the entry like a hound,
Keeps the passage, as its inch of way were the wide sea's profound!
See, safe thro' shoal and rock,
How they follow in a flock,
Not a ship that misbehaves, not a keel that grates the ground,
Not a spar that comes to grief!
The peril, see, is past.
All are harboured to the last,
And just as Herve Riel hollas 'Anchor!'—sure as fate,
Up the English come,—too late!

VIII

So, the storm subsides to calm:
They see the green trees wave
On the heights o'erlooking Greve.
Hearts that bled are stanched with balm.
'Just our rapture to enhance,
Let the English rake the bay,
Gnash their teeth and glare askance
As they cannonade away!
'Neath rampired Solidor pleasant riding on the Ranee!'
How hope succeeds despair on each Captain's countenance!
Out burst all with one accord,
'This is Paradise for Hell!
Let France, let France's King
Thank the man that did the thing!'
What a shout, and all one word,
'Herve Riel!'
As he stepped in front once more,
Not a symptom of surprise
In the frank blue Breton eyes,
Just the same man as before.

Then said Damfreville, 'My friend,
I must speak out at the end,
Though I find the speaking hard.
Praise is deeper than the lips:
You have saved the King his ships,
You must name your own reward.
'Faith, our sun was near eclipse!
Demand whate'er you will,
France remains your debtor still.
Ask to heart's content and have! or my name's not Damfreville.'

Then a beam of fun outbroke
On the bearded mouth that spoke,
As the honest heart laughed through
Those frank eyes of Breton blue:
' Since I needs must say my say,
Since on board the duty's done,
And from Malo Roads to Croisic Point, what is it but a run?—
Since 'tis ask and have, I may—
Since the others go ashore—
Come! A good whole holiday!
Leave to go and see my wife, whom I call the Belle Aurore!'
That he asked and that he got,—nothing more.

XI

Name and deed alike are lost:
Not a pillar nor a post
In his Croisic keeps alive the feat as it befell;
Not a head in white and black
On a single fishing-smack,
In memory of the man but for whom had gone to wrack
All that France saved from the fight whence England bore the bell.
Go to Paris; rank on rank
Search the heroes flung pell-mell
On the Louvre, face and flank!
You shall look long enough ere you come to Herve Riel.
So, for better and for worse,
Herve Riel, accept my verse!
In my verse, Herve Riel, do thou once more
Save the squadron, honour France, love thy wife the Belle Aurore!

A FORGIVENESS

I AM indeed the personage you know.
As for my wife,—what happened long ago,—
You have a right to question me, as I
Am bound to answer.

('Son, a fit reply!'
The monk half spoke, half ground through his clenched teeth,
At the confession-grate I knelt beneath.)

TTuk, then all happened, Father! Power and place
I had as still I have. I ran life's race,
With the whole world to see, as only strains
His strength some athlete whose prodigious gains
Of good appal him: happy to excess,—
Work freely done should balance happiness
Fully enjoyed; and, since beneath my roof
Housed she who made home heaven, in heaven's behoof
I went forth every day, and all day long
Worked for the world. Look, how the labourer's song

Cheers him! Thus sang my soul, at each sharp throe
Of labouring flesh and blood—'She loves me so!'

One day, perhaps such song so knit the nerve
That work grew play and vanished. 'I deserve
Haply my heaven an hour before the time!'
I laughed, as silverly the clockhouse-chime
Surprised me passing through the postern-gate
—Not the main entry where the menials wait
And wonder why the world's affairs allow
The master sudden leisure. That was how
I took the private garden-way for once.

Forth from the alcove, I saw start, ensconce
Himself behind the porphyry vase, a man.
My fancies in the natural order ran:
'A spy,—perhaps a foe in ambuscade,—
A thief,—more like, a sweetheart of some maid
Who pitched on the alcove for tryst per-haps.*

•Stand there!' Ibid.

Whereat my man but wraps
His face the closelier with uplifted arm
Whereon the cloak lies, strikes in blind alarm
This and that pedestal as,—stretch and stoop,—
Now in, now out of sight, he thrids the group
Of statues, marble god and goddess ranged
Each side the pathway, till the gate's ex-changed
For safety: one step thence, the street, you know!

Thus far I followed with my gaze. Then, slow,
Near on admiringly, I breathed again,
And—back to that last fancy of the train—
'A danger risked for hope of just a word
With—which of all my nest may be the bird
This poacher covets for her plumage, pray?
Carmen? Juana? Carmen seems too gay
For such adventure, while Juana 's grave
—Would scorn the folly. I applaud the knave!
He had the eye, could single from my brood
His proper fledgeling!'

As I turned, there stood
In face of me, my wife stone-still stone-white.
Whether one bound had brought her,—at first sight
Of what she judged the encounter, sure to be
Next moment, of the venturous man and me,—
Brought her to clutch and keep me from my prey:
Whether impelled because her death no day
Could come so absolutely opportune
As now at joy's height, like a year in June
Stayed at the fall of its first ripened rose:
Or whether hungry for my hate—who knows?—
Eager to end an irksome lie, and taste
Our tingling true relation, hate embraced
By hate one naked moment:—anyhow
There stone-still stone-white stood my wife, but now
The woman who made heaven within my house.
Ay, she who faced me was my very spouse
As well as love—you are to recollect!

'Stay!' she said. 'Keep at least one soul unspecked
With crime, that's spotless hitherto—your own!
Kill me who court the blessing, who alone
Was, am, and shall be guilty, first to last!
The man lay helpless in the toils I cast
About him, helpless as the statue there
Against that strangling bell-flower's bond-age: tear
Away and tread to dust the parasite.
But do the passive marble no despite!
I love him as I hate you. Kill me! Strike
At one blow both infinitudes alike
Out of existence—hate and love! Whence love?
That's safe inside my heart, nor will re-move
For any searching of your steel, I think.
Whence hate? The secret lay on lip, at brink
Of speech, in one fierce tremble to escape,
At every form wherein your love took shape,
At each new provocation of your kiss.
Kill me!'

We went in.

Next day after this,
I felt as if the speech might come. I spoke-
Easily, after all.

'The lifted cloak
Was screen sufficient: I concern myself
Hardly with laying hands on who for pelf—
Whate'er the ignoble kind—may prowl and brave
Cuffing and kicking proper to a knave

Detected by my household's vigilance.
Enough of such! As for my love-romance. .
I, like our gooa Hidalgo, rub my eyes
And wake and wonder how the film could rise
Which changed for me a barber's basin straight
Into—Mambrino's helm? I hesitate
Nowise to say—God's sacramental cup!
Why should I blame the brass which, burnished up,
Will blaze, to all but me, as good as gold?
To me—a warning I was overbold
In judging metals. The Hidalgo waked
Only to die, if I remember,—staked
His life upon the basin's worth, and lost:
While I confess torpidity at most
In here and there a limb; but, lame and halt,
Still should I work on, still repair my fault
Ere I took rest in death,—no fear at all!
Now, work—no word before the curtain fall!'

The 'curtain'? That of death on life, I meant:
My 'word,' permissible in death's event,
Would be—truth, soul to soul; for, otherwise,
Day by day, three years long, there had to rise
And, night by night, to fall upon our stage—
Ours, doomed to public play by heritage—
Another curtain, when the world, perforce
Our critical assembly, in due course
Came and went, witnessing, gave praise or blame
To art-mimetic. It had spoiled the game
If, suffered to set foot behind our scene,
The world had witnessed how stage-king and queen,
Gallant and lady, but a minute since
Enarming each the other, would evince
No sign of recognition as they took
His way and her way to whatever nook
Waited them in the darkness either side
Of that bright stage where lately groom and bride
Had fired the audience to a frenzy-fit
Of sympathetic rapture—every whit
Earned as the curtain fell on her and me,
—Actors. Three whole years, nothing was to see
But calm and concord; where a speech was due
There came the speech: when smiles were wanted too
Smiles were as ready. In a place like mine,
Where foreign and domestic cares combine,
There's audience every day and all day long;
But finally the last of the whole throng
Who linger lets one see his back. For her—
Why, liberty and liking: I aver,
Liking and liberty! For me—I breathed,
Let my face rest from every wrinkle wreathed
Smile-like about the mouth, unlearned my task
Of personation till next day bade mask,
And quietly betook me from that world
To the real world, not pageant: there unfurled
In work, its wings, my soul, the fretted power.
Three years I worked, each minute of each hour
Not claimed by acting:—work I may dispense
With talk about, since work in evidence,
Perhaps in history; who knows or cares?

After three years, this way, all unawares,
Our acting ended. She and I, at close
Of a loud night-feast, led, between two rows
Of bending male and female loyalty,
Our lord the king down staircase, while, held high
At arm's length did the twisted tapers' flare
Herald his passage from our palace, where
Such visiting left glory evermore.
Again the ascent in public, till at door
As we two stood by the saloon—now blank
And disencumbered of its guests—there sank
A whisper in my ear, so low and yet
So unmistakable!

'I half forget
The chamber you repair to, and I want
Occasion for one short word—if you grant
That grace—within a certain room you called
Our "Study," for you wrote there while I scrawled
Some paper full of faces for my sport.
That room I can remember. Just one short
Word with you there, for the remembrance' sake!'

'Follow me thither!' I replied.

We break
The gloom a little, as with guiding lamp
I lead the way, leave warmth and cheer, by damp
Blind disused serpentining ways afar
From where the habitable chambers are,—
Ascend, descend stairs tunnelled through the stone,—
Always in silence,—till I reach the lone
Chamber sepulchred for my very own
Out of the palace-quarry. When a boy,
Here was ray fortress, stronghold from annoy,

Proof-positive of ownership; in youth
I garnered up my gleanings here—uncouth
But precious relics of vain hopes, vain fears;
Finally, this became in after years
My closet of entrenchment to withstand
Invasion of the foe on every hand—
The multifarious herd in bower and hall,
State-room,—rooms whatsoe'er the style, which call
On masters to be mindful that, before
Men, they must look like men and something more.
Here,—when our lord the king's bestowment ceased
To deck me on the day that, golden-fleeced,
I touched ambition's height,—'twas here, released
From glory (always symbolled by a chain!)
No sooner was I privileged to gain
My secret domicile than glad I flung
That last toy on the table—gazed where hung
On hook my father's gift, the arquebuss—
And asked myself' Shall I envisage thus
The new prize and the old prize, when I reach
Another year's experience?—own that each
Equalled advantage—sportsman's—statesman's tool ?
That brought me down an eagle, this—a fool!'

Into which room on entry, I set down
The lamp, and turning saw whose rustled gown
Had told me my wife followed, pace for pace.
Each of us looked the other in the face.
She spoke. * Since I could die now . . .'
(To explain
Why that first struck me, know—not once again
Since the adventure at the porphyry's edge
Three years before, which sundered like a wedge
Her soul from mine,—though daily, smile to smile.
We stood before the public,—all the while
Not once had [distinguished, in that face
I paid observance to, the faintest trace
Of feature more than requisite for eyes
To do their duty by and recognize:
So did I force mine to obey my will
And pry no further. There exists such skill,—
Those know who need it. What physician shrinks
From needful contact with a corpse? He drinks
No plague so long as thirst for knowledge—not
An idler impulse—prompts inquiry. What,
And will you disbelieve in power to bid
Our spirit back to bounds, as though we chid
A child from scrutiny that's just and right
In manhood? Sense, not soul, accomplished sight,
Reported daily she it was—not how
Nor why a change had come to cheek and brow.)

'Since I could die now of the truth concealed,
Yet dare not, must not die—so seems revealed
The Virgin's mind to me—for death means peace,
Wherein no lawful part have I, whose lease
Of life and punishment the truth avowed
May haply lengthen,—let me push the shroud
Away, that steals to muffle ere is just
My penance-fire in snow! I dare—I must
Live, by avowal of the truth—this truth—
I loved you! Thanks for the fresh serpent's tooth
That, by a prompt new pang more exquisite
Than all preceding torture, proves me right!
I loved you yet I lost you! May I go
Burn to the ashes, now my shame you know?'

I think there never was such—how express?—
Horror coquetting with voluptuousness,
As in those arms of Eastern workmanship—
Yataghan, kandjar, things that rend and rip,
Gash rough, slash smooth, help hate so many ways,
Yet ever keep a beauty that betrays
Love still at work with the artificer
Throughout his quaint devising. Why prefer,
Except for love's sake, that a blade should writhe
And bicker like a flame?—now play the scythe
As if some broad neck tempted,—now contract
And needle off into a fineness lacked
For just that puncture which the heart demands ?
Then, such adornment! Wherefore need our hands
Enclose not ivory alone, nor gold
Roughened for use, but jewels? Nay, behold!
Fancy my favourite—which I seem to grasp
While I describe the luxury. No asp
Is diapered more delicate round throat
Than this below the handle! These denote

—These mazy lines meandering, to end
Only in flash they open—what intend
They else but-.watet-purlings—pale contrast
With the life-crimson where they blend at last?
And mark the handle's dim pellucid green,
Carved, the hard jadestone, as you pinch a bean,
mto a sort of parrot-bird! He pecks
A grape-bunch; his two eyes are ruby-specks
Pure from the mine: seen this way,—glassy blank,
But turn them,—lo the inmost fire, that shrank
From sparkling, sends a red dart right to aim!
Why did I choose such toys? Perhaps the game
Of peaceful men is warlike, just as men
War-wearied get amusement from that pen
And paper we grow sick of— statesfolk tired
Of merely (when such measures are required)
Dealing out doom to people by three words,
A signature and seal: we play with swords
Suggestive of quick process. That *is* how
I came to like the toys described you now.
Store of which glittered on the walls and strewed
The table, even, while my wife pursued
Her purpose to its ending. 'Now you know
This shame, my three years' torture, let me go,
Burn to the very ashes! You—I lost,
Yet you—I loved!*

The thing I pity most
In men is—action prompted by surprise
Of anger: men? nay, bulls—whose onset lies
At instance of the firework and the goad!
Once the foe prostrate,—trampling once bestowed,—
Prompt follows placability, regret,
Atonement. Trust me, blood-warmth never yet
Betokened strong will! As no leap of pulse
Pricked me, that first tims, so did none convulse
My veins at this occasion for resolve.
Had that devolved which did not then devolve
Upon me, I had done—what now to do
Was quietly apparent.

'Tell me who
The man was, crouching by the porphyry vase!'
'No, never! All was folly in his case,
All guilt in mine. I tempted, he complied.[1]
'And yet you loved me?'

'Loved you. Double-dyed
In folly and in guilt, I thought you gave
Your heart and soul away from me to slave
At statecraft. Since my right in you seemed lost,
I stung myself to teach you, to your cost,
What you rejected could be prized beyond
Life, heaven, by the first fool I threw a fond
Look on, a fatal word to.'

'And you still
Love me? Do I conjecture well or ill?*
' Conjecture—well or ill! I had three years
To spend in learning you.'

'We both are peers
In knowledge, therefore: since three years are spent
Ere thus much of yourself / learn—who went
Back to the house, that day, and brought my mind
To bear upon your action, uncombined
Motive from motive, till the dross, deprived
Of every purer particle, survived
At last in native simple hideousness,
Utter contemptibility, nor less
Nor more. Contemptibility—exempt
How could I, from its proper due—contempt?
I have too much despised you to divert
My life from its set course by help or hurt
Of your all-despicable life—perturb
The calm, I work in, by—men's mouths to curb,
Which at such news were clamorous enough—
Men's eyes to shut before my broidered stuff
With the huge hole there, my emblazoned wall
Blank where a scutcheon hung,—by, worse than all.
Each day's procession, my paraded life
Robbed and impoverished through the wanting wife
—Now that my life (which means—my work) was grown
Riches indeed! Once, just this worth alone
Seemed work to have, that profit gained thereby
Of good and praise would—how rewardingly!—
Fall at your feet,—a crown I hoped to cast
Before your love, my love should crown at last.
No love remaining to cast crown before,
My love stopped work now: but contempt the more

Impelled me task as ever head and hand,
Because the very fiends weave ropes of sand
Rather than taste pure hell in idleness.
Therefore I kept my memory down by stress
Of daily work I had no mind to stay
For the world's wonder at the wife away.
Oh, it was easy all of it, believe,
For I despised you! But your words retrieve
Importantly the past. No hate assumed
The mask of love at any time! There gloomed
A moment when love took hate's semblance, urged
By causes you declare; but love's self purged
Away a fancied wrong I did both loves
—Yours and my own: by no hate's help, it proves,
Purgation was attempted. Then, you rise
High by how many a grade! I did despise—
I do but hate you. Let hate's punishment
Replace contempt's! First step to which ascent—
Write down your own words I re-utter you.'
"I *loved my husband and I hated—who*
He was, I took up as my first chance, mere
Mud-ball to fling and make love foul with /"
Here
Lies paper!'

'Would my blood for ink suffice!'

'It may: this minion from a land of spice,
Silk, feather—every bird of jewelled breast—
This poignard's beauty, ne'er so lightly prest
Above your heart there . ..'

'Thus?'

'It flows, I see.
Dip there the point and write!'

'Dictate tome!
Nay, I remember.[9]

And she wrote the words.
I read them. Then— Since love, in you, affords
License for hate, in me, to quench (I say)
Contempt—why, hate itself has passed away
In vengeance—foreign to contempt. Depart
Peacefully to that death which Eastern art
Imbued this weapon with, if tales be true!
Love will succeed to hate. I pardon you—
Dead in our chamber!'

True as truth the tale.
She died ere morning: then, I saw how pale
Her cheek was ere it wore day's paint-disguise,
And what a hollow darkened 'neath her eyes,
Now that I used my own. She sleeps, as erst
Beloved, in this your church: ay, yours!

Immersed
In thought so deeply, Father? Sad, perhaps?
For whose sake, hers or mine or his who wraps
—Still plain I seem to see!—about his head
The idle cloak,—about his heart (instead
Of cuirass) some fond hope he may elude
My vengeance in the cloister's solitude?
Hardly, I think! As little helped his brow
The cloak then, Father—as your grate helps now!

CENCIAJA

Ogni cencio vuol entrare in bucato.
—Italian Proverb.

M A Y I print, Shelley, how it came to pass
That when your Beatrice seemed—by lapse
Of many a long month since her sentence fell-
Assured of pardon for the parricide,—
By intercession of staunch friends, or, say,
By certain pricks of conscience in the Pope
Conniver at Francesco Cenci's guilt,—
Suddenly all things changed and Clement grew
' Stern,' as you state, ' nor to be moved nor bent,
But said these three words coldly *"She must die;"*
Subjoining *"Pardon? Paolo Santa Croce*
Murdered his mother also yestereve,
And he is fled: she shall not flee at least!"
—So, to the letter, sentence was fulfilled?
Shelley, may I condense verbosity
Thai lies before me, into some few words
Of English, and illustrate your superb
Achievement by a rescued anecdote,
No great things, only new and true beside?
As if some mere familiar of a house
Should venture to accost the group at gaze
Before its Titian, famed the wide world through,
And supplement such pictured masterpiece
By whisper' Searching in the archives here,
I found the reason of the Lady's fate,
And how by accident it came to pass
She wears the halo and displays the palm:
Who, haply, else had never suffered—no.
Nor graced our gallery, by consequence.
Who loved the work would like the little news

Who lauds your poem lends an ear to me
Relating how the penalty was paid
By one Marchese dell',Oriolo, called
Onofrio Santa 'Croce otherwise,
For his complicity in matricide
With Paolo his own brother,—he whose crime
And flight induced 'those three words—She must die.'
Thus I unroll you then the manuscript.

'God's justice'—(of the multiplicity
Of such communications extant still,
Recording, each, injustice done by God
[n person of his Vicar-upon-earth,
Scarce one but leads off to the self-same tune)—
'God's justice, tardy though it prove perchance,
Rests never on the track until it reach
Delinquency. In proof I cite the case
Of Paolo Santa Croce.'

Many times
The youngster,—having been importunate
That Marchesine Costanza, who remained
His widowed mother, should supplant the heir
Her elder son, and substitute himself
In sole possession of her faculty,—
And meeting just as often with rebuff,—
Blinded by so exorbitant a lust
Of gold, the youngster straightway tasked his wits,
Casting about to kill the lady—thus.

He first, to cover his iniquity,
Writes to Onofrio Santa Croce, then
Authoritative lord, acquainting him
Their mother was contamination—wrought
Like hell-fire in the beauty of their House
By dissoluteness and abandonment
Of soul and body to impure delight.
Moreover, since she suffered from disease,
Those symptoms which her death made manifest
Hydroptic, he affirmed were fruits of sin
About to bring confusion and disgrace
Upon the ancient lineage and high fame
O' the family, when published. Duty bound,
He asked his brother—what a son should do?

Which when Marchese dell' Oriolo heard
By letter, being absent at his land
Oriolo, he made answer, this, no more:
' It must behove a son,—things haply so,—
To act as honour prompts a cavalier
And son, perform his duty to all three,
Mother and brothers'—here advice broke off.

By which advice informed and fortified,
As he professed himself—since bound by birth
To hear God's voice in primogeniture—
Paolo, who kept his mother company
In her domain Subiaco, straightway dared
His whole enormity of enterprise
And, falling on her, stabbed the lady dead;
Whose death demonstrated her innocence,
And happened,—by the way,—since Jesus Christ
Died to save man, just sixteen hundred years.
Costanza was of aspect beautiful
Exceedingly, and seemed, although in age
Sixty about, to far surpass her peers
The coetaneous dames, in youth and grace.

Done the misdeed, its author takes to flight,
Foiling thereby the justice of the world:
Not God's however,—God, be sure, knows well
The way to clutch a culprit. Witness here!
The present sinner, when he least expects,
Snug-cornered somewhere i theBasilicate,
Stumbles upon his death by violence.
A man of blood assaults a man of blood
And slays him somehow. This was afterward:
Enough, he promptly met with his deserts,
And, ending thus, permits we end with him,
And push forthwith to this important point—
His matricide fell out, of all the days,
Precisely when the law-procedure closed
Respecting Count Francesco Cenci's death
Chargeable on his daughter, sons and wife.
'Thus patricide was matched with matricide,'
A poet not inelegantly rhymed:
Nay, fratricide—those Princes Massimi !—
Which so disturbed the spirit of the Pope
That all the likelihood Rome entertained
Of Beatrice's pardon vanished straight,
And she endured the piteous death.

Now see
The sequel—what effect commandment had
For strict inquiry into this last case,
When Cardinal Aldobrandini (great
His efficacy—nephew to the Pope)
Was bidden crush—ay, though his very hand
Got soil i' the act—crime spawning everywhere !
Because, when all endeavour had been used
To catch the aforesaid Paolo, all in vain—
* Make perquisition' quoth our Eminence,
'Throughout his now deserted domicile!
Ransack the palace, roof and floor, to find

If haply any scrap of writing, hid
In nook or corner, may convict—who knows?—
Brother Onofrio of intelligence
With brother Paolo, as in brotherhood
Is but too likely: crime spawns everywhere.'

And, every cranny searched accordingly,
There comes to light—O lynx-eyed Cardinal!—
Onofrio's unconsidered writing-scrap,
The letter in reply to Paolo's prayer,
The word of counsel that—things proving so,
Paolo should act the proper knightly part,
And do as was incumbent on a son,
A brother—and a man of birth, be sure!

Whereat immediately the officers
Proceeded to arrest Onofrio—found
At foot-ball, child's play, unaware of harm,
Safe with his friends, the Orsini, at their seat
Monte Giordano; as he left the house
He came upon the watch in wait for him
Set by theBarigel,—was caught and caged.

News of which capture being, that same hour,
Conveyed to Rome, forthwith our Eminence,
Commands Taverna, Governor and Judge,
To have the process in especial care,
Be, first to last, not only president
In person, but inquisitor as well,
Nor trust the by-work to a substitute:
Bids him not, squeamish, keep the bench, but scrub
The floor of Justice, so to speak,—go try
His best in prison with the criminal:
Promising, as reward for by-work done
Fairly on all-fours, that, success obtained
And crime avowed, or such connivency
With crime as should procure a decent death—
Himself will humbly beg—which means, procure—
The Hat and Purple from his relative
The Pope, and so repay a diligence
Which, meritorious in the Cenci-case,
Mounts plainly here to Purple and the Hat.

Whereupon did my lord the Governor
So masterfully exercise the task
Enjoined him, that he, day by day, and week
By week, and month by month, from first to last
Toiled for the prize: now, punctual at his place,
Played Judge, and now, assiduous at his post,
Inquisitor—pressed cushion and scoured plank,
Early and late. Noon's fervour and night's chill,
Nought moved whom morn would, purpling, make amends!
So that observers laughed as, many a day,
He left home, in July when day is flame,
Posted to Tordinona-prison, plunged
Into a vault where daylong night is ice,
There passed his eight hours on a stretch, content,
Examining Onofrio: all the stress
Of all examination steadily
Converging into one pin-point,—he pushed
Tentative now of head and now of heart.
As when the nuthatch taps and tries the nut
This side and that side till the kernel sound,—
So did he press the sole and single point
—What was the very meaning of the phrase
'Do *as beseems an honoured cavalier'?*

Which one persistent question-torture, —plied
Day by day, week by week, and month by month,
Morn, noon and night,—fatigued away a mind
Grown imbecile by darkness, solitude,
And one vivacious memory gnawing there
As when a corpse is coffined with a snake
—Fatigued Onofrio into what might seem
Admission that perchance his judgment groped
So blindly, feeling for an issue—aught
With semblance of an issue from the toils
Cast of a sudden round feet late so free,
He possibly might have envisaged, scarce
Recoiled from—even were the issue death
—Even her death whose life was death and worse!
Always provided that the charge of crime,
Each jot and tittle of the charge were true.
In such a sense, belike, he might advise
His brother to expurgate crime with . . . well,
With blood, if blood must follow on *'the course*
Taken as might beseem a cavalier.'

Whereupon process ended, and report
Was made without a minute of delay
To Clement who, because of those two crimes
O' the Massimi and Cenci flagrant late,
Must needs impatiently desire result.

Result obtained, he bade the Governor
Summon the Congregation and despatch.
Summons made, sentence passed accordingly

—Death by beheading. When his death-decree
Was intimated to Onofrio, all
Man could do—that did he to save himself.
'Twas much, the having gained for his defence
The Advocate o'the Poor, with natural help
Of many noble friendly persons fain
To disengage a man of family,
So young too, from his grim entanglement:
But Cardinal Aldobrandini ruled
There must be no diversion of rhe law.
Justice is justice, and the magistrate
Bears not the sword in vain. Who sins must die.

So, the Marchese had his head cut off,
With Rome to see, a concourse infinite,
In Place Saint Angelo beside the Bridge:
Where, demonstrating magnanimity
Adequate to his birth and breed,—poor boy!—
He made the people the accustomed speech,
Exhorted them to true faith, honest works,
And special good behaviour as regards
A parent of no matter what the sex,
Bidding each son take warning from himself.
Truly, it was considered in the boy
Stark staring lunacy, no less, to snap
So plain a bait, be hooked and hauled ashore
By such an angler as the Cardinal!
Why make confession of his privity
To Paolo's enterprise? Mere sealing lips—
Or, better, saying 'When I counselled him
" To do as might beseem a cavalier"
What could I mean but" *Hide our parent's shame*
As Christian ought, by aid of Holy Church!
Bury it in a convent—ay, beneath
Enough dotation to prevent its ghost
From troubling earth!" ' Mere saying thus,
—'tis plain,
Not only were his life the recompense,
But he had manifestly proved himself
True Christian, and in lieu of punishment
Got praise of all men. So the populace.

Anyhow, when the Pope made promise good
(That of Aldobrandini, near and dear)
And gave Taverna, who had toiled so much,
A Cardinal's equipment, some such word
As this from mouth to ear went saucily:
'Taverna's cap is dyed in what he drew
From Santa Croce's veins!' So joked the world.

I add: Onofrio left one child behind,
A daughter named Valeria, dowered with grace
Abundantly of soul and body, doomed
To life the shorter for her father's fate.
By death of her, the Marquisatc returned
To that Orsini House from whence it came:
Oriolo having passed as donative
To Santa Croce from their ancestors.

And no word more? By all means! Would you know
The authoritative answer, when folk urged
'What made Aldobrandini, hound-like staunch,
Hunt out of life a harmless simpleton:'
The answer was—'Hatred implacable,
By reason they were rivals in their love.'
The Cardinal's desire was to a dame
Whose favour was Onofrio's. Pricked with pride,
The simpleton must ostentatiously
Display a ring, the Cardinal's love-gift,
Given to Onofrio as the lady's gage;
Which ring on finger, as he put forth hand
To draw a tapestry, the Cardinal
Saw and knew, gift and owner, old and young;
Whereon a fury entered him—the fire
He quenched with what could quench fire only—blood.
Nay, more: 'there want not who affirm to boot,
The unwise boy, a certain festal eve,
Feigned ignorance of who the wight might be
That pressed too closely on him with a crowd.
He struck the Cardinal a blow: and then,
To put a face upon the incident,
Dared next day, smug as ever, go pay court
I' the Cardinal's antechamber. Mark and mend,
Ye youth, by this example how may greed
Vainglorious operate in worldly souls!'

So ends the chronicler, beginning with
'God's justice, tardy though it prove perchance,
Rests never till it reach delinquency.'
Ay, or how otherwise had come to pass
That Victor rules, this present year, in Rome?

FILIPPO BALDINUCCI ON THE PRIVILEGE OF BURIAL

A REMINISCENCE OF A.D. 1676

'No, boy, we must not'—so began
My Uncle (he's with God long since)
A-petting me, the good old man!
We must not'—and he seemed to wince,

And lost that laugh whereto had grown
His chuckle at my piece of news,
How cleverly I aimed my stone—
'I fear we must not pelt the Jews!

'When I was young indeed,—ah, faith
Was young and strong in Florence too!
We Christians never dreamed of scathe
Because we cursed or kicked the crew.
But now—well, well! The olive-crops
Weighed double then, and Arno's pranks
Would always spare religious shops
Whenever he o'erflowed his banks!

'I'll tell you'—and his eye regained
Its twinkle—'tell you something choice!
Something may help you keep unstained
Your honest zeal to stop the voice
Of unbelief with stone-throw—spite
Of laws, which modern fools enact,
That we must suffer Jews in sight
Go wholly unmolested! Fact!

'There was, then, in my youth, and yet
Is, by our San Frediano, just
Below the Blessed Olivet,
A wayside ground wherein they thrust
Their dead,—these Jews,—the more our shame!
Except that, so they will but die,
Christians perchance incur no blame
In giving hogs a hoist to stye.

v

'There, anyhow, Jews slow away
Their dead; and,—such their insolence,—
Slink at odd times to sing and pray
As Christians do—all make-pretence !—
Which wickedness they perpetrate
Because they think no Christians see.
They reckoned here, at any rate,
Without their host: ha, ha, he, he!

'For, what should join their plot of ground
But a good Farmer's Christian field?
The Jews had hedged their corner round
With bramble-bush to keep concealed
Their doings: for the public road
Ran betwixt this their ground and that
The Farmer's, where he ploughed and sowed,
Grew corn for barn and grapes for vat.

vII

'So, properly to guard his store
And gall the unbelievers too,
He builds a shrine and, what is more,
Procures a painter whom I knew,
One Buti (he's with God) to paint
A holy picture there—no less
Than Virgin Mary free from taint
Borne to the sky by angels: yes!

Which shrine he fixed,—who says him nay?—
A-facing with its picture-side
Not, as you'd think, the public way,
But just where sought these hounds to hide
Their carrion from that very truth
Of Mary's triumph: not a hound
Could act his mummeries uncouth
But Mary shamed the pack all round!

'Now, if it was amusing, judge!
—To see the company arrive.
Each Jew intent to end his trudge
And take his pleasure (though alive)
With all his Jewish kith and kin
Below ground, have his venom out,
Sharpen his wits for next day's sin,
Curse Christians, and so home, no doubt!

'Whereas, each phyz upturned beholds
Mary, I warrant, soaring brave!
And in a trice, beneath the folds
Of filthy garb which gowns each knave,
Down drops it—there to hide grimace,
Contortion of the mouth and nose
At finding Mary in the place
They'd keep for Pilate, I suppose!

'At last, they will not brook—not they!—
Longer such outrage on their tribe:
So, in some hole and corner, lay
Their heads together—how to bribe
The meritorious Farmer's self
To straight undo his work, restore
Their chance to meet and muse on pelf-
Pretending sorrow, as before!

'Forthwith, a posse, if you please,
Of Rabbi This and Rabbi That
Almost go down upon their knees
To get him lay the picture flat.
The spokesman, eighty years of age,
Grey as a badger, with a goat's
Not only beard but bleat, 'gins wage
War with our Mary. Thus he dotes :-

'"Friends, grant a grace! How Hebrews toil
Through life in Florence—why relate
To those who lay the burden, spoil
Our paths of peace? We bear our fate,

FILIPPO BALDINUCCI ON THE PRIVILEGE OF BURIAL

But when with life the long toil ends,
Why must you—the expression craves
Pardon, but truth compels me, friends!—
Why must you plague us in our graves?

XIV

"' Thoughtlessly plague, I would believe!
For how can you—the lords of ease
*By nurture, birthright—e*en conceive*
Our luxury to lie with trees
And turf,—the cricket and the bird
Left for our last companionship:
No harsh deed, no unkindly word.
No frowning brow nor scornful lip!

XV

'"Death's luxury, we now rehearse
While, living, through your streets we fare
And take your hatred: nothing worse
Have we, once dead and safe, to bear!
So we refresh our souls, fulfil
Our works, our daily tasks; and thus
Gather you grain—earth's harvest—still
The wheat for you, the straw for us.

'" 'What flouting in a face, what harm,
In just a lady borne from bier
By boys' heads, wings for leg and arm?*
You question. Friends, the harm is here—
That just when our last sigh is heaved,
And we would fain thank God and you
For labour done and peace achieved,
Back comes the Past in full review!

xvII

' "At sight of just that simple flag,
Starts the foe-feeling serpent-like
From slumber. Leave it lulled, nor drag—
Though fangless—forth, what needs must strike
When stricken sore, though stroke he vain
Against the mailed oppressor! Give
Play to our fancy that we gain
Life's rights when once we cease to live!

'" Thus much to courtesy, to kind,
To conscience ! Now to Florence folk !
There's core beneath this apple-rind,
Beneath this white-of-egg there's yolk!
Beneath this prayer to courtesy,
Kind, conscience—there's a sum to pouch !
How many ducats down will buy
Our shame's removal, sirs? Avouch!

XIX

'"Removal, not destruction, sirs!
Just turn your picture! Let it front
The public path ! Or memory errs,
Or that same public path is wont
To witness many c chance befall
Of lust, theft, bloodshed—sins enough,
Wherein our Hebrew part is small.
Convert yourselves!"—**he cut up rough**

xx

'Look you, how soon a service paid
Religion yields the servant fruit!
A prompt reply our Farmer made
So following: *"Sirs, to grant your suit*
Involves much danger! How? Transpose
Our Lady? Stop the chastisement,
All for your good, herself bestows?
What wonder if I grudge consent?

XXI

'"—Yet grant it: since, what cash I take
Is so much saved from wicked use.
We know you! And, for Mary's sake,
A hundred ducats shall induce
Concession to your prayer. One day
Suffices: Master Buti's brush
Turns Mary round the other way,
And deluges your side with slush,

xxII

** "Down with the ducats therefore!"* **Dump,**
Dump, dump it falls, each counted piece,
Hard gold. Then out of door they stump,
These dogs, each brisk as with new lease
Of life, I warrant,—glad he'll die
Henceforward just as he may choose,
Be buried and in clover lie!
Well said Esaias—*"stiff-necked Jews!"*

xxIII

'Off posts without a minute's loss
Our Farmer, once the cash in poke,
And summons Buti—ere its gloss
Have time to fade from off the joke—
To chop and change his work, undo
The done side, make the side, now **blank,**
Recipient of our Lady—who,
Displaced thus, had these dogs to thank!

xxIv

'Now, boy, you're hardly to instruct
In technicalities of Art!
My nephew's childhood sure has sucked
Along with mother's-milk some part
Of pa inter's-practice—learned, at least,
How expeditiously is plied
A work in fresco—never ceased
When once begun—a day, each side.

xxv

'So, Buti—(he's with God)—begins:
First covers up the shrine all round
With hoarding; then, as like as twins,
Paints, t'other side the burial-ground,
New Mary, every point the same;
Next, sluices over, as agreed,
The old; and last—but, spoil the **game**
By telling you? Not I, indeed !

' Well, ere the week was half at end,
Out came the object of this zeal,
This fine alacrity to spend
Hard money for mere dead men's weal!
How think you? That old spokesman Jew
Was High Priest, and he had a wife
As old, and she was dying too,
And wished to end in peace her life!

'And he must humour dying whims,
And soothe her with the idle hope
They'd say their prayers and sing their hymns
As if her husband were the Pope!
And she did die—believing just
This privilege was purchased! Dead
In comfort through her foolish trust!
***"Stiff-necked ones,"* well Esaias said!**

XXVIII

'So, Sabbath morning, out of gate
And on to way, what sees our arch
Good Farmer? Why, they hoist their freight—
The corpse—on shoulder, and so, march!
***"Now for it, Buti!"* In the nick**
Of time 'tis pully-hauly, hence
With hoarding! O'er the wayside quick
There's Mary plain in evidence!

XXIX

And here's the convoy halting: right!
O they are bent on howling psalms
And growling prayers, when opposite!
And yet they glance, for all their qualms,
Approve that promptitude of his,
The Farmer's—duly at his post
To take due thanks from every phyz,
Sour smirk—nay, surly smile almost!

Then earthward drops each brow again;
The solemn task's resumed; they reach
Their holy field—the unholy train:
Enter its precinct, all and each,
Wrapt somehow in their godless rites;
Till, rites at end, up-waking, lo
They lift their faces! What delights
The mourners as they turn to go?

XXXI

'Ha, ha, he, he! On just the side
They drew their purse-strings to make quit
Of Mary,—Christ the Crucified
Fronted them now—these biters bit!
Never was such a hiss and snort,
Such screwing nose and shooting lip!
Their purchase—honey in report—
Proved gall and verjuice at first sip!

XXXII

'Out they break, on they bustle, where,
A-top of wall, the Farmer waits
With Buti: never fun so rare!
The Farmer has the best: he rates
The rascal, as the old High Priest
Takes on himself to sermonize—
Nay, sneer " ***We Jews supposed, at least,***
Theft was a crime in Christian eyes !"

XXXIII

"Theft?"* cries the Farmer.** ***"Eat your words!
Show me what constitutes a breach
Of faith in aught was said or heard!
I promised you in plainest speech
I'd take the thing you count disgrace
And put it here—and here 'tis put!
Did you suppose I'd leave the place
Blank, therefore, just your rage to glut?

XXXIV

' ***"I guess you dared not stipulate***
For such a damned impertinence!
So, quick, my greybeard, out of gate
And in at Ghetto! Haste you hence!
As long as I have house and land,
To spite you irreligious chaps
Here shall the Crucifixion stand—
Unless you down with cash, perhaps!"

XXXV

'So snickered he and Buti both.
The Jews said nothing, interchanged
A glance or two, renewed their oath
To keep ears stopped and hearts estranged
From grace, for all our Church can do;
Then off they scuttle: sullen jog
Homewards, against our Church to brew
Fresh mischief in their synagogue.

XXXVI

'But next day—see what happened, boy!
See why I bid you have a care
How you pelt Jews! The knaves employ
Such methods of revenge, forbear
No outrage on our faith, when free
To wreak their malice! Here they took
So base a method—plague o' me
If I record it in my Book!

XXXVII

'For, next day, while the Farmer sat
Laughing with Buti, in his shop,
At their successful joke,—rat-tat,—
Door opens, and they're like to drop
Down to the floor as in there stalks
A six-feet-high herculean-built
Young he-Jew with a beard that baulks
Description. " ***Help ere blood be spilt!"***

XXXVIII

—* Screamed Buti: for he recognized
Whom but the son, no less no more,
Of that High Priest his work surprised
So pleasantly the day before!

Son of the mother, then, whereof
The bier he lent a shoulder to,
And made the-moanrabout, dared scoff
At sober Christian grief—the Jew!

XXXIX

"" Sirs, I salute you ! Never rise !
No apprehension!" **(Buti. white**
And trembling like a tub or size,
Had tried to smuggle out of sight
The picture's self—the thing in oils,
You know, from which a fresco's dashed
Which courage speeds while caution spoils)
" Stay and be praised, sir, unabashed!

**" Praised,—ay, and paid too: for I come*
To buy that very work of yours.
My poor abode, which boasts—well, some
Few specimens of Art, secures
Haply, a masterpiece indeed
If I should find my humble means
Suffice the outlay. So, proceed!
Propose—ere prudence intervenes!"

XLI

'On Buti, cowering like a child,
These words descended from aloft,
In tone so ominously mild,
With smile terrifically soft
To that degree—could Buti dare
(Poor fellow) use his brains, think twice?
He asked, thus taken unaware,
No more than just the proper price!

XLII

**" Done!"* cries the monster. *"/ disburse*
Forthwith your moderate demand.
Count on my custom—if no worse
Your future work be, understand,
Than this I carry off! No aid!
My arm, sir, lacks nor bone nor thews:
The burden 's easy, and we're made,
Easy or hard, to bear—we Jews!"

XLIII

' Crossing himself at such escape,
Buti by turns the money eyes
And, timidly, the stalwart shape
Now moving doorwards; but, more wise,
The Farmer,—who, though dumb, this while
Had watched advantage,—straight conceived
A reason for that tone and smile
So mild and soft! The Jew—believed!

XLIV

'Mary in triumph borne to deck
A Hebrew household! Pictured where
No one was used to bend the neck
In praise or bow the knee in prayer!
Borne to that domicile by whom?
The son of the High Priest! Through what?
An insult done his mother's tomb!
Saul changed to Paul—the case came pat!

XLV

''Stay, dog Jew . . . gentle sir, that is!
Resolve me! Can it be, she crowned,—
Mary, by miracle,—Oh bliss!—
My present to your burial ground ?
Certain, a ray of light has burst
Your veil of darkness! Had you else,
Only for Mary's sake, unpursed
So much hard money? Tell—oh, tell 's!"

XL VI

' Round—like a serpent that we took
For worm and trod on—turns his bulk
About the Jew. First dreadful look
Sends Buti in a trice to skulk
Out of sight somewhere, safe—alack!
But our good Farmer faith made bold;
And firm (with Florence at his back)
He stood, while gruff the gutturals rolled—

xLvII

'" Ay, sir, a miracle was worked,
By quite another power, I trow,
Than ever yet in canvas lurked,
Or you would scarcely face me now!
A certain impulse did suggest
A certain grasp with this right-hand,
Which probably had put to rest
Our quarrel,—thus your throat once spanned!

XLvIII

" But I remembered me, subdued
That impulse, and you face me still!
And soon a philosophic mood
Succeeding {hear it, if you will!)
Has altogether changed my views
Concerning Art. Blind prejudice !
Well may you Christians tax us Jews
With scrupulosity too nice!

XLIX

'''For, don't I see,—let's issue join!—
Whenever I'm allowed pollute
(I—and my little bag of coin)
Some Christian palace of repute,—
Don't I see stuck up everywhere
Abundant proof that cultured taste
Has Beauty for its only care,
And upon Truth no thought to waste?

'" 'Jew, since it must be, take in pledge
Of payment **—so a Cardinal*
Has sighed to me as if a wedge
Entered his heart—this best of all
My treasures!' *Leda, Ganymede*
Or Antiope: swan, eagle, ape,
(Or what's the beast of what's the breed)
And Jupiter in every shape!

'"Whereat if I presume to ask
'But, Eminence, though Titian's whisk
Of brush have well performed its task,
How comes it these false godships frisk
In presence of—what yonder frame
Pretends to image? Surely, odd
It seems, you let confront The Name
Each beast the heathen called his god!*

LII

'"Benignant smiles me pity straight
The Cardinal. ' 'Tis Truth, we prize!
Art's the sole question in debate!
These subjects are so many lies.
We treat them with a proper scorn
When we turn lies—called gods forsooth—
To lies' fit use, now Christ is born.
Drawing and colouring are Truth.

LIII

' "'Think you I honour lies so much
As scruple to parade the charms
Of Leda—Titian, every touch—
Because the thing within her arms
Means Jupiter who had the praise
And prayer of a benighted world?
He would have mine too, if, in days
Of light, I kept the canvas furled!'

LIV

" So ending, with some easy gibe.
What power has logic! I, at once,
Acknowledged error in our tribe
So squeamish that, when friends ensconce
A pretty picture in its niche
To do us honour, deck our graves,
We fret and fume and have an itch
To strangle folk—ungrateful knaves!

LV

'"No, sir! Be sure that—what's its style,
Your picture?—shall possess ungrudged
A place among my rank and file
Of Ledas and what not—be judged
Just as a picture ! and {because
I fear me much I scarce have bought
A Titian) Master Buti's flaws
Found there, will have the laugh flaws ought!'

LVI

'So, with a scowl, it darkens door—
This bulk—no longer! Buti makes
Prompt glad re-entry; there's a score
Of oaths, as the good Farmer wakes
From what must needs have been a trance,
Or he had struck (he swears) to ground
The bold bad mouth that dared advance
Such doctrine the reverse of sound!

LVII

*Was magic here? Most like! For, since,
Somehow our city's faith grows still
More and more lukewarm, and our Prince
Or loses heart or wants the will
To check increase of cold. 'Tis "Live
And let live! Languidly repress
The Dissident I In short,—contrive
Christians must bear with Jews: no less !"

LvIII

The end seems, any Israelite
Wants any picture,—pishes, poohs,
Purchases, hangs it full in sight
In any chamber he may choose!
In Christ's crown, one more thorn we rue!
In Mary's bosom, one more sword!
No, boy, you must not pelt a Jew!
O Lord, how long? How long, O Lord?'

EPILOGUE

. . .

I

'The poets pour us wine—
Said the dearest poet I ever knew,
Dearest and greatest and best to me.
You clamour athirst for poetry—
We pour. 'But when shall a vintage be'—
You cry—'strong grape, squeezed gold from screw,
Yet sweet juice, flavoured fiowery-fine?
That were indeed the wine!'

II

One pours your cup—stark strength,
Meat for a man; and you eye the pulp
Strained, turbid still, from the viscous blood
Of the snaky bough: and you grumble 'Good!
For it swells resolve, breeds hardihood;
Despatch it, then, in a single gulp!'
So, down, with a wry face, goes at length
The liquor: stuff for strength.

III

One pours your cup—sheer sweet,
The fragrant fumes of a year condensed:
Suspicion of all that's ripe or rathe,
From the bud on branch to the grass in swathe.
'We suck mere milk of the seasons,' saith
A curl of each nostril—'dew, dispensed
Nowise for nerving man to feat:
Boys sip such honeyed sweet!'

IV

And thus who wants wine strong,
Waves each sweet smell of the year away;
Who likes to swoon as the sweets suffuse
His brain with a mixture of beams and dews
Turned syrupy drink—rough strength eschews:
'What though in our veins your wine-stock stay?
The lack of the bloom does our palate wrong.
Give us wine sweet, not strong!'

V

Yet wine is—some affirm,-
Prime wine is found in the world somewhere,
Of potable strength with sweet to match.
You double your heart its dose, yet catch—
As the draught descends—a violet-smatch,
Softness—however it came there,
Through drops expressed by the fire and worm:
Strong sweet wine—some affirm.

VI

Body and bouquet both?
Tis easy to ticket a bottle so;
But what was the case in the cask, my friends?
Cask? Nay, the vat—where the maker mends
His strong with his sweet (you suppose) and blends
His rough with his smooth, till none can know
How it comes you may tipple, nothing loth,
Body and bouquet both.

vII

'You' being just—the world.
No poets—who turn, themselves, the winch
Of the press; no critics—I'll even say.
(Being flustered and easy of faith to-day)
Who for love of the work have learned the way
Till themselves produce home-made, at a pinch:
No! You are the world, and wine ne'er purled
Except to please the world!

vIII

'For, oh the common heart!
And, ah the irremissible sin
Of poets who please themselves, not us!
Strong wine yet sweet wine pouring thus,
How please still—Pindar and Æschylus!—
Drink—dipt into by the bearded chin
Alike and the bloomy lip—no part
Denied the common heart!

Ix

'And might we get such grace,
And did you moderns but stock our vault
With the true half-brandy half-attar-gul,
How would seniors indulge at a hearty pull
While juniors tossed off their thimbleful!
Our Shakespeare and Milton escaped your fault,
So, they reign supreme o'er the weaker race
That wants the ancient grace!'

x

If I paid myself with words
(As the French say well) I were dupe indeed!
I were found in belief that you quaffed and bowsed
At your Shakespeare the whole day long, caroused,
In your Milton pottle-deep nor drowsed
A moment of night—toped on, took heed
Of nothing like modern cream-and-curds.
Pay me with deeds, not words!

XI

For—see your cellarage!
There are forty barrels with Shakespeare's brand.
Some five or six are abroach: the rest
Stand spigoted, fauceted. Try and test
What yourselves call best of the very best!
How comes it that still untouched they stand?
Why don't you try tap, advance a stage
With the rest in cellarage?

XII

For—see your cellarage!
There are four big butts of Milton's brew.
How comes it you make old drips and drops
Do duty, and there devotion stops?
Leave such an abyss of malt and hops
Embellied in butts which bungs still glue?
You hate your bard! A fig for your rage!
Free him from cellarage!

xIII

'Tis said I brew stiff drink.
But the deuce a flavour of grape is there.
Hardly a May-go-down, 'tis just
A sort of a gruff Go-down-it-must—
No Merry-go-down, no gracious gust
Commingles the racy with Springtide's rare!
'What wonder,' say you 'that we cough, and blink
At Autumn's heady drink?'

XIV

Is it a fancy, friends?
Mighty and mellow are never mixed,
Though mighty and mellow be born at once.
Sweet for the future,—strong for the nonce!
Stuff you should stow away, ensconce
In the deep and dark, to be found fast-fixed
At the century's close: such time strength spends
A-sweetening for my friends!

XV

And then—why, what you quaff
With a smack of lip and a cluck of tongue,
Is leakage and leavings—just what haps
From the tun some learned taster taps
With a promise 'Prepare your watery chaps!
Here's properest wine for old and young!
Dispute its perfection—you make us laugh!
Have faith, give thanks, but—quaff!

Leakage, I say, or—worse—
Leavings suffice pot-valiant souls.
Somebody, brimful, long ago,
Frothed flagon he drained to the dregs; and lo,
Down whisker and beard what an overflow!
Lick spilth that has trickled from classic jowls,
Sup the single scene, sip the only verse—
Old wine, not new and worse!

XVII

I grant you: worse by much!
Renounce that new where you never gained
One glow at heart, one gleam at head,
And stick to the warrant of age instead!
No dwarfs-lap! Fatten, by giants fed!
You fatten, with oceans of drink undrained?
You feed—who would choke did a cobweb smutch
The Age you love so much?

XVIII

A mine's beneath a moor:
Acres of moor roof fathoms of mine
Which diamonds dot where you please to dig:
Yet who plies spade for the bright and big?
Your product is—truffles, you hunt with a pig!
Since bright-and-big, when a man would dine,
Suits badly: and therefore the Koh-i-noor
May sleep in mine 'neath moor!

XIX

Wine, pulse in might from me!
It may never emerge in must from vat,
Never fill cask nor furnish can.
Never end sweet, which strong began—
God's gift to gladden the heart of man;
But spirit's at proof, I promise that!
No sparing of juice spoils what should be
Fit brewage—mine for me.

XX

Man's thoughts and loves and hates!
Earth is my vineyard, these grew there:
From grape of the ground, I made or marred
My vintage; easy the task or hard,
Who set it—his praise be my reward!
Earth's yield! Who yearn for the Dark Blue Sea's,
Let them 'lay, pray, bray'—the addle-pates!
Mine be Man's thoughts, loves, hates!

But someone says 'Good Sir!'
(Tis a worthy versed in what concerns
The making such labour turn out well)
'You don't suppose that the nosegay-smell
Needs always come from the grape? Each bell
At your foot, each bud that your culture spurns,
The very cowslip would act like myrrh
On the stiffest brew—good Sir!

XXII

'Cowslips, abundant birth
O'er meadow and hillside, vineyard too,
—Like a schoolboy's scrawlings in and out
Distasteful lesson-book—all about
Greece and Rome, victory and rout—
Love-verses instead of such vain ado!
So, fancies frolic it o'er the earth
Where thoughts have rightlier birth.

XXIII

'Nay, thoughtlings they themselves:
Loves, hates—in little and less and least!
Thoughts? *"What is a man beside a mount!* "
Loves? "*Absent—poor lovers the minutes count!"*
Hates? *"Fie—Pope's letters to Martha Blount!"*
These furnish a wine for a children's-feast:
Insipid to man, they suit the elves
Like thoughts, loves, hates themselves.'

XXIV

And, friends, beyond dispute
I too have the cowslips dewy and dear.
Punctual as Springtide forth peep they:
I leave them to make my meadow gay.
But I ought to pluck and impound them, eh?
Not let them alone, but deftly shear
And shred and reduce to—what may suit
Children, beyond dispute?

And, here's J^y-month^-all bloom,
All bounty: what if I sacrifice?
If I out with shears and shear, nor stop
Shearing till prostrate, lo, the crop?
And will you prefer it to ginger-pop
When I've made you wine of the memories
Which leave as bare as a churchyard tomb
My meadow, late all bloom?

Nay, what ingratitude
Should I hesitate to amuse the wits
That have pulled so long at my flask, nor grudged
The headache that paid their pains, nor budged
From bunghole before they sighed and judged
"Too rough for our taste, to-day, befits
The racy and right when the years conclude!"
Out on ingratitude!

XXVII

Grateful or ingrate—none,
No cowslip of all my fairy crew
Shall help to concoct what makes you wink
And goes to your head till you think you think!
I like them alive: the printer's ink
Would sensibly tell on the perfume too.
I may use up my nettles, ere I've done;
But of cowslips—friends get none!

XXVIII

Don't nettles make a broth
Wholesome for blood grown lazy and thick?
Maws out of sorts make mouths out of taste.
My Thirty-four Port—no need to waste
On a tongue that's fur and a palate—paste!
A magnum for friends who are sound! The sick—
I'll posset and cosset them, nothing loth,
Henceforward with nettle-broth!

LA SAISIAZ

1878

LA SAISIAZ

A. E. S. SEPTEMBER 14, 1877

DARED and done: at last I stand upon the summit, Dear and True!
Singly dared and done; the climbing both of us were bound to do.
Petty feat and yet prodigious: every side my glance was bent
O'er the grandeur and the beauty lavished through the whole ascent.
Ledge by ledge, out broke new marvels, now minute and now immense:
Earth's most exquisite disclosure, heaven's own God in evidence!
And no berry in its hiding, no blue space in its outspread,
Pleaded to escape my footstep, challenged my emerging head,
(As I climbed or paused from climbing, now o'erbranched by shrub and tree,
Now built round by rock and boulder, now at just a turn set free,
Stationed face to face with—Nature? rather with Infinitude)
—No revealment of them all, as singly I my path pursued,
But a bitter touched its sweetness, for the thought stung 'Even so
Both of us had loved and wondered just the same, five days ago!'

GOOD, to forgive;
Best, to forget!
Living, we fret;
Dying, we live.
Fretless and free,
Soul, clap thy pinion!
Earth have dominion,
Body, o'er thee!

Wander at will,
Day after day,—
Wander away,
Wandering still—
Soul that canst soar!
Body may slumber:
Body shall cumber
Soul-flight no more.

III

Waft of soul's wing!
What lies above?
Sunshine and Love,
Skyblue and Spring!
Body hides—where?
Ferns of all feather,
Mosses and heather,
Yours be the care!

Five short days, sufficient hardly to entice, from out its den
Splintered in the slab, this pink perfection of the cyclamen;
Scarce enough to heal and coat with amber gum the sloe-tree's gash,
Bronze the clustered wilding apple, redden ripe the mountain ash:
Yet of might to place between us—Oh the barrier! Yon Profound
Shrinks beside it, proves a pin-point: barrier this, without a bound!
Boundless though it be, I reach you: somehow seem to have you here
—Who are there. Yes, there you dwell now, plain the four low walls appear;
Those are vineyards they enclose from; and the little spire which points
—That's Collonge, henceforth your dwelling. All the same, howe'er disjoints
Past from present, no less certain you are here, not there: have dared,
Done the feat of mountain-climbing,—five days since, we both prepared
Daring, doing, arm in arm, if other help should haply fail.
For you asked, as forth we sallied to see sunset from the vale,
'Why not try for once the mountain,—take a foretaste, snatch by stealth
Sight and sound, some unconsidered fragment of the hoarded wealth?
Six weeks at its base, yet never once have we together won
Sight or sound by honest climbing: let us two have dared and done
Just so much of twilight journey as may prove to-morrow's jaunt
Not the only mode of wayfare—wheeled to reach the eagle's haunt!'
So, we turned from the low grass-path you were pleased to call 'your own,'
Set our faces to the rose-bloom o'er the summit's front of stone
Where Saleve obtains, from Jura and the sunken sun she hides,
Due return of blushing 'Good Night,' rosy as a borne-off bride's,
For his masculine 'Good Morrow' when, with sunrise still in hold,
Gay he hails her, and, magnific, thrilled her black length burns to gold.
Up and up we went, how careless—nay, how joyous! All was new,
All was strange. ' Call progress toilsome ? that were just insulting you!
How the trees must temper noontide! Ah, the thicket's sudden break!
What will be the morning glory, when at dusk thus gleams the lake?
Light by light puts forth Geneva: what a land—and, of the land,
Can there be a lovelier station than this spot where now we stand?
Is it late, and wrong to linger? True, to-morrow makes amends.
Toilsome progress ? child's play, call it—specially when one descends!
There, the dread descent is over—hardly our adventure, though!
Take the vale where late wc left it, pace the grass-path, "mine," you know!
Proud completion of achievement!' And we paced it, praising still
That soft tread on velvet verdure as it wound through hill and hill;
And at very end there met us, coming from Collonge, the pair
—All our people of the Chalet—two, enough and none to spare.
So, we made for home together, and we reached it as the stars
One by one came lamping—chiefly that prepotency of Mars—
And your last word was 'I owe you this enjoyment!'—met with 'Nay:
With yourself it rests to have a month of morrows like to-day!'
Then the meal, with talk and laughter, and the news of that rare nook
Yet untroubled by the tourist, touched on by no travel-book,
All the same—though latent—patent, hybrid birth of land and sea,
And (our travelled friend assured you)—if such miracle might be—
Comparable for completeness of both blessings—all around
Nature, and, inside her circle, safety from world's sight and sound—
Comparable to our Saisiaz. 'Hold it fast and guard it well!
Go and see and vouch for certain, then come back and never tell
Living soul but us; and haply, prove our sky from cloud as clear,
There may we four meet, praise fortune just as now, another year!'

Thus you charged him on departure: not without the final charge
'Mind to-morrow's early meeting! We must leave our journey marge
Ample for the wayside wonders: there's the stoppage at the inn
Three-parts up the mountain, where the hardships of the track begin;
There's the convent worth a visit; but, the triumph crowning all—
There's Saleve's own platform facing glory which strikes greatness small,
—Blanc, supreme above his earth-brood, needles red and white and green,
Horns of silver, fangs of crystal set on edge in his demesne.
So, some three weeks since, we saw them: so, to-morrow we intend

You shall see them likewise; therefore
Good Night till to morrow, friend!'
Last, the nothings that extinguish embers
of a vivid day:
'What might be the Marshal's next move,
what Gambetta's counter-play?'
Till the landing on the staircase saw escape
the latest spark:
' Sleep you well ! Sleep but as well, you!'
—lazy Jove quenched, all was dark.

Nothing dark next day at sundawn! Up
I rose and forth I fared:
Took my plunge within the bath-pool,
pacified the watch-dog scared,
Saw proceed the transmutation—Jura's
black to one gold glow,
Trod your level path that let me drink the
morning deep and slow,
Reached the little quarry—ravage recom-
pensed by shrub and fern—
Till the overflowing ardours told me time
was for return.
So, return I did, and gaily. But, for once,
from no far mound
Waved salute a tall white figure. 'Has
her sleep been so profound?
Foresight, rather, prudent saving strength
for day's expenditure!
Ay, the chamber-window's open: out and
on the terrace, sure I'

No, the terrace showed no figure, tall,
white, leaning through the wreaths,
Tangle-twine of leaf and bloom that inter-
cept the air one breathes,
Interpose between one's love and Nature's
loving, hill and dale
Down to where the blue lake's wrinkle
marks the river's inrush pale
—Mazy Arve: whereon no vessel but goes
sliding white and plain,
Not a steamboat pants from harbour but
one hears pulsate amain,
Past the city's congregated peace of homes
and pomp of spires
—Man's mild protest that there's some-
thing more than Nature, man re-
quires,
And that, useful as is Nature to attract the
tourist's foot,
Quiet slow sure money-making proves the
matter's very root,—
Need for body,—while the spirit also
needs a comfort reached
By no help of lake or mountain, but the
texts whence Calvin preached.
'Here's the veil withdrawn from land-
scape: up to Jura and beyond,
All awaits us ranged and ready; yet she
violates the bond,
Neither leans nor looks nor listens: why is
this?' A turn of eye
Took the whole sole answer, gave the un-
disputed reason 'why!'

This dread way you had your summons!
No premonitory touch,
As you talked and laughed ('tis told me)
scarce a minute ere the clutch
Captured you in cold forever. Cold? nay,
warm you were as life
When I raised you, while the others used,
in passionate poor strife,
All the means that seemed to promise any
aid, and all in vain.
Gone you were, and I shall never see that
earnest face again
Grow transparent, grow transfigured with
the sudden light that leapt,
At the first word's provocation, from the
heart-deeps where it slept.

Therefore, paying piteous duty, what
seemed You have we consigned
Peacefully to—what I think were, of all
earthbeds, to your mind
Most the choice for quiet, yonder: low
walls stop the vines' approach,
Lovingly Saleve protects you; village
sports will ne'er encroach
On the stranger lady's silence, whom
friends bore so kind and well
Thither ' just for love's sake,'—such their
own word was: and who can tell?
You supposed that few or none had known
and loved you in the world:
May be! flower that's full-blown tempts
the butterfly, not flower that's furled.
But more learned sense unlocked you,
loosed the sheath and let expand
Bud to bell and outspread flower-shape at
the least warm touch of hand
—Maybe, throb of heart, beneath which,
—quickening farther than it knew,—
Treasure oft was disembosomed, scent
all strange and unguessed hue.
Disembosomed, re-embosomed,—must
one memory suffice,
Prove I knew an Alpine-rose which all
beside named Edelweiss?

Rare thing, red or white, you rest now:
two days slumbered through; and
since
One day more will see me rid of this same
scene whereat I wince,
Tetchy at all sights and sounds and pettish
at each idle charm
Proffered me who pace now singly where
we two went arm in arm,—
I have turned upon my weakness: asked
'And what, forsooth, prevents
That, this latest day allowed me, I fulfil of
her intents
One she had the most at heart—that we
should thus again survey
From Saleve Mont Blanc together?'
Therefore,—dared and done to-day
Climbing,—here I stand: but you—
where?

If a spirit of the place
Broke the silence, bade me question, promised answer,—what disgrace
Did I stipulate 'Provided answer suit my hopes, not fears! '
Would I shrink to learn my life-time's limit—days, weeks, months or years?
Would I shirk assurance on each point whereat I can but guess—
'Does the soul survive the body? Is there God's self, no or yes?'
If I know my mood, 'twere constant—come in whatsoe'er uncouth
Shape it should, nay, formidable—so the answer were but truth.

Well, and wherefore shall it daunt me, when 'tis I myself am tasked,
When, by weakness weakness questioned, weakly answers—weakly asked ?
Weakness never needs be falseness: truth is truth in each degree
—Thunderpealed by God to Nature, whispered by my soul to me.
Nay, the weakness turns to strength and triumphs in a truth beyond:
'Mine is but man's truest answer—how were it did God respond ?'
I shall no more dare to mimic such response in futile speech,
Pass off human lisp as echo of the sphere-song out of reach,
Than,—because it well may happen yonder, where the far snows blanch
Mute Mont Blanc, that who stands near them sees and hears an avalanche,—
I shall pick a clod and throw,—cry 'Such the sight and such the sound!
What though I nor see nor hear them? Others do, the proofs abound!'
Can I make my eye an eagle's, sharpen ear to recognize
Sound o'er league and league of silence? Can I know, who but surmise ?
If I dared no self-deception when, a week since, I and you
Walked and talked along the grass-path, passing lightly in review
What seemed hits and what seemed misses in a certain fence-play,—strife
Sundry minds of mark engaged in 'On the Soul and Future Life,'—
If I ventured estimating what was come of parried thrust,
Subtle stroke, and, rightly, wrongly, estimating could be just
—Just, though life so seemed abundant in the form which moved by mine,
I might well have played at feigning, fooling,—laughed 'What need opine
Pleasure must succeed to pleasure, else past pleasure turns to pain,
And this first life claims a second, else I count its good no gain?'
Much less have I heart to palter when the matter to decide
Now becomes 'Was ending ending once and always, when you died?'
Did the face, the form I lifted as it lay, reveal the loss
Not alone of life but soul? A tribute to yon flowers and moss,
What of you remains beside ? A memory! Easy to attest
'Certainly from out the world that one believes who knew her best
Such was good in her, such fair, which fair and good were great perchance
Had but fortune favoured, bidden each shy faculty advance;
After all—who knows another? Only as I know, I speak.'
So much of you lives within me while I live my year or week.
Then my fellow takes the tale up, not unwilling to aver
Duly in his turn' I knew him best of all, as he knew her:
Such he was, and such he was not, and such other might have been
But that somehow every actor, somewhere in this earthly scene,
Fails.' And so both memories dwindle, yours and mine together linked,
Till there is but left for comfort, when the last spark proves extinct,
This—that somewhere new existence led by men and women new
Possibly attains perfection coveted by me and you;
While ourselves, the only witness to what work our life evolved,
Only to ourselves proposing problems proper to be solved
By ourselves alone,—who working ne'er shall know if work bear fruit
Others reap and garner, heedless how produced by stalk and root,—
We who, darkling, timed the day's birth,—struggling, testified to peace,—
Earned, by dint of failure, triumph,—we, creative thought, must cease
In created word, thought's echo, due to impulse long since sped!
Why repine ? There's ever someone lives although ourselves be dead!

Well, what signifies repugnance? Truth *it* truth howe'er it strike.
Fair or foul the lot apportioned life on earth, we bear alike.
Stalwart body idly yoked to stunted spirit, powers, that fain
Else whould soar, condemned to grovel, groundlings through the fleshly chain,—
Help that hinders, hindrance proved but help disguised when all too late,—

Hindrance is the fact acknowledged, howsoe'er explained as Fate,
Fortune, Providence: we bear, own life a burthen more or less.
Life thus owned unhappy, is there supplemental happiness
Possible and probable in life to come? or must we count
Life a curse and not a blessing, summed-up in its whole amount,
Help and hindrance, joy and sorrow? Why should I want courage here?
I will ask and have an answer,—with no favour, with no fear,—
From myself. How much, how little, do I inwardly believe
True that controverted doctrine? Is it fact to which I cleave,
Is it fancy I but cherish, when I take upon my lips
Phrase the solemn Tuscan fashioned, and declare the soul's eclipse
Not the soul's extinction? take his * I believe and I declare—
Certain am I—from this life I pass into a better, there
Where that lady lives of whom enamoured was my soul'—where this
Other lady, my companion dear and true, she also is?

I have questioned and am answered. Question, answer presuppose
Two points: that the thing itself which questions, answers,—*is*, it knows;
As it also knows the thing perceived outside itself,—a force
Actual ere its own beginning, operative through its course,
Unaffected by its end,—that this thing likewise needs must be;
Call this—God, then, call that—soul, and both—the only facts for me.
Prove them facts? that they o'erpass my power of proving, proves them such:
Fact it is I know I know not something which is fact as much.
What before caused all the causes, what effect of all effects
Haply follows,—these are fancy. Ask the rush if it suspects
Whence and how the stream which floats it had a rise, and where and how
Falls or flows on still! What answer makes the rush except that now
Certainly it floats and is, and, no less certain than itself,
Is the everyway external stream that now through shoal and shelf
Floats it onward, leaves it—may be—wrecked at last, or lands on shore
There to root again and grow and flourish stable evermore.
—May be! mere surmise not knowledge: much conjecture styled belief,
What the rush conceives the stream means through the voyage blind and brief.
Why, because I doubtless am, shall I as doubtless be? ' Because
God seems good and wise.* Yet under this our life's apparent laws
Reigns a wrong which, righted once, would give quite other laws to life.
'He seems potent.* Potent here, then why are right and wrong at strife?
Has in life the wrong the better ? Happily life ends so soon!
Right predominates in life? Then why two lives and double boon?
'Anyhow, we want *it:* wherefore want?' Because, without the want,
Life, now human, would be brutish: just that hope, however scant,
Makes the actual life worth leading; take the hope therein away,
All we have to do is surely not endure another day.
This life has its hopes for this life, hopes that promise joy: life done—
Out of all the hopes, how many had complete fulfilment? none.
'But the soul is not the body:' and the breath is not the flute;
Both together make the music: either marred and all is mute.
Truce to such old sad contention whence, according as we shape
Most of hope or most of fear, we issue in a half-escape:
'We believe' is sighed. I take the cup of comfort proffered thus,
Taste and try each soft ingredient, sweet infusion, and discuss
What their blending may accomplish for the cure of doubt, till—slow,
Sorrowful, but how decided! needs must I overturn it—so!
Cause before, effect behind me—blanks! The midway point I am,
Caused, itself—itself efficient: in that narrow space must cram
All experience—out of which there crowds conjecture manifold,
But, as knowledge, this comes only—things may be as I behold,
Or may not be, but, without me and above me, things there are;
I myself am what I know not—ignorance which proves no bar
To the knowledge that I am, and, since I am, can recognize
What to me is pain and pleasure: this is sure, the rest—surmise.
If my fellows are or are not, what may please them and what pain,—
Mere surmise: my own experience—that is knowledge, once again!

I have lived, then, done and suffered, loved and hated, learnt and taught
This—there is no reconciling wisdom with a world distraught,
Goodness with triumphant evil, power with failure in the aim,
If—(to my own sense, remember! though none other feel the same!)—
If you bar me from assuming earth to be a pupil's place,
And life, time,—with all their chances, changes,—just probation-space,
Mine, for me. But those apparent other mortals—theirs, for them?
Knowledge stands on my experience: all outside its narrow hem,
Free surmise may sport and welcome! Pleasures, pains affect mankind
Just as they affect myself? Why, here's my neighbour colour-blind,
Eyes like mine to all appearance: 'green as grass' do I affirm?
'Red as grass' he contradicts me: which employs the proper term?
Were we two the earth's sole tenants, with no third for referee,
How should I distinguish? Just so, God must judge 'twixt man and me.
To each mortal peradventure earth becomes a new machine,
Pain and pleasure no more tally in our sense than red and green;
Still, without what seems such mortal's pleasure, pain, my life were lost
—Life, my whole sole chance to prove—although at man's apparent cost—
What is beauteous and what ugly, right to strive for, right to shun,
Fit to help and fit to hinder,—prove my forces everyone,
Good and evil,—learn life's lesson, hate of evil, love of good,
As 'tis set me, understand so much as may be understood—
Solve the problem: 'From thine apprehended scheme of things, deduce
Praise or blame of its contriver, shown a niggard or profuse
In each good or evil issue! nor miscalculate alike
Counting one the other in the final balance, which to strike,
Soul was born and life allotted: ay, the show of things unfurled
For thy summing-up and judgment,—thine, no other mortal's world!'

What though fancy scarce may grapple with the complex and immense
—'His own world for every mortal?' Postulate omnipotence!
Limit power, and simple grows the complex: shrunk to atom size,
That which loomed immense to fancy low before my reason lies,—
I survey it and pronounce it work like other work: success
Here and there, the workman's glory,—here and there, his shame no less.
Failure as conspicuous. Taunt not 'Human work ape work divine?'
As the power, expect performance! God's be God's as mine is mine!
God whose power made man and made man's wants, and made, to meet those wants,
Heaven and earth which, through the body, prove the spirit's ministrants,
Excellently all,—did He lack power or was the will in fault
When He let blue heaven be shrouded o'er by vapours of the vault,
Gay earth drop her garlands shrivelled at the first infecting breath
Of the serpent pains which herald, swarming in, the dragon death?
What, no way but this that man may learn and lay to heart how rife
Life were with delights would only death allow their taste to life?
Must the rose sigh 'Pluck—I perish!' must the eve weep 'Gaze — I fade!'
—Every sweet warn "Ware my bitter!' every shine bid 'Wait my shade'?
Can we love but on condition, that the thing we love must die?
Needs there groan a world in anguish just to teach us sympathy—
Multitudinously wretched that we, wretched too, may guess
What a preferable state were universal happiness?
Hardly do I so conceive the outcome of that power which went
To the making of the worm there in yon clod its tenement,
Any more than I distinguish aught of that which, wise and good.
Framed the leaf, its plain of pasture, dropped the dew, its fineless food.
Nay, were fancy fact, were earth and all it holds illusion mere,
Only a machine for teaching love and hate and hope and fear
To myself, the sole existence, single truth mid falsehood,—well!
If the harsh throes of the prelude die not off into the swell
Of that perfect piece they sting me to become a-slrain for,—if
Roughness of the long rock-clamber lead not to the last of cliff,
First of level country where is sward my pilgrim-foot can prize,—
Plainlier! if this life's conception new life fail to realize,—

Though earth burst and proved a bubble
glassing hues of hell, one huge
Reflex of the rleWs" doings—God's work
by no subterfuge—
(So death's kindly touch informed me as
it broke the glamour, gave
Soul and body both release from life's
long nightmare in the grave)
Still,—with no more Nature, no more
Man as riddle to be read,
Only my own joys and sorrows now to
reckon real instead,—
I must say—or choke in silence—'How-
soever came my fate,
Sorrow did and joy did nowise,—life well
weighed,—preponderate.'
By necessity ordained thus? I shall bear
as best I can;
By a cause all-good, all-wise, all-potent?
No, as I am man!
Such were God: and was it goodness that
the good within my range
Or had evil in admixture or grew evil's
self by change?
Wisdom—that becoming wise meant
making slow and sure advance
From a knowledge proved in error to
acknowledged ignorance?
Power? 'tis just the main assumption
reason most revolts at! power
Unavailing for bestowment on its creature
of an hour,
Man, of so much proper action rightly
aimed and reaching aim,
So much passion,—no defect there, no
excess, but still the same,—
As what constitutes existence, pure per-
fection bright as brief
For yon worm, man's fellow-creature, on
yon happier world—its leaf!
No, as I am man, I mourn the poverty
I must impute:
Goodness, wisdom, power, all bounded,
each a human attribute!

But, O world outspread beneath me! only
for myself I speak.
Nowise dare to play the spokesman for
my brothers strong and weak,
Full and empty, wise and foolish, good
and bad, in every age,
Every clime, I turn my eyes from, as in
one or other stage
Of a torture writhe they, Job-like couched
on dung and crazed with blains
—Wherefore? whereto? ask the whirl-
wind what the dread voice thence ex-
plains!
I shall Vindicate no way of God's to
man,' nor stand apart,
'Laugh, be candid!' while I watch it
traversing the human heart.
Traversed heart must tell its story un-
commented on: no less
Mine results in 'Only grant a second life,
I acquiesce
In this present life as failure, count mis-
fortune's worst assaults
Triumph, not defeat, assured that loss so
much the more exalts
Gain about to be. For at what moment
did I so advance
Near to knowledge as when frustrate of
escape from ignorance?
Did not beauty prove most precious when
its opposite obtained
Rule, and truth seem more than ever po-
tent because falsehood reigned?
While for love—Oh how but, losing love,
does whoso loves succeed
By the death-pang to the birth-throe—
learning what is love indeed?
Only grant my soul may carry high
through death her cup unspilled,
Brimming though it be with knowledge,
life's loss drop by drop distilled,
I shall boast it mine—the balsam, bless
each kindly wrench that wrung
From life's tree its inmost virtue, tapped
the root whence pleasure sprung,
Barked the bole, and broke the bough,
and bruised the berry, left all grace
Ashes in death's stern alembic, loosed
elixir in its place!

Witness, Dear and True, how little I was
'ware of—not your worth
—That I knew, my heart assures me—but
of what a shade on earth
Would the passage from my presence of
the tall white figure throw
O'er the ways we walked together! Some-
what narrow, somewhat slow
Used to seem the ways, the walking;
narrow ways are well to tread
When there's moss beneath the footstep,
honeysuckle overhead:
Walking slow to beating bosom surest
solace soonest gives,
Liberates the brain o'erloaded—best of
all restoratives.
Nay, do I forget the open vast where soon
or late converged
Ways though winding?—world-wide
heaven-high sea where music slept
or surged
As the angel had ascendanc, and Beet-
hoven's Titan mace
Smote the immense to storm Mozart
would by a finger's lifting chase?
Yes, I knew—but not with knowledge
such as thrills me while I view
Yonder precinct which henceforward
holds and hides the Dear and True.
Grant me (once again) assurance we shall
each meet each some day,
Walk—but with how bold a footstep! on
a way—but what a way!

—Worst were best, defeat were triumph, utter loss were utmost gain.
Can it be, and must, and will it?

Silence! Out of fact's domain,
Just surmise prepared to mutter hope, and also fear—dispute
Fact's inexorable ruling 'Outside fact, surmise be mute!'
Well!
Ay, well and best, if fact's self I may force the answer from!
Tis surmise I stop the mouth of. Not above in yonder dome
All a rapture with its rose-glow,—not around, where pile and peak
Strainingly await the sun's fall,—not beneath, where crickets creak,
Birds assemble for their bed-time, soft the tree-top swell subsides,—
No, nor yet within my deepest sentient self the knowledge hides.
Aspiration, reminiscence, plausibilities of trust
—Now the ready 'Man were wronged else,' now the rash 'and God unjust'—
None of these I need. Take thou, my soul, thy solitary stand,
Umpire to the champions Fancy, Reason, as on either hand
Amicable war they wage and play the foe in thy behoof!
Fancy thrust and Reason parry! Thine the prize who stand aloof.

I concede the thing refused: henceforth no certainty more plain
Than this mere surmise that after body dies soul lives again.
Two, the only facts acknowledged late, are now increased to three—
God is, and the soul is, and, as certain, after death shall be.
Put this third to use in life, the time for using fact!

REASON

I do:
Find it promises advantage, coupled with the other two.
Life to come will be improvement on the life that's now; destroy
Body's thwartings, there s no longer screen betwixt soul and soul's joy.
Why should we expect new hindrance, novel tether? In this first
Life, I see the good of evil, why our world began at worst:
Since time means amelioration, tardily enough displayed,
Yet a mainly onward moving, never wholly retrograde.
We know more though we know little, we grow stronger though still weak,
Partly see though all too purblind, stammer though we cannot speak.
There is no such grudge in God as scared the ancient Greek, no fresh
Substitute of trap for dragnet, once a breakage in the mesh.
Dragons were, and serpents are, and blindworms will be: ne'er emerged
Any new-created python for man's plague since earth was purged.
Failing proof, then, of invented trouble to replace the old,
O'er this life the next presents advantage much and manifold:
Which advantage—in the absence of a fourth and farther fact
Now conceivably surmised, of harm to follow from the act—
I pronounce for man's obtaining at this moment. Why delay?
Is he happy? happiness will change: anticipate the day!
Is he sad ? there's ready refuge: of all sadness death's prompt cure!
Is he both, in mingled measure? cease a burthen to endure!
Pains with sorry compensations, pleasures stinted in the dole,
Power that sinks and pettiness that soars, all halved and nothing whole,
Idle hopes that lure man onward, forced back by as idle fears—
What a load he stumbles under through his glad sad seventy years,
When a touch sets right the turmoil, lifts his spirit where, flesh-freed,
Knowledge shall be rightly named so, all that seems be truth indeed!
Grant his forces no accession, nay, no faculty's increase,
Only let what now exists continue, let him prove in peace
Power whereof the interrupted unperfected play enticed
Man through darkness, which to lighten any spark of hope sufficed,—
What shall then deter his dying out of darkness into light?
Death itself perchance, brief pain that's pang, condensed and infinite?
But at worst, he needs must brave it one day, while, at best, he laughs—
Drops a drop within his chalice, sleep not death his science quaffs!
Any moment claims more courage when, by crossing cold and gloom,
Manfully man quits discomfort, makes for the provided room
Where the old friends want their fellow, where the new acquaintance wait,
Probably for talk assembled, possibly to sup in state!

I affirm and re-affirm it therefore: only make as plain
As that man now lives, that, after dying, man will live again,—
Make as plain the absence, also, of a law to contravene
Voluntary passage from this life to that by change of scene,—
And I bid him—at suspicion of first cloud athwart his sky,
Flower's departure, frost's arrival—never hesitate, but die!

Then I double my concession: grant, along with new life sure,
This same law found lacking now: ordain that, whether rich or poor
Present life is judged in aught man counts advantage—be it hope,
Be it fear that brightens, blackens most or least his horoscope,—
He, by absolute compulsion such as made him live at all,
Go on living to the fated end of life what-e'er befall.
What though, as on earth he darkling grovels, man descry the sphere,
Next life's—call it, heaven of freedom, close above and crystal-clear?
He shall find—say, hell to punish who in aught curtails the term,
Fain would act the butterfly before he has played out the worm.
God, soul, earth, heaven, hell,—five facts now: what is to desiderate?

REASON

Nothing! Henceforth man's existence bows to the monition 'Wait!
Take the joys and bear the sorrows—neither with extreme concern!
Living here means nescience simply: 'tis next life that helps to learn.
Shut those eyes, next life will open,—stop those ears, next life will teach
Hearing's office,—close those lips, next life will give the power of speech!
Or, if action more amuse thee than the passive attitude,
Bravely bustle through thy being, busy thee for ill or good,
Reap this life's success or failure! Soon shall things be unperplexed
And the right and wrong, now tangled, lie unravelled in the next.'

FANCY

Not so fast! Still more concession! not alone do I declare
Life must needs be borne,—I also will that man become aware
Life has worth incalculable, every moment that he spends
So much gain or loss for that next life which on this life depends.
Good, done here, be there rewarded,-evil, worked here, there amerced!
Six facts now, and all established, plain to man the last as first.

REASON

There was good and evil, then, defined to man by this decree?
Was—for at its promulgation both alike have ceased to be.
Prior to this last announcement 'Certainly as God exists,
As He made man's soul, as soul is quenchless by the deathly mists,
Yet is, all the same, forbidden premature escape from time
To eternity's provided purer air and brighter clime,—
Just so certainly depends it on the use to which man turns
Earth, the good or evil done there, whether after death he earns
Life eternal,—heaven, the phrase be, or eternal death,—say, hell.
As his deeds, so proves his portion, doing *ill* or doing well!'
—Prior to this last announcement, earth was man's probation-place:
Liberty of doing evil gave his doing good a grace;
Once lay down the law, with Nature's simple *Such effects succeed
Causes such, and heaven or hell depends upon man's earthly deed
Just as surely as depends the straight or else the crooked line
On his making point meet point or with or else without incline,'—
Thenceforth neither good nor evil does man, doing what he must.
Lay but down that law as stringent 'Wouldst thou live again, be just!'
As this other 'Wouldst thou live now, regularly draw thy breath!
For, suspend the operation, straight law's breach results in death—'
And (provided always, man, addressed this mode, be sound and sane)
Prompt and absolute obedience, never doubt, will law obtain!
Tell not me 'Look round us! nothing each side but acknowledged law,
Now styled God's—now Nature's edict!' Where's obedience without flaw
Paid to either? What's the adage rife in man's mouth? Why, 'The best
I both see and praise, the worst I follow'—which, despite professed
Seeing, praising, all the same he follows, since he disbelieves
In the heart of him that edict which for truth his head receives.

There's evading and persuading and much making law amends
Somehow, there's the nice distinction 'twixt fast foes and faulty friends,
—Any consequence except inevitable death when 'Die,
Whoso breaks our law!' they publish, God and Nature equally.
Law that's kept or broken—subject to man's will and pleasure! Whence?
How comes law to bear eluding? Not because of impotence:
Certain laws exist already which to hear means to obey;
Therefore not without a purpose these man must, while those man may
Keep and, for the keeping, haply gain approval and reward.
Break through this last superstructure, all is empty air—no sward
Firm like my first fact to stand on 'God there is, and soul there is,'
And soul's earthly life-allotment: wherein, by hypothesis,
Soul is bound to pass probation, prove its powers, and exercise
Sense and thought on fact, and then, from fact educing fit surmise,
Ask itself, and of itself have solely answer, 'Does the scope
Earth affords of fact to judge by warrant future fear or hope?'

Thus have we come back full circle: fancy's footsteps one by one
Go their round conducting reason to the point where they begun,
Left where we were left so lately, Dear and True! When, half a week
Since, we walked and talked and thus I told you, how suffused a cheek
You had turned me had I sudden brought the blush into the smile
By some word like 'Idly argued! you know better all the while!'
Now, from me—Oh not a blush but, how much more, a joyous glow,
Laugh triumphant, would it strike did your 'Yes, better I do know'
Break, my warrant for assurance! which assurance may not be
If, supplanting hope, assurance needs must change this life to me.
So, I hope—no more than hope, but hope—no less than hope, because
I can fathom, by no plumb-line sunk in life's apparent laws,
How I may in any instance fix where change should meetly fall
Nor involve, by one revisal, abrogation of them all:
—Which again involves as utter change in life thus law-released,
Whence the good of goodness vanished when the ill of evil ceased.
Whereas, life and laws apparent reinstated,—all we know,
All we know not,—o'er our heaven again cloud closes, until, lo—
Hope the arrowy, just as constant, comes to pierce its gloom, compelled
By a power and by a purpose which, if no one else beheld,
I behold in life, so—hope!

Sad summing-up of all to say!
Athanasius contra mundum, why should he hope more than they?
So are men made notwithstanding, such magnetic virtue darts
From each head their fancy haloes to their unresisting hearts!

Here I stand, methinks a stone's throw from yon village I this morn
Traversed for the sake of looking one last look at its forlorn
Tenement's ignoble fortune: through a crevice, plain its floor
Piled with provender for cattle, while a dung-heap blocked the door.
In that squalid Bossex, under that obscene red roof, arose,
Like a fiery flying serpent from its egg, a soul—Rousseau's.
Turn thence! Is it Diodati joins the glimmer of the lake?
There I plucked a leaf, one week since,—ivy, plucked for Byron's sake.
Famed unfortunates! And yet, because of that phosphoric fame
Swathing blackness' self with brightness till putridity looked flame,
All the world was witched: and wherefore? what could lie beneath, allure
Heart of man to let corruption serve man's head as cynosure?
Was the magic in the dictum 'All that's good is gone and past;
Bad and worse still grows the present, and the worst of all comes last:
Which believe—for I believe it?' So preached one his gospel-news;
While melodious moaned the other 'Dying day with dolphin-hues!
Storm, for loveliness and darkness like a woman's eye! Ye mounts
Where I climb to 'scape my fellow, and thou sea wherein he counts
Not one inch of vile dominion! What were your especial worth
Failed ye to enforce the maxim "Of all objects found on earth
Man is meanest, much too honoured when compared with—what by odds
Beats him—any dog: so, let him go a-howling to his gods!"

Which believe—for I believe it!' such the comfort man received
Sadly since perforce he must: for why? the famous bard believed!

Fame! Then, give me fame, a moment! As I gather at a glance
Human glory after glory vivifying yon expanse,
Let me grasp them all together, hold on high and brandish well
Beacon-like above the rapt world ready, whether heaven or hell
Send the dazzling summons earthward, to submit itself the same,
Take on trust the hope or else despair flashed full on face by—Fame!
Thanks, thou pine-tree of Makistos, wide thy giant torch I wave!
Know ye whence I plucked the pillar, late with sky for architrave?
This the trunk, the central solid Knowledge, kindled core, began
Tugging earth-deeps, trying heaven-heights, rooted yonder at Lausanne.
This which flits and spits, the aspic,—sparkles in and out the boughs
Now, and now condensed, the python, coiling round and round allows
Scarce the bole its due effulgence, dulled by flake on flake of Wit—
Laughter so bejewels Learning,—what but Ferney nourished it?
Nay, nor fear—since very resin feeds the flame—that I dispense
With yon Bossex terebinth-tree's all-explosive Eloquence:
No, be sure! nor, any more than thy re-splendency, Jean-Jacques,
Dare I want thine, Diodati! What though monkeys and macaques
Gibber 'Byron'? Byron's ivy rears a branch beyond the crew,
Green for ever, no deciduous trash macaques and monkeys chew!
As Rousseau, then, eloquent, as Byron prime in poet's power,—
Detonations, figurations, smiles—the rainbow, tears—the shower,—
Lo, I lift the coruscating marvel—Fame! and, famed, declare
—Learned for the nonce as Gibbon, witty as wit's self Voltaire . . .
O the sorriest of conclusions to whatever man of sense
Mid the millions stands the unit, takes no flare for evidence!
Yet the millions have their portion, live their calm or troublous day,
Find significance in fireworks: so, by help of mine, they may
Confidently lay to heart and lock in head their life long—this:
'He there with the brand flamboyant, broad o'er night's forlorn abyss,
Crowned by prose and verse; and wielding, with Wit's bauble, Learning's rod . . .
Well? Why, he at least believed in Soul, was very sure of God.'

So the poor smile played, that evening: pallid smile long since extinct
Here in London's mid-November! Not so loosely thoughts were linked,
Six weeks since as I, descending in the sunset from Saleve,
Found the chain, I seemed to forge there, flawless till it reached your grave,—
Not so filmy was the texture, but I bore it in my breast
Safe thus far. And since I found a something in me would not rest
Till I, link by link, unravelled any tangle of the chain,
—Here it lies, for much or little! I have lived all o'er again
That last pregnant hour: I saved it, just as I could save a root
Disinterred for re-interment when the time best helps to shoot.
Life is stocked with germs of torpid life; but may I never wake
Those of mine whose resurrection could not be without earthquake!
Rest all such, unraised forever! Be this, sad yet sweet, the sole
Memory evoked from slumber! Least part this: then what the whole?

THE TWO POETS OF CROISIC

1878

I

SUCH a starved bank of moss
Till that May-morn,
Blue ran the flash across:
Violets were born I

II

Sky—what a scowl of cloud
Till, near and far,
Ray on ray split the shroud:
Splendid, a star I

III

World—how it walled about
Life with disgrace
Till God's own smile came out:
That was thy face!

THE TWO POETS OF CROISIC

I

'FAME!' Yes, I said it and you read it. First,
Praise the good log-fire! Winter howls without.
Crowd closer, let us! Ha, the secret nursed
Inside yon hollow, crusted round about
With copper where the clamp was,—how the burst
Vindicates flame the stealthy feeder! Spout
Thy splendidest—a minute and no more?
So soon again all sobered as before?

II

Nay, for I need to see your face! One stroke
Adroitly dealt, and lo, the pomp revealed!
Fire in his pandemonium, heart of oak
Palatial, where he wrought the works concealed
Beneath the solid-seeming roof I broke,
As redly up and out and off they reeled
Like disconcerted imps, those thousand sparks
From fire's slow tunnelling of vaults and arcs!

III

Up, out, and off, see! Were you never used,—
You now, in childish days or rather nights,—
As I was, to watch sparks fly? not amused
By that old nurse-taught game which gave the sprites
Each one his title and career,—confused
Belief 'twas all long over with the flights
From earth to heaven of hero, sage and bard,
And bade them once more strive for ume's award?

Iv

New long bright life! and happy chance befell—
That I know—when some prematurely lost
Child of disaster bore away the bell
From some too-pampered son of fortune, crossed
Never before my chimney broke the spell!
Octogenarian Keats gave up the ghost,
While—never mind Who was it cumbered earth—
Sank stifled, span-long brightness, in the birth.

v

Well, try a variation of the game!
Our log is old ship-timber, broken bulk.
There's sea-brine spirits up the brimstone flame,
That crimson-curly spiral proves the hulk
Was saturate with—ask the chloride's name
From somebody who knows! I shall not sulk
If yonder greenish tonguelet licked from brass
Its life, I thought was fed on copperas.

VI

Anyhow, there they flutter! What may be
The style and prowess of that purple one?
Who is the hero other eyes shall see
Than yours and mine? That yellow, deep to dun—
Conjecture how the sage glows, whom not we
But those unborn are to get warmth by! Son
O' the coal,—as Job and Hebrew name a spark,—
What bard, in thy red soaring, scares the dark?

VII

Oh and the lesser lights, the dearer still
That they elude a vulgar eye, give ours
The glimpse repaying astronomic skill
Which searched sky deeper, passed those patent powers
Constellate proudly,—swords, scrolls, harps, that fill
The vulgar eye to surfeit,—found best flowers
Hid deepest in the dark,—named unplucked grace
Of soul, ungathered beauty, form or face!

VIII

Up with thee mouldering ash men never knew,
But I know! flash thou forth, and figure bold,
Calm and columnar as yon flame I view!
Oh and I bid thee,—to whom fortune doled
Scantly all other gifts out—bicker blue,
Beauty for all to see, zinc's uncontrolled
Flake-brilliance! Not my fault if these were shown,
Grandeur and beauty both, to me alone.

Ix

No! as the first was boy's play, this proves mere
Stripling's amusement: manhood's sport be grave!
Choose rather sparkles quenched in mid career,
Their boldness and their brightness could not save
(In some old night of time on some lone drear
Sea-coast, monopolized by crag or cave)
—Save from ignoble exit into smoke,
Silence, oblivion, all death-damps that choke!

x

Launched by our ship-wood, float we, once adrift
In fancy to that land-strip waters wash,
We both know well! Where uncouth tribes made shift
Long since to just keep life in, billows dash
Nigh over folk who shudder at each lift
Of the old tyrant tempest's whirlwind-lash
Though they have built the serviceable town
Tempests but tease now, billows drench, not drown.

XI

Croisic, the spit of sandy rock which juts
Spitefully northward, bears nor tree nor shrub
To tempt the ocean, show what Guerande shuts
Behind her, past wild Batz whose Saxons grub
The ground for crystals grown where ocean gluts
Their promontory's breadth with salt: all stub
Of rock and stretch of sand, the land's last strife
To rescue a poor remnant for dear life.

xII

And what life! Here was, from the world to choose,
The Druids' chosen chief of homes: they reared
—Only their women,—mid the slush **and** ooze
Of yon low islet,—to their sun, revered
In strange stone guise,—a temple. May-dawn dews
Saw the old structure levelled; when there peered
May's earliest eve-star, high and wide once more
Up towered the new pile perfect as before:

xm

Seeing that priestesses—and all were such—
Unbuilt and then rebuilt it every May,
Each alike helping—well, if not too much!
For, mid their eagerness to outstrip day
And get work done, if any loosed her clutch
And let a single stone drop, straight a prey
Herself fell, torn to pieces, limb from limb,
By sisters in full chorus glad and grim.

xIv

And still so much remains of that grey cult,
That even now, of nights, do women steal
To the sole Menhir standing, and insult
The antagonistic church-spire by appeal
To power discrowned in vain, since each adult
Believes the gruesome thing she clasps may heal
Whatever plague no priestly help can cure:
Kiss but the cold stone, the event is sure!

xv

Nay more: on May-morns, that primeval rite
Of temple-building, with its punishment
For rash precipitation, lingers, spite
Of all remonstrance; vainly are they shent,
Those girls who form a ring and, dressed in white,
Dance round it, till some sister's strength be spent:
Touch but the Menhir, straight the rest turn roughs
From gentles, fall on her with fisticuffs.

XVI

Oh and, for their part, boys from door to door
Sing unintelligible words to tunes
As obsolete: 'scraps of Druidic lore,'
Sigh scholars, as each pale man impor-tunes
Vainly the mumbling to speak plain once more.
Enough of this old worship, rounds and runes!
They serve my purpose, which is but to show
Croisic to-day and Croisic long ago.

xvII

What have we sailed to see, then, wafted there
By fancy from the log that ends its days
Of much adventure 'neath skies foul or fair,
On waters rough or smooth, in this good blaze
We two crouch round so closely, bidding care
Keep outside with the snow-storm? Something says
'Fit time for story-telling!' I begin—
Why not at Croisic, port we first put in ?

xvIII

Anywhere serves: for point me out the place
Wherever man has made himself a home,
And there I find the story of our race
In little, just at Croisic as at Rome.
What matters the degree? the kind I trace.
Druids their temple, Christians have their dome:
So with mankind; and Croisic, I'll engage,
With Rome yields sort for sort, in age for age.

XIX

No doubt, men vastly differ: and we need
Some strange exceptional benevolence
Of nature's sunshine to develop seed
So well, in the less-favoured clime, that thence
We may discern how shrub means tree indeed
Though dwarfed till scarcely shrub in evidence.
Man in the ice-house or the hot-house ranks
With beasts or gods: stove-forced, give warmth the thanks!

xx

While, is there any ice-checked? Such shall learn
I am thankworthy, who propose to slake
His thirst for tasting how it feels to turn
Cedar from hyssop-on-the-wall. I wake
No memories of what is harsh and stern
In ancient Croisic-nature, much less rake
The ashes of her last warmth till out leaps
Live Herve Riel, the single spark she keeps.

XXI

Take these two, see, each outbreak,—spirt and spirt
Of fire from our brave billet's either edge
Which—call maternal Croisic ocean-girt!
These two shall thoroughly redeem my pledge.
One flames fierce gules, its feebler rival—vert,
Heralds would tell you: heroes, I allege,
They both were: soldiers, sailors, states-men, priests,
Lawyers, physicians—guess what gods or beasts!

XXII

None of them all, but—poets, if you please!
'What, even there, endowed with knack of rhyme,
Did two among the aborigines
Of that rough region pass the ungracious time
Suiting, to rumble-tumble of the sea's,
The songs forbidden a serener clime?
Or had they universal audience—that's
To say, the folk of Croisic, ay and Batz?'

XXIII

Open your ears! Each poet in his day
Had such a mighty moment of success
As pinnacled him straight, in full display,
For the whole world to worship—nothing less!
Was not the whole polite world Paris, pray?
And did not Paris, for one moment—yes,
Worship these poet-flames, our red and green,
One at a time, a century between?

xxrv

And yet you never heard their names! Assist,
Clio, Historic Muse, while I record
Great deeds! Let fact, not fancy, break the mist
And bid each sun emerge, in turn play lord
Of day, one moment! Hear the annalist
Tell a strange story, true to the least word!
At Croisic, sixteen hundred years and ten
Since Christ, forth flamed yon liquid ruby, then.

xxv

Know him henceforth as Ren6 Gentil-homme
—Appropriate appellation! noble birth
And knightly blazon, the device where-from
Was 'Better do than say'! In Croisic's dearth
Why prison his career while Christendom
Lay open to reward acknowledged worth?
He therefore left it at the proper age
And got to be the Prince of Condd's page.

XXVI

Which Prince of Conde -whom men called
'The Duke,'
—Failing the king, his cousin, of an heir,
(As one might hold would hap, without
rebuke,
Since Anne of Austria, all the world was
'ware,
Twenty-three years long sterile, scarce
could look
For issue)—failing Louis of so rare
A godsend, *it* was natural the Prince
Should hear men call him 'Next King'
too, nor wince.

XXVII

Now, as this reasonable hope, by growth
Of years, nay, tens of years, looked
plump almost
To bursting,—would the brothers, child-
less both,
Louis and Gaston, give but up the
ghost—
Conde, called 'Duke and 'Next King,'
nothing loth
Awaited his appointment to the post,
And wiled away the time, as best he might,
Till Providence should settle things aright.

xxvIII

So, at a certain pleasure-house, withdrawn
From cities where a whisper breeds of-
fence,
He sat him down to watch the streak of
dawn
Testify *to* first stir of Providence;
And, since dull country life makes
courtiers yawn,
There wanted not a poet to dispense
Song's remedy for spleen-fits all and some,
Which poet was Page Rene Gentilhomme.

xxrx

A poet born and bred, his very sire
A poet also, author of a piece
Printed and published, 'Ladies—their
attire':
Therefore the son, just born at his de-
cease,
Was bound to keep alive the sacred fire,
And kept *it* yielding moderate increase
Of songs and sonnets, madrigals, and
much
Rhyming thought poetry and praised as
such.

XXX

Rubbish unutterable (bear in mind!)
Rubbish not wholly without value,
though,
Being to compliment the Duke designed
And bring the complimenter credit so,—
Pleasure with profit happily combined.
Thus Rene Gentilhomme rhymed,
rhymed till—lo,
This happened, as he sat in an alcove
Elaborating rhyme for 'love'—*not* 'dove.'

XXXI

He was alone: silence and solitude
Befit the votary of the Muse. Around,
Nature—not our new picturesque and
rude,
But trim tree-cinctured stately garden-
ground—
Breathed polish and politeness. All-
imbued
With these, he sat absorbed in one pro-
found
Excogitation 'Were it best to hint
Or boldly boast "She loves me,—Ara-
minte'T

xxxII

When suddenly flashed lightning, searing
sight
Almost, so close to eyes; then, quick on
flash,
Followed the thunder, splitting earth
downright
Where Ren6 sat a-rhyming: with huge
crash
Of marble into atoms infinite—
Marble which, stately, dared the world
to dash
The stone-thing proud, high-pillared, from
its place:
One flash, and dust was all that lay at base.

xxxIII

So, when the horrible confusion loosed
Its wrappage round his senses, and, with
breath,
Seeing and hearing by degrees induced
Conviction what he felt was life, not
death—
His fluttered faculties came back to roost
One after one, as fowls do: ay, beneath,
About his very feet there, lay in dust
Earthly presumption paid by heaven's
disgust.

xxxIv

For, what might be the thunder-smitten
thing
But, pillared high and proud, in marble
guise,
A ducal crown—which meant 'Now
Duke: Next, King'?
Since such the Prince was, not in his
own eyes
Alone, but all the world's. Pebble from
sling
Prostrates a giant; so can pulverize
Marble pretension—how much more,
make moult
A peacock-prince his plume—God's thun-
derbolt.

xxxv

That was enough for Rene, that first fact
Thus flashed into him. Up he looked:
all blue

And bright the sky above; earth firm, compact
Beneath his footing, lay apparent too;
Opposite stood the pillar: nothing lacked
There, but the Duke's crown: see, its fragments strew
The earth,—about his feet lie atoms fine
Where he sat nursing late his fourteenth line!

XXXVI

So, for the moment, all the universe
Being abolished, all 'twixt God and him,—
Earth's praise or blame, its blessing or its curse,
Of one and the same value,—to the brim
Flooded with truth for better or for worse,—
He pounces on the writing-paper, prim,
Keeping its place on table: not a dint
Nor speck had damaged 'Ode to Araminte,*

xxxvII

And over the neat crowquill calligraph
His pen goes blotting, blurring, as an ox
Tramples a flower-bed in a garden,—laugh
You may!—so does not he, whose quick heart knocks
Audibly at his breast: an epitaph
On earth's break-up, amid the falling rocks,
He might be penning in a wild dismay,
Caught with his work half-done on Judgment Day.

xxxvIII

And what is it so terribly he pens,
Ruining 'Cupid, Venus, wile and smile,
Hearts, darts,' and all his day's *divinior mens*
Judged necessary to a perfect style? *
Little recks Rene, with a breast to cleanse,
Of Rhadamanthine law that reigned erewhile:
Brimful of truth, truth's outburst will convince
(Style or no style) who bears truth's brunt —the Prince.

XXXIX

'Conde\ called "Duke," be called just "Duke," not more
To life's end! "Next King" thou forsooth wilt be?
Ay, when this bauble, as it decked before
Thy pillar, shall again, for France to see,
Take its proud station there! Let France adore
No longer an illusive mock-sun—thee—
But keep her homage for Sol's self, about
To rise and put pretenders to the rout!

XL

'What? France so God-abandoned that her root
Regal, though many a Spring it gave no sign,
Lacks power to make the bole, now branchless, shoot
Greenly as ever? Nature, though benign,
Thwarts ever the ambitious and astute.
In store for such is punishment condign:
Sure as thy Duke's crown to the earth was hurled,
So sure, next year, a Dauphin glads the world!'

XLI

Which penned—some forty lines to this effect—
Our Rene folds his paper, marches brave
Back to the mansion, luminous, erect,
Triumphant, an emancipated slave.
There stands the Prince. 'How now? My Duke's crown wrecked ?
What may this mean?' The answer Ren6 gave
Was—handing him the verses, with the due
Incline of body:' Sir, God's word to you!'

XLII

The Prince read, paled, was silent; all around,
The courtier-company, to whom he passed
The paper, read, in equal silence bound.
Rene grew also by degrees aghast
At his own fit of courage—palely found
Way of retreat from that pale presence: classed
Once more among the cony-kind. 'Oh, son,
It is a feeble folk!' saith Solomon.

xLIII

Vainly he apprehended evil: since,
When, at the year's end, even as foretold.
Forth came the Dauphin who discrowned the Prince
Of that long-craved mere visionary gold,
'Twas no fit time for envy to evince
Malice, be sure! The timidest grew bold:
Of all that courtier-company not one
But left the semblance for the actual sun.

And all sorts and conditions that stood by
At Ren6's burning moment, bright escape
Of soul, bore witness to the prophecy.
Which witness took the cusComary shape

Of verse; a score of poets in full cry
Hailed the inspited one. Nantes and Tours agape,
Soon Paris caught the infection; gaining strength,
How could it fail to reach the Court at length?

XLV

'0 poet!' smiled King Louis, ' and besides,
O prophet! Sure, by miracle announced,
My babe will prove a prodigy. Who chides
Henceforth the unchilded monarch shall be trounced
For irreligion: since the fool derides
Plain miracle by which this prophet pounced
Exactly on the moment I should lift
Like Simeon, in my arms, a babe, "God's gift!"

XLVI

' So call the boy! and call this bard and seer
By a new title! him I raise to rank
Of "Royal Poet": poet without peer!
Whose fellows only have themselves to thank
If humbly they must follow in the rear
My Rene. He's the master: they must clank
Their chains of song, confessed his slaves; for why?
They poetize, while he can prophesy!'

XLVII

So said, so done; our Rene rose august,
'The Royal Poet'; straightway put in type
His poem-prophecy, and (fair and just
Procedure) added,—now that time was ripe
For proving friends did well his word to trust,—
Those attestations, tuned to lyre or Pipe,
Which friends broke out with when he dared foretell
The Dauphin's birth: friends trusted, and did well.

XLVIII

Moreover he got painted by Du Pre,
Engraved by Daret also, and prefixed
The portrait to his book: a crown of bay
Circled his brows, with rose and myrtle mixed;
And Latin verses, lovely in their way.
Described him as ' the biforked hill betwixt:
Since he hath scaled Parnassus at one jump,
Joining the Delphic quill and Getic trump.'

XLIX

Whereof came... What, it lasts, our spirt, thus long
—The red fire? That's the reason must excuse
My letting flicker Rene's prophet-song
No longer; for its pertinacious hues
Must fade before its fellow joins the throng
Of sparks departed up the chimney, dues
To dark oblivion. At the word, it winks,
Rallies, relapses, dwindles, deathward sinks!

L

So does our poet. All this burst of fame,
Fury of favour, Royal Poetship,
Prophetship, book, verse, picture—thereof came
—Nothing! That's why I would not let outstrip
Red his green rival flamelet: just the same
Ending in smoke waits both! In vain we rip
The past, no further faintest trace remains
Of Rene to reward our pious pains.

LI

Somebody saw a portrait framed and glazed
At Croisic. . Who may be this glorified
Mortal unheard-of hitherto?' amazed
That person asked the owner by his side,
Who proved as ignorant. The question raised
Provoked inquiry; key by key was tried
On Croisic's portrait-puzzle, till back flew
The wards at one key's touch, which key was—Who?

LII

The other famous poet! Wait thy turn,
Thou green, our red's competitor! Enough
Just now to note 'twas he that itched to learn
(A hundred years ago) how fate could puff
Heaven-high (a hundred years before) then spurn
To suds so big a bubble in some huff:
Since green too found red's portrait,—having heard
Hitherto of red's rare self not one word.

Lin

And he with zeal addressed him to the task
Of hunting out, by all and any means,
—Who might the brilliant bard be, born to bask
Butterfly-like in shine which kings and queens
And baby-dauphins shed? Much need to ask!
Is fame so fickle that what perks and preens
The eyed wing, one imperial minute, dips
Next sudden moment into blind eclipse?

LIV

After a vast expenditure of pains,
Our second poet found the prize he sought:
Urged in his search by something that restrains
From undue triumph famed ones who have fought,
Or simply, poetizing, taxed their brains:
Something that tells such—dear is triumph bought
If it means only basking in the midst
Of fame's brief sunshine, as thou, Rene, didst.

LV

For, what did searching find at last but this?
Quoth somebody 'I somehow somewhere seem
To think I heard one old De Chevaye is
Or was possessed of Rene's works!* which gleam
Of light from out the dark proved not amiss
To track, by correspondence on the theme;
And soon the twilight broadened into day,
For thus to question answered De Chevaye.

LVI

'True it is, I did once possess the works
You want account of—works—to call them so,—
Comprised in one small book: the volume lurks
(Some fifty leaves *in duodecimo)*
'Neath certain ashes which my soul it irks
Still to remember, because long ago
That and my other rare shelf-occupants
Perished by burning of my house at Nantes.

LVII

'Yet of that book one strange particular
Still stays in mind with me'—and thereupon
Followed the story. 'Few the poems are;
The book was two-thirds filled up with this one,
And sundry witnesses from near and far
That here at least was prophesying done
By prophet, so as to preclude all doubt,
Before the thing he prophesied about.'

That's all he knew, and all the poet learned,
And all that you and I are like to hear
Of Rene; since not only book is burned
But memory extinguished,—nay, I fear,
Portrait is gone too: nowhere I discerned
A trace of it at Croisic. 'Must a tear
Needs fall for that?' you smile. 'How fortune fares
With such a mediocrity, who cares?'

LIX

Well, I care—intimately care to have
Experience how a human creature felt
In after-life, who bore the burden grave
Of certainly believing God had dealt
For once directly with him: did not rave
—A maniac, did not find his reason melt
—An idiot, but went on, in peace or strife,
The world's way, lived an ordinary life.

LX

How many problems that one fact would solve!
An ordinary soul, no more, no less,
About whose life earth's common sights revolve,
On whom is brought to bear, by thunder-stress,
This fact—God tasks him, and will not absolve
Task's negligent performer! Can you guess
How such a soul,—the task performed to point,—
Goes back to life nor finds things out of joint?

LXI

Does he stand stock-like henceforth? or proceed
Dizzily, yet with course straightforward still,
Down-trampling vulgar hindrance?—as the reed
Is crushed beneath its tramp when that blind will
Hatched in some old-world beast's brain bids it speed
Where the sun wants brute-presence to fulfil
Life's purpose in a new far zone, ere ice
Enwomb the pasture-tract its fortalice.

I think no such direct plain truth consists
With actual sense and thought and what they take
To be the solid walls of life: mere mists—
How such would, at that truth's first piercing, break
Into the nullity they are!—slight lists
Wherein the puppet-champions wage, for sake
Of some mock-mistress, mimic war: laid low
At trumpet-blast, there's shown the world, one foe!

LxIII

No, we must play the pageant out, observe
The toumey-regulations, and regard
Success—to meet the blunted spear nor swerve,
Failure—to break no bones yet fall on sward;

Must prove we have—not courage? well then,—nervel !
And, at the day's end, boast the crown's award—
Be warranted as promising to wield
Weapons, no sham, in a true battle-field.

Meantime, our simulated thunderclaps
Which tell us counterfeited truths—these same
Are—sound, when music storms the soul, perhaps?
—Sight, beauty, every dart of every aim
That touches just, then seems, by strange relapse,
To fall effectless from the soul it came
As if to fix its own, but simply smote
And startled to vague beauty more remote?

LXV

So do we gain enough—yet not too much—
Acquaintance with that outer element
Wherein there's operation (call it such!)
Quite of another kind than we the pent
On earth are proper to receive. Our hutch
Lights up at the least chink: let roof be rent—
How inmates huddle, blinded at first spasm,
Cognizant of the sun's self through the chasm!

LXVI

Therefore, who knows if this our Rene's quick
Subsidence from as sudden noise and glare
Into oblivion was impolitic?
No doubt his soul became at once aware
That, after prophecy, the rhyming-trick
Is poor employment: human praises scare
Rather than soothe ears all a-tingle yet
With tones few hear and live, but none forget.

LXVII

There's our first famous poet. Step thou forth,
Second consummate songster! See, the tongue
Of fire that typifies thee, owns thy worth
In yellow, purple mixed its green among,
No pure and simple resin from the North,
But composite with virtues that belong
To Southern culture! Love not more than hate
Helped to a blaze .. . But I anticipate.

LXVIII

Prepare to witness a combustion rich
And riotously splendid, far beyond
Poor Renews lambent little streamer which
Only played candle to a Court grown fond
By baby-birth: this soared to such a pitch,
Alternately such colours doffed and donned,
That when I say it dazzled Paris—please
Know that it brought Voltaire upon his knees!

LXIX

Who did it, was a dapper gentleman,
Paul Desforges Maillard, Croisickese by birth,
Whose birth that century ended which began
By similar bestowment on our earth
Of the aforesaid Rene. Cease to scan
The ways of Providence! See Croisic's dearth—
Not Paris in its plenitude—suffice
To furnish France with her best poet twice

Till he was thirty years of age, the vein
Poetic yielded rhyme by drops and spirts:
In verses of society had lain
His talent chiefly; but the Muse asserts
Privilege most by treating with disdain
Epics the bard mouths out, or odes he blurts
Spasmodically forth. Have people time
And patience nowadays for thought in rhyme?

LXXI

So, his achievements were the quatrain's inch
Of homage, or at most the sonnet's ell
Of admiration: welded lines with clinch
Of ending word and word, to every belle
In Croisic's bounds; these, brisk as any finch,
He twittered till his fame had reached as well
Guerande as Batz; but there fame stopped, for—curse
On fortune—outside lay the universe!

LxxII

That's Paris. Well,—why not break bounds, and send
Song onward till it echo at the gates
Of Paris whither all ambitions tend,
And end too, seeing that success there sates
The soul which hungers most for fame? Why spend
A minute in deciding, while, by Fate's
Decree, there happens to be just the prize
Proposed there, suiting souls that poetize?

LXXIII

A prize indeed, the Academy's own self
Proposes to what bard shall best indite
A piece describing how, through shoal and shelf,
The Art of Navigation, steered aright,

Has, in our last king*s reign,—the lucky elf,—
Reached, one may say, Perfection's haven quite,
And there cast anchor. At a glance one sees
The subject's crowd of capabilities!

LXXIV

Neptune and Amphitrite! Thetis, who
Is either Tethys or as good—both tag!
Triton can shove along a vessel too:
It's Virgil! Then the winds that blow or lag,—
De Maille, Vendome, Vermandois! Toulouse blew
Longest, we reckon: he must puff the flag
To fullest outflare; while our lacking nymph
Be Anne of Austria, Regent o'er the lymph!

LXXV

Promised, performed! Since *irritabilis gens*
Holds of the feverish impotence that strives
To stay an itch by prompt resource to pen's
Scratching itself on paper; placid lives,
Leisurely works mark the *divinior mens:*
Bees brood above the honey in their hives;
Gnats are the busy bustlers. Splash and scrawl,—
Completed lay thy piece, swift penman Paul!

LXXVI

To Paris with the product! This despatched,
One had to wait the Forty's slow and sure
Verdict, as best one might. Our penman scratched
Away perforce the itch that knows no cure
But daily paper-friction: more than matched
His first feat by a second—tribute pure
And heartfelt to the Forty when their voice
Should peal with one accord 'Be Paul our choice!'

LXXVII

Scratch, scratch went much laudation of that sane
And sound Tribunal, delegates august
Of Phoebus and the Muses' sacred train—
Whom every poetaster tries to thrust
From where, high-throned, they dominate the Seine:
Fruitless endeavour,—fail it shall and must!
Whereof in witness have not one and all
The Forty voices pealed *Our choice be Paul'?

LXXVIII

Thus Paul discounted his applause. Alack
For human expectation! Scarcely ink
Was dry when, lo, the perfect piece came back
Rejected, shamed! Some other poet's clink
' Thetis and Tethys' had seduced the pack
Of pedants to declare perfection's pink
A singularly poor production. 'Whew!
The Forty are stark fools, I always knew.'

LXXIX

First fury over (for Paul's race—to-wit,
Brain-vibrios—wriggle clear of protoplasm
Into minute life that's one fury-fit),
'These fools shall find a bard's enthusiasm
Comports with what should counterbalance it—
Some knowledge of the world! No doubt, orgasm
Effects the birth of verse which, born, demands
Prosaic ministration, swaddling-bands!

'Verse must be cared for at this early stage.
Handled, nay dandled even. I should play
Their game indeed if, till it grew of age,
I meekly let these dotards frown away
My bantling from the rightful heritage
Of smiles and kisses! Let the public say
If it be worthy praises or rebukes,
My poem, from these Forty old perukes!'

LXXXI

So, by a friend, who boasts himself in grace
With no less than the Chevalier La Roque,—
Eminent in those days for pride of place,
Seeing he had it in his power to block
The way or smooth the road to all the race
Of literators trudging up to knock
At Fame's exalted temple-door—for why?
He edited the Paris 'Mercury':—

LXXXII

By this friend's help the Chevalier receives
Paul's poem, prefaced by the due appeal
To Caesar from the Jews. As duly heaves
A sigh the Chevalier, about to deal
With case so customary—turns the leaves,
Finds nothing there to borrow, beg or steal—
Then brightens up the critic's brow deep-lined.
'The thing may be so cleverly declined!'

LXXXIII

Down to **desk, out** with paper, up with quill,
Dip and indite! ' Sir, gratitude immense
For this true draught from the Pierian rill!
Our Academic clodpoles must be dense
Indeed to stand unirrigated still.
No less, we critics dare not give offence
To grandees like the Forty: while we mock,
We grin and bear. So, here's your piece! La Rogue.'

LXXXIV

There now! ' cries Paul: ' the fellow can't avoid
Confessing that my piece deserves the palm;
And yet he dares not grant me space enjoyed
By every scribbler he permits embalm
His crambo in the Journal's corner! Cloyed
With stuff like theirs, no wonder if a qualm
Be caused by verse like mine: though that's no cause
For his defrauding me of just applause.

LXXXV

Aha, he fears the Forty, this poltroon?
First let him fear *me!* Change smooth speech to rough!
I'll speak my mind out, show the fellow soon
Who is the foe to dread: insist enough
On my own merits till, as clear as noon,
He sees I am no man to take rebuff
As patiently as scribblers may and must!
Quick to the onslaught, out sword, cut and thrust!'

LXXXVI

And thereupon a fierce epistle flings
Its challenge in the critic's face. Alack!
Our bard mistakes his man! The gauntlet rings
On brazen visor proof against attack.
Prompt from his editorial throne up springs
The insulted magnate, and his mace falls, thwack,
On Paul's devoted brainpan,—quite away
From common courtesies of fencing-play!

LXXXVII

Sir, will you have the truth *1* This piece of yours
Is simply execrable past belief.
I shrank from saying so; but, since nought cures
Conceit but truth, truth's at your service! Brief,
Just so long as 'The Mercury' endures,
So long are you excluded by its Chief
From corner, nay, from cranny! Play the cock
O' the roost, henceforth, at Croisic!' wrote La Roque.

LXXXVIII

Paul yellowed, whitened, as his wrath from red
Waxed incandescent. Now, this man of rhyme
Was merely foolish, faulty in the head
Not heart of him: conceit's a venial crime.
* Oh by no means malicious!' cousins said:
Fussily feeble,—harmless all the time,
Piddling at so-called satire—well-advised
He held in most awe whom he satirized.

LXXXIX

Accordingly his kith and kin—removed
From emulation of the poet's gift
By power and will—these rather liked, nay, loved
The man who gave his family a lift
Out of the Croisic level; 'disapproved
Satire so trenchant.' Thus our poet sniffed
Home-incense, though too churlish to unlock
'The Mercury's' box of ointment was La Roque.

XC

But when Paul's visage grew from red to white,
And from his lips a sort of mumbling fell
Of who was to be kicked,—' And serve him right'—
A gay voice interposed—'did kicking well
Answer the purpose! Only—if I might
Suggest as much—a far more potent spell
Lies in another kind of treatment. Oh,
Women are ready at resource, you know!

' Talent should minister to genius! Good:
The proper and superior smile returns.
Hear me with patience! Have you understood
The only method whereby genius earns
Fit guerdon nowadays ? In knightly mood
You entered lists with visor up; one learns
Too late that, had you mounted Roland's crest,
"Room!" they had roared—La Roque with ail the rest!

XCI

'Why did you first of all transmit your piece
To those same priggish Forty unprepared

Whether to rank you with the swans or geese
By friendly intervention? If they dared
Count you a cackler,—wonders never cease!
I think it still more wondrous that you bared
Your brow (my earlier image) as if praise
Were gained by simple fighting nowadays I

XCIII

* Your next step showed a touch of the true means
Whereby desert is crowned: not force but wile
Came to the rescue. "Get behind the scenes!"
Your friend advised: he writes, sets forth your style
And title, to such purpose intervenes
That you get velvet-compliment three-pile;
And, though "The Mercury" said "nay," nor stock
Nor stone did his refusal prove La Roque.

XCIV

*Why must you needs revert to the high hand,
Imperative procedure—what you call
"Taking on merit your exclusive stand"?
Stand, with a vengeance! Soon you went to wall,
You and your merit! Only fools command
When folk are free to disobey them, Paul!
You've learnt your lesson, found out what's o'clock,
By this uncivil answer of La Roque.

XCV

'Now let me counsel! Lay this piece on shelf
—Masterpiece though it be! From out your desk
Hand me some lighter sample, verse the elf
Cupid inspired you with, no god grotesque
Presiding o'er the Navy! I myself
Hand-write what's legible yet picturesque;
I'll copy fair and femininely frock
Your poem masculine that courts La Roque!

XCVI

'Dei'damia he—Achilles thou!
Ha, ha, these ancient stories come so apt !
My sex, my youth, my rank I next avow
In a neat prayer for kind perusal. Sapped
I see the walls which stand so stoutly now!
I see the toils about the game entrapped
By honest cunning! Chains of lady's-smock,
Not thorn and thistle, tether fast La Roque!'

XCVII

Now, who might be the speaker sweet and arch
That laughed above Paul's shoulder as it heaved
With the indignant heart?—bade steal a march
And not continue charging? Who conceived
This plan which set our Paul, like pea you parch
On fire-shovel, skipping, of a load relieved,
From arm-chair moodiness to escritoire
Sacred to Phoebus and the tuneful choir?

XCVIII

Who but Paul's sister! named of course like him
'Desforges'; but, mark you, in those days a queer
Custom obtained,—who knows whence grew the whim?—
That people could not read their title clear
To reverence till their own true names, made dim
By daily mouthing, pleased to disappear,
Replaced by brand-new bright ones: Arouet,
For instance, grew Voltaire; Desforges—Malcrais.

XCIX

'Demoiselle Malcrais de la Vigne'—because
The family possessed at Brederac
A vineyard,—few grapes, many hips-and-haws,—
Still a nice Breton name. As breast and back
Of this vivacious beauty gleamed through gauze,
So did her sprightly nature nowise lack
Lustre when draped, the fashionable way,
In 'Malcrais de la Vigne'—more short, 'Malcrais.'

C

Out from Paul's escritoire behold escape
The hoarded treasure! verse falls thick and fast,
Sonnets and songs of every size and shape.
The lady ponders on her prize; at last
Selects one which—Oh angel and yet ape!—
Her malice thinks is probably surpassed
In badness by no fellow of the flock,
Copies it fair, and 'Now for my La Roque!'

So, to him goes' with-the neat manuscript,
The soft petitionary letter. 'Grant
A fledgeling novice that with wing unclipt
She soar her little circuit, habitant
Of an old manor; buried in which crypt,
How can the youthful chatelaine but pant
For disemprisonment by one *ad hoc*
Appointed "Mercury's" Editor, La Roque ?'

'Twas an epistle that might move the Turk!
More certainly it moved our middle-aged
Pen-driver drudging at his weary work,
Raked the old ashes up and disengaged
The sparks of gallantry which always lurk
Somehow in literary breasts, assuaged
In no degree by compliments on style;
Are Forty wagging beards worth one girl's smile?

In trips the lady's poem, takes its place
Of honour in the gratified Gazette,
With due acknowledgment of power and grace;
Prognostication, too, that higher yet
The Breton Muse will soar: fresh youth, high race,
Beauty and wealth have amicably met
That Demoiselle Malcrais may fill the chair
Left vacant by the loss of Deshoulieres.

'There!' cried the lively lady. 'Who was right—
You in the dumps, or I the merry maid
Who know a trick or two can baffle spite
Tenfold the force of this old fool's? Afraid
Of Editor La Roque? But come! next flight
Shall outsoar—Deshoulieres alone? My blade,
Sappho herself shall you confess outstript!
Quick, Paul, another dose of manuscript!'

cv

And so, once well a-foot, advanced the game:
More and more verses, corresponding gush
On gush of praise, till everywhere acclaim
Rose to the pitch of uproar. 'Sappho? Tush!
Sure "Malcrais on her Parrot" puts to shame
Deshoulieres' pastoral, clay not worth a rush
Beside this find of treasure, gold in crock,
Unearthed in Brittany,—nay, ask La Roque!'

cvI

Such was the Paris tribute. 'Yes,' you sneer,
'Ninnies stock Noodledom, but folk more sage
Resist contagious folly, never fear!'
Do they? Permit me to detach one page
From the huge Album which from far and near
Poetic praises blackened in a rage
Of rapture! and that page shall be—who stares
Confounded now, I ask you?—just Voltaire's!

CVII

Ay, sharpest shrewdest steel that ever stabbed
To death Imposture through the armour-joints!
How did it happen that gross Humbug grabbed
Thy weapons, gouged thine eyes out? Fate appoints
That pride shall have a fall, or I had blabbed
Hardly that Humbug, whom thy soul aroints,
Could thus cross-buttock thee caught unawares,
And dismalest of tumbles proved—Voltaire's!

cvII

See his epistle extant yet, wherewith
'Henri' in verse and 'Charles' in prose he sent
To do her suit and service! Here's the pith
Of half a dozen stanzas—stones which went
To build that simulated monolith—
Sham love in due degree with homage blent
As sham—which in the vast of volumes scares
The traveller still: 'That stucco-heap—Voltaire's?'

cIx

'Oh thou, whose clarion-voice has overflown
The wilds to startle Paris that's one ear!
Thou who such strange capacity hast shown
For joining all that's grand with all that's dear,
Knowledge with power to please—Deshoulieres grown
Learned as Dacier in thy person! mere
Weak fruits of idle hours, these crabs of mine
I dare lay at thy feet, O Muse divine!

CX

'Charles was my taskwork only; Henri trod
My hero erst; and now, my heroine-she
Shall be thyself! True—is it true, great God?
Certainly love henceforward must not be!
Yet all the crowd of Fine Arts fail—how odd!—
Tried turn by turn, to fill a void in me!
There's no replacing love with these, alas!
Yet all I can I do to prove no ass.

CXI

'I labour to amuse my freedom; but
Should any sweet young creature slavery preach,
And—borrowing thy vivacious charm, the slut!—
Make me, in thy engaging words, a speech,
Soon should I see myself in prison shut
With all imaginable pleasure.' Reach
The washhand-basin for admirers! There's
A stomach-moving tribute—and Voltaire's!

CXII

Suppose it a fantastic billet-doux,
Adulatory flourish, not worth frown!
What say you to the Fathers of TreVoux?
These in their Dictionary have her down
Under the heading 'Author': 'Malcrais, too,
Is "Author" of much verse that claims renown.'
While Jean-Baptiste Rousseau... but why proceed?
Enough of this—something too much, indeed!

At last La Roque. unwilling to be left
Behindhand in the rivalry, broke bounds
Of figurative passion; hilt and heft,
Plunged his huge downright love through what surrounds
The literary female bosom; reft
Away its veil of coy reserve with 'Zounds!
I love thee, Breton Beauty! All's no use!
Body and soul I love,—the big word's loose!'

He's greatest now and to de-struoti-on
Nearest. Attend the solemn word I quote,
O Paul! *There's no pause at per-fec-ti-on.*
Thus knolls thy knell the Doctor's bronzed throat!
Greatness a period hath, no sta-ti-on!
Better and truer verse none ever wrote
(Despite the antique outstretched *a-i-on)*
Than thou, revered and magisterial Donne!

CXV

Flat on his face, La Roque, and,—pressed to heart
His dexter hand,—Voltaire with bended knee!
Paul sat and sucked-in triumph; just apart
Leaned over him his sister. 'Well!' smirks he,
And 'Well?' she answers, smiling—woman's art
To let a man's own mouth, not hers, decree
What shall be next move which decides the game:
Success? She said so. Failure? His the blame.

CXVI

'Well!' this time forth affirmatively comes
With smack of lip, and long-drawn sigh through teeth
Close clenched o'er satisfaction, as the gums
Were tickled by a sweetmeat teased beneath
Palate by lubricating tongue: 'Well! crumbs
Of comfort these, undoubtedly! no death
Likely from famine at Fame's feast! 'tis clear
I may put claim in for my pittance, Dear!

CXVII

'La Roque, Voltaire, my lovers! Then disguise
Has served its turn, grows idle; let it drop!
I shall to Paris, flaunt there in men's eyes
My proper manly garb and mount a-top
The pedestal that waits me, take the prize
Awarded Hercules. He threw a sop
To Cerberus who let him pass, you know,
Then, following, licked his heels: exactly so!

CXVIII

'I like the prospect—their astonishment,
Confusion: wounded vanity, no doubt,
Mixed motives; how I see the brows quick bent!
"What, sir. yourself, none other, brought about
This change of estimation? Phcebus sent
His shafts as from Diana?" Critic pout
Turns courtier smile: "Lo, him we took for her!
Pleasant mistake! You bear no malice, sir?"

Eh, my Diana?* But Diana kept
Smilingly silent with fixed needle-sharp
Much-meaning eyes that seemed to intercept
Paul's very thoughts ere they had time to warp
From earnest into sport the words they leapt
To life with—changed as when maltreated harp
Renders in tinkle what some player-prig
Means for a grave tune though it proves a jig.

cxx

'What, Paul, and are my pains thus thrown away,
My lessons end in loss?' at length fall slow
The pitying syllables, her lips allay
The satire of by keeping in full flow,
Above their coral reef, bright smiles at play:
'Can it be, Paul thus fails to rightly know
And altogether estimate applause
As just so many asinine hee-haws?

cxxI

'I thought to show you'. . . 'Show me,' Paul in-broke,
'My poetry is rubbish, and the world
That rings with my renown a sorry joke!
What fairer test of worth than that, form furled,
I entered the arena? Yet you croak
Just as if Phoebe and not Phoebus hurled
The dart and struck the Python! What, he crawls
Humbly in dust before your feet, not Paul's?

cxxII

'Nay, 'tis no laughing matter though absurd
If there's an end of honesty on earth!
La Roque sends letters, lying every word!
Voltaire makes verse, and of himself makes mirth
To the remotest age! Rousseau 's the third
Who, driven to despair amid such dearth
Of people that want praising, finds no one
More fit to praise than Paul the simpleton!

cxxIII

'Somebody says—if a man writes at all
It is to show the writer's kith and kin
He was unjustly thought a natural;
And truly, sister, I have yet to win
Your favourable word, it seems, for Paul
Whose poetry you count not worth a pin
Though well enough esteemed by these Voltaires,
Rousseaus and suchlike: let them quack, who cares?'

cxxIv

'—To Paris with you, Paul! Not one word's waste
Further: my scrupulosity was vain!
Go triumph! Be my foolish fears effaced
From memory's record! Go, to come again
With glory crowned,—by sister re-embraced,
Cured of that strange delusion of her brain
Which led her to suspect that Paris gloats
On male limbs mostly when in petticoats!'

cxxv

So laughed her last word, with the little touch
Of malice proper to the outraged pride
Of any artist in a work too much
Shorn of its merits. 'By all means be tried
The opposite procedure! Cast your crutch
Away, no longer crippled, nor divide
The credit of your march to the World's Fair
With sister Cherry-cheeks who helped you there!'

CXXVI

Crippled, forsooth! what courser sprightlier pranced
Paris-ward than did Paul ? Nay, dreams lent wings:
He flew, or seemed to fly, by dreams entranced.
Dreams? wide-awake realities: no things
Dreamed merely were the missives that advanced
The claim of Malcrais to consort with kings
Crowned by Apollo—not to say with queens
Cinctured by Venus for Idalian scenes.

cxxvII

Soon he arrives, forthwith is found before
The outer gate of glory. Bold tic-toe
Announces there's a giant at the door.
'Ay, sir, here dwells the Chevalier La Roque.'
'Lackey! Malcrais,—mind, no word less nor more!—
Desires his presence. I've unearthed the brock:
Now, to transfix him!' There stands Paul erect,
Inched out his uttermost, for more effect.

cxxvIII

A bustling entrance: 'Idol of my flame!
Can it be that my heart attains at last
Its longing ? that you stand, the very same
As in my visions? . . . Hal hey, how?' aghast
Stops short the rapture. 'Oh, my boy's to blame!
You merely are the messenger! Too fast
My fancy rushed to a conclusion. Pooh!
Well, sir, the lady's substitute is—who?'

cxxIx

Then Paul's smirk grows inordinate. ' Shake hands!
Friendship not love awaits you, master mine,
Though nor Malcrais nor any mistress stands
To meet your ardour! So, you don't divine
Who wrote the verses wherewith ring the land's
Whole length and breadth? Just he whereof no line
Had ever leave to blot your Journal—eh?
Paul Desforgcs Maillard—otherwise Malcrais!'

cxxx

And there the two stood, stare confronting smirk,
Awhile uncertain which should yield the *pas.*
In vain the Chevalier beat brain for quirk
To help in this conjuncture; at length 'Bah!
Boh! Since I've made myself a fool, why shirk
The punishment of folly? Ha, ha, ha,
Let me return your handshake!' Comic sock
For tragic buskin prompt thus changed La Roque.

cxxxI

'I'm nobody—a wren-like journalise;
You've flown at higher game and winged your bird,
The golden eagle! That's the grand acquist!
Voltaire's sly Muse, the tiger-cat, has purred
Prettily round your feet; but if she missed
Priority of stroking, soon were stirred
The dormant spit-fire. To Voltaire! away,
Paul Desforges Maillard, otherwise Malcrais!'

cxxxII

Whereupon, arm in arm, and head in air,
The two begin their journey. Need I say,
La Roque had felt the talon of Voltaire,
Had a long-standing little debt to pay,
And pounced, you may depend, on such a rare
Occasion for its due discharge ? So, gay
And grenadier-like, marching to assault,
They reach the enemy's abode, there halt.

cxxxIII

'I'll be announcer!' quoth La Roque: 'I know,
Better than you, perhaps, my Breton bard,
How to procure an audience! He's not slow
To smell a rat, this scamp Voltaire! Discard
The petticoats too soon,—you'll never show
Your *haut-de-chausses* and all they've made or marred
In your true person. Here's his servant. Pray,
Will the great man see Demoiselle Malcrais?'

cxxxIv

Now, the great man was also, no whit less,
The man of self-respect,—more great man he!
And bowed to social usage, dressed the dress,
And decorated to the fit degree
His person; 'twas enough to bear the stress
Of battle in the field, without, when free
From outside foes, inviting friends' attack
By—sword in hand? No,—ill-made coat on back!

cxxxv

And, since the announcement of his visitor
Surprised him at his toilet,—never glass
Had such solicitation! 'Black, now—or
Brown be the killing wig to wear ? Alas,
Where's the rouge gone, this cheek were better for
A tender touch of? Melted to a mass,
All my pomatum! There's at all events
A devil—for he's got among my scents!'

cxxxvi

So, 'barbered ten times o'er,' as Antony
Paced to his Cleopatra, did at last
Voltaire proceed to the fair presence: high
In colour, proud in port, as if a blast
Of trumpet bade the world 'Take note! draws nigh
To Beauty, Power! Behold the Icono-

The Poet) the Philosopher, the Rod
Of iron for imposture! Ah my God!'

For there stands smirking Paul, and—what lights fierce
The situation as with sulphur flash—

There grinning stands La Roque! No carte-and-tierce- -
Observes the grinning fencer, but, full dash
From breast to shoulderblade, the thrusts transpierce
That armour against which so idly clash
The swords of priests and pedants! Victors there.
Two smirk and grin who have befooled—Voltaire!

CXXXVIII

A moment's horror; then quick turn-about
On high-heeled shoe,—flurry of ruffles, flounce
Of wig-ties and of coat-tails,—and so out
Of door banged wrathfully behind, goes —bounce—
Voltaire in tragic exit! vows, no doubt,
Vengeance upon the couple. Did he trounce
Either, in point of fact? His anger's flash
Subsided if a culprit craved his cash.

CXXXIX

As for La Roque, he having laughed his laugh
To heart's content,—the joke defunct at once,
Dead in the birth, you see,—its epitaph
Was sober earnest 'Well, sir, for the nonce,
You've gamed the laurel; never hope to graff
A second sprig of triumph there! Ensconce
Yourself again at Croisic: let it be
Enough you mastered both Voltaire and —me!

CXL

'Don't linger here in Paris to parade
Your victory, and have the very boys
Point at you! "There's the little mouse which made
Believe those two big lions that its noise,
Nibbling away behind the hedge, conveyed
Intelligence that—portent which destroys
All courage in the lion's heart, with horn
That's fable—there lay couched the unicorn!"

'Beware us, now we've found who fooled us! Quick
To cover! "In proportion to men's fright,
Expect their fright's revenge!" quoth politic
Old Macchiavelli. As for me,—all's right:
I'm but a journalist. But no pin's prick
The tooth leaves when Voltaire is roused to bite!
So, keep your counsel, I advise! Adieu!
Good journey 1 Ha, ha, ha, Malcrais was —you!'

CXLII

'—Yes, I'm Malcrais, and somebody beside,
You snickering monkey!' thus winds up the tale
Our hero, safe at home, to that black-eyed
Cherry-cheeked sister, as she soothes the pale
Mortified poet. 'Let their worst be tried,
I'm their match henceforth—very man and male!
Don't talk to me of knocking-under! man
And male must end what petticoats began!

CXLIII

'How woman-like it is to apprehend
The world will eat its words! why, words transfixed
To stone, they stare at you in print,—at end,
Each writer's style and title! Choose betwixt
Fool and knave for his name, who should intend
To perpetrate a baseness so unmixed
With prospect of advantage! What is writ
Is writ: they've praised me, there's an end of it.

CXLIV

'No, Dear, allow me! I shall print these same
Pieces, with no omitted line, as Paul's.
Malcrais no longer, let me see folk blame
What they—praised simply?—placed on pedestals,
Each piece a statue in the House of Fame!
Fast will they stand there, though their presence galls
The envious crew: such show their teeth, perhaps,
And snarl, but never bite! I know the chaps!'

CXLV

Oh Paul, oh piteously deluded! Pace
Thy sad sterility of Croisic flats,
Watch, from their southern edge, the foamy race
Of high-tide as it leaves the drowning mats
Of yellow-berried web-growth from their place,
The rock-ridge, when, rolling as far as Batz,
One broadside crashes on it, and the crags.
That needle under, stream with weedy rags!

CXLVI

Or, if thou wilt, at inland Bergerac,
Rude heritage but recognized domain,
Do as two here are doing: make hearth crack
With logs until thy chimney roar again
Jolly with fire-glow I Let its angle lack
No grace of Cherry-cheeks thy sister, fain
To do a sister's office and laugh smooth
Thy corrugated brow—that scowls forsooth!

CXLVII

Wherefore? Who does not know how these La Roques,
Voltaires, can say and unsay, praise and blame,
Prove black white, white black, play at paradox
And, when they seem to lose it, win the game?
Care not thou what this badger, and that fox,
His fellow in rascality, call 'fame!'
Fiddlepin's end! Thou hadst it,—quack, quack, quack!
Have quietude from geese at Bergerac!

CXLVIII

Quietude! For, be very sure of this!
A twelvemonth hence, and men shall know or care
As much for what to-day they clap or hiss
As for the fashion of the wigs they wear,
Then wonder at. There 's fame which, bale or bliss,—
Got by no gracious word of great Voltaire
Or not-so-great La Roque,—is taken back
By neither, any more than Bergerac!

CXLIX

Too true! or rather, true as ought to be!
No more of Paul the man, Malcrais the maid,
Thenceforth for ever! One or two, I see,
Stuck by their poet: who the longest stayed
Was Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, and even he
Seemingly saddened as perforce he paid
A rhyming tribute ' After death, survive—
He hoped he should; and died while yet alive!'

CL

No. he hoped nothing of the kind, or held
His peace and died in silent good old age.
Him it was, curiosity impelled
To seek if there were extant still some page
Of his great predecessor, rat who belled
The cat once, and would never deign engage
In after-combat with mere mice,—saved from
More sonnetteering,—Ren6 Gentilhomme.

CLI

Paul's story furnished forth that famous play
Of Piron's 'Metromanie': **there you'll** find
He's Francaleu, while Demoiselle Malcrais
Is Demoiselle No-end-of-names-behind!
As for Voltaire, he'sDamis. Good and gay
The plot and dialogue, and all's designed
To spite Voltaire: at 'Something' such the laugh
Of simply 'Nothing!' (see his epitaph).

CLII

But truth, truth, that's the gold! and all the good
I find in fancy is, it serves to set
Gold's inmost glint free, gold which comes up rude
And rayless from the mine. All fume and fret
Of artistry beyond this point pursued
Brings out another sort of burnish: yet
Always the ingot has its very own
Value, a sparkle struck from truth alone.

CLIII

Now, take this sparkle and the other spirt
Of fitful flame,—twin births of our grey brand
That's sinking fast to ashes! I assert.
As sparkles want but fuel to expand
Into a conflagration no mere squirt
Will guench too quickly, so might Croisic strand,
Had fortune pleased posterity to chowse,
Boast of her brace of beacons luminous.

CLIV

Did earlier Agamemnons lack their bard?
But later bards lacked Agamemnon too!
How often frustrate they of fame's award
Just because Fortune, as she listed, blew
Some slight bark's sails to bellying, mauled and marred
And forced to put about the First-rate! True,
Such tacks but for a time: still—small-craft ride
At anchor, rot while Beddoes breasts the tide!

CLV

Dear, shall I tell you? There's a simple test
Would serve, when **people take on them to** weigh

The worth of poets, Who was better, best,
This, that, the other bard ? (baids none gainsay
As good, observe! no matter for the rest)
'What quality preponderating may
Turn the scale as it trembles?' End the strife
By asking 'Which one led a happy life?'

CLVI

If one did, over his antagonist
That yelled or shrieked or sobbed or wept or wailed
Or simply had the dumps,—dispute who list,—
I count him victor. Where his fellow failed,
Mastered by his own means of might,—acquist
Of necessary sorrows,—he prevailed,
A strong since joyful man who stood distinct
Above slave-sorrows to his chariot linked.

CLVII

Was not his lot to feel more ? What meant 'feel
Unless to suffer! Not, to see more? Sight—
What helped it but to watch the drunken reel
Of vice and folly round him, left and right,
One dance of rogues and idiots! Not, to deal
More with things lovely? What provoked the spite
Of filth incarnate, like the poet's need
Of other nutriment than strife and greed!

CLvIII

Who knows most, doubts most; entertaining hope,
Means recognizing fear; the keener sense
Of all comprised within our actual scope
Recoils from aught beyond earth's dim and dense.
Who, grown familiar with the sky, will grope
Henceforward among groundlings? That's offence
Just as indubitably: stars abound
O'erhead, but then—what flowers make glad (he ground!

CLIX

So, force is sorrow, and each sorrow, force:
What then? since Swiftness gives the charioteer
The palm, his hope be in the vivid horse
Whose neck God clothed with thunder, not the steer
Sluggish and safe! Yoke Hatred, Crime, Remorse,
Despair: but ever mid the whirling fear,
Let, through the tumult, break the poet's face
Radiant, assured his wild slaves win the race!

CLX

Therefore I say ... no, shall not say, but think,
And save my breath for better purpose. White
From grey our log has burned to: just one blink
That quivers, loth to leave it, as a sprite
The outworn body. Ere your eyelids' wink
Punish who sealed so deep into the night
Your mouth up, for two poets dead so long,—
Here pleads a live pretender: right your wrong!

What a pretty tale you told me
Once upon a time
—Said you found it somewhere (scold me!)
Was it prose or was it rhyme,
Greek or Latin? Greek, you said,
While your shoulder propped my head,

II

Anyhow there's no forgetting
This much if no more,
That a poet (pray, no petting!)
Yes, a bard, sir, famed of yore,
Went where suchlike used to go,
Singing for a prize, you know.

in

Well, he had to sing, nor merely
Sing but play the lyre;
Playing was important clearly
Quite as singing: I desire,
Sir, you keep the fact in mind
For a purpose that's behind.

IV

There stood he, while deep attention
Held the judges round,
—Judges able, I should mention,
To detect the slightest sound
Sung or played amiss: such ears
Had old judges, it appears!

v

None the less he sang out boldly,
Played in time and tune,
Till the judges, weighing coldly
Each note's worth, seemed, late or soon,
Sure to smile 'In vain one tries
Picking faults out: take the prize!'

VI

When, a mischief! Were they seven
Strings the lyre possessed?
Oh, and afterwards eleven,
Thank you I Well, sir,—who had guessed
Such ill luck in store?—it happed
One of those same seven strings snapped.

vII

All was lost, then! No! a cricket
(What'cicada'? Pooh!)
—Some mad thing that left its thicket
For mere love of music—flew
With its little heart on fire,
Lighted on the crippled lyre.

vIII

So that when (ah joy!) our singer
For his truant string
Feels with disconcerted finger,
What does cricket else but fling
Fiery heart forth, sound the note
Wanted by the throbbing throat?

IX

Ay and, ever to the ending,
Cricket chirps at need,
Executes the hand's intending,
Promptly, perfectly,—indeed
Saves the singer from defeat
With her chirrup low and sweet.

x

Till, at ending, all the judges
Cry with one assent
'Take the prize—a prize who grudges
Such a voice and instrument?
Why, we took your lyre for harp,
So it shrilled us forth F sharp!'

xI

Did the conqueror spurn the creature,
Once its service done?
That's no such uncommon feature
In the case when Music's son
Finds his Lotte's power too spent
For aiding soul-development.

xII

No! This other, on returning
Homeward, prize in hand,
Satisfied his bosom's yearning:
(Sir, I hope you understand!)
—Said 'Some record there must be
Of this cricket's help to me!'

xIII

So, he made himself a statue:
Marble stood, life-size;
On the lyre, he pointed at you,
Perched his partner in the prize;
Never more apart you found
Her, he throned, from him, she crowned.

xIv

That's the tale: its application?
Somebody I know
Hopes one day for reputation
Through his poetry that's—Oh,
All so learned and so wise
And deserving of a prize!

xv

If he gains one, will some ticket,
When his statue's built,
Tell the gazer "Twas a cricket
Helped my crippled lyre, whose lilt
Sweet and low, when strength usurped
Softness* place i' the scale, she chirped?

XVI

'For as victory was nighest,
While I sang and played,—
With my lyre at lowest, highest,
Right alike,—one string that made
"Love" sound soft was snapt in twain,
Never to be heard again,—

xvII

'Had not a kind cricket fluttered,
Perched upon the place
Vacant left, and duly uttered
"Love, Love, Love," whene'er the bass
Asked the treble to atone
For its somewhat sombre drone.'

xvIII

But you don't know music! Wherefore
Keep on casting pearls
To a—poet? All I care for
Is—to tell him that a girl's
'Love' comes aptly in when gruff
Grows his singing. (There, enough!)

DRAMATIC IDYLS

FIRST SERIES

1879

MARTIN RELPH

MY grandfather says he remembers he saw,
when a youngster long ago,
On a bright May day, a strange old man,
with a beard as white as snow,
Stand on the hill outside our town like a
monument of woe,
And, striking his bare bald head the while,
sob out the reason—so!

If I last as long as Methuselah I shall never
forgive myself:
But—God forgive me, that I pray, unhappy Martin Relph,
As coward, coward I call him—him, yes, him! Away from me!
Get you behind the man I am now, you man that I used to be!

What can have sewed my mouth up, set me a-stare, all eyes, no tongue?
People have urged ' You visit a scare too hard on a lad so young!
You were taken aback, poor boy,' they urge, 'no time to regain your wits:
Besides it had maybe cost you life.' Ay, there is the cap which fits!

So, cap me, the coward,—thus! No fear! A cuff on the brow does good:
The feel of it hinders a worm inside which bores at the brain for food.
See now, there certainly seems excuse: for a moment, I trust, dear friends,
The fault was but folly, no fault of mine, or if mine, I have made amends!

For, every day that is first of May, on the hill-top, here stand I,
Martin Relph, and I strike my brow, and publish the reason why,
When there gathers a crowd to mock the fool. No fool, friends, since the bite
Of a worm inside is worse to bear: pray God I have baulked him quite!

I'll tell you. Certainly much excuse! It came of the way they cooped
Us peasantry up in a ring just here, close huddling because tight-hooped
By the red-coats round us villagers all: they meant we should see the sight
And take the example,—see, not speak, for speech was the Captain's right.

' You clowns on the slope, beware! ' cried he: 'This woman about to die
Gives by her fate fair warning to such acquaintance as play the spy.

Henceforth who meddle with matters of state above them perhaps will learn
That peasants should stick to their plough-tail, leave to the King the King's concern.

'Here's a quarrel that sets the land on fire, between King George and his foes:
What call has a man of your kind—much less, a woman—to interpose?
Yet you needs must be meddling, folk like you, not foes—so much the worse!
The many and loyal should keep themselves unmixed with the few perverse.

'Is the counsel hard to follow? I gave it you plainly a month ago,
And where was the good? The rebels have learned just all that they need to know.
Not a month since in we quietly marched: a week, and they had the news,
From a list complete of our rank and file to a note of our caps and shoes.

'All about all we did and all we were doing and like to do!
Only, I catch a letter by luck, and capture who wrote it, too.
Some of you men look black enough, but the milk-white face demure
Betokens the finger foul with ink: 'tis a woman who writes, be sure!

'Is it "Dearie, how much I miss your mouth!"—good natural stuff, she pens?
Some sprinkle of that, for a blind, of course: with talk about cocks and hens,
How "robin has built on the apple-tree, and our creeper which came to grief
Through the frost, we feared, is twining afresh round casement in famous leaf."

' But all for a blind! She soon glides frank into "Horrid the place is grown
With Officers here and Privates there, no nook we may call our own:
And Farmer Giles has a tribe to house, and lodging will be to seek
For the second Company sure to come ('tis whispered) on Monday week."

* And so to the end of the chapter! There! The murder, you see, was out:
Easy to guess how the change of mind in the rebels was brought about!

Safe in the trap would they now lie snug,
had treachery made no sign;
But treachery meets a just reward, no
matter if fools malign!

'That traitors had played us false, was
proved—sent news which fell so pat:
And the murder was out—this letter of
love, the sender of this sent that!
'Tis an ugly job, though, all the same—
a hateful, to have to deal
With a case of the kind, when a woman's
in fault: we soldiers need nerves of
steel!

'So, I gave her a chance, despatched post-
haste a message to Vincent Parkes
Whom she wrote to; easy to find he was,
since one of the King's own clerks,
Ay, kept by the King's own gold in the
town close by where the rebels camp:
A sort of a lawyer, just the man to betray
our sort—the scamp!

' " If her writing is simple and honest and
only the lover-like stuff it looks,
And if you yourself are a loyalist, nor
down in the rebels' books,
Come quick," said I, " and in person prove
you are each of you clear of crime,
Or martial law must take its course: this
day next week's the time!"

'Next week is now: does he come? Not
he! Clean gone, our clerk, in a trice!
He has left his sweetheart here in the
lurch: no need of a warning twice!
His own neck free, but his partner's fast
in the noose still, here she stands
To pay for her fault. Tis an ugly job: but
soldiers obey commands.

'And hearken wherefore I make a speech!
Should any acquaintance share
The folly that led to the fault that is now
to be punished, let fools beware!
Look black, if you please, but keep hands
white: and, above all else, keep
wives—
Or sweethearts or what they may be—
from ink! Not a word now, on your
lives!'

Black? but the Pit's own pitch was white
to the Captain's face—the brute
With the bloated cheeks and the bulgy
nose and the bloodshot eyes to suit!
He was muddled with wine, they say:
more like, he was out of his wits with
fear;
He had but a handful of men, that's true,
—a riot might cost him dear.

And all that time stood Rosamund Page,
with pinioned arms and face
Bandaged about, on the turf marked out
for the party's firing-place.

I hope she was wholly with God: I hope
'twas His angel stretched a hand
To steady her so, like the shape of stone
you see in our church-aisle stand.

I hope there was no vain fancy pierced the
bandage to vex her eyes,
No face within which she missed without,
no questions and no replies—
'Why did you leave me to die?'—'Because
. . .' Oh, fiends, too soon you grin
At merely a moment of hell, like that—
such heaven as hell ended in!

Let mine end too! He gave the word, up
went the guns in a line.
Those heaped on the hill were blind as
dumb,—for, of ail eyes, only mine
Looked over the heads of the foremost
rank. Some fell on their knees in
prayer,
Some sank to the earth, but all shut eyes,
with a sole exception there.

That was myself, who had stolen up last,
had sidled behind the group:
I am highest of all on the hill-top, there
stand fixed while the others stoop!
From head to foot in a serpent's twine am
I tightened: I touch ground?
No more than a gibbet's rigid corpse
which the fetters rust around!

Can I speak, can I breathe, can I burst—
aught else but see, see, only see?
And see I do—for there comes in sight—a
man, it sure must be!—
Who staggeringly, stumblingly rises, falls,
rises, at random flings his weight
On and on, anyhow onward—a man
that's mad he arrives too late!

Else why does he wave a something white
high-flourished above his head?
Why does not he call, cry,—curse the
fool!—why throw up his arms in-
stead?
O take this fist in your own face, fool!
Why does not yourself shout Stay!
Here's a man comes rushing, might and
main, with something he's mad to
say'?

And a minute, only a moment, to have
hell-fire boil up in your brain,
And ere you can judge things right,
choose heaven,—time's over, repen-
tance vain!
They level: a volley, a smoke and the
clearing of smoke: I see no more
Of the man smoke hid, nor his frantic arms,
nor the something white he bore.

But stretched on the field, some half-mile
off, is an object. Surely dumb,
Deaf, blind were we struck, that nobody
heard, not one of us saw him come!

Has he fainted through fright? One may well belive! Wbat is it he holds so fast?
Turn him over, examine the face! Hey-day! What, Vincent Parkes at last?

Dead! dead as she, by the self-same shot: one bullet has ended both,
Her in the body and him in the soul. They laugh at our plighted troth.
'Till death us do part' ? Till death us do join past parting—that sounds like
Betrothal indeed! O Vincent Parkes, what need has my fist to strike?

I helped you: thus were you dead and wed: one bound, and your soul reached hers!
There is clenched in your hand the thing, signed, sealed, the paper which plain avers
She is innocent, innocent, plain as print, with the King's Arms broad engraved:
No one can hear, but if anyone high on the hill can see, she's saved!

And torn his garb and bloody his lips with heart-break—plain it grew
How the week's delay had been brought about: each guess at the end proved true.
It was hard to get at the folk in power: such waste of time! and then
Such pleading and praying, with, all the while, his lamb in the lions' den!

And at length when he wrung their pardon out, no end to the stupid forms—
The licence and leave: I make no doubt—what wonder if Dassion warms
The pulse in a man if you play with his heart?—he was something hasty in speech;
Anyhow, none would quicken the work: he had to beseech, beseech!

And the thing once signed, sealed, safe in his grasp,—what followed but fresh delays?
For the floods were out, he was forced to take such a roundabout of ways!
And 'twas 'Halt there!' at every turn of the road, since he had to cross the thick
Of the red-coats: what did they care for him and his ' Quick, for God's sake, quick!'

Horse? but he had one: had it how long? till the first knave smirked 'You brag
Yourself a friend of the King's? then lend to a King's friend here your nag!'
Money to buy another? Why, piece by piece they plundered him still,
With their 'Wait you must,—no help: if aught can help you, a guinea will!'

And a borough there was—I forget the name—whose Mayor must have the bench
Of Justices ranged to clear a doubt: for 'Vincent,' thinks he, sounds French!
It well may have driven him daft, God knows! all man can certainly know
Is—rushing and falling and rising, at last he arrived in a horror—so!

When a word, cry, gasp, would have rescued both! Ay bite me! The worm begins
At his work once more. Had cowardice proved—that only—my sin of sins!
Friends, look you here! Suppose . . . suppose • • • But mad I am, needs must be!
Judas the Damned would never have dared such a sin as I dream! For, see!

Suppose I had sneakingly loved her myself, my wretched self, and dreamed
In the heart of me ' She were better dead than happy and his!'—while gleamed
A light from hell as I spied the pair in a perfectest embrace,
He the saviour and she the saved,—bliss born of the very murder-place!

No! Say I was scared, friends! Call me fool and coward, but nothing worse!
Jeer at the fool and gibe at the coward! 'Twas ever the coward's curse
That fear breeds fancies in such: such take their shadow for substance still,
—A fiend at their back. I liked poor Parkes,—loved Vincent, if you will!

And her—why, I said 'Good morrow' to her, 'Good even,' and nothing more:
The neighbourly way! She was just to me as fifty had been before.
So, coward it is and coward shall be! There's a friend, now! Thanks! A drink
Of water I wanted: and now I can walk, get home by myself, I think.

PHEIDIPPIDES

FIRST I salute this soil of the blessed, river and rock!
Gods of my birthplace, daemons and heroes, honour to all!
Then I name thee, claim thee for our patron, co-equal in praise
—Ay, with Zeus the Defender, with Her of the aegis and spear!
Also, ye of the bow and the buskin, praised be your peer,
Now, henceforth and forever,—O latest to whom I upraise

Hand and heart and voice! For Athens, leave pasture and flock!
Present to help, potent to save, Pan—patron I call!'

Archons of Athens, topped by the tettix, see, I return!
See, 'tis myself here standing alive, no spectre that speaks!
Crowned with the myrtle, did you command me, Athens and you,
'Run, Pheidippides, run and race, reach Sparta for aid!
Persia has come, we are here, where is She?' Your command I obeyed,
Ran and raced: like stubble, some field which a fire runs through,
Was the space between city and city: two days, two nights did I burn
Over the hills, under the dales, down pits and up peaks.

Into their midst I broke: breath served but for 'Persia has come!
Persia bids Athens proffer slavcs'-tribute, water and earth;
Razed to the ground is Eretria—but Athens, shall Athens sink,
Drop into dust and die—the flower of Hellas utterly die,
Die, with the wide world spitting at Sparta, the stupid, the stander-by?
Answer me quick, what help, what hand do you stretch o'er destruction's brink?
How,—when? No care for my limbs!—there's lightning in all and some—
Fresh and fit your message to bear, once lips give it birth!'

O my Athens—Sparta love thee? Did Sparta respond?
Every face of her leered in a furrow of envy, mistrust,
Malice,—each eye of her gave me its ghtter of gratified hate!
Gravely they turned to take counsel, to cast for excuses. I stood
Quivering,—the limbs of me fretting as fire frets, an inch from dry wood:
'Persia has come, Athens asks aid, and still they debate?
Thunder, thou Zeus! Athene, are Spartans a quarry beyond
Swing of thy spear? Phoibos and Artemis, clang them "Ye must"!'

No bolt launched from Olumpos! Lo, their answer at last!
'Has Persia come,—does Athens ask aid,
—may Sparta befriend?
Nowise precipitate judgment—too weighty the issue at stake!
Count we no time lost time which lags through respect to the Gods!
Ponder that precept of old, "No warfare, whatever the odds
In your favour, so long as the moon, half-orbed, is unable to take
Full-circle her state in the sky!" Already she rounds to it fast:
Athens must wait, patient as we—who judgment suspend.'

Athens,—except for that sparkle,—thy name, I had mouldered to ash!
That sent a blaze through my blood; off, off and away was I back,
—Not one word to waste, one look to lose on the false and the vile!
Yet 'O Gods of my land!' I cried, as each hillock and plain,
Wood and stream, I knew, I named, rushing past them again,
'Have ye kept faith, proved mindful of honours we paid you erewhile?
Vain was the filleted victim, the fulsome libation! Too rash
Love in its choice, paid you so largely service so slack!

'Oak and olive and bay,—I bid you cease to enwreathe
Brows made bold by your leaf! Fade at the Persian's foot,
You that, our patrons were pledged, should never adorn a slave!
Rather I hail thee, Parnes,—trust to thy wild waste tract!
Treeless, herbless, lifeless mountain! What matter if slacked
My speed may hardly be, for homage to crag and to cave
No deity deigns to drape with verdure?—at least I can breathe,
Fear in thee no fraud from the blind, no lie from the mute!'

Such my cry as, rapid, I ran over Parnes' ridge;
Gully and gap I clambered and cleared till, sudden, a bar
Jutted, a stoppage of stone against me, blocking the way.
Right! for I minded the hollow to traverse, the fissure across:
'Where I could enter, there I depart by! Night in the fosse?
Athens to aid? Though the dive were through Erebos, thus I obey—
Out of the day dive, into the day as bravely arise! No bridge
Better!'—when—ha! what was it I came on, of wonders that are?

There, in the cool of a cleft, sat he—majestical Pan!
Ivy drooped wanton, kissed his head, moss cushioned his hoof:

All the great God was good in the eyes grave-kindly—the curl
Carved on the bearded'Cheek, amused at a mortal's awe,
As, under the human trunk, the goat-thighs grand I saw.
'Halt, Pheidippides!'—halt I did, my brain of a whirl:
'Hither to me! Why pale in my presence?' he gracious began:
'How is it,—Athens, only in Hellas, holds me aloof?

'Athens, she only, rears me no fane, makes me no feast!
Wherefore? Than I what godship to Athens more helpful of old?
Ay, and still, and forever her friend! Test Pan, trust me!
Go, bid Athens take heart, laugh Persia to scorn, have faith
In the temples and tombs! Go, say to Athens, "The Goat-God saith:
When Persia—so much as strews not the soil—is cast in the sea,
Then praise Pan who fought in the ranks with your most and least,
Goat-thigh to greaved-thigh, made one cause with the free and the bold!"

'Say Pan saith: "Let this, foreshowing the place, be the pledge!'*
(Gay, the liberal hand held out this herbage I bear
—Fennel—I grasped it a-tremble with dew—whatever it bode)
'While, as for thee...' But enough! He was gone. If I ran hitherto—
Be sure that, the rest of my journey, I ran no longer, but flew.
Parnes to Athens—earth no more, the air was my road:
Here am I back. Praise Pan, we stand no more on the razor's edge!
Pan for Athens, Pan for me! I too have a guerdon rare!

Then spoke Miltiades. 'And thee, best runner of Greece,
Whose limbs did duty indeed,—what gift is promised thyself?
Tell it us straightway,—Athens the mother demands of her son! '
Rosily blushed the youth: he paused: but, lifting at length
His eyes from the ground, it seemed as he gathered the rest of his strength
Into the utterance—'Pan spoke thus: "For what thou hast done
Count on a worthy reward! Henceforth be allowed thee release
From the racer's toil, no vulgar reward in praise or in pelf!"
'I am bold to believe, Pan means reward the most to my mind!
Fight I shall, with our foremost, wherever this fennel may grow,—
Pound—Pan helping us—Persia to dust, and, under the deep,
Whelm her away for ever; and then,—no Athens to save,—
Marry a certain maid, I know keeps faith to the brave,—
Hie to my house and home: and, when my children shall creep
Close to my knees,—recount how the God was awful yet kind,
Promised their sire reward to the full-rewarding him—so!'

Unforeseeing one! Yes, he fought on the Marathon day:
So, when Persia was dust, all cried 'To Akropolis!
Run, Pheidippides, one race more! the meed is thy due!
"Athens is saved, thank Pan," go shout!' He flung down his shield,
Ran like fire once more: and the space 'twixt the Fennel-field
And Athens was stubble again, a field which a fire runs through,
Till in he broke: 'Rejoice, we conquer!' Like wine through clay,
Joy in his blood bursting his heart, he died—the bliss!

So, to this day, when friend meets friend, the word of salute
Is still 'Rejoice! '—his word which brought rejoicing indeed.
So is Pheidippides happy for ever,—the noble strong man
Who could race like a God, bear the face of a God, whom a God loved so well;
He saw the land saved he had helped to save, and was suffered to tell
Such tidings, yet never decline, but, gloriously as he began,
So to end gloriously—once to shout, thereafter be mute:
'Athens is saved!'—Pheidippides dies in the shout for his meed.

HALBERT AND HOB

HERE is a thing that happened. Like wild beasts whelped, for den,
In a wild part of North England, there lived once two wild men
Inhabiting one homestead, neither a hovel nor hut,
Time out of mind their birthright: father and son, these—but—
Such a son, such a father! Most wildness by degrees
Softens away: yet, last of their line, the wildest and worse were these.

Criminals, then? Why, no: they did not murder and rob;
But, give them a word, they returned a blow—old Halbert as young Hob:
Harsh and fierce of word, rough and savage of deed,
Hated or feared the more—who knows?—the genuine wild-beast breed.

Thus were they found by the few sparse folk of the country-side;
But how fared each with other? E'en beasts couch, hide by hide,
In a growling, grudged agreement: so, father and son aye curled
The closelier up in their den because the last of their kind in the world.

Still, beast irks beast on occasion. One Christmas night of snow,
Came father and son to words—such words! more cruel because the blow
To crown each word was wanting, while taunt matched gibe, and curse
Competed with oath in wager, like pastime in hell,—nay, worse:
For pastime turned to earnest, as up there sprang at last
The son at the throat of the father, seized him and held him fast.

'Out of this house you go!'—(there followed a hideous oath)—
'This oven where now we bake, too hot to hold us both!
If there's snow outside, there's coolness: out with you, bide a spell
In the drift and save the sexton the charge of a parish shell I*

Now, the old trunk was tough, was solid as stump of oak
Untouched at the core by a thousand years: much less had its seventy broke
One whipcord nerve in the muscly mass from neck to shoulder-blade
Of the mountainous man, whereon his child's rash hand like a feather weighed.

Nevertheless at once did the mammoth shut his eyes,
Drop chin to breast, drop hands to sides, stand stiffened—arms and thighs
All of a piece—struck mute, much as a sentry stands,
Patient to take the enemy's fire: his captain so commands.

Whereat the son's wrath flew to fury at such sheer scorn
Of his puny strength by the giant eld thus acting the babe new-born:
And 'Neither will this turn serve!' yelled he. 'Out with you! Trundle, log!
If you cannot tramp and trudge like a man, try all-fours like a dog !'

Still the old man stood mute. So, log-wise,—down to floor
Pulled from his fireside place, dragged on from hearth to door,—
Was he pushed, a very log, staircase along, until
A certain turn in the steps was reached, a yard from the house-door-sill.

Then the father opened eyes—each spark of their rage extinct,—
Temples, late black, dead-blanched,—right-hand with left-hand linked,—
He faced his son submissive; when slow the accents came,
They were strangely mild though his son's rash hand on his neck lay all the same.

'Hob, on just such a night of a Christmas long ago,
For such a cause, with such a gesture, did I drag—so—
My father down thus far: but, softening here, I heard
A voice in my heart, and stopped: you wait for an outer word.

'For your own sake, not mine, soften you too! Untrod
Leave this last step we reach, nor brave the finger of God!
I dared not pass its lifting: I did well. I nor blame
Nor praise you. I stopped here: and, Hob, do you the same!'

Straightway the son relaxed his hold of the father's throat.
They mounted, side by side, to the room again: no note
Took either of each, no sign made each to either: last
As first, in absolute silence, their Christmas-night they passed.

At dawn, the father sate on, dead, in the self-same place.
With an outburst blackening still the old bad fighting-face;
But the son crouched all a-tremble like any lamb new-yeaned.

When he went to the burial, someone's staff he borrowed—tottered and leaned.
But his lips were loose, not locked,—kept muttering, mumbling. 'There!
At his cursing and swearing!' the youngsters cried: but the elders thought 'In prayer.'
A boy threw stones: he picked them up and stored them in his vest.

So tottered, muttered, mumbled he, till he
died, perhaps found rest.
Is there a reason in "nature for these hard
hearts?' O Lear,
That a reason out of nature must turn
them soft, seems clear!

IVAN IVANOVITCH

'THEY tell me, your carpenters,' quoth I
to my friend the Russ,
'Make a simple hatchet serve as a tool-box
serves with us.
Arm but each man with his axe, 'tis a
hammer and saw and plane
And chisel, and—what know I else? We
should imitate in vain
The mastery wherewithal, by a flourish of
iust the adze,
He cleaves, clamps, dovetails in,—no need
of our nails and brads,—
The manageable pine: 'tis said he could
shave himself
With the axe,—so all adroit, now a giant
and now an elf,
Does he work and play at once!'
Quoth my friend the Russ to me,
'Ay, that and more beside on occasion! It
scarce may be
You never heard tell a tale told children,
time out of mind,
By father and mother and nurse, for a
moral that's behind,
Which children quickly seize. If the inci-
dent happened at all,
We place it in Peter's time when hearts
were great not small,
Germanized, Frenchified. I wager 'tis old
to you
As the story of Adam and Eve, and pos-
sibly quite as true.'

in the deep of our land, 'tis said, a village
from out the woods
Emerged on the great main-road 'twixt
two great solitudes.
Through forestry right and left, black
verst and verst of pine,
From village to village runs the road's long
wide bare line.
Clearance and clearance break the else-
unconquered growth
Of pine and all that breeds and broods
there, leaving loth
Man's inch of masterdom,—spot of life,
spirt of fire,—
To star the dark and dread, lest right and
rule expire
Throughout the monstrous wild, a-hun-
gered to resume
Its ancient sway, suck back the world into
its womb:
Defrauded by man's craft which clove
from North to South
This highway broad and straight e'en from
the Neva's mouth
To Moscow's gates of gold. So, spot of
life and spirt
Of fire aforesaid, burn, each village death-
begirt
By wall and wall of pine—unprobed un-
dreamed abyss.
Early one winter morn, in such a village as
this.
Snow-wnitened everywhere except the
middle road
Ice-roughed by track of sledge, there
worked by his abode
Ivan Ivanovitch, the carpenter, employed
On a huge shipmast trunk; his axe now
trimmed and toyed
With branch and twig, and now some chop
athwart the bole
Changed bole to billets, bared at once the
sap and soul.
About him, watched the work his neigh-
bours sheepskin-clad;
Each bearded mouth puffed steam, each
grey eye twinkled glad
To see the sturdy arm which, never stop-
ping play,
Proved strong man's blood still boils,
freeze winter as he may.
Sudden, a burst of bells. Out of the road,
on edge
Of the hamlet—horse's hoofs galloping.
'How, a sledge?
What's here?' cried all as—in, up to the
open space.
Workyard and market-ground, folk's
common meeting-place,—
Stumbled on, till he fell, in one last bound
for life,
A horse: and, at his heels, a sledge held—
'Dmitri's wife!
Back without Dmitri too! and children—
where are they?
Only a frozen corpse!'
They drew it forth: then—'Nay,
Not dead, though like to die! Gone hence
a month ago:
Home again, this rough jaunt—alone
through night and snow—
What can the cause be? Hark—Droug,
old horse, how he groans:
His day's done! Chafe away, keep chaf-
ing, for she moans:
She's coming to! Give here: see, mother-
kin, your friends!
Cheer up, all safe at home! Warm inside
makes amends
For outside cold,—sup quick! Don't look
as we were bears!
What is it startles you? What strange ad-
venture stares

Up at us in your face? You know friends
—which is which?
I'm Vassili, he's Sergei, Ivan Ivanovitch

At the word, the woman's eyes, slow-
wandering till they neared
The blue eyes o'er the bush of honey-
coloured beard,
Took in full light and sense and—torn to
rags, some dream
Which hid the naked truth—O loud and
long the scream
She gave, as if all power of voice within
her throat
Poured itself wild away to waste in one
dread note!
Then followed gasps and sobs, and then
the steady flow
Of kindly tears: the brain was saved, a man
might know.
Down fell her face upon the good friend's
propping knee;
His broad hands smoothed her head, as
fain to brush it free
From fancies, swarms that stung like bees
unhived. He soothed—
'Loukeria, Louscha!'—still he, fondling,
smoothed and smoothed.
At last her lips formed speech.

'Ivan, dear—you indeed!
You, just the same dear you! While I . . .
O intercede,
Sweet Mother, with thy Son Almighty-
let his might
Bring yesterday once more, undo all done
last night!
But this time yesterday, Ivan. I sat like you,
A child on either knee, and, dearer than
the two.
A babe inside my arms, close to my heart
—that's lost
In morsels o'er the snow! Father, Son,
Holy Ghost,
Cannot you bring again my blessed yester-
day?'

When no more tears would flow, she told
her tale: this way.

'Maybe, a month ago,—was it not?—
news came here,
They wanted, deeper down, good work-
men fit to rear
A church and roof it in. "We'll go," my
husband said:
"None understands like me to melt and
mould their lead."
So, friends here helped us off—Ivan, dear,
you the first!
How gay we jingled forth, all five—(my
heart will burst)—
While Dmitri shook the reins, urged
Droug upon his track!

'Well, soon the month ran out, we just
were coming back,
When yesterday—behold, the village was
on fire!
Fire ran from house to house. What help,
as, nigh and nigher,
The flames came furious? "Haste," cried
Dmitri, "men must do
The little good man may: to sledge and in
with you,
You and our three! We check the fire by
laying flat
Each building in its path,—I needs must
stay for that,—
But you... no time for talk! Wrap round
you every rug,
Cover the couple close,—you'll have the
babe to hug.
No care to guide old Droug, he knows his
way, by guess,
Once start him on the road: but chirrup,
none the less!
The snow lies glib as glass and hard as
steel, and soon
You'll have rise, fine and full, a marvel of
a moon.
Hold straight up, all the same, this lighted
twist of pitch!
Once home and with our friend Ivan
Ivanovitch,
All's safe: I have my pay in pouch, all's
right with me,
So I but find as safe you and our precious
three!
Off, Droug!"—because the flames had
reached us, and the men
Shouted "But lend a hand, Dmitri—as
good as ten!"

'So, in we bundled—I, and those God gave
me once;
Old Droug, that's stiff at first, seemed
youthful for the nonce:
He understood the case, galloping straight
ahead.
Out came the moon: my twist soon
dwindled, feebly red
In that unnatural day—yes, daylight, bred
between
Moon-light and snow-light, lamped those
grotto-depths which screen
Such devils from God's eye. Ah, pines,
how straight you grow
Nor bend one pitying branch, true breed
of brutal snow!
Some undergrowth had served to keep the
devils blind
While we escaped outside their border!

'Was that—wind?
Anyhow, Droug starts, stops, back go his
ears, he snuffs,
Snorts,—never such a snort! then plunges,
knows the sough's

Only the wind: yet, no—our breath goes
up too straight ! „——
Still the low sound,—less low, loud,
louder, at a rate
There's no mistaking more! Shall I lean
out—look—learn
The truth whatever it be? Pad, pad! At
last, I turn—

Tis the regular pad of the wolves in pur-
suit of the life in the sledge!
An army they are: close-packed they press
like the thrust of a wedge:
They increase as they hunt: for I see,
through the pine-trunks ranged each
side,
Slip forth new fiend and fiend, make wider
and still more wide
The four-footed steady advance. The
foremost—none may pass:
They are elders and lead the line, eye and
eye—green-glowing brass!
But a long way distant still. Droug, save
us! He does his best:
Yet they gain on us, gain, till they reach,
—one reaches . . . How utter the
rest?
0 that Satan-faced first of the band! How
he lolls out the length of his tongue,
How he laughs and lets gleam his white
teeth! He is on me, his paws pry
among
The wraps and the rug3! O my pair, my
twin-pigeons, lie still and seem dead!
Stepan, he shall never have you for a meal,
—here's your mother instead!
No, he will not be counselled—must cry,
poor Sti6pka, so foolish! though first
Of my boy-brood, he was not the best:
nay, neighbours have called him the
worst:
He was puny, an undersized slip,—a dar-
ling to me, all the same!
But *little* there was to be praised in the boy,
and a plenty to blame.
I loved him with heart and soul, yes—but,
deal him a blow for a fault,
He would sulk for whole days. "Foolish
boy! lie still or the villain will vault,
Will snatch you from over my head!" No
use! he cries, screams,—who can
hold
Fast a boy in a frenzy of fear! It follows—
as I foretold!
The Satan-face snatched and snapped: I
tugged, I tore—and then
His brother too needs must shriek! If one
must go, 'tis men
The Tsar needs, so we hear, not ailing
boys! Perhaps
My hands relaxed their grasp, got tangled
in the wraps:
God, he was gone! I looked: there tumbled
the cursed crew,
Each fighting for a share: too busy to pur-
sue!
That's so far gain at least: Droug, gallop
another verst,
Or two, or three—God sends we beat
them, arrive the first!
A mother who boasts two boys was ever
accounted rich:
Some have not a boy: some have, but lose
him,—God knows which
Is worse: how pitiful to see your weakling
pine
And pale and pass away! Strong brats,
this pair of mine!

'O misery! for while I settle to what near
seems
Content, I am 'ware again of the tramp,
and again there gleams—
Point and point—the line, eyes, levelled
green brassy fire!
So soon is resumed your chase? Will
nothing appease, nought tire
The furies ? And yet I think—I am certain
the race is slack,
And the numbers are nothing like. Not a
quarter of the pack!
Feasters and those full-fed are staying be-
hind .. . Ah why?
We'll sorrow for that too soon! Now,—
gallop, reach home, and die,
Nor ever again leave house, to trust our
life in the trap
For life—we call a sledge! Terioscha, in
my lap!
Yes, I'll lie down upon you, tight-tie you
with the strings
Here—of my heart! No fear, this time,
your mother flings . . .
Flings? I flung? Never! but think!—a
woman, after all
Contending with a wolf! Save you I must
and shall,
Terentil!
'How now? What, you still head
the race,
Your eyes and tongue and teeth crave fresh
food, Satan-face?
There and there! Plain I struck green fire
out! Flash again?
All a poor fist can do to damage eyes
proves vain!
My fist—why not crunch that ? He is wan-
ton for... O God,
Why give this wolf his taste? Common
wolves scrape and prod
The earth till out they scratch some corpse
—mere putrid flesh!
Why must this glutton leave the faded,
choose the fresh?
Terentil—God, feel!—his neck keeps fast
thy bag
Of holy things, saints' bones, this Satan-
face will drag

Forth, and devour along with him, our Pope declared
The relics were to save from danger!

* Spurned, not spared!
'Twas through my arms, crossed arms, he—nuzzling now with snout,
Now ripping, tooth and claw—plucked, pulled Terentii out,
A prize indeed! I saw—how could I else but see?—
My precious one—I bit to hold back—pulled from me!
Up came the others, fell to dancing—did the imps!—
Skipped as they scampered round. There's one is grey, and limps:
Who knows but old bad Marpha,—she always owed me spite
And envied me my births,—skulks out of doors at night
And turns into a wolf, and joins the sisterhood,
And laps the youthful life, then slinks from out the wood,
Squats down at door by dawn, spins there demure as erst
—No strength, old crone,—not she!—to crawl forth half a verst!

* Well, I escaped with one: 'twixt one and none there lies
The space 'twixt heaven and hell. And see, a rose-light dyes
The endmost snow: 'tis dawn, 'tis day, 'tis safe at home!
We have outwitted you! Ay, monsters, snarl and foam,
Fight each the other fiend, disputing for a share,—
Forgetful, in your greed, our finest off we bear,
Tough Droug and I,—my babe, my boy that shall be man,
My man that shall be more, do all a hunter can
To trace and follow and find and catch and crucify
Wolves, wolfkins, all your crew! A thousand deaths shall die
The whimperingest cub that ever squeezed the teat!
"Take that!" we'll stab you with,—"the tenderness we met
When, wretches, you danced round—not this, thank God—not this!
Hellhounds, we baulk you!"

'But—Ah, God above!—Bliss, bliss—
Not the band, no! And yet—yes, for Droug knows him! One—
This only of them all has said " She saves a son!"
His fellows disbelieve such luck: but he believes,
He lets them pick the bones, laugh at him in their sleeves:
He's off and after us,—one speck, one spot, one ball
Grows bigger, bound on bound,—one wolf as good as all!
Oh but I know the trick! Have at the snaky tongue!
That's the right way with wolves! Go, tell your mates I wrung
The panting morsel out, left you to howl your worst!
Now for it—now! Ah me! I know him—thrice-accurst
Satan-face,—him to the end my foe!

'All fight's in vain:
This time the green brass points pierce to my very brain.
I fall—fall as I ought—quite on the babe I guard:
I overspread with flesh the whole of him. Too hard
To die this way, torn piecemeal? Move hence? Not I—one inch!
Gnaw through me, through and through: flat thus I lie nor flinch!
0 God, the feel of the fang furrowing my shoulder!—see
It grinds—it grates the bone. O Kirill under me,
Could I do more? Besides he knew wolf's way to win:
1 clung, closed round like wax: yet in he wedged and in,
Past my neck, past my breasts, my heart, until. . . how feels
The onion-bulb your knife parts, pushing through its peels,
Till out you scoop its clove wherein lie stalk and leaf
And bloom and seed unborn?

'That slew me: yes, in brief.
I died then, dead I lay doubtlessly till Droug stopped
Here, I suppose. I come to life, I find me propped
Thus—how or when or why,—I know not. Tell me, friends,
All was a dream: laugh quick and say the nightmare ends!
Soon I shall find my house: 'tis over there: in proof,
Save for that chimney heaped with snow, you'd see the roof
Which holds my three—my two—my one—not one?

'Life's mixed
With misery, yet we live—must live. The Satan fixed

His face on mine so fast, I took its print as pitch
Takes what it cools beneath. Ivan Ivanovitch,
'Tis you unharden me, you thaw, disperse the thing!
Only keep looking kind, the horror will not cling.
Your face smooths fast away each print of Satan. Tears
—What good they do I Life's sweet, and all its after-years,
Ivan Ivanovitch, I owe you! Yours am I!
May God reward you, dear!'

Down she sank. Solemnly
Ivan rose, raised his axe,—for fitly, as she knelt,
Her head lay: well-apart, each side, her arms hung,—dealt
Lightning-swift thunder-strong one blow —no need of more!
Headless she knelt on still: that pine was sound at core
(Neighbours were used to say)—cast-Iron-kernelled—which
Taxed for a second stroke Ivan Ivanovitch.

The man was scant of words as strokes. 'It had to be:
I could no other: God it was bade "Act forme!'"
Then stooping, peering round—what is it now he lacks?
A proper strip of bark wherewith to wipe his axe.
Which done, he turns, goes in, closes the door behind.
The others mute remain, watching the blood-snake wind
Into a hiding-place among the splinter-heaps.

At length, still mute, all move: one lifts,—from where it steeps
Redder each ruddy rag of pine,—-the head: two more
Take up the dripping body: then, mute still as before,
Move in a sort of march, march on till marching ends
Opposite to the church; where halting,—who suspends,
By its long hair, the thing, deposits in its place
The piteous head: once more the body shows no trace
Of harm done: there lies whole the Louscha, maid and wife
And mother, loved until this latest of her life.
Then all sit on the bank of snow which bounds a space
Kept free before the porch for judgment: just the place!
Presently all the souls, man, woman, child, which make
The village up, are found assembling for the sake
Of what is to be done. The very Jews are **there:**
A Gipsy-troop, though bound with horses for the Fair,
Squats with the rest. Each heart with its conception seethes
And simmers, but no tongue speaks: one may say,—none breathes.

Anon from out the church totters the Pope —the priest—
Hardly alive, so old, a hundred years at least.
With him, the Commune's head, a hoary senior too,
Starosta, that's his style,—like Equity Judge with you,—
Natural Jurisconsult: then, fenced about with furs,
Pomeschlk,—Lord of the Land, who wields—and none demure—
A power of life and death. They stoop, survey the corpse.

Then, straightened on his staff, the Starosta—the thorpe's
Sagaciousest old man—hears what you just have heard,
From Droug's first inrush, all, up to Ivan's last word
'God bade me act for him: I dared not disobey!'

Silence—the Pomeschik broke with 'A wild wrong way
Of righting wrong—if wrong there were, such wrath to rouse!
Why was not law observed? What article allows
Whoso may please to play the judge, and, judgment dealt,
Play executioner, as promptly as we pelt
To death, without appeal, the vermin whose sole fault
Has been—it dared to leave the darkness of its vault,
Intrude upon our day! Too sudden and too rash!
What was this woman's crime? Suppose the church should crash
Down where I stand, your lord: bound are my serfs to dare
Their utmost that I 'scape: yet, if the crashing scare
My children,—as you are,—if sons fly, one and all,
Leave father to his fate,—poor cowards though I call
The runaways, I pause before I claim their life

Because they prized it more than mine. I would each wife
Died for her husband's sake, each son to save his sire:
Tis glory, I applaud—scarce duty, I require.
Ivan Ivanovitch has done a deed that's named
Murder by law and me: who doubts, may speak unblamedl'

All turned to the old Pope. 'Ay, children, I am old—
How old, myself have got to know no longer. Rolled
Quite round, my orb of life, from infancy to age,
Seems passing back again to youth. A certain stage
At least I reach, or dream I reach, where I discern
Truer truths, laws behold more lawlike than we learn
When first we set our foot to tread the course I trod
With man to guide my steps: who leads me now is God.
" Your young men shall see visions:" and in my youth I saw
And paid obedience to man's visionary law:
" Your old men shall dream dreams:" and, in my age, a hand
Conducts me through the cloud round law to where I stand
Firm on its base,—know cause, who, before, knew effect.

'The world lies under me: and nowhere I detect
So great a gift as this—God's own—of human life.
"Shall the dead praise thee?" No! "The whole live world is rife,
God, with thy glory," rather! Life then, God's best of gifts.
For what shall man exchange? For life—when so he shifts
The weight and turns the scale, lets life for life restore
God's balance, sacrifice the less to gain the more,
Substitute—for low life, another's or his own—
Life large and liker God's who gave it: thus alone
May life extinguish life that life may trulier be!
How low this law descends on earth, is not forme
To trace: complexed becomes the simple, intricate
The plain, when I pursue law's winding. Tis the straight
Outflow of law I know and name: to law, the fount
Fresh from God's footstool, friends, follow while I remount.

'A mother bears a child: perfection is complete
So far in such a birth. Enabled to repeat
The miracle of life,—herself was bom so just
A type of womankind, that God sees fit to trust
Her with the holy task of giving life in turn.
Crowned by this crowning pride,—how say you, should she spurn
Regality—discrowned, unchilded, by her choice
Of barrenness exchanged for fruit which made rejoice
Creation, though life's self were lost in giving birth
To life more fresh and fit to glorify God's earth?
How say you, should the hand God trusted with life's torch
Kindled to light the world—aware of sparks that scorch,
Let fall the same? Forsooth, her flesh a fire-flake stings:
The mother drops the child! Among what monstrous things
Shall she be classed? Because of motherhood, each male
Yields to his partner place, sinks proudly in the scale:
His strength owned weakness, wit—folly, and courage—fear,
Beside the female proved male's mistress—only here.
The fox-dam, hunger-pined, will slay the felon sire
Who dares assault her whelp: the beaver, stretched on fire,
Will die without a groan: no pang avails to wrest
Her young from where they hide—her sanctuary breast.
What's here then ? Answer me, thou dead one, as, I trow,
Standing at God's own bar, he bids thee answer now!
Thrice crowned wast thou—each crown of pride, a child—thy charge!
Where are they? Lost? Enough: no need that thou enlarge
On how or why the loss: life left to utter "lost"
Condemns itself beyond appeal. The soldier's post
Guards from the foe's attack the camp he sentinels:
That he no traitor proved, this and this only tells—

IVAN IVANOVITCH

Over the corpse of him trod foe to foe s success.
Yet—one by CfhatKy crowns torn from thee—thou no less
To scare the world, shame God,—livedst! I hold He saw
The unexampled sin, ordained the novel law,
Whereof first instrument was first intelligence
Found loyal here. I hold that, failing human sense,
Tha very earth had oped, sky fallen, to efface
Humanity's new wrong, motherhood's first disgrace.
Earth oped not, neither fell the sky, for prompt was found
A man and man enough, head-sober and heart-sound,
Ready to hear God's voice, resolute to obey.
Ivan Ivanovitch, I hold, has done, this day,
No otherwise than did, in ages long ago,
Moses when he made known the purport of that flow
Of fire athwart the law's twain-tables! I proclaim
Ivan Ivanovitch God's servant!'

At which name
Uprose that creepy whisper from out the crowd, is wont
To swell and surge and sink when fellow-men confront
A punishment that falls on fellow flesh and blood,
Appallingly beheld—shudderingly understood,
No less, to be the right, the just, the merciful.
'God's servant!' hissed the crowd.

When that Amen grew dull
And died away and left acquittal plain adjudged,
'Amen!' last sighed the lord. ' There's none shall say I grudged
Escape from punishment in such a novel case.
Deferring to old age and holy life,—be grace
Granted! say I. No less, scruples might shake a sense
Firmer than I boast mine. Law's law, and evidence
Of breach therein lies plain,—blood-red-bright,—all may see!
Yet all absolve the deed: absolved the deed must be!

And next—as mercy rules the hour—methinks 'twere well
You signify forthwith its sentence, and dispel
The doubts and fears, I judge, which busy now the head
Law puts a halter round—a halo—you, instead!
Ivan Ivanovitch—what think you he expects
Will follow from his feat? Go, tell him—law protects
Murder, for once: no need he longer keep behind
The Sacred Pictures—where skulks Innocence enshrined,
Orlmissay! Go, some! You others, haste and hide
The dismal object there: get done, whate'er betide!'

So, while the youngers raised the corpse, the elders trooped
Silently to the house: where halting, someone stooped,
Listened beside the door; all there was silent too.
Then they held counsel; then pushed door and, passing through,
Stood in the murderer's presence.
Ivan Ivanovitch
Knelt, building on the floor that Kremlin rare and rich
He deftly cut and carved on lazy winter nights.
Some five young faces watched, breathlessly, as, to rights,
Piece upon piece, he reared the fabric nigh complete.
Stescha, Ivan's old mother, sat spinning by the heat
Of the oven where his wife Katia stood baking bread.
Ivan's self, as he turned his honey-coloured head,
Was just in act to drop, 'twixt fir-cones,—each a dome,—
The scooped-out yellow gourd presumably the home
Of Kolokol the Big: the bell, therein to hitch,
—An acorn-cup—was ready: Ivan Ivanovitch
Turned with it in his mouth.

They told him he was free
As air to walk abroad. ' How otherwise ?' asked he.

TRAY

SING me a hero! Quench my thirst
Of soul, ye bards!
Quoth Bard the first:
'Sir Olaf, the good knight, did don
His helm and eke his habergeon...'
Sir Olaf and his bard_____!

'That sin-scathed brow' (quoth Bard the second)
'That eye wide ope as though Fate beckoned
My hero to some steep, beneath
Which precipice smiled tempting death…'
You too without your host have reckoned!

'A beggar-child' (let's hear this third!)
*Sat on a quay's edge: like a bird
Sang to herself at careless play,
And fell into the stream. "Dismay!
Help, you the standers-by!" None stirred.

'Bystanders reason, think of wives
And children ere they risk their lives.
Over the balustrade has bounced
A mere instinctive dog, and pounced
Plumb on the prize. "How well he dives!

'" Up he comes with the child, see, tight
In mouth, alive too, clutched from quite
A depth of ten feet—twelve, I bet!
Good dog! What, off again? There's yet
Another child to save? All right!

'"How strange we saw no other fall!
It's instinct in the animal.
Good dog! But he's a long while under:
If he got drowned I should not wonder—
Strong current, that against the wall!

'" Here he comes, holds in mouth this time
—What may the thing be? Well, that's prime!
Now, did you ever? Reason reigns
In man alone, since all Tray's pains
Have fished—the child's doll from the slime!"

'And so, amid the laughter gay,
Trotted my hero off,—old Tray,—
Till somebody, prerogatived
With reason, reasoned: "Why he dived,
His brain would show us, I should say.

'"John, go and catch—or, if needs be,
Purchase—that animal for me!
By vivisection, at expense
Of half-an-hour and eighteenpence,
How brain secretes dog's soul, we'll see!"'

NED BRATTS

'TWAS Bedford Special Assize, one daft Midsummer's Day:
A broiling blasting June,—was never its like, men say.
Corn stood sheaf-ripe already, and trees looked yellow as that;
Ponds drained dust-dry, the cattle lay foaming around each flat.
Inside town, dogs went mad, and folk kept bibbing beer
While the parsons prayed for rain. 'Twas horrible, yes—but queer:
Queer—for the sun laughed gay, yet nobody moved a hand
To work one stroke at his trade: as given to understand
That all was come to a stop, work and such worldly ways,
And the world's old self about to end in a merry blaze.
Midsummer's Day moreover was the first of Bedford Fair,
With Bedford Town's tag-rag and bobtail a-bowsing there.

But the Court House, Quality crammed: through doors ope, windows wide.
High on the Bench you saw sit Lordships side by side.
There frowned Chief Justice Jukes, fumed learned Brother Small,
And fretted their fellow Judge: like threshers, one and all,
Of a reek with laying down the law in a furnace. Why?
Because their lungs breathed flame—the regular crowd forbye—
From gentry pouring in—quite a nosegay, to be sure!
How else could they pass the time, six mortal hours endure
Till night should extinguish day, when matters might haply mend?
Meanwhile no bad resource was—watching begin and end
Some trial for life and death, in a brisk five minutes' space,
And betting which knave would 'scape, which hang, from his sort of face.

So, their Lordships toiled and moiled, and a deal of work was done
(I warrant) to justify the mirth of the crazy sun
As this and t'other lout, struck dumb at the sudden show
Of red robes and white wigs, boggled nor answered 'Boh!'
When asked why he, Tom Styles, should not—because Jack Nokes
Had stolen the horse—be hanged: for Judges must have their jokes,
And louts must make allowance—let's say, for some blue fly
Which punctured a dewy scalp where the frizzles stuck awry—
Else Tom had fleered scot-free, so nearly over and done
Was the main of the job. Full-measure, the gentles enjoyed their fun,
As a twenty-five were tried, rank puritans caught at prayer

In a cow-house and laid by the heels,—have at 'em, devil may care!—
And ten were described the whip, and ten a brand on the cheek,
And five a slit of the nose—just leaving enough to tweak.

Well, things at jolly high-tide, amusement steeped in fire.
While noon smote fierce the roof's red tiles to heart's desire,
The Court a-simmer with smoke, one ferment of oozy flesh,
One spirituous humming musk mount-mounting until its mesh
Entoiled all heads in a fluster, and Serjeant Postlethwayte
—Dashing the wig oblique as he mopped his oily pate—
Cried 'Silence, or I grow grease! No loophole lets in air?
Jurymen,—Guilty, Death! Gainsay me if you dare!'
—Things at this pitch, I say,—what hubbub without the doors?
What laughs, shrieks, hoots and yells, what rudest of uproars?

Bounce through the barrier throng a bulk comes rolling vast!
Thumps, kicks,—no manner of use!—spite of them rolls at last
Into the midst a ball which, bursting, brings to view
Publican Black Ned Bratts and Tabby his big wife too:
Both in a muck-sweat, both... were never such eyes uplift
At the sight of yawning hell, such nostrils—snouts that sniffed
Sulphur, such mouths a-gape ready to swallow flame!
Horrified, hideous, frank fiend-faces! yet, all the same,
Mixed with a certain ... eh? how shall I dare style—mirth
The desperate grin of the guess that, could they break from earth,
Heaven was above, and hell might rage in impotence
Below the saved, the saved!

'Confound you! (no offence!)
Out of our way,—push, wife I Yonder their Worships be!'
Ned Bratts has reached the bar, and 'Hey, my Lords,' roars he,
A Jury of life and death, Judges the prime of the land,
Constables, javelineers,—all met, if I understand,
To decide so knotty a point as whether 'twas Jack or Joan
Robbed the henroost, pinched the pig, hit the King's Arms with a stone.
Dropped the baby down the well, left the tithesman in the lurch,
Or, three whole Sundays running, not once attended church!
What a pother—do these deserve the parish-stocks or whip,
More or less brow to brand, much or little nose to snip,—
When, in our Public, plain stand we—that's we stand here,
I and my Tab, brass-bold, brick-built of beef and beer,
—Do not we, slut? Step forth and show your beauty, jade!
Wife of my bosom—that's the word now! What a trade
We drove! None said us nay: nobody loved his life
So little as wag a tongue against us,—did they, wife?
Yet they knew us all the while, in their hearts, for what we are
—Worst couple, rogue and quean, unhanged—search near and far!
Eh, Tab? The pedlar, now—o'er his noggin—who warned a mate
To cut and run, nor risk his pack where its loss of weight
Was the least to dread,—aha, how we two laughed a-good
As, stealing round the midden, he came on where I stood
With billet poised and raised,—you, ready with the rope,—
Ah, but that's past, that's sin repented of, we hope!
Men knew us for that same, yet safe and sound stood we!
The lily-livered knaves knew too (I've baulked a d_____)
Our keeping the "Pied Bull" was just a mere pretence:
Too slow the pounds make food, drink, lodging, from out the pence!
There's not a stoppage to travel has chanced, this ten long year,
No break into hall or grange, no lifting of nag or steer,
Not a single roguery, from the clipping of a purse
To the cutting of a throat, but paid us toll. Od's curse!
When Gipsy Smouch made bold to cheat us of our due,
—Eh, Tab? the Squire's strong-box we helped the rascal to—
I think he pulled a face, next Sessions' swinging-time!
He danced the jig that needs no floor,—and, here's the prime,
Twas Scroggs that houghed the marel Ay, those were busy days!

'Well, there we flourished brave, like scripture-trees called bays,
Faring high, drinking hard, in money up to head
—Not to say, boots and shoes, when ... Zounds, I nearly said—
Lord, to unlearn one's language! How shall we labour, wife?
Have you, fast hold, the Book? Grasp, grip it, for your life!
See, sirs, here's life, salvation! Here's—hold but out my breath—
When did I speak so long without once swearing? 'Sdeath,
No, nor unhelped by ale since man and boy! And yet
All yesterday I had to keep my whistle wet
While reading Tab this Book: book? don't say "book"—they're plays,
Songs, ballads and the like: here's no such strawy blaze,
But sky wide ope, sun, moon, and seven stars out full-flare!
Tab, help and tell! I'm hoarse. A mug or—no, a prayer!
Dip for one out of the Book! Who wrote it in the Jail
—He plied his pen unhelped by beer, sirs, I'll be bail!

'I've got my second wind. In trundles she—that's Tab.
"Why, Gammer, what's come now, that—bobbing like a crab
On Yule-tide bowl—your head's a-work and both your eyes
Break loose? Afeard, you fool? As if the dead can rise!
Say—Bagman Dick was found last May with fuddling-cap
Stuffed in his mouth: to choke's a natural mishap!"
"Gaffer, be—blessed," cries she, "and Bagman Dick as well!
I, you, and he are damned: this Public is our hell:
We live in fire: live coals don't feel!—once quenched, they learn—
Cinders do, to what dust they moulder while they burn!"

'"If you don't speak straight out," says I—belike I swore—
"A knobstick, well you know the taste of, shall, once more,
Teach you to talk, my maid!" She ups with such a face,
Heart sunk inside me. " Well, pad on, my prate-apace!"

'"I've been about those laces we need for •,. never mind!
If henceforth they tie hands, 'tis mine they'll have to bind.
You know who makes them best—the Tinker in our cage,
Pulled-up for gospelling, twelve years ago: no age
To try another trade,—yet, so he scorned to take
Money he did not earn, he taught himself the make
Of laces, tagged and tough—Dick Bagman found them so!
Good customers were we! Well, last week, you must know
His girl,—the blind young chit, who hawks about his wares,—
She takes it in her head to come no more—such airs
These hussies have! Yet, since we need a stoutish lace,—
'I'll to the jail-bird father, abuse her to his face!'
So, first I filled a jug to give me heart, and then,
Primed to the proper pitch, I posted to their den—
Patmore—they style their prison! I tip the turnkey, catch
My heart up, fix my face, and fearless lift the latch—
Both arms a-kimbo, in bounce with a good round oath
Ready for rapping out: no 'Lawks' nor 'By my troth!'

"'There sat my man, the father. He looked up: what one feels
When heart that leapt to mouth drops down again to heels!
He raised his hand . . . Hast seen, when drinking out the night,
And in, the day, earth grow another something quite
Under the sun's first stare? I stood a very stone.

'"'Woman!' (a fiery tear he put in every tone),
'How should my child frequent your house where lust is sport,
Violence—trade? Too true! I trust no vague report.
Her angel's hand, which stops the sight of sin, leaves clear
The other gate of sense, lets outrage through the ear.
What has she heard!—which, heard shall never be again.
Better lack food than feast, a Dives in the—wain
Or reign or train—of Charles!' (His language was not ours:
'Tis my belief, God spoke: no tinker has such powers.)

*Bread, only bread they bring—my laces: if we broke, . ,
Your lump oF leavened sin, the loaf's first crumb would choke I'

4"Down on my marrow-bones! Then all at once rose he:
His brown hair burst a-spread, his eyes were suns to see:
Up went his hands: 'Through flesh, I reach, I read thy soul!
So may some stricken tree look blasted, bough and bole,
Champed by the fire-tooth, charred without, and yet, thrice-bound
With dreriment about, within may life be found.
A prisoned power to branch and blossom as before,
Could but the gardener cleave the cloister, reach the core,
Loosen the vital sap: yet where shall help be found?
Who says "How save it?"—nor "Why cumbers it the ground?"
Woman, that tree art thou! All sloughed about with scurf,
Thy stag-horns fright the sky, thy snake-roots sting the turf!
Drunkenness, wantonness, theft, murder gnash and gnarl
Thine outward, case thy soul with coating like the marie
Satan stamps flat upon each head beneath his hoof!
And how deliver such? The strong men keep aloof,
Lover and friend stand far, the mocking ones pass by,
Tophet gapes wide for prey: lost soul, despair and die!
What then? "Look unto me and be ye saved!" saith God:
"I strike the rock, outstreats the life-stream at my rod!
Be your sins scarlet, wool shall they seem like,—although
As crimson red, yet turn white as the driven snow!"'

'"There, there, there! All I seem to somehow understand
Is—that, if I reached home, 'twas through the guiding hand
Of his blind girl which led and led me through the streets
And out of town and up to door again. What greets
First thing my eye, as limbs recover from their swoon?
A book—this Book she gave at parting. 'Father's boon—
The Book he wrote: it reads as if he spoke himself:
He cannot preach in bonds, so,—take it down from shelf
When you want counsel,—think you hear his very voice!'

'" Wicked dear Husband, first despair and then rejoice!
Dear wicked Husband, waste no tick of moment more,
Be saved like me, bald trunk! There's greenness yet at core,
Sap under slough! Read, read!"

'Let me take breath, my lords!
I'd like to know, are these—hers, mine, or Bunyan's words?
I'm 'wildered—scarce with drink,—no-wise with drink alone!
You'll say, with heat: but heat's no stuff to split a stone
Like this black boulder—this flint heart of mine: the Book—
That dealt the crashing blow! Sirs, here's the fist that shook
His beard till Wrestler Jem howled like a just-lugged bear!
You had brained me with a feather: at once I grew aware
Christian was meant for me. A burden at your back,
Good Master Christmas? Nay,—yours was that Joseph's sack,
—Or whose it was,—which held the cup, —compared with mine!
Robbery loads my loins, perjury cracks my chine,
Adultery ... nay, Tab, you pitched me as I flung!
One word, I'll up with fist... No, sweet spouse, hold your tongue!

'I'm hasting to the end. The Book, sirs—take and read!
You have my history in a nutshell,—ay, indeed!
It must off, my burden! See,—slack straps and into pit,
Roll, reach the bottom, rest, rot there—a plague on it!
For a mountain's sure to fall and bury Bedford Town,
"Destruction"—that's the name, and fire shall burn it down!
O 'scape the wrath in time! Time's now, if not too late.
How can I pilgrimage up to the wicket-gate?
Next comes Despond the slough: not that I fear to pull
Through mud, and dry my clothes at brave House Beautiful—
But it's late in the day, I reckon: had I left years ago
Town, wife, and children dear . . . Well, Christmas did, you know!—

Soon I had met in the valley and tried my cudgel's strength
On the enemy horned and winged, a-straddle across its length!
Have at his horns, thwick—thwack: they snap, see! Hoof and hoof-
Bang, break the fetlock-bones! For love's sake, keep aloof
Angels! I'm man and match,—this cudgel for my flail,—
To thresh him, hoofs and horns, bat's wing and serpent's tail!
A chance gone by! But then, what else does Hopeful ding
Into the deafest ear except—hope, hope's the thing?
Too late i' the day for me to thrid the windings: but
There's still a way to win the race by death's short cut!
Did Master Faithful need climb the Delightful Mounb?
No, straight to Vanity Fair,—a fair, by all accounts,
Such as is held outside,—lords, ladies, grand and gay,—
Says he in the face of them, just what you hear me say.
And the Judges brought him in guilty, and brought him out
To die in the market-place—St. Peter's Green's about
The same thing: there they flogged, flayed, buffeted, lanced with knives,
Pricked him with swords,—I'll swear, he'd full a cat's nine lives,—
So to his end at last came Faithful,—ha, ha, he!
Who holds the highest card? for there stands hid, you see,
Behind the rabble-rout, a chariot, pair and all:
He's in, he's off, he's up, through clouds, at trumpet-call,
Carried the nearest way to Heaven-gate! Odds my life—
Has nobody a sword to spare? not even a knife?
Then hang me, draw and quarter! Tab—do the same by her!
O Master Worldly-Wiseman . . . that's Master Interpreter,
Take the will, not the deed! Our gibbet's handy close:
Forestall Last Judgment-Day! Be kindly, not morose!
There wants no earthly judge-and-jurying: here we stand—
Sentence our guilty selves: so, hang us out of hand!
Make haste for pity's sake! A single moment's loss
Means—Satan's lord once more: his whisper shoots across
All singing in my heart, all praying in my brain,
"It comes of heat and beer!"—hark how he guffaws plain!
"To-morrow you'll wake bright, and, in a safe skin, hug
Your sound selves, Tab and you, over a foaming jug!
You've had such qualms before, time out of mind!" He's right!
Did not we kick and cuff and curse away, that night
When home we blindly reeled, and left poor humpback Joe
I' the lurch to pay for what... somebody did, you know!
Both ofus maundered then "Lame hump-back,—never more
Will he come limping, drain his tankard at our door!
He'll swing, while—somebody. .." Says Tab, "No, for I'll peach!"
"I'm for you, Tab," cries I, "there's rope enough for each!"
So blubbered we, and bussed, and went to bed upon
The grace of Tab's good thought: by morning, all was gone!
We laughed—"What's life to him, a cripple of no account?"
Oh, waves increase around—I feel them mount and mount!
Hang us! To-morrow brings Tom Bear-ward with his bears:
One new black-muzzled brute beats Sackerson, he swears:
(Sackerson, for my money!) And, baiting o'er, the Brawl
They lead on Turner's Patch,—lads, lasses, up tails all,—
I'm i' the thick o' the throng! That means the Iron Cage,
—Means the Lost Man inside! Where's hope for such as wage
War against light? Light's left, light's here, I hold light still,
So does Tab—make but haste to hang us both! You will?'

I promise, when he stopped you might have heard a mouse
Squeak, such a death-like hush sealed up the old Mote House.
But when the mass of man sank meek upon his knees,
While Tab, alongside, wheezed a hoarse 'Do hang us, please!'
Why, then the waters rose, no eye but ran with tears,
Hearts heaved, heads thumped, until, paying all past arrears
Of pity and sorrow, at last a regular scream outbroke
Of triumph, joy and praise.

NED BRATTS

My Lord Chief Justice spoke,
First mopping his bucowandcheek, where still,
for one that budged.
Another bead broke fresh: 'What Judge,
that ever judged
Since first the world began, judged such a
case as this?
Why, Master Bratts, long since, folk smelt
you out, I wis!
I had my doubts, i' faith, each time you
played the fox
Convicting geese of crime in yonder wit-
ness-box—
Yea, much did I misdoubt, the thief that
stole her eggs
Was hardly goosey's self at Reynard's
game, i' feggs!
Yet thus much was to praise—you spoke
to point, direct—
Swore you heard, saw the theft: no jury
could suspect—
Dared to suspect,—I'll say,—a spot in
white so clear:
Goosey was throttled, true: but thereof
godly fear
Came of example set, much as our laws
intend;
And, though a fox confessed, you proved
the Judge's friend.
What if I had my doubts? Suppose I gave
them breath,
Brought you to bar: what work to do, ere
"Guilty, Death,"—
Had paid our pains I What heaps of wit-
nesses to drag
From holes and corners, paid from out
the County's bag!
Trial three dog-days long! *Amicus Curies*
—that's
Your title, no dispute—truth-telling Mas-
ter Bratts!
Thank you, too, Mistress Tab! Why
doubt one word you say?
Hanging you both deserve, hanged both
shall be this day!

The tinker needs must be a proper man,
I've heard
He lies in Jail long since: if Quality's good
word
Warrants me letting loose,—some house-
holder, I mean—
Freeholder, better still,—I don't say but
—between
Now and next Sessions .. . Well! Con-
sider of his case,
I promise to, at least: we owe him so much
grace.
Not that—no, God forbid!—I lean to
think, as you,
The grace that such repent is any jail-bird's
due:
I rather see the fruit of twelve years' pious
reign—
Astrsea Redux, Charles restored his rights
again!
—Of which, another time! I somehow
feel a peace
Stealing across the world. May deeds like
this increase!
So, Master Sheriff, stay that sentence I
pronounced
On those two dozen odd: deserving to be
trounced
Soundly, and yet . . . well, well, at all
events despatch
This pair of—shall I say, sinner-saints?—
ere we catch
Their jail-distemper too. Stop tears, or
I'll indite
All weeping Bedfordshire for turning Bun-
yanite!'

So, forms were galloped through. If Jus-
tice, on the spur,
Proved somewhat expeditious, would
Quality demur?
And happily hanged were they,—why
lengthen out my tale?—
Where Bunyan's Statue stands facing
where stood his Jail.

DRAMATIC IDYLS

SECOND SERIES

1880

'You are sick, that's sure*—they say:
' Sick of what?'—they disagree.
"Tis the brain'—thinks Doctor A;
"Tis the heart'—holds Doctor B;
'The liver—my life I'd lay!'
'The lungs!' 'The lights!
Ah me!
So ignorant of man's whole
Of bodily organs plain to see—
So sage and certain, frank and free,
About what's under lock and key—
Man's soul!

ECHETLOS

HERE is a story shall stir you! Stand up, Greeks dead and gone,
Who breasted, beat Barbarians, stemmed Persia rolling on,
Did the deed and saved the world, for the day was Marathon!

No man but did his manliest, kept rank and fought away
In his tribe and file: up, back, out, down—was the spear-arm play:
Like a wind-whipt branchy wood, all spear-arms a-swing that day!

But one man kept no rank and his sole arm plied no spear,
As a flashing came and went, and a form *i** the van, the rear,
Brightened the battle up, for he blazed now there, now here.

Nor helmed nor shielded, he! but, a goat-skin all his wear,
Like a tiller of the soil, with a clown's limbs broad and bare,
Went he ploughing on and on: he pushed with a ploughman's share.

Did the weak mid-line give way, as tunnies on whom the shark
Precipitates his bulk? Did the right-wing halt when, stark
On his heap of slain lay stretched Kallimachos Polemarch?

Did the steady phalanx falter? To the rescue, at the need,
The clown was ploughing Persia, clearing Greek earth of weed,
As he routed through the Sakian and rooted up the Mede.

But the deed done, battle won,—nowhere to be descried
On the meadow, by the stream, at the marsh,—look far and wide
From the foot of the mountain, no, to the last blood-plashed seaside,—

Not anywhere on view blazed the large limbs thonged and brown,
Shearing and clearing still with the share before which—down
To the dust went Persia's pomp, as he ploughed for Greece, that clown!

How spake the Oracle? 'Care for no name at all!
Say but just this: "We praise one helpful whom we call
The Holder of the Ploughshare." The great deed ne'er grows small.'

Not the great name! Sing—woe for the great name Miltiades
And its end at Paros isle! Woe for Themistokles
—Satrap in Sardis court! Name not the clown like these!

CLWE

I AND Clive were friends—and why not? Friends! I think you laugh, my lad.
Clive it was gave England India, while your father gives—egad,
England nothing but the graceless boy who lures him on to speak—
'Well, Sir, you and Clive were comrades—' with a tongue thrust in your cheekl

Very true: in my eyes, your eyes, all the world's eyes, Clive was man,
I was, am and ever shall be—mouse, nay, mouse of all its clan
Sorriest sample, if you take the kitchen's estimate for fame;
While the man Clive—he fought Plassy, spoiled the clever foreign game.
Conquered and annexed and Englished!

Never mind! As o'er my punch
(You away) I sit of evenings,—silence, save for biscuit-crunch,
Black, unbroken,—thought grows busy, thrids each pathway of old years,
Notes this forthnght, that meander, till the long-past life appears
Like an outspread map of country plodded through, each mile and rood.
Once, and well remembered still: I'm startled in my solitude

Ever and anon by—what's the sudden mockingJJght that breaks
On me as I slap ftie table till no rummer-glass but shakes
While I ask—aloud, I do believe, God help me!—'Was it thus?
Can it be that so I faltered, stopped when just one step for us—'
(Us,—you were not born, I grant, but surely some day born would be)
'—One bold step had gained a province' (figurative talk, you see)
' Got no end of wealth and honour,—yet I stood stock still no less?'
—'For I was not Clive,' you comment: but it needs no Clive to guess
Wealth were handy, honour ticklish, did no writing on the wall
Warn me 'Trespasser, 'ware man-traps!' Him who braves that notice—call
Hero! none of such heroics suit myself who read plain words,
Doff my hat, and leap no barrier. Scripture says the land's the Lord's:
Louts then—what avail the thousand, noisy in a smock-frocked ring,
All-agog to have me trespass, clear the fence, be Clive their king?
Higher warrant must you show me ere I set one foot before
T'other in that dark direction, though I stand for evermore
Poor as Job and meek as Moses. Evermore? No! By-and-by
Job grows rich and Moses valiant, Clive turns out less wise than I.
Don't object 'Why call him friend, then?' Power is power, my boy, and still
Marks a man,—God's gift magnific, exercised for good or ill.
You've your boot now on my hearth-rug, tread what was a tiger's skin:
Rarely such a royal monster as I lodged the bullet in!
True, he murdered half a village, so his own death came to pass;
Still, for size and beauty, cunning, courage—ah, the brute he was!
Why. that Clive,—that youth, that greenhorn, that quill-driving clerk, in fine,—
He sustained a siege in Arcot.... But the world knows! Pass the wine.

Where did I break off at ? How bring Clive in? Oh, you mentioned 'fear'!
Just so: and, said I, that minds me of a story you shall hear.

We were friends then, Clive and I: so, when the clouds, about the orb
Late supreme, encroaching slowly, surely, threatened to absorb
Ray by ray its noontide brilliance,—friendship might, with steadier eye
Drawing near, bear what had burned else, now no blaze—all majesty.
Too much bee's-wing floats my figure? Well, suppose a castle's new:
None presume to climb its ramparts, none find foothold sure for shoe
'Twixt those squares and squares of granite plating the impervious pile
As his scale-mail's warty iron cuirasses a crocodile.
Reels that castle thunder-smitten, storm-dismantled? From without
Scrambling up by crack and crevice, every cockney prates about
Towers—the heap he kicks now! turrets—just the measure of his cane!
Will that do? Observe moreover—(same similitude again)—
Such a castle seldom crumbles by sheer stress of cannonade:
'Tis when foes are foiled and fighting's finished that vile rains invade,
Grass o'ergrows, o'ergrows till night-birds congregating find no holes
Fit to build in like the topmost sockets made for banner-poles.
So Clive crumbled slow in London—crashed at last.

A week before,
Dining with him,—after trying churchyard-chat of days of yore,—
Both of us stopped, tired as tombstones, head-piece, foot-piece, when they lean
Each to other, drowsed in fog-smoke, o'er a coffined Past between.
As I saw his head sink heavy, guessed the soul's extinguishment
By the glazing eyeball, noticed how the furtive fingers went
Where a drug-box skulked behind the honest liquor,—'One more throw
Try for Clive!' thought I: 'Let's venture some good rattling question!' So—
'Come, Clive, tell us'—out I blurted—'what to tell in turn, years hence,
When my boy—suppose I have one—asks me on what evidence
I maintain my friend of Plassy proved a warrior every whit
Worth your Alexanders, Caesars, Marlboroughs and—what said Pitt?—
Frederick the Fierce himself! Clive told me once'—I want to say—
'Which feat out of all those famous doings bore the bell away
—In his own calm estimation, mark you, not the mob's rough guess—
Which stood foremost as evincing what Clive called courageousness!

Come! what moment of the minute, what
speck-centre in the wide
Circle of the action saw your mortal fairly
deified?
(Let alone that filthy sleep-stuff, swallow
bold this wholesome Port!)
If a friend has leave to question,—when
were you most brave, in short?'

Up he arched his brows o' the instant—
formidably Clive again.
' When was I most brave? I'd answer, were
the instance half as plain
As another instance that's a brain-lodged
crystal—curse it!—here
Freezing when my memory touches—
ugh!—the time I felt most fear.
Ugh! I cannot say for certain if I showed
fear—anyhow,
Fear I felt and, very likely, shuddered,
since I shiver now.'

'Fear!' smiled I. 'Well, that's the rarer:
that's a specimen to seek,
Ticket up in one's museum, *Mind-Freaks,
Lord Clive's Fear, Unique!*'

Down his brows dropped. On the table
painfully he pored as though
Tracing, in the stains and streaks there,
thoughts encrusted long ago.
When he spoke 'twas like a lawyer reading
word by word some will,
Some blind jungle of a statement,—beating
on and on until
Out there leaps fierce life to fight with.

'This fell in my factor-days.
Desk-drudge, slaving at St. David's, one
must game, or drink, or craze.
I chose gaming: and,—because your high-
flown gamesters hardly take
Umbrage at a factor's elbow *if* the factor
pays his stake,—
I was winked at in a circle where the company was choice,
Captain This and Major That, men high
of colour, loud of voice,
Yet indulgent, condescending to the
modest juvenile
Who not merely risked but lost his hard-
earned guineas with a smile.

'Down I sat to cards, one evening,—had
for my antagonist
Somebody whose name's a secret—you'll
know why—so, if you list,
Call him Cock o' the Walk, my scarlet son
of Mars from head to heel!
Play commenced: and, whether Cocky
fancied that a clerk must feel
Quite sufficient honour came of bending
over one green baize,
I the scribe with him the warrior,—guessed
no penman dared to raise
Shadow of objection should the honour
stay but playing end
More or less abruptly,—whether disinclined he grew to spend
Practice strictly scientific on a booby born
to stare
At—not ask of—lace-and-ruffles if the
hand they hide plays fair,—
Anyhow, I marked a movement when he
bade me "Cut!"

'I rose.
"Such the new manoeuvre, Captain? I'm
a novice: knowledge grows.
What, you force a card, you cheat, Sir?"

'Never did a thunder-clap
Cause emotion, startle Thyrsis locked with
Chloe in his lap,
As my word and gesture (down I flung my
cards to join the pack)
Fired the man of arms, whose visage,
simply red before, turned black.

'When he found his voice, he stammered
"That expression once again!"

'"Well, you forced a card and cheated!"

'"Possibly a factor's brain,
Busied with his all-important balance of
accounts, may deem
Weighing words superfluous trouble:
cheat to clerkly ears may seem
Just the joke for friends to venture: but we
are not friends, you see!
When a gentleman is joked with,—if he's
good at repartee,
He rejoins, as do I—Sirrah, on your knees,
withdraw in full!
Beg my pardon, or be sure a kindly bullet
through your skull
Lets in light and teaches manners to what
brain it finds! Choose quick—
Have your life snuffed out or, kneeling,
pray me trim yon candle-wick!"

"'Well, you cheated!"

'Then outbroke a
howl from all the friends around.
To his feet sprang each in fury, fists were
clenched and teeth were ground.
"End it! no time like the present! Captain,
yours were our disgrace!
No delay, begin and finish! Stand back,
leave the pair a space!
Let civilians be instructed: henceforth
simply ply the pen,
Fly the sword! This clerk's no swordsman? Suit him with a pistol, then!
Even odds! A dozen paces 'twixt the most
and least expert
Make a dwarf a giant's equal: nay, the
dwarf, if he's alert,
Likelier hits the broader target!"

'Up we stood accordingly.
As they handed me the weapon, such was
my sours thirst to try
Then and there conclusions with this
bully, tread on and stamp out
Every spark of his existence, that,—crept
close to, curled about
By that toying tempting teasing fool-fore-
finger's middle joint,—
Don't you guess?—the trigger yielded.
Gone my chance! and at the point
Of such prime success moreover: scarce
an inch above his head
Went my ball to hit the wainscot. He was
living, I was dead.

'Up he marched in flaming triumph—
'twas his right, mind!—up, within
Just an arm's length. "Now, my clerk-
ling," chuckled Cocky with a grin
As the levelled piece quite touched me,
"Now, Sir Counting-House, repeat
That expression which I told you proved
bad manners! Did I cheat?"

'"Cheat you did, you knew you cheated,
and, this moment, know as well.
As for me, my homely breeding bids you
—fire and go to Hell!"

'Twice the muzzle touched my forehead.
Heavy barrel, flurried wrist,
Either spoils a steady lifting. Thrice: then,
"Laugh at Hell who list,
I can't! God's no fable either. Did this
boy's eye wink once? No!
There's no standing him and Hell and God
all three against me,—so,
I did cheat!"

'And down he threw the pistol,
out rushed—by the door
Possibly, but, as for knowledge if by chim-
ney, roof or floor,
He effected disappearance—I'll engage no
glance was sent
That way by a single starer, such a blank
astonishment
Swallowed up their senses: as for speaking
—mute they stood as mice.

'Mute not long, though! Such reaction,
such a hubbub in a trice!
"Rogue and rascal! Who'd have thought
it? What's to be expected next,
When His Majesty's Commission serves a
sharper as pretext
For ... But where's the need of wasting
time now? Nought requires delay:
Punishment the Service cries for: let dis-
grace be wiped away
Pubhcly, in good broad daylight! Resig-
nation? No, indeed
Drum and fife must play the Rogue's
March, rank and file be free to speed
Tardy marching on the rogue's part by
appliance in the rear
—Kicks administered shall right this
wronged civilian,—never fear.
Mister Clive, for—though a cleric—you
bore yourself—suppose we say—
Just as would beseem a soldier!"

'"Gentlemen, attention—pray!
First, one word!"

'I passed each speaker
severally in review.
When I had precise their number, names
and styles, and fully knew
Over whom my supervision thenceforth
must extend,—why, then—

'" Some five minutes since, my life lay—as
you all saw, gentlemen—
At the mercy of your friend there. Not a
single voice was raised
In arrest of judgment, not one tongue—
before my powder blazed—
Ventured 'Can it be the youngster blun-
dered, really seemed to mark
Some irregular proceeding? We conjec-
ture in the dark,
Guess at random,—still, for sake of fair
play—what if for a freak,
In a fit of absencc,—such things have
been!—if our friend proved weak
—What's the phrase?—corrected for-
tune! Look into the case, at least!'
Who dared interpose between the altar's
victim and the priest?
Yet he spared me! You eleven! Whoso-
ever, all or each,
To the disadvantage of the man who
spared me, utters speech
—To his face, behind his back,—that
speaker has to do with me:
Me who promise, if positions change and
mine the chance should be,
Not to imitate your friend and waive
advantage!"

'Twenty-five
Years ago this matter happened: and 'tis
certain,' added Clive,
'Never, to my knowledge, did Sir Cocky
have a single breath
Breathed against him: lips were closed
throughout his life, or since his death,
For if he be dead or living I can tell no
more than you.
All I know is—Cocky had one chance
more; how he used it,—grew
Out of such unlucky habits, or relapsed,
and back again
Brought the late-ejected devil with a score
more in his train,—
That's for you to judge. Reprieval I pro-
cured, at any rate.
Ugh—the memory of that minute's fear
makes gooseflesh rise! Why prate

Longer? You've my story, there's your instance: fear I did, you see!'

'Well'—I hardly kept from laughing—
'if I see it, thanks must be
Wholly to your Lordship's candour. Not that—in a common case—
When a bully caught at cheating thrusts a pistol in one's face,
I should underrate, believe me, such a trial to the nerve!
'Tis no joke, at one-and-twenty, for a youth to stand nor swerve.
Fear I naturally look for—unless, of all men alive,
I am forced to make exception when I come to Robert Clive.
Since at Arcot, Plassy, elsewhere, he and death—the whole world knows—
Came to somewhat closer quarters.'
Quarters? Had we come to blows,
Clive and I, you had not wondered—up he sprang so, out he rapped
Such a round of oaths—no matter! I'll endeavour to adapt
To our modern usage words he—well, 'twas friendly licence—flung
At me like so many fire-balls, fast as he could wag his tongue.

'You—a soldier? You—atPlassy? Yours the faculty to nick
Instantaneously occasion when your foe, if lightning-quick,
—At his mercy, at his malice,—has you, through some stupid inch
Undefended in your bulwark? Thus laid open,—not to flinch
—That needs courage, you'll concede me. Then, look here! Suppose the man,
Checking his advance, his weapon still extended, not a span
Distant from my temple,—curse him!—quietly had bade me "There!
Keep your life, calumniator!—worthless life I freely spare:
Mine you freely would have taken—murdered me and my good fame
Both at once—and all the better! Go, and thank your own bad aim
Which permits me to forgive you! What if, with such words as these,
He had cast away his weapon? How should I have borne me, please?
Nay, I'll spare you pains and tell you. This, and only this, remained—
Pick his weapon up ana use it on myself. I so had gained
Sleep the earlier, leaving England probably to pay on still
Rent and taxes for half India, tenant at the Frenchman's will.'

'Such the turn,' said L 'the matter takes with you? Then I abate
—No, by not one jot nor tittle,—of your act my estimate.
Fear—I wish I could detect there: courage fronts me, plain enough—
Call it desperation, madness—nevermind! for here's in rough
Why, had mine been such a trial, fear had overcome disgrace.
True, disgrace were hard to bear: but such a rush against God's face
—None of that for me, Lord Plassy, since I go to church at times,
Say the creed my mother taught me! Many years in foreign climes
Rub some marks away—not all, though! We poor sinners reach life's brink,
Overlook what rolls beneath it, recklessly enough, but think
There's advantage in what's left us—ground to stand on, time to call
"Lord, have mercy!" ere we topple over—do not leap, that's all!'

Oh, he made no answer,—re-absorbed into his cloud. I caught
Something like ' Yes—courage: only fools will call it fear.'

If aught
Comfort you, my great unhappy hero Clive, in that I heard,
Next week, how your own hand dealt you doom, and uttered just the word
'Fearfully courageous!'—this, be sure, and nothing else I groaned.
I'm no Clive, nor parson either: Clive's worst deed—we'll hope condoned.

MULEKEH

IF a stranger passed the tent of H6seyn, he cried 'A churl's!'
Or haply 'God help the man who has neither salt nor bread!'
—' Nay,' would a friend exclaim,' he needs nor pity nor scorn
More than who spends small thought on the shore-sand, picking pearls,
—Holds but in light esteem the seed-sort, bears instead
On his breast a moon-like prize, some orb which of night makes morn.

' What if no flocks and herds enrich the son of Sinan?
They went when his tribe was mulct, ten thousand camels the due,
Blood-value paid perforce for a murder done of old.
"God gave them, let them go! But never since time began,
MulSykeh, peerless mare, owned master the match of you,
And you are my prize, my Pearl: I laugh at men's land and gold!"

' So in the pride of his soul laughs Hoseyn —and right, I say.
Do the ten steeds run a race of glory? Outstripping all,
Ever Muleykeh stands first steed at the victor's staff.
Who started, the owner's hope, gets shamed and named, that day.
"Silence," or, last but one, is "The Cuffed," as we use to call
Whom the paddock's lord thrusts forth. Right, Hdseyn, I say, to laugh!*

'Boasts he Muleykeh the Pearl?' the stranger replies:' Be sure
On him I waste nor scorn nor pity, but lavish both
On Duhl the son of Sheyban, who withers away in heart
For envy of H6seyn's luck. Such sickness admits no cure.
A certain poet has sung, and sealed the same with an oath,
"For the vulgar—flocks and herds! The Pearl is a prize apart."'

Lo, Duhl the son of Sheyban comes riding to H6seyn's tent.
And he casts his saddle down, and enters and 'Peace!' bids he.
'You are poor, I know the cause: my plenty shall mend the wrong.
*Tis said of your Pearl—the price of a hundred camels spent
In her purchase were scarce ill paid: such prudence is far from me
Who proffer a thousand. Speak! Long parley may last too long.'

Said H6seyn 'You feed young beasts a many, of famous breed,
Slit-eared, unblemished, fat, true offspring of Muzennem:
There stumbles no weak-eyed she in the line as it climbs the hill.
But I love Mul6ykeh's face: her forefront whitens indeed
Like a yellowish wave's cream-crest. Your camels—go gaze on them!
Her fetlock is foam-splashed too. Myself am the richer still.'

A year goes by: lo, back to the tent again rides Duhl.
'You are open-hearted, ay—moist-handed, a very prince.
Why should I speak of sale? Be the mare your simple gift!
My son is pined to death for her beauty: my wife prompts "Fool,
Beg for his sake the Pearl I Be God the rewarder, since
God pays debts seven for one: who squanders on Him shows thrift.'"

Said Hoseyn' God gives each man one life, like a lamp, then gives
That lamp due measure of oil: lamp lighted—hold high, wave wide
Its comfort for others to share! once quench it, what help is left?
The oil of your lamp is your son: I shine while Mule>keh lives.
Would I beg your son to cheer my dark if Mul6ykeh died?
It is life against life: what good avails to the life-bereft?'

Another year, and—hist! What craft is it Duhl designs?
He alights not at the door of the tent as he did last time,
But, creeping behind, he gropes his stealthy way by the trench
Half-round till he finds the flap in the folding, for night combines
With the robber—and such is he: Duhl, covetous up to crime,
Must wring from Hoseyn's grasp the Pearl, by whatever the wrench.

'He was hunger-bitten, I heard: I tempted with half my store,
And a gibe was all my thanks. Is he generous like Spring dew?
Account the fault to me who chaffered with such an one!
He has killed, to feast chance comers, the creature he rode: nay, more—
For a couple of singing-girls his robe has he torn in two:
I will beg! Yet I nowise gained by the tale of my wife and son.

'I swear by the Holy House, my head will I never wash
Till I filch his Pearl away. Fair dealing I tried, then guile,
And now I resort to force. He said we must live or die:
Let him die, then,—let me live! Be bold—but not too rash!
I have found me a peeping-place: breast, bury your breathing while
I explore for myself! Now, breathe! He deceived me not, the spy!

'As he said—there lies in peace Hoseyn—how happy! Beside
Stands tethered the Pearl: thrice winds her headstall about his wrist:
'Tis therefore he sleeps so sound—the moon through the roof reveals.
And, loose on his left, stands too that other, known far and wide,
Buheyseh, her sister born: fleet is she yet ever missed
The winning tail's fire-flash a-stream past the thunderous heels.

'No less she stands saddled and bridled, this second, in case some thief
Should enter and seize and fly with the first, as I mean to do.
What then? The Pearl is the Pearl: once mount her we both escape.'
Through the skirt-fold in glides Duhl,—so a serpent disturbs no leaf
In a bush as he parts the twigs entwining a nest: clean through.
He is noiselessly at his work: as he planned, he performs the rape.

He has set the tent-door wide, has buckled the girth, has clipped
The headstall away from the wrist he leaves thrice bound as before,
He springs on the Pearl, is launched on the desert like bolt from bow.
Up starts our plundered man: from his breast though the heart be ripped,
Yet his mind has the mastery: behold, in a minute more,
He is out and off and away on BuhSyseh, whose worth we know!

And H6seyn—his blood turns flame, he has learned long since to ride,
And Buheyseh does her part,—they gain—they are gaining fast
On the fugitive pair, and Duhl has Ed-Darraj to cross and quit,
And to reach the ridge El-Saban,—no safety till that be spied!
And Buhdyseh is, bound by bound, but a horse-length off at last,
For the Pearl has missed the tap of the heel, the touch of the bit.

She shortens her stride, she chafes at her rider the strange and queer:
Buheyseh is mad with hope—beat sister she shall and must
Though Duhl, of the hand and heel so clumsy, she has to thank.
She is near now, nose by tail—they are neck by croup—joy! fear!
What folly makes H6seyn shout 'Dog Duhl, Damned son of the Dust,
Touch the right ear and press with your foot my Pearl's left flank!'

And Duhl was wise at the word, and Muleykeh as prompt perceived
Who was urging redoubled pace, and to hear him was to obey,
And a leap indeed gave she, and evanished for evermore.
And H6seyn looked one long last look as who, all bereaved,
Looks, fain to follow the dead so far as the living may:
Then he turned Buh6yseh's neck slow homeward, weeping sore.

And, lo, in the sunrise, still sat H6seyn upon the ground
Weeping: and neighbours came, the tribesmen of Benu-Asad
In the vale of green Er-Rass, and they questioned him of his grief;
And he told from first to last how, serpent-like, Duhl had wound
His way to the nest, and how Duhl rode like an ape, so bad!
And how Buheyseh did wonders, yet Pearl remained with the thief.

And they jeered him, one and all: *Poor Hoseyn is crazed past hope!
How else had he wrought himself his ruin, in fortune's spite?
To have simply held the tongue were a task for a boy or girl,
And here were Muteykeh again, the eyed like an antelope,
The child of his heart by day, the wife of his breast by night!'—
'And the beaten in speed!' wept Hoseyn: 'You never have loved my Pearl.'

PIETRO OF ABANO

Petrus Aponensis—there was a magician!
When that strange adventure happened, which I mean to tell my hearers,
Nearly had he tried all trades—beside physician,
Architect, astronomer, astrologer,—or worse:
How else, as the old books warrant, was he able,
All at once, through all the world, to prove the promptest of appearers
Where was prince to cure, tower to build as high as Babel,
Star to name or sky-sign read,—yet pouch, for pains, a curse?

—Curse: for when a vagrant,—foot-sore, travel-tattered,
Now a young man, now an old man, Turk or Arab, Jew or Gipsy,—
Proffered folk in passing—O for pay, what mattered?—
'I'll be doctor, I'll play builder, star I'll name—sign read!'
Soon as prince was cured, tower built, and fate predicted,
'Who may you be?' came the question; when he answered,'*Petrus ipse,*'
' Just as we divined!' cried folk—'A wretch convicted
Long ago of dealing with the devil—you indeed!'

So, they cursed him roundly, all his labour's payment,
Motioned him—the convalescent prince would—to vacate the presence:

PIETRO OF ABANO

Babylonians plucked his beard and tore
his raiment,
Drove him from that tower he built: while,
had he peered at stars,
Town howled * Stone the quack who styles
our Dog-star—Sirius!'
Country yelled 'Aroint the churl who pro-
phesies we take no pleasance
Under vine and fig-tree, since the year's
delirious,
Bears no crop of any kind,—all through
the planet Mars!'

Straightway would the whilom youngster
grow a grisard,
Or, as case might hap, the hoary eld drop
off and show a stripling.
Town and country groaned—indebted to
a wizard!
'Curse—nay, kick and cuff him—fit re-
quital of his pains!
Gratitude in word or deed were wasted
truly!
Rather make the Church amends by cry-
ing out on, cramping, crippling
One who, on pretence of serving man,
serves duly
Man's arch foe: not ours, be sure, but
Satan's—his the gains!'

Peter grinned and bore it, such disgraceful
usage:
Somehow, cuffs and kicks and curses
seem ordained his like to suffer:
Prophet's pay with Christians, now as in
the Jew's age,
Still is—stoning: so, he meekly took his
wage and went,
—Safe again was found ensconced in those
old quarters,
Padua's blackest blindest by-street,—none
the worse, nay. somewhat tougher:
Calculating,' quotn he, 'soon I join the
martyrs,
Since, who magnify my lore on burning me
are bent.'[1]

Therefore, on a certain evening, to his
alley
Peter slunk, *all* bruised and broken, sore
in body, sick in spirit,
Just escaped from Cairo where he launched
a galley
Needing neither sails nor oars nor help of
wind or tide,
—Needing but the fume of fire to set
a-flying
Wheels like mad which whirled you quick
—North, South, where'er you pleased
require it,—
That is—would have done so had not
priests come prying,
Broke his engine up and bastinadoed him
beside.

As he reached his lodging, stopped there
unmolested,
(Neighbours feared him, urchins fled him,
few were bold enough to follow)
While his fumbling fingers tried the lock
and tested
Once again the queer key's virtue, oped the
sullen door,—
Someone plucked his sleeve, cried 'Master,
pray your pardon!
Grant a word to me who patient wait you
in your archway's hollow!
Hard on you men's hearts are: be not your
heart hard on
Me who kiss your garment's hem, O Lord
of magic lore!

'Mage—say I, who no less, scorning tittle-
tattle.
To the vulgar give no credence when they
prate of Peter's magic,
Deem his art brews tempest, hurts the
crops and cattle,
Hinders fowls from laying eggs and worms
from spinning silk,
Rides upon a he-goat, mounts at need a
broomstick:
While the price he pays for this (so turns to
comic what was tragic)
Is—he may not drink—dreads like the
Day of Doom's tick—
One poor drop of sustenance ordained
mere men—that's milk!

'Tell such tales to Padua! Think me no
such dullard!
Not from these benighted parts did I
derive my breath and being!
I am from a land whose cloudless skies are
coloured
Livelier, suns orb largelier, airs seem in-
cense,—while, on earth—
What, instead of grass, our fingers and our
thumbs cull,
Proves true moly! sounds and sights there
help the body's hearing, seeing,
Till the soul grows godlike: brief,—you
front no numbscull
Shaming by ineptitude the Greece that
gave him birth!

'Mark within my eye its iris mystic-
lettered—
That's my name! and note my ear—its
swan-shaped cavity, my emblem!

[1] 'Studiando le mie cifre col compasso,
Rilevo che saro presto sotterra,
Pcrche del mio saper si fa gran chlasso,
E gl' ignorant! m" hanno mosso guerra.'
Said to have been found in a well at Abano in the last century. They were extemporaneously Englished thus: not as Father Prout chose to prefer them:—
Studying my ciphers with the compass,
I reckon—I soon shall be below-ground;
Because of my lore folk make great rumpus,
And war on myself makes each dull rogue round.—R. B.

Mine's the swan-like nature born to fly unfettered
Over land and sea in search of knowledge —food for song.
Art denied the vulgar! Geese grow fat on barley,
Swans require ethereal provend, undesirous to resemble 'em—
Soar to seek Apollo,—favoured with a parley
Such as, Master, you grant me—who will not hold you long.

'Leave to learn to sing—for that your swan petitions:
Master, who possess the secret, say not nay to such a suitor!
All I ask is—bless mine, purest of ambitions!
Grant me leave to make my kind wise, free, and happy! How?
Just by making me—as you are mine—their model!
Geese have goose-thoughts: make a swan their teacher first, then co-adjutor,—
Let him introduce swan-notions to each noddle,—
Geese will soon grow swans, and men become what I am now!

'That's the only magic—had but fools discernment,
Could they probe and pass into the solid through the soft and seeming!
Teach me such true magic—now and no adjournment!
Teach your art of making fools subserve the man of mind!
Magic is the power we men of mind should practise,
Draw fools to become our drudges, docile henceforth, never dreaming—
While they do our hests for fancied gain—the fact is
What they toil and moil to get proves falsehood : truth 's behind I

' See now! you conceive some fabric—say, a mansion
Meet for monarch's pride and pleasure: this is truth—a thought has fired you,
Made you fain to give some cramped concept expansion,
Put your faculty to proof, fulfil your nature's task.
First you fascinate the monarch's self: he fancies
He it was devised the scheme you execute as he inspired you:
He in turn sets slaving insignificances
Toiling, moiling till your structure stands there—all you ask!

'Soon the monarch's known for what he was—a ninny:
Soon the rabble-rout leave labour, take their work-day wage and vanish:
Soon the late puffed bladder, pricked, shows lank and skinny—
"Who was its inflator?" ask we, "whose the giant lungs?"
Petri en pulmones! What though men prove ingrates?
Let them—so they stop at crucifixion—buffet, ban and banish!
Peter's power's apparent: human praise —its din grates
Harsh as blame on ear unused to aught save angels' tongues.

'Ay, there have been always, since our world existed,
Mages who possessed the secret—needed but to stand still, fix eye
On the foolish mortal: straight was he enlisted
Soldier, scholar, servant, slave—no matter for the style!
Only through illusion; ever what seemed profit—
Love or lucre—justified obedience to the *Ipse dixi:*
Work done—palace reared from pavement up to soffit—
Was it strange if builders smelt out cheating all the while?

'Let them pelt and pound, bruise, bray you in a mortar!
What's the odds to you who seek reward of quite another nature?
You've enrolled your name where sages of your sort are,
—Michael of Constantinople, Hans of Halberstadt!
Nay and were you nameless, still you've your conviction
You it was and only you—what signifies the nomenclature?—
Ruled the world in fact, though how you ruled be fiction
Fit for fools: true wisdom's magic you—if e'er man—had't!

'But perhaps you ask me "Since each. ignoramus
While he profits by such magic persecutes the benefactor,
What should I expect but—once I render famous
You as Michael, Hans and Peter—just one ingrate more?
If the vulgar prove thus, whatsoe'er the pelf be,
Pouched through my beneficence—and doom me dungeoned, chained, or racked, or

Fairly burned outright—how grateful will yourself be
When, his secret gained, you match your —master just before?"

'That's where I await you! Please, revert a little!
What do folk report about you if not this —which, though chimeric,
Still, as figurative, suits you to a tittle—
That,—although the elements obey your nod and wink.
Fades or flowers the herb you chance to smile or sigh at,
While your frown bids earth quake palled by obscuration atmospheric,—
Brief, although through nature nought resists your *fiat,*
There's yet one poor substance mocks you—milk you may not drink!

'Figurative language! Take my explanation!
Fame with fear, and hate with homage, these your art procures in plenty.
All's but daily dry bread: what makes moist the ration?
Love, the milk that sweetens man his meal—alas, you lack:
I am he who, since he fears you not, can love you.
Love is born of heart not mind, *de corde natus haud de mente;*
Touch my heart and love's yours, sure as shines above you
Sun by day and star by night though earth should go to wrack!

'Stage by stage you lift me—kiss by kiss I hallow
Whose but your dear hand my helper, punctual as at each new impulse
I approach my aim? Shell chipped, the eaglet callow
Needs a parent's pinion-push to quit the eyrie's edge:
But once fairly launched forth, denizen of aether,
While each effort sunward bids the blood more freely through each limb pulse,
Sure the parent feels, as gay they soar together,
Fully are all pains repaid when love redeems its pledge!'

Then did Peter's tristful visage lighten somewhat,
Vent a watery smile as though inveterate mistrust were thawing.
* Well, who knows ?' he slow broke silence. 'Mortals—come what
Come there may—are still the dupes of hope there's luck in store.

Many scholars seek me, promise mounts and marvels:
Here stand I to witness how they step 'twixt me and clapperclawing!
Dry bread,—that I've gained me: truly I should starve else:
But of milk, no drop was mine! Well, shuffle cards once more!'

At the word of promise thus implied, our stranger—
What can he but cast his arms, in rapture of embrace, round Peter?
'Hold! I choke!' the mage grunts. 'Shall I in the manger
Any longer play the dog? Approach, my calf, and feed!
Bene ... won't you wait for grace?' But sudden incense
Wool-white, serpent-solid, curled up—perfume growing sweet and sweeter
Till it reached the young man's nose and seemed to win sense
Soul and all from out his brain through nostril: yes, indeed!

Presently the young man rubbed his eyes. 'Where am I?
Too much bother over books! Some reverie has proved amusing.
What did Peter prate of? 'Faith, my brow *is* clammy!
How my head throbs, how my heart thumps! Can it be I swooned?
Oh, I spoke my speech out—cribbed from Plato's tractate,
Dosed him with "the Fair and Good," swore—Dog of Egypt—I was choosing
Plato's way to serve men! What's the hour? Exact eight!
Home now, and to-morrow never mind how Plato mooned!

'Peter has the secret! Fair and Good are products
(So he said) of Foul and Evil: one must bring to pass the other.
Just as poisons grow drugs, steal through sundry odd ducts
Doctors name, and ultimately issue safe and changed.
You'd abolish poisons, treat disease with dainties
Such as suit the sound and sane ? With all such kickshaws vain you pother!
Arsenic's the stuff puts force into the faint eyes,
Opium sets the brain to rights—by cark and care deranged.

'What, he's safe within door?—would escape—no question—
Thanks, since thanks and more I owe, and mean to pay in time befitting.

What most presses now is—after night's digestion,
Peter, of thy precepts!—promptest practice of the same.
Let me see! The wise man, first of all, scorns riches:
But to scorn them must obtain them: none believes in his permitting
Gold to lie ungathered: who picks up, then pitches
Gold away—philosophizes: none disputes his claim.

'So with worldly honours: 'tis by abdicating,
Incontestably he proves he could have kept the crown discarded.
Sulla cuts a figure, leaving off dictating:
Simpletons laud private life? "The grapes are sour," laugh we.
So, again—but why continue? All's tumultuous
Here: my head's a-whirl with knowledge. Speedily shall be rewarded
He who taught me! Greeks prove ingrates? So insult you us?
When your teaching bears its first-fruits, Peter—wait and see!'

As the word, the deed proved; ere a brief year's passage,
Fop—that fool he made the jokes on—now he made the jokes for, *gratis:*
Hunks—that hoarder, long left lonely in his crass age—
Found now one appreciative deferential friend:
Powder-paint-and-patch, Hag Jezebel—recovered,
Strange to say, the power to please, got courtship till she cried *Jam satis!*
Fop be-flattered, Hunks be-friended, Hag be-lovered—
Nobody o'erlooked, save God—he soon attained his end.

As he lounged at ease one morning in his villa,
(Hag's the dowry) estimated (Hunks' bequest) his coin in coffer,
Mused on how a fool's good word (Fop's word) could fill a
Social circle with his praise, promote him man of mark,—
All at once—'An old friend fain would see your Highness!'
There stood Peter, skeleton and scarecrow, plain writ *Phi-lo-so-pher*
In the woe-worn face—for yellowness and dryness,
Parchment—with a pair of eyes—one hope their feeble spark.

'Did I counsel rightly? Have you, in accordance,
Prospered greatly, dear my pupil? Sure, at just the stage I find you.
When your hand may draw me forth from the mad war-dance
Savages are leading round your master—down, not dead.
Padua wants to burn me: baulk them, let me linger
Life out—rueful though its remnant—hid in some safe hole behind you!
Prostrate here I he: quick, help with but a finger
Lest I house in safety's self—a tombstone o'er my head!

'Lodging, bite and sup, with—now and then—a copper
—Alms for any poorer still, if such there be,—is all my asking.
Take me for your bedesman,—nay, if you think proper,
Menial merely,—such my perfect passion for repose!
Yes, from out your plenty Peter craves a pittance
—Leave to thaw his frozen hands before the fire whereat you're basking!
Double though your debt were, grant this boon—remittance
He proclaims of obligation: 'tis himself that owes!'

'Venerated Master—can it be, such treatment
Learning meets with, magic fails to guard you from, by all appearance?
Strange! for, as you entered,—what the famous feat meant,
I was full of,—why you reared that fabric, Padua's boast.
Nowise for man's pride, man's pleasure, did you slyly
Raise it, but man's seat of rule whereby the world should soon have clearance
(Happy world) from such a rout as now so vilely
Handles you—and hampers me, for which I grieve the most.

'Since if it got wind you now were my familiar,
How could I protect you—nay, defend myself against the rabble?
Wait until the mob, now masters, willy-nilly are
Servants as they should be: then has gratitude full play!
Surely this experience shows how unbefitting
'Tis that minds like mine should rot in ease and plenty. Geese may gabble,

Gorge, and keep the ground: but swans are soon for quitting
Earthly fare—as fain would I, your swan, if taught the way.

'Teach me, then, to rule men, have them at my pleasure!
Solely for their good, of course,—impart a secret worth rewarding,
Since the proper life's-prize! Tantalus's treasure
Aught beside proves, vanishes and leaves no trace at all.
Wait awhile, nor press for payment prematurely 1
Over-haste defrauds you. Thanks! since, —even while I speak,—discarding
Sloth and vain delights, I learn how—swiftly, surely,—
Magic sways the sceptre, wears the crown and wields the ball!

'Gone again—what, is he? 'Faith, he's soon disposed of!
Peter's precepts work already, put within my lump their leaven!
Ay, we needs must don glove would we pluck the rose—doff
Silken garment would we climb the tree and take its fruit.
Why sharp thorn, rough rind? To keep unviolated
Either prize! We garland us, we mount from earth to feast in heaven,
Just because exist what once we estimated
Hindrances which, better taught, as helps we now compute.

'Foolishly I turned disgusted from my fellows!
Pits of ignorance—to fill, and heaps of prejudice—to level—
Multitudes in motley, whites and blacks and yellows—
What a hopeless task it seemed to discipline the host!
Now I see my error. Vices act like virtues
—Not alone because they guard—sharp thorns—the rose we first dishevel,
Not because they scrape, scratch—rough rind—through the dirt-shoes
Bare feet cling to bole with, while the half-mooned boot we boast.

'No, my aim is nobler, more disinterested!
Man shall keep what seemed *to* thwart him, since it proves his true assistance,
Leads to ascertaining which head is the best head,
Would he crown his body, rule its members—lawless else.
Ignorant the horse stares, by deficient vision
Takes a man to be a monster, lets him mount, then, twice the distance
Horse could trot unridden, gallops-dream Elysian!—
Dreaming that his dwarfish guide's a giant,—jockeys tell's.'

Brief, so worked the spell, he promptly had a riddance:
Heart and brain no longer felt the pricks which passed for conscience-scruples:
Free henceforth his feet,—*Per Bacco,* how they did dance
Merrily through lets and checks that stopped the way before!
Politics the prize now,—such adroit adviser,
Opportune suggester, with the tact that triples and quadruples
Merit in each measure,—never did the Kaiser
Boast a subject such a statesman, friend, and something more!

As he, up and down, one noonday, paced his closet
—Council o'er, each spark (his hint) blown flame, by colleagues' breath applauded,
Strokes of statecraft hailed with '*Salomo sinosset!*'
(His the nostrum)___ every throw for luck come double-six,—
As he, pacing, hugged himself in satisfaction,
Thump—the door went. 'What, the Kaiser? By none else were I defrauded
Thus of well-earned solace. Since 'tis fate's exaction,—
Enter, Liege my Lord! Ha, Peter, you here? *Teneor vix!'*

'Ah, Sir, none the less, contain you, nor wax irate!
You so lofty, I so lowly,—vast the space which yawns between us!
Still, methinks, you—more than ever—at a high rate
Needs must prize poor Peter's secret since *it* lifts you thus.
Grant me now the boon whereat before you boggled!
Ten long years your march has moved—one triumph—(though e's short)—*hactenus,*
While I down and down disastrously have joggled
Till I pitch against Death's door, the true *Nec Ultra Plus.*

'Years ago—some ten 'tis—since I sought for shelter,
Craved in your whole house a closet, out of all your means a comfort.
Now you soar above these: as is gold to spelter
So is power—you urged with reason—paramount to wealth.

Power you boast in plenty: let it grant me refuge!
Houseroom now is out of question: find for me some stronghold—some fort—
Privacy wherein, immured, shall this blind deaf huge
Monster of a mob let stay the soul I'd save by stealth I

'Ay, for all too much with magic have I tampered!
—Lost the world, and gained, I fear, a certain place I'm to describe loth!
Still, if prayer and fasting tame the pride long pampered,
Mercy may be mine: amendment never comes too late.
How can I amend beset by cursers, kickers?
Pluck this brand from out the burning! Once away, I take my Bible-oath,
Never more—so long as life's weak lamp-flame flickers—
No, not once I'll tease you, but in silence bear my fate!'

'Gently, good my Genius, Oracle unerring!
Strange now! can you guess on what—as in you peeped—it was I pondered?
You and I are both of one mind in preferring
Power to wealth, but—here's the point—what sort of power, I ask?
Ruling men is vulgar, easy and ignoble:
Rid yourself of conscience, quick you have at beck and call the fond herd.
But who wields the crozier, down may fling the crow-bill:
That's the power I covet now; soul's sway o'er souls—my task!

'"Well but," you object, "you have it, who by glamour
Dress up lies to look like truths, mask folly in the garb of reason:
Your soul acts on theirs, sure, when the people clamour,
Hold their peace, now fight now fondle,—earwigged through the brains."
Possibly! but still the operation's mundane,
Grosser than a taste demands which—craving manna—kecks at peason—
Power o'er men by wants material: why should one deign
Rule by sordid hopes and fears—a grunt for all one's pains?

'No, if men must praise me, let them praise to purpose!
Would we move the world, not earth but heaven must be our fulcrum—*pou sto!*
Thus I seek to move it: Master, why interpose—
Baulk my climbing close on what's the ladder's topmost round?
Statecraft 'tis I step from: when by priestcraft hoisted
Up to where my foot may touch the highest rung which fate allows toe,
Then indeed ask favour! On you shall be foisted
No excuse: I'll pay my debt, each penny of the pound!

'Ho, my knaves without there! Lead this worthy downstairs!
No farewell, good Paul—nay, Peter—what's your name remembered rightly?
Come, he's humble: out another would have flounced—airs
Suitors often give themselves when our sort bow them forth.
Did I touch his rags? He surely kept his distance:
Yet, there somehow passed to me from him—where'er the virtue might lie—
Something that inspires my soul—Oh, by assistance
Doubtlessly of Peter!—still, he's worth just what he's worth I

"Tis my own soul soars now: soaring—how? By crawling!
I'll to Rome, before Rome's feet the temporal-supreme lay prostrate!
"Hands" (I'll say) "proficient once in pulling, hauling
This and that way men as I was minded—feet now clasp!"
Ay, the Kaiser's self has wrung them in his fervour!
Now—they only sue to slave for Rome, nor at one doit the cost rate.
Rome's adopted child—no bone, no muscle, nerve or
Sinew of me but I'll strain, though out my life I gasp!'

As he stood one evening proudly—(he had traversed
Rome on horseback—peerless pageant!—claimed the Lateran as new Pope)—
Thinking 'All's attained now! Pontiff! Who could have erst
Dreamed of my advance so far when, some ten years ago,
I embraced devotion, grew from priest to bishop,
Gained the Purple, bribed the Conclave, got the Two-thirds, saw my coop ope,
Came out—what Rome hails me! O were there a wish-shop,
Not one wish more would I purchase—lord of all below!

' Ha!—who dares intrude now—puts aside the arras?
What, old Peter here again , at such a time, in such a presence ?
Satan sends this plague back merely to embarrass
Me who enter on my office—little needing you!
'Faith, I'm touched myself by age, but you look Tithon!
Were it vain to seek of you the sole prize left—rejuvenescence ?
Well, since flesh is grass which Time must lay his scythe on,
Say your say and so depart and make no more ado!'

Peter faltered—coughing first by way of prologue—
' Holiness, your help comes late: a death at ninety little matters.
Padua, build poor Peter's pyre now, on log roll log,
Burn away—I've lived my day! Yet here's the sting in death—
I've an author's pride: I want my Book's survival:
See, I've hid it in my breast to warm me mid the rags and tatters!
Save it—tell next age your Master had no rival!
Scholar's debt discharged in full, be "Thanks" my latest breath!'

' Faugh, the frowsy bundle—scribblings harum-scarum
Scattered o'er a dozen sheepskins! What's the name of this farrago ?
Ha—" *Conciliator Differentiarum* "—
Man and book may burn together, cause the world no loss!
Stop—what else? A tractate—eh, *"De Speciebus*
Ceremonialis Ma-gi-œ?" I dream sure! Hence, away, go,
Wizard,—quick avoid me! Vain you clasp my knee, buss
Hand that bears the Fisher's ring or foot that boasts the Cross!

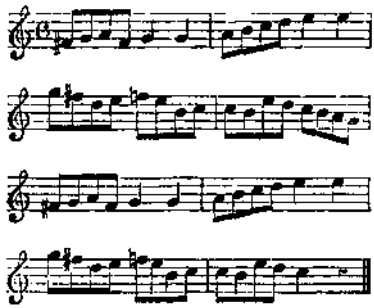
'Help! The old magician clings like an octopus!
Ah, you rise now—fuming, fretting, frowning, if I read your features!
Frown, who cares? We're Pope—once Pope, you can't unpope us!
Good—you muster up a smile: that's better! Still so brisk?
All at once grown youthful? But the case is plain! Ass—
Here I dally with the fiend, yet know the Word—compels all creatures
Earthly,heavenly, hellish. *Apage. Sathanas !*
Dicam verbum Salomonis— —dicite !"
When—whisk!—
What was changed ? The stranger gave his eyes a rubbing:
There smiled Peter's face turned back a moment at him o'er the shoulder,
As the black door shut, bang! 'So he 'scapes a drubbing!'
(Quoth a boy who, unespied, had stopped to hear the talk.)
' That's the way to thank these wizards when they bid men
Benedicite! What ails you? You, a man, and yet no bolder ?
Foreign Sir, you look but foolish!' *'Id-men, idmen!'*
Groaned the Greek. *0 Peter, cheese at last I know from chalk!'

Peter lived his fife out, menaced yet no martyr,
Knew himself the mighty man he was—such knowledge all his guerdon,
Left the world a big book—people but in part err
When they style a true *Scientia* Corn-pen-di-um:*
'Admirationem incutit' they sourly
Smile, as fast they shut the folio which myself was somehow spurred on
Once to ope: but love—life's milk which daily, hourly,
Blockheads lap—O Peter, still thy taste of love's to come!

Greek, was your ambition likewise doomed to failure?
True, I find no record you wore purple, walked with axe and fasces,
Played some antipope's part: still, friend, don't turn tail, you're
Certain, with but these two gifts, to gain earth's prize in time!
Cleverness uncurbed by conscience—if you ransacked
Peter's book you'd find HO potent spell like these to rule the masses;
Nor should want example, had I not to transact
Other business. Go your ways, you'll thrive! So ends my rhyme.

When these parts Tiberius,—not yet Caesar,—travelled,
Passing Padua, he consulted Padua's Oracle of Geryon
(God three-headed, thrice wise) just to get unravelled
Certain tangles of his future. 'Fling at Abano
Golden dice,' it answered: 'dropt within the fount there,
Note what sum the pips present!' And still we see each die, the very one,

Turn up, through the crystal,—read the whole account there
Where 'tis told by Suetonius,—each its highest throw.

Scarce the sportive fancy-dice I fling show 'Venus:'
Still—for love of that dear land which I so oft in dreams revisit—
I have—oh, not sung! but lilted (as—between us—
Grows my lazy custom) this its legend. What the lilt?

DOCTOR——

A RABBI told me: On the day allowed
Satan for carping at God's rule, he came,
Fresh from our earth, to brave the angel-crowd.

'What is the fault now?' 'This I find to blame:
Many and various are the tongues below,
Yet all agree in one speech, all proclaim

'"Hell has no might to match what earth can show:
Death is the strongest-born of Hell, and yet
Stronger than Death is a Bad Wife, we know."

'Is it a wonder if I fume and fret—
Robbed of my rights, since Death am I, and mine
The style of Strongest ? Men pay Nature's debt

'Because they must at my demand; decline
To pay it henceforth surely men will please,
Provided husbands with bad wives combine

'To baffle Death. Judge between me and these!'
'Thyself shalt judge. Descend to earth in shape
Of mortal, marry, drain from froth to lees

'The bitter draught, then see if thou escape
Concluding, with men sorrowful and sage,
A Bad Wife's strength Death's self in vain would ape!'

How Satan entered on his pilgrimage,
Conformed himself to earthly ordinance,
Wived and played husband well from youth to age

Intrepidly—I leave untold, advance
Through many a married year until I reach
A day when—of his father's countenance

The very image, like him too in speech
As well as thought and deed,—the union's fruit
Attained maturity. 'I needs must teach

'My son a trade: but trade, such son to suit,
Needs seeking after. He a man of war?
Too cowardly! A lawyer wins repute—

'Having to toil and moil, though—both which are
Beyond this sluggard. There's Divinity:
No, that's my own bread-winner—that be far

'From my poor offspring! Physic? Ha, we'll try
If this be practicable. Where's my wit?
Asleep?—since, now I come to think . .. Ay, ay!

'Hither, my son! Exactly have I hit
On a profession for thee. *Medicus*—
Behold, thou art appointed! Yea, I spit

'Upon thine eyes, bestow a virtue thus
That henceforth not this human form I wear
Shalt thou perceive alone, but—one of us

'By privilege—thy fleshly sight shall bear
Me in my spirit-person as I walk
The world and take my prey appointed there.

'Doctor once dubbed—what ignorance shall baulk
Thy march triumphant? Diagnose the gout
As cholic, and prescribe it cheese for chalk—

'No matter! All's one: cure shall come about
And win thee wealth—fees paid with such a roar
Of thanks and praise alike from lord and lout

'As never stunned man's ears on earth before.
"How may this be?" Why, that's my sceptic! Soon
Truth will corrupt thee, soon thou doubt'st no more!

'Why is it I bestow on thee the boon
Of recognizing me the while I go
Invisibly amongmen morning, noon

'And night, from house to house, and—quick or slow—
Take my appointed prey? Theysummoi thee
For help, suppose: obey the summons so!

'Enter, look round I Where's Death! Know—I am he,
Satan who work all evil: I who bring
Pain to the patient in whate'er degree.

' I , then, am there: first glance thine ey(shall fling
Will find me—whether distant or at hand
As I am free to do my spiriting.

'At such mere first glance thou shalt understand
Wherefore I reach no higher up the roorr
Than door or window, when my form is scanned.

'Howe'er friends' faces please to gathei gloom,
Bent o'er the sick,—howe'er himself desponds,—
In such case Death is not the sufferer's doom.

' Contrariwise, do friends rejoice my bonds
Are broken, does the captive in his turn
Crow "Life shall conquer"? Nip thes foolish fronds

'Of hope a-sprout, if haply thou discerr
Me at the head—my victim's head, tx sure!
Forth now! This taught thee, little else to learn!'

And forth he went. Folk heard him as! demure
'How do you style this ailment? (There he peeps,
My father, through the arras!) Sirs, the cure

'Is plain as A. B. C! Experience steeps
Blossoms of pennyroyal half an hour
In sherris. *Sumat!*—Lo, how sound he sleeps—

'The subject you presumed was past the power
Of Galen to relieve!' Or else 'How's this?
Why call for help so tardily? Clouds lorn

'Portentously indeed, Sirs! (Nought's amiss:
He's at the bed-foot merely.) Still, the storm
May pass averted—not by quacks, I wis

'Like you, my masters! You, forsooth, perform
A miracle? Stand, sciolists, aside!
Blood, ne'er so cold, at ignorance grows warm!'

Which boasting by result was justified,
Big as might words be: whether drugged or left
Drugless, the patient always lived, not died.

Great the heir's gratitude, so nigh bereft
Of all he prized in this world: sweet the smile
Of disconcerted rivals: 'Cure?—say, theft

' From Nature in despite of Art—so style
This off-hand ldll-or-cure work! You did much,
I had done more: folk cannot wait awhile!'

But did the case change ? was it—' Scarcely such
The symptoms as to warrant our recourse
To your skill, Doctor! Yet since just a touch

' Of pulse, a taste of breath, has all the force
With you of long investigation claimed
By others,—tracks an ailment to its source

'Intuitively,—may we ask unblamed
What from this pimple you prognosticate?'
'Death!' was the answer, as he saw and named

The coucher by the sick man's head. ' Too late
You send for my assistance. I am bold
Only by Nature's leave, and bow to Fate!

'Besides, you have my rivals: lavish gold!
How comfortably quick shall life depart
Cosseted by attentions manifold!

'One day, one hour ago, perchance my art
Had done some service. Since you have yourselves
Chosen—before the horse—to put the cart,

'Why, Sirs, the sooner that the sexton delves
Your patient's grave, the better! How you stare
—Shallow, for all the deep books on your shelves!

'Fare you well, tumblers!* Do I need declare
What name and fame, what riches recompensed
The Doctor's practice? Never anywhere

Such an adept as daily evidenced
Each new vaticination! Oh, not he
Like dolts who dallied with their scruples fenced

With subterfuge, nor gave out frank and free
Something decisive! If he said * I save
The patient,' saved he was: if Death will

'His portion,' you might count him dead. Thus brave,
Behold our worthy, sans competitor
Throughout the country, on the architrave

Of Glory's temple golden-lettered for
Machaon *redivivus!* So, it fell
That, of a sudden, when the Emperor

Was smit by sore disease, I need not tell
If any other Doctor's aid was sought
To come and forthwith make the sick Prince well.

'He will reward thee as a monarch ought.
Not much imports the malady; but then,
He clings to life and cries like one distraught

'For thee—who, from a simple citizen,
Mayst look to rise in rank,—nay, haply wear
A medal with his portrait,—always when

'Recovery is quite accomplished. There!
Pass to the presence!' Hardly has he crossed
The chamber's threshold when he halts, aware

Of who stands sentry by the head. All's lost.
'Sire, nought avails my art: you near the goal,
And end the race by giving up the ghost/

' How?' cried the monarch: 'Names upon your roll
Of half my subjects rescued by your skill—
Old and young, rich and poor—crowd cheek by jowl

'And yet no room for mine? Be saved I will!
Why else am I earth's foremost potentate ?
Add me to these and take as fee your fill

'Of gold—that point admits of no debate
Between us: save me, as you can and must,—
Gold, till your gown's pouch cracks beneath the weight!'

This touched the Doctor. 'Truly a home-thrust,
Parent, you will not parry! Have I dared
Entreat that you forego the meal of dust

'—Man that is snake's meat—when I saw prepared
Your daily portion ? Never! Just this once,
Go from his head, then,—let his life be spared!'

Whisper met whisper in the gruff response
'Fool, I must have my prey: no inch I budge
From where thou see'st me thus myself ensconce.'

'Ah,' moaned the sufferer, 'by thy look I judge
Wealth fails to tempt thee: what if honours prove
More efficacious? Nought to him I grudge

'Who saves me. Only keep my head above
The cloud that's creeping round *it*—I'll divide
My empire with thee! No? What's left but—love?

'Does love allure thee? Well then, take as bride
My only daughter, fair beyond belief!
Save me—to-morrow shall the knot be tied!'

'Father, you hear him! Respite ne'er so brief
Is all I beg: go now and come again
Next day, for aught I care: respect the grief

' Mine will be if thy first-born sues in vain! '
'Fool, I must have my prey!' was all he got
In answer. But a fancy crossed his brain.

'I have it! Sire, methinks a meteor shot
Just now across the heavens and neutralized
Jove's salutary influence: 'neath the blot

'Plumb are you placed now: well that I surmised
The cause of failure! Knaves, reverse the bed!'
'Stay!' groaned the monarch, 'I shall be capsized—

'Jolt—jolt—my heels uplift where late my head
Was lying—sure I'm turned right round at last!
What do you say now, Doctor?' Nought he said:

For why? With one brisk leap the Antic passed
From couch-foot back to pillow,—as before,
Lord of the situation. Long aghast

The Doctor gazed, then 'Yet one trial more
Is left me' inwardly he uttered. 'Shame
Upon thy flinty heart! Do I implore

'This trifling favour in the idle name
Of mercy to the moribund? I plead
The cause of all thou dost affect: my aim

DOCTOR

' Befits my author! Why would I succeed ?
Simply that by success I.may promote
The growth of thy pet virtues—pride and greed.

'But keep thy favours!—curse thee! I devote
Henceforth my service to the other side.
No time to lose: the rattle's in his throat.

'So,—not to leave one last resource untried,—
Run to my house with all haste, somebody!
Bring me that knobstick thence, so often plied

'With profit by the astrologer—shall I
Disdain its help, the mystic Jacob's-Staff?
Sire, do but have the courage not to die

'Till this arrive! Let none of you dare laugh!
Though rugged its exterior, I have seen
That implement work wonders, send the chaff

'Quick and thick flying from the wheat—I mean,
By metaphor, a human sheaf it thrashed
Flail-like. Go fetch it! Or—a word between

'Just you and me, friend!—go bid, unabashed,
My mother, whom you'll find there, bring the stick
Herself—herself, mind!' Out the lackey dashed

Zealous upon the errand. Craft and trick
Are meat and drink to Satan: and he grinned
—How else?—at an excuse so politic

For failure: scarce would Jacob's-Staff rescind
Fate's firm decree! And ever as he neared
The agonizing one, his breath like wind

Froze to the marrow, while his eye-flash seared
Sense in the brain up: closelier and more close
Pressing his prey, when at the door appeared

—Who but his Wife the Bad? Whereof one dose,
One grain, one mite of the medicament,
Sufficed him. Up he sprang. One word, too gross

To soil my lips with,—and through ceiling went
Somehow the Husband. 'That a storm's dispersed
We know for certain by the sulphury scent!

'Hail to the Doctor! Who but one so versed
In all Dame Nature's secrets had prescribed
The staff thus opportunely? Style him first

'And foremost of physicians!' 'I've imbibed
Elixir surely,' smiled the prince,—'have gained
New lease of life. Dear Doctor, how you bribed

'Death to forego me, boots not: you've obtained
My daughter and her dowry. Death, I've heard,
Was still on earth the strongest power that reigned,

'Except a Bad Wife!* Whereunto demurred
Nowise the Doctor, so refused the fee
—No dowry, no bad wife!

'You think absurd
This tale?'—the Rabbi added: 'True, our Talmud
Boasts sundry such: yet—have our elders erred
In thinking there's some water there, not all mud?'
I tell it, as the Rabbi told it me.

PAN AND LUNA

O WORTHY of belief I hold it was,
Virgil, your legend in those strange three lines!
No question, that adventure came to pass
One black night in Arcadia: yes, the pines,
Mountains and valleys mingling made one mass
Of black with void black heaven: the earth's confines,
The sky's embrace, — below, above, around,
All hardened into black without a bound.

Fill up a swart stone chalice to the brim
With fresh-squeezed yet fast-thickening poppy-juice:
See how the sluggish jelly, late a-swim,
Turns marble to the touch of who would loose
The solid smooth, grown jet from rim to rim,
By turning round the bowl! So night can fuse
Earth with her all-comprising sky. No less,
Light, the least spark, shows air and emptiness.

And thus it proved when—diving into space,
Stript of all vapour, from each web of mist
Utterly film-free—entered on her race
The naked Moon, full-orbed antagonist
Of night and dark, night's dowry: peak to base,
Upstarted mountains, and each valley, kissed
To sudden life, lay silver-bright: in air
Flew she revealed, Maid-Moon with limbs all bare.

Still as she fled, each depth—where refuge seemed—
Opening a lone pale chamber, left distinct
Those limbs: mid still-retreating blue, she teemed
Herself with whiteness,—virginal, uncinct
By any halo save what finely gleamed
To outline not disguise her: heaven was linked
In one accord with earth to quaff the joy,
Drain beauty to the dregs without alloy.

Whereof she grew aware. What help? When, lo,
A succourable cloud with sleep lay dense:
Some pine-tree-top had caught it sailing slow,
And tethered for a prize: in evidence
Captive lay fleece on fleece of piled-up snow
Drowsily patient: flake-heaped how or whence,
The structure of that succourable cloud,
What matter? Shamed she plunged into its shroud.

Orbed—so the woman-figure poets call
Because of rounds on rounds—that apple-shaped
Head which its hair binds close into a ball
Each side the curving ears—that pure un-draped
Pout of the sister paps—that... Once for all,
Say—her consummate circle thus escaped
With its innumerous circlets, sank absorbed,
Safe in the cloud—O naked Moon full-orbed!

But what means this? The downy swathes combine,
Conglobe, the smothery coy-caressing stuff
Curdles about her! Vain each twist and twine
Those lithe limbs try, encroached on by a fluff
Fitting as close as fits the dented spine
Its flexile ivory **outside-flesh: enough!**
The plumy drifts contract, condense, constringe,
Till she is swallowed by the feathery springe.

As when a pearl slips lost in the thin foam
Churned on a sea-shore, and, o'er-frothed, conceits
Herself safe-housed in Amphitrite's dome,—
If, through the bladdery wave-worked yeast, she meets
What most she loathes and leaps from,—elf from gnome
No gladlier,—finds that safest of retreats
Bubble about a treacherous hand wide ope
To grasp her—(divers who pick pearls so grope)—

So lay this Maid-Moon clasped around and caught
By rough red Pan, the god of all that tract:
He it was schemed the snare thus subtly wrought
With simulated earth-breath,—wool-tufts packed
Into a billowy wrappage. Sheep far-sought
For spotless shearings yield such: take the fact
As learned Virgil gives it,—how the breed
Whitens itself for ever: yes, indeed!

If one forefather ram, though pure as chalk
From tinge on fleece, should still display a tongue
Black 'neath the beast's moist palate, prompt men baulk
The propagating plague: he gets no young:
They rather slay him,—sell his hide to caulk
Ships with, first steeped in pitch,—nor hands are wrung
In sorrow for his fate: protected thus,
The purity we love is gained for us.

So did Girl-moon, by just her attribute
Of unmatched modesty betrayed, lie trapped,
Bruised to the breast of Pan, half-god half-brute,
Raked by his bristly boar-sward while he lapped
—Never say, kissed her! that were to pollute
Love's language—which moreover proves unapt
To tell how she recoiled—as who finds thorns
Where she sought flowers—when, feeling, she touched—horns!

Then—does the legend say?—first moon-eclipse
Happened, first swooning-fit which puzzled sore
The early sages? Is that why she dips
Into the dark, a minute and no more,
Only so long as serves her while she rips
The cloud's womb through and, faultless as before,
Pursues her way? No lesson for a maid
Left she, a maid herself thus trapped, betrayed?

Ha, Virgil? Tell the rest, you! 'To the deep
Of his domain the wildwood, Pan forthwith
Called her, and so she followed'—in her sleep,
Surely?—'by no means spurning him.' The myth
Explain who may! Let all else go, I keep
—As of a ruin just a monolith—
Thus much, one verse of five words, each a boon:
Arcadia, night, a cloud, Pan, and the moon.

'TOUCH him ne'er so lightly, into song he broke:
Soil so quick-receptive,—not one feather-seed,
Not one flower-dust fell but straight its fall awoke
Vitalizing virtue: song would song succeed
Sudden as spontaneous—prove a poet-soul!'
Indeed?
Rock's the song-soil rather, surface hard and bare:
Sun and dew their mildness, storm and frost their rage
Vainly both expend,—few flowers awaken there:
Quiet in its cleft broods—what the after age
Knows and names a pine, a nation's heritage.

JOCOSERIA

1883

WANTING is—what?
Summer redundant,
Blueness abundant,
—Where is the blot?
Beamy the world, yet a blank all the same,
—Framework which waits for a picture to frame:
What of the leafage, what of the flower?
Roses embowering with nought they embower!
Come then, complete incompletion, O comer,
Pant through the blueness, perfect the summer!
Breathe but one breath
Rose-beauty above,
And all that was death
Grows life, grows love,
Grows love!

DONALD

'WILL you hear my story also,
—Huge Sport, brave adventure in plenty?'
The boys were a band from Oxford,
The oldest of whom was twenty.

The bothy we held carouse in
Was bright with fire and candle;
Tale followed tale like a merry-go-round
Whereof Sport turned the handle.

In our eyes and noses—turf-smoke:
In our ears a tune from the trivet,
Whence 'Boiling, boiling,' the kettle sang,
'And ready for fresh Glenlivet.'

So, feat capped feat, with a vengeance:
Truths, though,—the lads were loyal:
'Grouse, five score brace to the bag!
Deer, ten hours' stalk of the Royal!'

Of boasting, not one bit, boys!
Only there seemed to settle
Somehow above your curly heads.
—Plain through the singing kettle,

Palpable through the cloud,
As each new-puffed Havanna
Rewarded the teller's well-told tale,
This vaunt 'To Sport—Hosanna!

'Hunt, fish, shoot,
Would a man fulfil life's duty!
Not to the bodily frame alone
Does Sport give strength and beauty.

'But character gains in—courage?
Ay, Sir, and much beside it!
You don't sport, more's the pity:
You soon would find, if you tried it,

'Good sportsman means good fellow,
Sound-hearted he, to the centre;
Your mealy-mouthed mild milksops
—There s where the rot can enter!

'There's where the dirt will breed,
The shabbiness Sport would banish!
Oh no, Sir, no! In your honoured case
All such objections vanish.

"Tis known how hard you studied:
A Double-First—what, the jigger!
Give me but half your Latin and Greek,
I'll never again touch trigger!

'Still, tastes are tastes, allow me!
Allow, too, where there's keenness
For Sport, there's little likelihood
Of a man's displaying meanness!'

So. put on my mettle, I interposed.
Will you hear my story?' quoth I.
'Never mind how long since it happed,
I sat, as we sit, in a bothy;

'With as merry a band of mates, too,
Undergrads all on a level:
(One's a Bishop, one's gone to the Bench,
And one's gone—well, to the Devil.)

'When, lo, a scratching and tapping!
In hobbled a ghastly visitor.
Listen to just what he told us himself
—No need of our playing inquisitor!'

Do you happen to know in Ross-shire
Mount... Ben... but the name scarce matters:
Of the naked fact I am sure enough,
Though I clothe it in rags and tatters.

You may recognise Ben by description;
Behind him—a moor's immenseness:
Up goes the middle mount of a range,
Fringed with its firs in denseness.

Rimming the edge, its fir-fringe, mind!
For an edge there is, though narrow;
From end to end of the range, a stripe
Of path runs straight as an arrow.

And the mountaineer who takes that path
Saves himself miles of journey
He has to plod if he crosses the moor
Through heather, peat and burnie.

But a mountaineer he needs must be,
For, look you, right in the middle
Projects bluff Ben—with an end in *ich*—
Why planted there, is a riddle:

Since all Ben's brothers little and big
Keep rank, set shoulder to shoulder,
And only this burliest out must bulge
Till it seems—to the beholder

From down in the gully,—as if Ben's breast
To a sudden spike diminished,
Would signify to the boldest foot
'All further passage finished!'

Yet the mountaineer who sidles on
And on to the very bending,
Discovers, if heart and brain be proof,
No necessary ending.

Foot up, foot down, to the turn abrupt
Having trod, he, there arriving,
Finds—what he took for a point was breadth,
A mercy of Nature's contriving.

So, he rounds what, when 'tis reached, proves straight,
From one side gains the other:
The wee path widens—resume the march,
And he foils you, Ben my brother I

But Donald—(that name, I hope, will do)—
I wrong him if I call 'foiling'
The tramp of the callant, whistling the while
As blithe as our kettle's boiling.

He had dared the danger from boyhood up,
And now,—when perchance was waiting
A lass at the brig below,—'twixt mount
And moor would he stand debating?

Moreover this Donald was twenty-five,
A glory of bone and muscle:
Did a fiend dispute the right of way,
Donald would try a tussle,

Lightsomely marched he out of the broad
On to the narrow and narrow:
A step more, rounding the angular rock,
Reached the front straight as an arrow.

He stepped it, safe on the ledge he stood,
When—whom found he full-facing?
What fellow in courage and wariness too,
Had scouted ignoble pacing,

And left low safety to timid mates,
And made for the dread dear danger.
And gained the height where—who could guess
He would meet with a rival ranger?

'Twas a gold-red stag that stood and stared,
Gigantic and magnific,
By the wonder—ay, and the peril—struck
Intelligent and pacific:

For a red deer is no fallow deer
Grown cowardly through park-feeding;
He batters you like a thunderbolt
If you brave his haunts unheeding.

I doubt he could hardly perform *volte-face*
Had valour advised discretion:
You may walk on a rope, but to turn on a rope
No Blondin makes profession.

Yet Donald must turn, would pride permit,
Though pridelll Brooks retiring:
Each eyed each—mute man, motionless beast—
Less fearing than admiring.

These are the moments when quite new sense,
To meet some need as novel,
Springs up in the brain: it inspired resource:
—'Nor advance nor retreat but—grovel!'

And slowly, surely, never a whit
Relaxing the steady tension
Of eye-stare which binds man to beast,—
By an inch and inch declension,

Sank Donald sidewise down and down:
Till flat, breast upwards, lying
At his six-foot length, no corpse more still,
—'If he cross me! The trick's worth trying.*

Minutes were an eternity;
But a new sense was created
In the stag's brain too; he resolves! Slow, sure,
With eye-stare unabated,

Feelingly he extends a foot
Which tastes the way ere it touches
Earth's solid and just escapes man's soft,
Nor hold of the same unclutches

Till its fellow foot, light as a feather whisk,
Lands itself no less finely:
So a mother removes a fly from the face
Of her babe asleep supinely.

And now 'tis the haunch and hind foot's turn
—That's hard: can the beast quite raise it?
Yes, traversing half the prostrate length,
His hoof-tip does not graze it.

Just one more lift! But Donald, you see,
Was sportsman first, man after:
A fancy lightened his caution through,
—He well-nigh broke into laughter.

'It were nothing short of a miracle!
Unrivalled, unexampled—
All sporting feats with this feat matched
Were down and dead and trampled!'

The last of the legs as tenderly
Follows the rest: or never
Or now is the time! His knife in reach,
And his right-hand loose—how clever!

For this can stab up the stomach's soft,
While the left-hand grasps the pastern.
A rise on the elbow, and—now's the time
Or never: this turn's the last turn!

I shall dare to place myself by God
Who scanned—for He does—each feature
Of the face thrown up in appeal to Him
By the agonizing creature.

Nay, I hear plain words: 'Thy gift brings this!'
Up he sprang, back he staggered,
Over he fell, and with him our friend
—At following game no laggard.

Yet he was not dead when they picked next day
From the gully's depth the wreck of him;
His fall had been stayed by the stag beneath
Who cushioned and saved the neck of him.

But the rest of his body—why, doctors said,
Whatever could break was broken:
Legs, arms, ribs, all of him looked like a toast
In a tumbler of port-wine soaken.

'That your life is left you, thank the stag!'
Said they when—the slow cure ended—
They opened the hospital door, and thence
—Strapped, spliced, main fractures mended,

And minor damage left wisely alone,—
Like an old shoe clouted and cobbled,
Out—what went in a Goliath well-nigh,—
Some half of a David hobbled.

'You must ask an alms from house to house:
Sell the stag's head for a bracket,
With its grand twelve tines—I'd buy it myself—
And use the skin for a jacket!'

He was wiser, made both head and hide
His win-penny: hands and knees on,
Would manage to crawl—poor crab—by the roads
In the misty stalking-season.

And if he discovered a bothy like this,
Why. harvest was sure: folk listened.
He tola his tale to the lovers of Sport:
Lips twitched, cheeks glowed, eyes glistened.

And when he had come to the close, and spread
His spoils for the gazers' wonder,
With Gentlemen, here's the skull of the stag
I was over, thank God, not under!'—

The company broke out in applause;
'By Jingo, a lucky cripple!
Have a munch of grouse and a hunk of bread,
And a tug, besides, at our tipple 1

And 'There's my pay for your pluck!* cried This,
'And mine for your jolly story!'
Cried That, while T'other—but he was drunk—
Hiccupped 'A trump, a Tory!'

I hope I gave twice as much as the rest;
For, as Homer would say, 'within grate
Though teeth kept tongue,' my whole soul growled
' Rightly rewarded,—Ingrate!'

SOLOMON AND BALKIS

SOLOMON King of the Jews and the Queen of Sheba Balkis
Talk on the ivory throne, and we well may conjecture their talk is
Solely of things sublime: why else has she sought Mount Zion,
Climbed the six golden steps, and sat betwixt lion and lion?

She proves him with hard questions: before she has reached the middle
He smiling supplies the end, straight solves them riddle by riddle;
Until, dead-beaten at last, there is left no spirit in her,
And thus would she close the game whereof she was first beginner:

'O wisest thou of the wise, world's marvel and well-nigh monster,
One crabbed question more to construe or *vulgo* conster!
Who are those, of all mankind, a monarch of perfect wisdom
Should open to, when they knock at *spheteron do*—that's his dome?'

The King makes tart reply: 'Whom else but the wise his equals
Should he welcome with heart and voice? —since, king though he be, such weak walls
Of circumstance—power and pomp—divide souls each from other
That whoso proves kingly in craft I needs must acknowledge my brother.

'Come poet, come painter, come sculptor, come builder—whate'er his condition,
Is he prime in his art? We are peers! My insight has pierced the partition
And hails—for the poem, the picture, the statue, the building—my fellow!
Gold's gold though dim in the dust: court-polish soon turns it yellow.

'But tell me in turn, O thou to thy weakling sex superior,
That for knowledge has travelled so far yet seemest no whit the wearier,—
Who are those, of all mankind, a queen like thyself, consummate
In wisdom, should call to her side with an affable "Up hither, come, mate!'"

'The Good are my mates—how else? Why doubt it?' the Queen upbridled:
'Sure even above the Wise,—or in travel my eyes have idled,—
I see the Good stand plain: be they rich, poor, shrewd or simple,
If Good they only are. . . . Permit me to drop my wimple !'

And in that bashful jerk of her body, she—peace, thou scoffer!—
Jostled the King's right-hand stretched courteously help to proffer,
And so disclosed a portent: all unaware the Prince eyed
The Ring which bore the Name—turned outside now from inside!

The truth-compelling Name!—and at once 'I greet the Wise—Oh,
Certainly welcome such to my court—with this proviso:
The building must be my temple, my person stand forth the statue,
The picture my portrait prove, and the poem my praise—you cat, you!'

But Solomon nonplussed? Nay! 'Be truthful in turn!' so bade he:
'See the Name, obey its hest!' And at once subjoins the lady
—' Provided the Good are the young, men strong and tall and proper,
Such servants I straightway enlist,—which means...' but the blushes stop her.

'Ah, Soul,' the Monarch sighed, 'that wouldst soar yet ever crawlest,
How comes it thou canst discern the greatest yet choose the smallest,
Unless because heaven is far, where wings find fit expansion,
While creeping on all-fours suits, suffices the earthly mansion?

'Aspire to the Best! But which? There are Bests and Bests so many,
With a *habitat* each for each, earth's Best as much Best as any!
On Lebanon roots the cedar—soil lofty, yet stony and sandy—
While hyssop, of worth in its way, on the wall grows low but handy.

'Above may the Soul spread wing, spurn body and sense beneath her;
Below she must condescend to plodding unbuoyed by asther.

SOLOMON AND BALKIS

In heaven I yearn for knowledge, account all else inanity;
On earth I confess an itch for the praise of fools—that's Vanity.

'It is nought, it will go, it can never presume above to trouble me;
But here,—why, it toys and tickles and teases, howe'er I redouble me
In a doggedest of endeavours to play the indifferent. Therefore,
Suppose we resume discourse? Thou hast travelled thus far: but wherefore?

'Solely for Solomon's sake, to see whom earth styles Sagest?'
Through her blushes laughed the Queen. 'For the sake of a Sage? The gay jest!
On high, be communion with Mind—there, Body concerns not Balkis:
Down here,—do I make too bold? Sage Solomon,—one fool's small kiss!'

CRISTINA AND MONALDESCHI

AH, but how each loved each, Marquis I
Here's the gallery they trod
Both together, he her god,
She his idol,—lend your rod,
Chamberlain!—ay, there they are—'*Quis Separabit?*'—plain those two
Touching words come into view,
Apposite for me and you:

Since they witness to incessant
Love like ours: King Francis, he—
Diane the adored one. she—
Prototypes of you and me.
Everywhere is carved her Crescent
With his Salamander-sign—
Flame-fed creature: flame benign
To itself or, if malign,

Only to the meddling curious,
—So, be warned, Sirt Where's my head?
How *it* wanders! What I said
Merely meant—the creature, fed
Thus on flame, was scarce injurious
Save to fools who woke its ire,
Thinking fit to play with fire.
'Tis the Crescent you admire?

Then, be Diane! I'll be Francis.
Crescents change,—true!—wax and wane,
Woman-like: male hearts retain
Heat nor, once warm, cool again.
So, we figure—such our chance is—
I as man and you as... What?
Take offence? My Love forgot
He plays woman, I do not?

I—the woman? See my habit,
Ask my people! Anyhow,
Be we what we may, one vow
Binds us, male or female. Now,—
Stand, Sir! Read! '*Quis separabit?*'
Half a mile of pictured way
Past these palace-walls to-day
Traversed, this I came to say.

You must needs begin to love me;
First I hated, then, at best,
—Have it so!—I acquiesced;
Pure compassion did the rest.
From below thus raised above me,
Would you, step by step, descend,
Pity me, become my friend,
Like me, like less, loathe at end?

That's the ladder's round you rose by!
That—my own foot kicked away,
Having raised you: let it stay,
Serve you for retreating? Nay.
Close to me you climbed: as close by,
Keep your station, though the peak
Reached proves somewhat bare and bleak!
Woman's strong if man is weak.

Keep here, loving me forever!
Love's lock, gesture, speech, I claim;
Act love, lie love, all the same—
Play as earnest were our garnet
Lonely I stood long: 'twas clever
When you climbed, before men's eyes,
Spurned the earth and scaled the skies,
Gained my peak and grasped your prize'

Here you stood, then, to men's wonder;
Here you tire of standing? Kneel I
Cure what giddiness you feel,
This way! Do your senses reel?
Not unlikely! What rolls under?
Yawning death in yon abyss
Where the waters whirl and hiss
Round more frightful peaks than this.

Should my buffet dash you thither...
But be sage! No watery grave
Needs await you: seeming brave
Kneel on safe, dear timid slave!
You surmised, when you climbed hither,
Just as easy were retreat
Should you tire, conceive unmeet
Longer patience at my feet?

Me as standing, you as stooping,—
Who arranged for each the pose?
Lest men think us friends turned foes,
Keep the attitude you chose!
Men are used to this same grouping—
I and you like statues seen.
You and I, no third between,
Kneel and stand I That makes the scene.

Mar it—and one buffet... Pardon!
Needless warmth—wise words in waste!
'Twas prostration that replaced
Kneeling, then? A proof of taste.
Crouch, not kneel, while I mount guard on
Prostrate love—become no waif,
No estray to waves that chafe
Disappointed—love's so safe!

Waves that chafe? The idlest fancy!
Peaks that scare? I think we know
Walls enclose our sculpture: so
Grouped, we pose in Fontainebleau.
Up now! Wherefore hesitancy?
Arm in arm and cheek by cheek,
Laugh with me at waves and peak!
Silent still? Why, pictures speak.

See, where Juno strikes Ixion,
Primatice speaks plainly! Pooh—
Rather, Florentine Le Roux!
I've lost head for who is who—
So it swims and wanders! Fie on
What still proves the female! Here,
By the staircase!—for we near
That dark 'Gallery of the Deer.'

Look me in the eyes once! Steady!
Are you faithful now as erst
On that eve when we two first
Vowed at Avon, blessed and cursed
Faith and falsehood? Pale already?
Forward! Must my hand compel
Entrance—this way? Exit—well,
Somehow, somewhere. Who can tell?

What if to the self-same place in
Rustic Avon, at the door
Of the village church once more,
Where a tombstone paves the floor
By that holy-water basin
You appealed to—'As, below,
This stone hides its corpse, e'en so
I your secrets hide'? What ho!

Friends, my four! You, Priest, confess him!
I have judged the culprit there:
Execute my sentence! Care
For no mail such cowards wear!
Done, Priest? Then, absolve and bless him!
Now—you three, stab thick and fast,
Deep and deeper! Dead at last?
Thanks, friends—Father, thanks! Aghast?

What one word of his confession
Would you tell me, though I lured
With that royal crown abjured
Just because its bars immured
Love too much? Love burst compression,
Fled free, finally confessed
All its secrets to that breast
Whence . . . let Avon tell the rest!

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT **AND** FUSELI

OH but is it not hard, Dear?
Mine are the nerves to quake at a mouse:
If a spider drops I shrink with fear:
I should die outright in a haunted house;
While for you—did the danger dared bring help—
From a lion's den I could steal his whelp,
With a serpent round me, stand stock-still,
Go sleep in a churchyard,—so would will
Give me the power to dare and do
Valiantly—just for you!

Much amiss in the head, Dear.
I toil at a language, tax my brain
Attempting to draw—the scratches here!
I play, play, practise and all in vain:
But for you—if my triumph brought you pride,
I would grapple with Greek Plays till I died,
Paint a portrait of you—who can tell?
Work my fingers offfor your' Pretty well:'
Language and painting and music too,
Easily done—for you!

Strong and fierce in the heart, Dear,
With—more than a will—what seems a power
To pounce on my prey, love outbroke here
In flame devouring and to devour.
Such love has laboured its best and worst
To win me a lover; yet, last as first,
I have not quickened his pulse one beat,
Fixed a moment's fancy, bitter or sweet:
Yet the strong fierce heart's love's labour's due.
Utterly lost, was—you!

ADAM, LILITH, AND EVE

ONE day it thundered and lightened.
Two women, fairly frightened,
Sank to their knees, transformed, transfixed,
At the feet of the **man** who sat betwixt;
And 'Mercy!' cried each—'if I tell the truth
Of a passage in my youth!'

Said This: 'Do you mind the morning
I met your love with scorning?
As the worst of **the** venom left my lips,
I thought "If, despite this lie, he strips
The mask from my soul with a kiss—I crawl
His slave,—soul, body and all!'"

Said That: 'We stood to be married;
The priest, or someone, tarried:
"If Paradise-door prove locked?" smiled **you;**
I thought, as **I nodded, smiling too,**
"Did one, that's away, arrive—nor late
Nor soon should unlock Hell's gate!"'

It ceased to lighten and thunder.
Up started both in-wonder,
Looked round and saw that the sky was clear,
Then laughed 'Confess you believed us, Dear!'
'I saw through the joke!' the man replied
They re-seated themselves beside.

IXION

HIGH in the dome, suspended, of Hell, sad triumph, behold us!
Here the revenge of a God, there the amends of a Man.
Whirling forever in torment, flesh once mortal, immortal
Made—for a purpose of hate—able to die and revive,
Pays to the uttermost pang, then, newly for payment replenished,
Doles out—old yet young—agonies ever afresh;
Whence the result above me: torment is bridged by a rainbow,—
Tears, sweat, blood,—each spasm, ghastly once, glorified now.
Wrung, by the rush of the wheel ordained my place of reposing,
Off in a sparklike spray,—flesh become vapour thro' pain,—
Flies the bestowment of Zeus, soul's vaunted bodily vesture,
Made that his feats observed gain the approval of Man,—
Flesh that he fashioned with sense of the earth and the sky and the ocean,
Framed should pierce to the star, fitted to pore on the plant,—
All, for a purpose of hate, re-framed, re-fashioned, re-fitted
Till, consummate at length,—lo, the employment of sense!
Pain's mere minister now to the soul, once pledged to her pleasure—
Soul, if untrammelled by flesh, unapprehensive of pain!
Body, professed soul's slave, which serving beguiled and betrayed her,
Made things false seem true, cheated thro' eye and thro' ear,
Lured thus heart and brain to believe in the lying reported,—
Spurn but the traitorous slave, uttermost atom, away,
What should obstruct soul's rush on the real, the only apparent?
Say I have erred,—how else? Was I Ixion or Zeus?
Foiled by my senses I dreamed; I doubtless awaken in wonder:
This proves shine, that—**shade? Good was the evil that** seemed?
Shall I, with sight thus gained, by torture be taught I was blind once?
Sisuphos, teaches thy stone—Tantalos, teaches thy thirst
Aught which unaided sense, purged pure, less plainly demonstrates?
No, for the past was dream: now that the dreamers awake,
Sisuphos scouts low fraud, and to Tantalos treason is folly.
Ask of myself, whose form melts on the murderous wheel,
What is the sin which throe and throe prove sin to the sinner!
Say the false charge was true,—thus do I expiate, say,
Arrogant thought, word, deed,—mere man who conceited me godlike,
Sat beside Zeus, my friend—knelt before Here, my love!
What were the need but of pitying power to touch and disperse it,
Film-work—eye's and ear's—all the distraction of sense?
How should the soul not see, not hear,—perceive and as plainly
Render, in thought, word, deed, back again truth—not a lie?
'Ay, but the pain is to punish thee!' Zeus, once more, for a pastime,
Play the familiar, the frank! Speak and have speech in return!
I was of Thessaly king, there ruled and a people obeyed me:
Mine to establish the law, theirs to obey it or die:
Wherefore? Because of the good to the people, because of the honour
Thence accruing to me, king, the king's law was supreme.
What of the weakling, the ignorant criminal? Not who, excuseless,
Breaking my law braved death, knowing his deed and its due—
Nay, but the feeble and foolish, the poor transgressor, of purpose
No whit more than a tree, born to erectness of bole,
Palm or plane or pine, we laud if lofty, columnar—
Loathe if athwart, askew,—leave to the axe and the flame!
Where is the vision may penetrate earth and beholding acknowledge
Just one pebble at root ruined the straightness of stem?
Whose fine vigilance follows the sapling, accounts for the failure,
—Here blew wind, so it bent: there the snow lodged, so it broke?
Also the tooth of the beast, bird's bill, mere bite of the insect
Gnawed, gnarled, warped their **worst:** passive it lay to offence.

King—**I** was man, no more: what I recognized faulty I punished,
Laying it prone: be sure, more than a man had I proved,
Watch and ward o'er the sapling at birth-time had saved it, nor simply
Owned the distortion's excuse,—hindered it wholly: nay, more—
Even a man, as I sat in my place to do judgment, and pallid
Criminals passing to doom shuddered away at my foot,
Could I have probed thro' the face to the heart, read plain a repentance,
Crime confessed fools' play, virtue ascribed to the wise,
Had I not stayed the consignment to doom, not dealt the renewed ones
Life to retraverse the past, light to retrieve the misdeed?
Thus had I done, and thus to have done much more it behoves thee,
Zeus who madest man—flawless or faulty, thy work!
What if the charge were true, as thou mouthest.—Ixion the cherished
Minion of Zeus grew vain, vied with the godships and fell,
Forfeit thro' arrogance? Stranger! I clothed, with the grace of our human,
Inhumanity—gods, natures I likened to ours.
Man among men I had borne me till gods forsooth must regard me
—Nay, must approve, applaud, claim as a comrade at last.
Summoned to enter their circle, I sat—their equal, how other?
Love should be absolute love, faith is infulness or nought.
'I am thy friend, be mine!' smiled Zeus: 'If Here attract thee,'
Blushed the imperial cheek, 'then—as thy heart may suggest!'
Faith in me sprang to the faith, my love hailed love as its fellow,
'Zeus, we are friends—how fast! Here, my heart for thy heart!'
Then broke smile into fury of frown, and the thunder of 'Hence, fool!'
Then thro' the kiss laughed scorn 'Limbs or a cloud was to clasp?'
Then from Olumpus to Erebos, then from the rapture to torment,
Then from the fellow of gods—misery's mate, to the man!
—Man henceforth and forever, who lent from the glow of his nature
Warmth to the cold, with light coloured the black and the blank.
So did a man conceive of your passion, you passion-protesters!
So did he trust, so love—being **the truth of** your lie!

You to aspire to be Man! Man made you who vainly would ape him:
You are the hollowness, he—filling you, falsifies void.
Even as—witness the emblem, Hell's sad triumph suspended,
Born of my tears, sweat, blood—bursting to vapour above—
Arching my torment, an iris ghostlike startles the darkness,
Cold white—jewelry quenched—justifies, glorifies pain.
Strive, mankind, though strife endure through endless obstruction,
Stage after stage, each rise marred by as certain a fall!
Baffled forever—yet never so baffled but, e'en in the baffling,
When Man's strength proves weak, checked in the body or soul—
Whatsoever the medium, flesh or essence, —Ixion's
Made for a purpose of hate,—clothing the entity Thou,
—Medium whence that entity strives for the Not-Thou beyond it,
Fire elemental, free, frame unencumbered, the All,—
Never so baffled but—when, on the verge of an alien existence,
Heartened to press, by pangs burst to the infinite Pure,
Nothing is reached but the ancient weakness still that arrests strength,
Circumambient still, still the poor human array,
Pride and revenge and hate and cruelty—all it has burst through,
Thought to escape,—fresh formed, found in the fashion it fled,—
Never so baffled but—when Man pays the price of endeavour,
Thunderstruck, downthrust, Tartaros-doomed to the wheel,—
Then, ay, then, from the tears and sweat and blood of his torment,
E'en from the triumph of Hell, up let him look and rejoice!
What is the influence, high o'er Hell, that turns to a rapture
Pain—and despair's murk mists blends in a rainbow of hope?
What is beyond the obstruction, stage by stage tho' it baffle?
Back must I fall, confess 'Ever the weakness I fled'?
No, for beyond, far, far is a Purity all-unobstructed!
Zeus was Zeus—not Man: wrecked by his weakness, I whirl.
Out of the wreck I rise—past Zeus to **the** Potency o'er him!
I—to have hailed him my friend! I—to have clasped her—my love!

Pallid birth of my pain,—where light, where light israspirmg
Thither I rise, whilst thou—Zeus, keep the godship and sink!

JOCHANAN HAKKADOSH

'THIS now, this other story makes amends
And justifies our Mishna,' quoth the Jew
Aforesaid. ' Tell it, learnedest of friends!*

A certain morn broke beautiful and blue
O'er Schiphaz city, bringing joy and mirth,
—So had ye deemed; while the reverse was true,

Since one small house there gave a sorrow birth
In such black sort that, to each faithful eye,
Midnight, not morning settled on the earth.

How else, when it grew certain thou wouldst die
Our much-enlightened master, Israel's prop,
Eximious Jochanan Ben Sabbathai?

Old, yea but, undiminished of a drop,
The vital essence pulsed through heart and brain;
Time left unsickled yet the plenteous crop

On poll and chin and cheek,whereof a skein
Handmaids might weave—hairs silk-soft, silver-white,
Such as the wool-plant's; none the less in vain

Had Physic striven her best against the spite
Of fell disease: the Rabbi must succumb;
And, round the couch whereon in piteous plight

He lay a-dying, scholars,—awe-struck, dumb
Throughout the night-watch,—roused themselves and spoke
One to the other: 'Ere death's touch benumb

'His active sense,—while yet 'neath Reason's yoke
Obedient toils his tongue,—befits we claim
The fruit of long experience, bid this oak

' Shed us an acorn which may, all the same,
Grow to a temple-pillar,—dear that day!—
When Israel's scattered seed finds place and name

'Among the envious nations. Lamp us, pray,
Thou the Enlightener! Partest hence in peace?
Hailest without regret—much less, dismay—

'The hour of thine approximate release
From fleshly bondage soul hath found obstruct?
Calmly envisagest the sure increase

'Of knowledge? Eden's tree must hold unplucked
Some apple, sure, has never tried thy tooth,
Juicy with sapience thou hast sought, not sucked?

'Say, does age acquiesce in vanished youth?
Still towers thy purity above—as erst—
Our pleasant follies? Be thy last word—truth!'

The Rabbi groaned; then, grimly, 'Last as first
The truth speak I—in boyhood who began
Striving to live an angel, and, amerced

'For such presumption, die now hardly man.
What have I proved of life? To live, indeed,
That much I learned: but here lies Jochanan

'More luckless than stood David when, to speed
His fighting with the Philistine, they brought
Saul's harness forth: whereat, "Alack, I need

'"Armour to arm me, but have never fought
With sword and spear, nor tried to manage shield,
Proving arms' use, as well-trained warrior ought.

'"Only a sling and pebbles can I wield!"
So he: while I. contrariwise, "No trick
Of weapon helpful on the battle-field

'"Comes iinfamiliar to my theoric:
But, bid me put in practice what I know.
Give me a sword—it stings like Moses stick,

'"A serpent I let drop apace." E'en so,
I,—able to comport me at each stage
Of human life as never here below

'Man played his part,—since mine the heritage
Of wisdom carried to that perfect pitch,
Ye rightly praise,—I, therefore, who, thus sage,

'Could sure act man triumphantly, enrich
Life's annals with example how I played
Lover, Bard, Soldier, Statist,—(all of which

'Parts in presentment failing, cries invade
The world's ear—"Ah, the Past, the pearl-gift thrown
To hogs, time's opportunity we made

*" So light of, only recognized when flown!
Had we been wise!")—in fine, I—wise enough,—
What profit brings me wisdom never shown

'Just when its showing would from each rebuff
Shelter weak virtue, threaten back to bounds
Encroaching vice, tread smooth each track too rough

'For youth's unsteady footstep, climb the rounds
Of life's long ladder, one by slippery one,
Yet make no stumble ? Me hard fate confounds

'With that same crowd of wailers I outrun
By promising to teach another cry
Of more hilarious mood than theirs, the sun

'I look my last at is insulted by.
What cry,—ye ask? Give ear on every side!
Witness yon Lover! "How entrapped a mi!

'"Methought, because a virgin's rose-lip vied
With ripe Khubbezleh's, needs must beauty mate
With meekness and discretion in a bride:

'"Bride she became to me who wail—too late—
Unwise I loved !'" That'sonecry. "Mind's my gift:
I might have loaded me with lore, full weight

' "Pressed down and running over at each rift
O' the brain-bag where the famished clung and fed.
I filled it with what rubbish!—would not sift

'" The wheat from chaff, sound grain from musty—shed
Poison abroad as oft as nutriment—
And sighing say but as my fellows said,

'"Unwise I learned!" That's two. "In dwarf 's-play spent
Was giant's prowess: warrior all unversed
In war's right waging, I struck brand, was lent

'"For steel's fit service, on mere stone—and cursed
Alike the shocked limb and the shivered steel,
Seeing too late the blade's true use which erst

'"How was I blind to! My cry swells the peal—
Unwise I fought!" That's three. But wherefore waste
Breath on the wailings longer? Why reveal

'A root of bitterness whereof the taste
Is noisome to Humanity at large?
First we get Power, but Power absurdly placed

' In Folly's keeping, who resigns her charge
To Wisdom when all Power grows nothing worth:
Bones marrowless are mocked with helm and targe

'When, like your Master's, soon below the earth
With worms shall warfare only be. Fare well,
Children! I die a failure since my birth!'

'Not so!' arose a protest as, pell-mell,
They pattered from his chamber to the street,
Bent on a last resource. Our Targums tell

That such resource there is. Put case, there meet
The Nine Points of Perfection—rarest chance—
Within some saintly teacher whom the fleet

Years, in their blind implacable advance,
O'ertake before fit teaching born of these
Have magnified his scholars' countenance,—

If haply folk compassionating please
To render up—according to his store,
Each one—a portion of the life he sees

Hardly worth saving when 'tis set before
Earth s benefit should the Saint, Hakkadosh,
Favoured thereby, attain to full fourscore—

If such contribute (Scoffer, spare thy 'Bosh!')
A year, a month, a day, an hour—to eke
Life out,—in him away the gift shall wash

That much of ill-spent time recorded, streak
The twilight of the so-assisted sage
With a new sunrise: truth, though strange to speak!

Quick to the doorway, then, where youth and age,
All Israel, throligmg, waited for the last
News of the loved one. "Tis the final stage:

'Art's utmost done, the Rabbi's feet tread fast
The way of all flesh !' So announced that apt
Olive-branch Tsaddik: 'Yet, O Brethren, cast

'No eye to earthward! Look where heaven has clapped
Morning's extinguisher—yon ray-shot robe
Of sun-threads—on the constellation mapped

'And mentioned by our Elders,—yea, from Job
Down to Satam,—as figuring forth—what?
Perpend a mystery! Ye call it *Dob*—

""TheBear":I trow, a wiser namethan that
Were *Aisch*—"The Bier": a corpse those four stars hold,
Which—are not those Three Daughters weeping at,

'Banoth? I judge so: list while I unfold
The reason. As in twice twelve hours this Bier
Goes and returns, about the East-cone rolled,

' So may a setting luminary here
Be rescued from extinction, rolled anew
Upon its track of labour, strong and clear,

'About the Pole—that Salem, every Jew
Helps to build up when thus he saves some Saint
Ordained its architect. Ye grasp the clue

'To all ye seek? The Rabbi's lamp-flame faint
Sinks: would ye raise it? Lend then life from yours,
Spare each his oil-drop! Do I need acquaint

'The Chosen how self-sacrifice ensures
Ten-fold requital?—urge ye emulate
The fame of those Old Just Ones death procures

'Such praise for, that 'tis now men's sole debate
Which of theTen who volunteered at Rome
To die for glory to our Race, was great

'Beyond his fellows? Was it thou—the comb
Of iron carded, flesh from bone, away,
While thy lips sputtered thro' their bloody foam

'Without a stoppage (O brave Akiba!)
" Hear, Israel, our Lord God is One " ? Or thou,
Jischab?—who smiledst, burning, since there lay,

'Burning along with thee, our Law! I trow,
Such martyrdom might tax flesh to afford:
While that for which I make petition now,

'To what amounts it? Youngster, wilt thou hoard
Each minute of long years thou look'st to spend
In dalliance with thy spouse? Hast thou so soared,

'Singer of songs, all out of sight of friend
And teacher, warbling like a woodland bird,
There's left no Selah, 'twixt two psalms, to lend

'Our late-so-tuneful quirist? Thou, averred
The fighter born to plant our lion-flag
Once more on Zion's mount,—doth, all-unheard,

'My pleading fail to move thee? Toss some rag
Shall staunch our wound, some minute never missed
From swordsman's lustihood like thine! Wilt lag

'In liberal bestowment, show close fist
When open palm we look for,—thou, wide-known
For statecraft? whom, 'tis said, an if thou list,

'The Shah himself would seat beside his throne,
So valued were advice from thee* •.. But here
He stopped short: such a hubbub! Not alone

From those addressed, but, far as well as near,
The crowd broke into clamour: 'Mine, mine, mine-
Lop from my life the excrescence, never fear!

'At me thou lookedst, markedst me! Assign
To me that privilege of granting life—
Mine, mine!' Then he: 'Be patient! I combine

'The needful portions only, wage no strife
With Nature's law nor seek to lengthen out
The Rabbi's day unduly. 'Tis the knife

'I stop,—would cut its thread **too** short. About
As much as helps life last the proper term,
The appointed Fourscore,—that I crave and scout

'A too-prolonged existence. Let the worm
Change at fit season to the butterfly!
And here a story strikes me, to confirm

'This judgment. Of our worthies, none ranks high
As Perida who kept the famous school:
None rivalled him in patience: none! For why?

'In lecturing it was his constant rule,
Whatever he expounded, to repeat
—Ay, and keep on repeating, lest some fool

'Should fail to understand him fully—(feat
Unparalleled, Uzzean!)—do ye mark?—
Five hundred times! So might he entrance beat

'For knowledge into howsoever dark
And dense the brain-pan. Yet it happed, at close
Of one especial lecture, not one spark

'Of light was found to have illumed the rows
Of pupils round their pedagogue. " What, still
Impenetrable to me? Then—here goes!"

'And for a second time he sets the rill
Of knowledge running, and five hundred times
More re-repeats the matter—and gains *nil.*

'Out broke a voice from heaven: "Thy patience climbs
Even thus high. Choose! Wilt thou, rather, quick
Ascend to bliss—or, since thy zeal sublimes

'"Such drudgery, will thy back still bear its crick,
Bent o'er thy class,—thy voice drone spite of drouth,—
Five hundred years more at thy desk wilt stick?"

'"To heaven with me!" was in the good man's mouth,
When all his scholars,—cruel-kind were they!—
Stopped utterance, from East, West, North and South,

'Rending the welkin with their shout of "Nay—
No heaven as yet for our instructor! Grant
Five hundred years **on** earth for Perida!"

'And so long did he keep instructing! Want
Our Master no such misery! I but take
Three months of life marital. Ministrant

'Be thou of so much, Poet! Bold I make,
Swordsman, with thy frank offer!—and conclude,
Statist, with thine! One year,—ye will not shake

'My purpose to accept no more. So rude?
The very boys and girls, forsooth, must press
And proffer their addition? Thanks! The mood

'Is laudable, but I reject, no less,
One month, week, day of life more. Leave my gown,
Ye overbold ones! Your life's gift, you guess,

'Were good as any? Rudesby, get thee down!
Set my feet free, or fear my staff! Farewell,
Seniors and saviours, sharers of renown

'With Jochanan henceforward!' Straightway fell
Sleep on the sufferer; who awoke in health,
Hale everyway, so potent was the spell.

O the rare Spring-time! Who is he by stealth
Approaches Jochanan?—embowered that sits
Under his vine and figtree mid the wealth

Of garden-sights and sounds, since intermits
Never the turtle's coo, nor stays **nor** stints
The rose her smell. In homage that befits

The musing Master, Tsaddik, see, imprints
A kiss on the extended foot, low bends
Forehead to earth, then, all-obsequious, hints

'What if it should be time? A period ends—
That of the Lover's gift—his quarter-year
Of lustihood: 'tis just thou make amends,

'Return that loan with usury: so, here
Come I, of thy Disciples delegate,
Claiming our lesson from thee. Make appear

'Thy profit from experience! Plainly state
How men should Love!' Thus he: and to him thus
The Rabbi: **'Love, ye call it?—rather,** Hate!

'What wouldst thou? Is it needful I discuss
Wherefore new sWeet wine, poured in bottles caked
With old strong wine's deposit, offers us

'Spoilt liquor we recoil from, thirst-unslaked?
Like earth-smoke from a crevice, out there wound
Languors and yearnings: not a sense but ached

'Weighed on by fancied form and feature, sound
Of silver word and sight of sunny smile:
No beckoning of a flower-branch, no profound

'Purple of noon-oppression, no light wile
O* the West wind, but transformed itself till—brief-
Before me stood the phantasy ye style

'Youth's love, the joy that shall not come to grief'
Born to endure, eternal, unimpaired
By custom the accloyer, time the thief.

'Had Age's hard cold knowledge only spared
That ignorance of Youth! But now the dream,
Fresh as from Paradise, alighting fared

'As fares the pigeon, finding what may seem
Her nest's safe hollow holds a snake inside
Coiled to enclasp her. See, Eve stands supreme

'In youth and beauty! Take her for thy bride!
What Youth deemed crystal, Age finds out was dew
Morn set a-sparkle, but which noon nuick dried

'While Youth bent gazing at its red and blue
Supposed perennial,—never dreamed the sun
Which kindled the display would quench it too.

'Graces of shape and colour—everyone
With its appointed period of decay
When ripe to purpose! " Still, these dead and done,

'"Survives the woman-nature—the soft sway
Of undefinable omnipotence
O'er our strong male-stuff, we of Adam's clay."

'Ay, if my physics taught not why and whence
The attraction! Am I like the simple steer
Who. from his pasture lured inside the fence

'Where yoke and goad wait him, holds that mere
Kindliness prompts extension of the hand
Hollowed for barley, which drew near and near

'His nose—in proof that, of the horned band,
The farmer best affected him? Beside,
Steer, since his calfhood, got to understand

'Farmers a many in the world so wide
Were ready with a handful just as choice
Or choicer—maize and cuirimin, treats untried.

'Shall I wed wife, and all my days rejoice
I gained the peacock? 'Las me, round I look,
And lo—"With me thou wouldst have blamed no voice

'" Like hers that daily deafens like a rook:
I am the phoenix!"—" I, the larl:, the dove,
—The owl," for aught knows he who blindly took

'Peacock for partner, while the vale, the grove,
The plain held bird-mates in abundance. There!
Youth, try fresh capture! Age has found out Love

'Long ago. War seems better worth man's care.
But leave me! Disappointment finds a balm
Haply in slumber.' 'This first step o' the stair

'To knowledge fails me, but the victor's palm
Lies on the next to tempt him overleap
A stumbling-block. Experienced, gather calm,

'Thou excellence of Judah, cured by sleep
Which ushers in the Warrior, to replace
The Lover! At due season I shall reap

'Fruit of my planting!' So, with lengthened face,
Departed Tsaddik: and three moons more waxed
And waned, and not until the Summer-space

Waned likewise, any second visit taxed
The Rabbi's patience. But at three months' end,
Behold, supine beneath a rock, relaxed

The sage lay musing till the noon should spend
Its ardour. Up comes Tsaddik, who but he.
With 'Master, may I warn thee, nor offend,

'That time comes round again? We look to see
Sprout from the old branch—not the youngling twig—
But fruit of sycamine: deliver me,

'To share among my fellows, some plump fig,
Juicy as seedy! That same man of war,
Who. with a scantling of his store, made big

'Thy starveling nature, caused thee, safe from scar,
To share his gains by long acquaintanceship
With bump and bruise and all the knocks that are

'Of battle dowry,—he bids loose thy lip,
Explain the good of battle I Since thou know'st,
Let us know likewise! Fast the moments slip,

'More need that we improve them!'—'Ay, we boast,
We warriors in our youth, that with the sword
Man goes the swiftliest to the uttermost—

'Takes the straight way thro' lands yet unexplored
To absolute Right and Good,—may sc obtain
God's glory and man's weal too long ignored,

'Too late attained by preachments all in vain—
The passive process. Knots get tangled worse
By toying with: does cut cord close again)

'Moreover there is blessing in the curse
Peace-praisers call war. What so sure evolves
All the capacities of soul, proves nurse

'Of that self-sacrifice in men which solves
The riddle—*Wherein differs Man from beast?*
Foxes boast cleverness and courage wolves:

'Nowhere but in mankind is found the least
Touch of an impulse "To our fellows-good
I' the highest!—not diminished but increased

'"By the condition plainly understood
—Such good shall be attained at price of hurt
I* the highest to ourselves!" Fine sparks, that brood

'Confusedly in Man, 'tis war bids spurt
Forth into flame: as fares the meteor-mass,
Whereof no particle but holds inert

'Some seed of light and heat, however crass
The enclosure, yet avails not to discharge
Its radiant birth before there come to pass

'Some push external,—strong to set at large
Those dormant fire-seeds, whirl them in a trice
Through heaven and light up earth from marge to marge:

' Since force by motion makes—what erst was ice—
Crash into fervency and so expire,
Because some Djinn has hit on a device

'For proving the full prettiness of fire!
Ay, thus we prattle—young: but old—why, first,
Where's that same Right and Good—(the wise inquire)—

'So absolute, it warrants the outburst
Of blood, tears, all war's woeful consequence,
That comes of the fine flaring? Which plague cursed

'The more your benefited Man—offence,
Or what suppressed the offender? Say *it* did—
Show us the evil cured by violence,

'Submission cures not also! Lift the lid
From the maturing crucible, we find
Its slow sure coaxing-out or virtue hid

'In that same meteor-mass, hath uncombined
Those particles and, yielding for result
Gold, not mere flame, by so much leaves behind

'The heroic product. E'en the simple cult
Of Edom's children wisely bids them turn
Cheek to the smiter with *"Sic Jesus vult,"*

'Say there's a tyrant by whose death we earn
Freedom, and justify a war to wage:
Good!—were we only able to discern

'Exactly how to reach and catch and cage
Him only and no innocent beside!
Whereas the folk whereon war wreaks its rage

'—How shared they his ill-doing? Far and widest
The victims of our warfare strew the plain,
Ten thousand dead, whereof not one but died

'In faith that vassals owed their suzerain
Life: therefore each paid tribute,—honest soul,—
To that same Right and Good ourselves are fain

'To call exclusively our end. From bole
(Since ye accept in me a sycamine)
Pluck, eat, digest a fable—yea, the sole

'Fig I afford you! " Dost thou dwarf my vine?"
(So did a certain husbandman address
The tree which faced his field,) "Receive condign

'"Punishment, prompt removal by the stress
Of axe I forthwith lay unto thy root!"
Long did he hack and hew, the root no less

[4]As long defied him, for its tough strings shoot
As deep down as the boughs above aspire:
All that he did was—shake to the tree's foot

'Leafage and fruitage, things we most require
For shadow and refreshment: which good deed
Thoroughly done, behold the axe-haft tires

'His hand, and he desisting leaves unfreed
The vine he hacked and hewed for. Comes a frost.
One natural night's work, and there's little need

• Of hacking, hewing: lo, the tree's a ghost!
Perished it starves, black death from topmost bough
To farthest-reaching fibre! Shall I boast

' My rough work,—warfare,—helped more? Loving, now—
That, by comparison, seems wiser, since
The loving fool was able to avow

'He could effect his purpose, just evince
Love's willingness,—once 'ware of what she lacked,
His loved one,—to go work for that, nor wince

'At self-expenditure: he neither hacked
Nor hewed, but when the lady of his field
Required defence because the sun attacked,

'He, failing to obtain a fitter shield,
Would interpose his body, and so blaze,
Blest in the burning. Ah, were mine to wield

'The intellectual weapon—poet-lays,—
How preferably had I sung one song
Which . . . but my sadness sinks me: go your ways!

'I sleep out disappointment.' 'Come along,
Never lose heart! There's still as much again
Of our bestowment left to right the wrong

' Done by its earlier moiety—explain
Wherefore, who may! The Poet's mood comes next.
Was he not wishful the poetic vein

'Should pulse within him? Jochanan, thou reck'st
Little of what a generous flood shall soon
Float thy clogged spirit free and unperplexed

'Above dry dubitation! Song's the boon
Shall make amends for my untoward mistake
That Joshua-like thou couldst bid sun and moon—

' Fighter and Lover,—which for most men make
All they descry in heaven,—stand both stock-still
And lend assistance. Poet shalt thou wake!'

Autumn brings Tsaddik. 'Ay, there speeds the rill
Loaded with leaves: a scowling sky, beside:
The wind makes olive-trees up yonder hill

'Whiten and shudder—symptoms far and wide
Of gleaning-time's approach; and glean good store
May I presume to trust we shall, thou tried

'And ripe experimenter! Three months more
Have ministered to growth of Song: that graft
Into thy sterile stock has found at core

'Moisture, I warrant, hitherto unquaffed
By boughs, however florid, wanting sap
Of prose-experience which provides the draught

'Which song-sprouts, wanting, wither: vain we tap
A youngling stem all green and immature:
Experience must secrete the stuff, our hap

'Will be to quench Man's thirst with, glad and sure
That fancy wells up through corrective fact:
Missing which test of truth, though flowers allure

'The goodman's eye with promise, soon the pact
Is broken, and 'tis flowers,—mere words, —he finds
When things,—that's fruit,—he looked for. Well, once cracked

'The nut, how glad my tooth the kernel grinds!
Song may henceforth boast substance! Therefore, hail
Proser and poet, perfect in both kinds!

'Thou from whose eye hath dropped the envious scale
Which hides the truth of things and substitutes
Deceptive show, unaided optics fail

'To transpierce,—hast entrusted to the lute's
Soft but sure guardianship some unrevealed
Secret shall lift mankind above the brutes

'As only knowledge can?' 'A fount unsealed'
(Sighed Jochanan)' should seek the heaven in leaps
To die in dew-gems—not find death, congealed

' By contact with the cavern's nether deeps,
Earth's secretest foundation where, enswathed
In dark and fear, primaeval mystery sleeps—

'Petrific fount wherein my fancies bathed
And straight turned ice. My dreams of good and fair
In soaring upwards had dissolved, unscathed

'By any influence of the kindly air,
Singing, as each took flight, The Future—that's
Our destination, mists turn rainbows there,

[4] Which sink to fog, confounded in the flats
O' the Present! Day's the song-time for the lark,
Night for her music boasts but owls and bats.

' And what's the Past but night—the deep and dark
Ice-spring I speak of, corpse-thicked with its drowned
Dead fancies which no sooner touched the mark

*They aimed at—fact—than all at once they found
Their film-wings freeze, henceforth unfit to reach
And roll in sether, revel—robed and crowned

'As truths, confirmed by falsehood all and each—
Sovereign and absolute and ultimate!
Up with them, skyward, Youth, ere Age impeach

'Thy least of promises to re-instate
Adam in Eden! Sing on, ever sing,
Chirp till thou burst!—the fool cicada's fate,

' Who holds that after Summer next comes Spring,
Than Summer's self sun-warmed, spice-scented more.
Fighting was better! There, no fancy-fling

'Pitches you past the point was reached of yore
By Sampsons, Abners, Joabs, Judases,
The mighty men of valour who, before

'Our little day, did wonders none profess
To doubt were fable and not fact, so trust
By fancy-flights to emulate much less.

'Were I a Statesman, now! Why, that were just
To pinnacle my soul, mankind above,
A-top the universe: no vulgar lust

'To gratify—fame, greed, at this remove
Looked down upon so far—or overlooked
So largely, rather—that mine eye should rove

'World-wide and rummage earth, the many-nooked,
Yet find no unit of the human flock
Caught straying but straight comes back hooked and crooked

'By the strong shepherd who, from out his stock
Of aids proceeds to treat each ailing fleece,
Here stimulate to growth, curtail and dock

'There, baldness or excrescence,—that, with grease,
This, with up-grubbing of the bristly patch
Born of the tick-bite. How supreme a peace

'Steals o'er the Statist,—while, in wit, a match
For shrewd Ahitophel, in wisdom... well,
His name escapes me—somebody, at watch

'And ward, the fellow of Ahithophel
In guidance of the Chosen!'—at which word
Eyes closed and fast asleep the Rabbi fell.

'Cold weather!' shivered Tsaddik. 'Yet the hoard
Of the sagacious ant shows garnered grain,
Ever abundant most when fields afford

'Least pasture, and alike disgrace the plain
Tall tree and lowly Shrub. 'Tis so with us
Mortals: our age stores wealth ye seek in vain

'While busy youth culls just what we discuss
At leisure in the last days: and the last
Truly are these for Jochanan, whom thus

'I make one more appeal to! Thine amassed
Experience, now or never, let escape
Some portion of! For I perceive aghast

'The end approaches, while they jeer and jape,
These sons of Shimei:" Justify your boast!
What have ye gained from Death by twelve months' rape?"

'Statesman, what cure hast thou for—least and most—
Popular grievances? What nostrum, say,
Will make the Rich and Poor, expertly dosed,

'Forget disparity, bid each go gay
That, with his bauble,—with his burden, this?
Propose an alkahest shall melt away

'Men's lacquer, show by prompt analysis
Which is the metal, which the make-believe,
So that no longer brass shall find, gold miss

'Coinage and currency? Make haste, retrieve
The precious moments, Master!' Whereunto
There snarls an 'Ever laughing in thy sleeve,

'Pert Tsaddik? Youth indeed sees plain a clue
To guide man where life's wood is intricate:
How shall he fail to thrid its thickest through

'When every oak-trunk takes the eye? Elate
He goes from bole to brushwood, plunging finds—
Smothered in briars—that the small's the great!

'All men are men: I would all minds were minds!
Whereas 'tis just the many's mindless mass
That most needs helping: labourers and hinds

'We legislate for—not the cultured class
Which law-makes for itself nor needs the whip
And bridle,—proper help formule and ass,

'Did the brutes know! In vain our statesmanship
Strives at contenting the rough multitude:
Still the ox cries '"Tis me thou shouldst equip

'"With equine trappings!" or, in humbler mood,
"Cribful of corn for me! and, as for work—
Adequate rumination o'er my food!"

'Better remain a Poet! Needs it irk
Such an one if light, kindled in his sphere.
Fail to transfuse the Mizraim cold and murk

'Round about Goshen? Though light disappear,
Shut inside,—temporary ignorance
Got outside of, lo, light emerging clear

'Shows each astonished starer the expanse
Of heaven made bright with knowledge! That's the way,
The only way—I see it at a glance—

'To legislate for earth! As poet.... Stay!
What is ... I would that. •. were it ... I had been ...
0 sudden change, as if my arid clay

'Burst into bloom! ...' 'A change indeed, I ween,
And change the last!' sighed Tsaddik as he kissed
The closing eyelids. 'Just as those serene

'Princes of Night apprised me! Our acquist
Of life is spent, since corners only four
Hath Aisch, and each in turn was made desist

'In passage round the Pole (O Mishna's lore—
Little it profits here!) by strenuous tug
Of friends who eked out thus to full four-score

'The Rabbi's years. I see each shoulder shrug!
What have we gained? Away the Bier may roll!
To-morrow, when the Master's grave is dug,

'In with his body I may pitch the scroll
1 hoped to glorify with, text and gloss,
My Science of Man's Life: one blank's the whole!

'Love, war, song, statesmanship—no gain, all loss,
The stars' bestowment! We on **our** return
To-morrow merely find—not gold but dross,

'The body not the soul. Come, friends, we learn
At least thus much by our experiment—
That—that. . . well, find what, whom it may concern!'

But next day through the city rumours went
Of a new persecution; so, they fled
All Israel, each man,—this time,—from his tent,

Tsaddik among the foremost. When, the dread
Subsiding, Israel ventured back again
Some three months after, to the cave they sped

Where lay the Sage,—a reverential train!
Tsaddik first enters. ' What is this I view?
The Rabbi still alive? No stars remain

'Of Aisch to stop within their courses. True,
I mind me, certain gamesome boys must urge
Their offerings on me: can it be—one threw

'Life at him and it stuck? There needs the scourge
To teach that urchin manners! Prithee, grant
Forgiveness if we pretermit thy dirge

'Just to explain no friend was ministrant,
This time, of life to thee! Some jackanapes,
I gather, has presumed to foist his scant

'Scurvy unripe existence—wilding grapes
Grass-green and sorrel-sour—on that grand wine,
Mighty as mellow, which, so fancy shapes

'May fitly image forth this life of thine
Fed on the last low fattening lees—condensed
Elixir, no milk-mildness of the vine!

'Rightly with Tsaddik wert thou now incensed
Had he been witting of the mischief wrought
When, for elixir, verjuice he dispensed!'

And slowly woke,—like Shushan's flower besought
By over-curious handling to unloose
The curtained secrecy wherein she thought

Her captive bee, mid store of sweets to choose,
Would loll, in gold pavilioned lie unteased,
Sucking on, sated never,—whose, O whose

Might seem that countenance, uplift, all eased
Of old distraction and bewilderment,
Absurdly happy? 'How ye have **appeased**

'The strife within me, bred this whole content,
This utter acquiescence in my past,
Present and future life,—by whom was lent

'The power to work this miracle at last,—
Exceeds my guess. Though—*ignorance confirmed*
By knowledge sounds like paradox, I cast

* Vainly about to tell you—fitlier termed—
Of calm struck by encountering opposites,
Each nullifying either! Henceforth wormed

'From out my heart is every snake that bites
The dove that else would brood there: doubt, which kills
With hiss of "What if sorrows end delights?"

'Fear which stings ease with "Work the Master wills!"
Experience which coils round and strangles quick
Each hope with "Ask the Past if hoping

'"To work accomplishment, or proves a **trick**
Wiling thee to endeavour! Strive, fool, stop
Nowise, so live, so die—that's law! why kick

'" Against the pricks ? " All out-wormed! Slumber, drop
Thy films once more and veil the bliss within!
Experience strangle hope? Hope waves a-top

' Her wings triumphant! Come what will, I win,
Whoever loses! Every dream's assured
Of soberest fulfilment. Where's a sin

'Except in doubting that the light, which lured
The unwary into darkness, meant no wrong
Had I but marched on bold, nor paused immured

'By mists I should have pressed thro', passed along
My way henceforth rejoicing? Not the boy's
Passionate impulse he conceits so strong,

'Which, at first touch, truth, bubble-like, destroys,—
Not the man's slow conviction "Vanity
Of vanities—alike my griefs and joys!"

'Ice!—thawed (look up) each bird, each insect by
(Look round) by all the plants that break in bloom,
(Look down) by every dead friend's memory

'That smiles "Am I the dust within my tomb?"
Not either, but both these—amalgam rare—
Mix in a product, not from Nature's womb,

'But stuff which He the Operant—who shall dare
Describe His operation?—strikes alive
And thaumaturgic. I nor know nor care

'How from this tohu-bohu—hopes which dive,
And fears which soar—faith, ruined through and through
By doubt, and doubt, faith treads to dust—revive

'In some surprising sort,—as see, they do!—
Not merely foes no longer but fast friends.
What does it mean unless—O strange and new

'Discovery!—this life proves a wine-press—blends
Evil and good, both fruits of Paradise,
Into a novel drink which—who intends

'To quaff, must bear a brain for ecstasies
Attempered, not this all-inadequate
Organ which, quivering within me, dies

'—Nay, lives!—what, how,—too soon, or else too late—
I was—I am...'('He babbleth!' Tsaddik mused)
'O Thou Almighty who canst re-instate

'Truths in their primal clarity, confused
By man's perception, which is man's and made
To suit his service,—how, once disabused

'Of reason which sees light half shine half shade.
Because or flesh, the medium that adjusts
Purity to his visuals, both an aid

'And hindrance,—how to eyes earth's air encrusts.
When purged and perfect to receive truth's beam
Pouring itself on the new sense *it* trusts

'With all its plenitude of power,—how seen
The intricacies now, of shade and shine,
Oppugnant natures—**Right and Wrong, we** deem

'Irreconcilable? O eyes of mine,
Freed now of imperfection, ye avail
To see the whole sight, nor may uncombine

'Henceforth what, erst divided, caused you quail—
So huge the chasm between the false and true,
The dream and the reality! All hail,

'Day of my soul's deliverance—day the new,
The never-ending! What though every shape
Whereon I wreaked my yearning to pursue

'Even to success each semblance of escape
From my own bounded self to some all-fair
All-wise external fancy, proved a rape

'Like that old giant's, feigned of fools—on air,
Not solid flesh? How otherwise? To love—
That lesson was to learn not here—but there—

'On earth, not here! 'Tis there we learn,—there prove
Our parts upon the stuff we needs must spoil,
Striving at mastery, there bend above

'The spoiled clay potsherds, many a year of toil
Attests the potter tried his hand upon,
Till sudden he arose, wiped free from soil

'His hand, cried "So much for attempt—anon
Performance! Taught to mould the living vase,
What matter the cracked pitchers dead and gone?"

'Could I impart and could thy mind embrace
The secret, Tsaddik!" Secret none to me!'
Quoth Tsaddik, as the glory on the face

Of Jochanan was quenched. 'The truth I see
Of what that excellence of Judah wrote,
Doughty Halaphta. This a case must be

'Wherein, though the last breath have passed the throat,
So that "The man is dead" we may pronounce,
Yet is the Ruach—(thus do we denote

'The imparted Spirit)—in no haste to bounce
From its entrusted Body,—some three days
Lingers ere it relinquish **to the pounce**

'Of hawk-clawed Death his victim. Further says
Halaphta, "Instances have been, and yet
Again may be, when saints, whose earthly ways

'"Tend to perfection, very nearly get
To heaven while still on earth: and, as a fine
Interval shows where waters pure have met

'"Waves brackish, in a mixture, sweet with brine,
That's neither sea nor river but a taste
Of both—so meet the earthly and divine

'"And each is either." Thus I hold him graced—
Dying on earth, half inside and half out,
Wholly in heaven, who knows? My mind embraced

'Thy secret, Jochanan, how dare I doubt?
Follow thy Ruach, let earth, all it can,
Keep of the leavings!' Thus was brought about

The sepulture of Rabbi Jochanan:
Thou hast him,—sinner-saint, live-dead, boy-man,—
Schiphaz, on Bendimir, in Farzistan!

NOTE.—This story can have no better authority than that of the treatise, existing dispersedly in fragments of Rabbinical writing, משך של רבים, from which I might have helped myself more liberally. Thus, instead of the simple reference to ' Moses' stick',—but what if I make amends by attempting three illustrations, when some thirty might be composed on the same subject, equally justifying that pithy proverb ממשה עד משה לא קם כמשה.

I

MOSES the Meek was thirty cubits high,
The staff he strode with—thirty cubits long:
And when he leapt, so muscular and strong
Was Moses that his leaping neared the sky
By thirty cubits more: we learn thereby
He reached full ninety cubits—am I wrong?—
When, in a fight slurred o'er by sacred song,
With staff outstretched he took a leap to try
The just dimensions of the giant Og.
And yet he barely touched—this marvel lacked
Posterity to crown earth's catalogue
Of marvels—barely touched—to be exact—
The giant's ankle-bone, remained a frog
That fain would match an ox in stature: fact!

And this same fact has met with unbelief!
How saith a certain traveller? 'Young, I chanced
To come upon an object—if thou canst,
Guess me its name and nature ! 'Twas, in brief,
White, hard, round, hollow, of such length, in chief,
—And this is what especially enhanced
My wonder—that it seemed, as I advanced,
Never to end. Bind up within thy sheaf
Of marvels, this—Posterity! I walked
From end to end,—four hours walked I, who go
A goodly pace,—and found—I have not baulked
Thine expectation, Stranger? Ay or No?
Twas but Og's thigh-bone, all the while. ! stalked
Alongside of: respect to Moses, though!

in

Og's thigh-bone—if ye deem its measure strange,
Myself can witness to much length of shank
Even in birds. Upon a water's bank
Once halting, I was minded to exchange
Noon heat for cool. Quoth I *On many a grange
I have seen storks perch—legs both long and lank:
Yon stork's must touch the bottom of this tank,
Since on its top doth wet no plume derange
Of the smooth breast. I'll bathe there!' 'Do not so!'
Warned me a voice from heaven. 'A man let drop
His axe into that shallow rivulet—
As thou accountest—seventy years ago:
It fell and fell and still without a stop
Keeps falling, nor has reached the bottom yet.*

NEVER THE TIME AND THE PLACE

NEVER the time and the place
And the loved one all together!
This path—how soft to pace!
This May—what magic weather!
Where is the loved one's face?
In a dream that loved one's face meets mine,
But the house is narrow, the place is bleak
Where, outside, rain and wind combine
With a furtive ear, if I strive to speak,
With a hostile eye at my flushing cheek,
With a malice that marks each word, each sign!
O enemy sly and serpentine,
Uncoil thee from the waking man!
Do I hold the Past
Thus firm and fast
Yet doubt if the Future hold I can?
This path so soft to pace shall lead
Thro the magic of May to herself indeed!
Or narrow if needs the house must be,
Outside are the storms and strangers: we—
Oh, close, safe, warm sleep I and she,
– I and she!

PAMBO

SUPPOSE that we part (work done, comes play)
With a grave tale told in crambo
—As our hearty sires were wont to say—
Whereof the hero is Pambo?
Do you happen to know who Pambo was ?
Nor I—but this much have heard of him:
He entered one day a college-class,
And asked—was it so absurd of him?—

PAMBO

May Pambo learn wisdom ere practise it ?
In wisdomJ,fain would ground me:
Since wisdom is centred in Holy Writ,
Some psalm to the purpose expound mer

That psalm,' the Professor smiled/shall be
Untroubled by doubt which dirtieth
Pellucid streams when an ass like thee
Would drink there—the Nine-and-thirtieth.

'Verse first: / *said I will look to my ways*
That I with my tongue offend not.
How now? Why stare? Art struck in amaze?
Stop, stay! The smooth line hath an end knot!

'He's gone!—disgusted my text should prove
Too easy to need explaining?
Had he waited, the blockhead might find I move
To matter that pays remaining!'

Long years went by, when—'Ha, who's this?
Do I come on the restive scholar
I had driven to Wisdom's goal, I wis,
But that he slipped the collar?

'What? Arms crossed, brow bent, thought-immersed ?
A student indeed! Why scruple
To own that the lesson proposed him first
Scarce suited so apt a pupil?

' Come back! From the beggarly elements
To a more recondite issue
We pass till we reach, at all events,
Some point that may puzzle . .. Why "pish" you?'

From the ground looked piteous up the head:
'Daily and nightly, Master,
Your pupil plods thro' that text you read,
Yet gets on never the faster.

'At the self-same stand,—now old, then young!
/ *will look to my ways*—were doing
As easy as saying!—*that I with my tongue*
Offend not—and 'scape pooh-poohing

' From sage and simple, doctor and dunce?
Ah, nowise! Still doubts so muddy
The stream I would drink at once,—but once!
That—thus I resume my study!'

Brother, brother, I share the blame,
Arcades sumus ambo !
Darkling, I keep my sunrise-aim,
Lack not the critic's flambeau,
And *look to my ways*, yet, much the same,
Offend with my tongue—like Pambo!

FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

1884

•His genius was jocular, but, when disposed, he could be very serious.'—Article •Snakespear JEREMY COLLIER'S *Historical &c. Dictionary,* 2nd edition, 1701.

' You, Sir, I entertain you for one of ray Hundred; only, I do not like the fashion of your garments: you will say they are Persian: but let them be changed.'—fiTtey *Lear,* act Hi. sc. 6.

PROLOGUE

PRAY, Reader, have you eaten ortolans
Ever in Italy?
Recall how cooks there cook them: for my plan's
To—Lyre with Spit ally.
They pluck the birds,—some dozen luscious lumps,
Or more or fewer,—
Then roast them, heads by heads and rumps by rumps,
Stuck on a skewer.
But first,—and here's the point I fain would press,—
Don't think I'm tattling!—
They interpose, to curb its lusciousness,
—What, 'twixt each fatling?
First comes plain bread, crisp, brown, a toasted square:
Then, a strong sage-leaf:
(So we find books with flowers dried here and there
Lest leaf engage leaf.)
First, food—then, piquancy—and last of all
Follows the thirdling:
Through wholesome hard, sharp soft, your tooth must bite
Ere reach the birdling.
Now, were there only crust to crunch, you'd wince
Unpalatable!
Sage-leaf is bitter-pungent—so's a quince:
Eat each who's able!
But through all three bite boldly—lo, the gust!
Flavour—no fixture-
Flies, permeating flesh and leaf and crust
In fine admixture.
So with your meal, my poem: masticate
Sense, sight and song there!

Digest these, and I praise your peptics' state,
Nothing found wrong there.
Whence springs my illustration who can tell?
—The more surprising
That here eggs, milk, cheese, fruit suffice so well
For gormandizing.
A fancy-freak by contrast born of thee,
Delightful Gressoney!
Who laughest 'Take what is, trust what maybe!'
That's Life's true lesson,—eh?

MAISON DELAPIERRE,
GRESSONEY ST. JEAN, VAL D'AOSTA,
September 12, '83.

THE EAGLE

DERVISH—(though yet un-dervished, call him so
No less beforehand: while he drudged our way.
Other his worldly name was: when he wrote
Those versicles we Persians praise him for,
—True fairy-work—Ferishtah grew his style)—
Dervish Ferishtah walked the woods one eve,
And noted on a bough a raven's nest
Whereof each youngling gaped with callow beak
Widened by want; for why? beneath the tree
Dead lay the mother-bird. 'A piteous chance!
'How shall they 'scape destruction?' sighed the sage
—Or sage about to be, though simple still.
Responsive to which doubt, sudden there swooped
An eagle downward, and behold he bore
(Great-hearted) in his talons flesh wherewith
He stayed their craving, then resought the sky.
'Ah, foolish, faithless me!' the observer smiled,
'Who toil and moil to eke out life, when lo
Providence cares for every hungry mouth!'
To profit by which lesson, home went he,
And certain days sat musing,—neither meat
Nor drink would purchase by his handiwork.
Then,—for his head swam and his limbs grew faint,—
Sleep overtook the unwise one, whom in dream
God thus admonished: 'Hast thou marked my deed?
Which part assigned by providence dost judge
Was meant for man's example? Should he play
The helpless weakling, or the helpful strength
That captures prey and saves the perishing?
Sluggard, arise: work, eat, then feed who lack!'

Waking, 'I have arisen, work I will,
Eat, and so following. Which lacks food the more,
Body or soul in me? I starve in soul:
So may mankind: and since men congregate
In towns, not woods,—to Ispahan forthwith!'

Round us the wild creatures, overhead the trees,
Underfoot the moss-tracks,—life and love with these!
I to wear a fawn-skin, thou to dress in flowers:
All the long lone Summer-day, that green" wood life of ours I

Rich-pavilioned, rather,—still the world without.—
Inside—gold-roofed silk-walled silence round about!
Queen it thou on purple,—I, at watch and ward
Couched beneath the columns, gaze, thy slave, love*s guard!

So, for us no world? Let throngs press thee to me!
Up and down amid men, heart by heart fare we!
Welcome squalid vesture, harsh voice, hateful face!
God is soul, souls I and thou: with souls should souls have place,

THE MELON-SELLER

GOING his rounds one day in Ispahan,—
Half-way on Dervishhood, not wholly there,—
Ferishtah, as he crossed a certain bridge,
Came startled on a well-remembered face.
'Can it be? What, turned melon-seller—thou?
Clad in such sordid garb, thy seat yon step
Where dogs brush by thee and express contempt?
Methinks, thy head-gear is some scooped-out gourd!
Nay, sunk to slicing up. for readier sale,
One fruit whereof the whole scarce feeds a swine?
Wast thou the Shah's Prime Minister, men saw

THE MELON-SELLER

Ride on **his** right-hand while **a** trumpet blew
And Persia **hallad** the* Favourite? Yea, twelve years
Are past, I judge, since that transcendency,
And thou didst peculate and art abased:
No less, twelve years since, thou didst hold in hand
Persia, couldst halve and quarter, mince its pulp
As pleased thee, and distribute—melon-like-
Portions to whoso played the parasite,
Or suck—thyself—each juicy morsel. How
Enormous thy abjection,—hell from heaven,
Made tenfold hell by contrast! Whisper me!
Dost thou curse God for granting twelve years' bliss
Only to prove this day's the direr lot?'
Whereon the beggar raised a brow, once more
Luminous and imperial, from the rags.
* Fool, does thy folly think my foolishness
Dwells rather on the fact that God appoints
A day of woe to the unworthy one,
Than that the unworthy one, by God's award,
Tasted joy twelve years long? Or buy **a** slice,
Or go to school!'

To school Ferishtah went;
And, schooling ended, passed from Ispahan
To Nishapur, that Elburz looks above
—Where they dig turquoise: there kept school himself,
The melon-seller's speech, his stock in trade.
Some say a certain Jew adduced the word
Out of their book, it sounds so much the same,
אֶת־הַטּוֹב נְקַבֵּל מֵאֵת הָאֱלֹהִים
וְאֶת־הָרַע לֹא נְקַבֵּל׃ In Persian phrase,
'Shall we receive good at the hand of God
And evil not receive?' But great wits **jump.**

Wish no word unspoken, want no look away!
What if words were but mistake, and looks
—too sudden, say I
Be unjust for once, Love! Bear it—well I may!
Do me justice always? Bid my heart—thine shrine-
Render back its store of gifts, old looks and words of thine
—Oh, so all unjust—the less deserved, the more divine?

SHAH ABBAS

ANYHOW, once full Dervish, youngsters came
To gather up his own words, 'neath a rock
Or else a palm, by pleasant Nishapur.
Said someone, as Ferishtah paused abrupt,
Reading a certain passage from the roll
Wherein is treated of Lord Ali's life:
*** Master, explain this incongruity!**
When I dared question "It is beautiful,
But is it true?"—thy answer was "In truth
Lives beauty." I persisting—"Beauty—yes,
In thy mind and in my mind, every mind
That apprehends: but outside—so to speak—
Did beauty live in deed as well as word,
Was this life lived, was this death died—not dreamed?'
"Many attested it for fact" saidst thou.
"Many!" but mark, Sir! Half as long ago
As such things were,—supposing that they were,—
Reigned great Shah Abbas: he too lived and died
—How say they? Why, so strong of arm, of foot
So swift, he stayed a lion in his leap
On a stag's haunch,—with one hand grasped the stag,
With one struck down the lion: yet, no less,
Himself, that same day, feasting after sport,
Perceived a spider drop into his wine,
Let fall the flagon, died of simple fear.
So all say,—so dost thou say?'

'Wherefore not?'
Ferishtah smiled: ' though strange, the story stands
Clear-chronicled: none tells it otherwise:
The fact's eye-witness bore the cup, beside.'
'And dost thou credit one cup-bearer's tale,
False, very like, and futile certainly,
Yet hesitate to trust what many tongues
Combine to testify was beautiful
In deed as well as word? No fool's report
Of lion, stag and spider, but immense
With meaning for mankind,—thy race,—thyself?'
Whereto the Dervish: 'First amend, my son.
Thy faulty nomenclature, call belief
Belief indeed, nor grace with such a name
This easy acquiescence of mankind
In matters nowise worth dispute, since life
Lasts merely the allotted moment. Lo—
That lion-stag-and-spider tale leaves fixed
The fact for us that somewhen Abbas reigned,

Died, somehow slain,—a useful registry,—
Which therefore we—"believe"? Stand forward, thou.
My Yakub, son of Yusuf, son of Zal!
I advertise thee that our liege, the Shah
Happily regnant, hath become assured,
By opportune discovery, that thy sires,
Son by the father upwards, track their line
To—whom but that same bearer of the cup
Whose inadvertency was chargeable
With what therefrom ensued, disgust and death
To Abbas Shah, the over-nice of soul?
Whence he appoints thee,—such his clemency,—
Not death, thy due, but just a double tax
To pay, on thy particular bed of reeds
Which flower into the brush that makes a broom
Fit to sweep ceilings clear of vermin. Sure,
Thou dost believe the story nor dispute
That punishment should signalize its truth?
Down therefore with some twelve dinars! Why start,
—The stag's way with the lion hard on haunch?
"Believe the story?"—how thy words throng fast!—
"Who saw this, heard this, said this, wrote down this,
That and the other circumstance to prove
So great a prodigy surprised the world?
Needs must thou prove me fable can be fact
Or ere thou coax one piece from out my pouch!"'

*There we agree, Sir: neither of us knows,
Neither accepts that tale on evidence
Worthy to warrant the large word—belief.
Now I get near thee! Why didst pause abrupt,
Disabled by emotion at a tale
Might match—be frank!—for credibility
The figment of the spider and the cup?
—To wit, thy roll's concerning Ali's life,
Unevidenced—thine own word! Little boots
Our sympathy with fiction! When I read
The annals and consider of Tahmasp
And that sweet sun-surpassing star his love.
I weep like a cut vine-twig, though aware
Zurah's sad fate is fiction, since the snake
He saw devour her,—how could such exist,
Having nine heads ? No snake boasts more than three!
I weep, then laugh—both actions right

But thou, Ferishtah, sapiency confessed,
When at the Day of Judgment God shall ask
"Didst thou believe?"—what wilt thou plead? Thy tears?
(Nay, they fell fast and stain the parchment still)
What if thy tears meant love? Love lacking ground
—Belief,—avails thee as it would avail
My own pretence to favour since, forsooth,
I loved the lady—I, who needs must laugh
To hear a snake boasts nine heads: they have three!*

'Thanks for the well-timed help that's born, behold,
Out of thy words, my son,—belief and love!
Hast heard of Ishak son of Absal? Ay,
The very same we heard of, ten years since,
Slain in the wars: he comes back safe and sound,—
Though twenty soldiers saw him die at Yezdt,—
Just as a single mule-and-baggage boy
Declared 'twas like he some day would,—for why?
The twenty soldiers lied, he saw him stout,
Cured of all wounds at once by smear of salve.
A Mubid s manufacture: such the tale.
Now, when his pair of sons were thus apprised
Effect was twofold on them. "Hail!" crowed This:
"Dearer the news than dayspring after night!
The cure-reporting youngster warrants me
Our father shall make glad our eyes once more,
For whom, had outpoured life of mine sufficed
To bring him back, free broached were every vein!"
" Avaunt, delusive tale-concocter, news
Cruel as meteor simulating dawn!"
Whimpered the other:" Who believes this boy
Must disbelieve his twenty seniors: no,
Return our father shall not! Might my death
Purchase his life, how promptly would the dole
Be paid as due!" Well, ten years pass,—aha,
Ishak is marching homeward,—doubts, not he,
Are dead and done with! So, our townsfolk straight
Must take on them to counsel. "Go thou gay,
Welcome thy father thou of ready faith!
Hide thee, contrariwise, thou faithless one.
Expect paternal frowning, blame and blows!"
So do our townsfolk counsel: dost demur?'

'Ferishtah like those simpletons—at loss
In what is plain as pikestaff? Pish! Suppose
The trustful sonixadsighed "Somuch the worse!
Returning means—retaking heritage
Enjoyed these ten years, who should say me nay?"
How should such trust reward him? Trustlessness
—O' the other hand—were what procured most praise
To him who judged return impossible,
Yet hated heritage procured thereby.
A fool were Ishak if he failed to prize
Mere head's work less than heart's work: no fool he!'

'Is God less wise? Resume the roll!'
They did.

You groped your way across my room which was
dear dark dead of night;
At each fresh step a stumble was: but, once
your lamp alight.
Easy and plain you walked again: so soon
all wrong grew right!
What lay on floor to trip your foot? Each
object, late awry,
Looked fitly placed, nor proved offence to
footing free—for why?
The lamp showed all', discordant late, grown
simple symmetry.
Be love your light and trust your guide, with
these explore my heart I
No obstacle to trip you then, strike hands and
souls apart!
Since rooms and hearts are furnished so,—
light shows you,—needs love starts.

THE FAMILY

A CERTAIN neighbour lying sick to death,
Ferishtah grieved beneath a palm-tree, whence
He rose at peace: whereat objected one
'Gudarz our friend gasps in extremity.
Sure, thou art ignorant now close at hand
Death presses, or the cloud, which fouled so late
Thy face, had deepened down not lightened off.'

'I judge there will be respite, for I prayed.'

'Sir, let me understand, of charity!
Yestereve, what was thine admonishment?
"All-wise, all-good, all-mighty—God is such!"
How then should man, the all-unworthy, dare
Propose to set aside a thing ordained?
To pray means—substitute man's will for God's:
Two best wills cannot be: by consequence,
What is man bound to but—assent, say I?
Rather to rapture of thanksgiving; since
That which seems worst to man to God is best,
So, because God ordains it, best to man.
Yet man—the foolish, weak and wicked—prays!
Urges "My best were better, didst Thou know"!'

'List to a tale. A worthy householder
Of Shiraz had three sons, beside a spouse
Whom, cutting gourds, a serpent bit, whereon
The offended limb swelled black from foot to fork.
The husband called in aid a leech renowned
World-wide, confessed the lord of surgery,
And bade him dictate—who forthwith declared
Sole remedy is amputation." Straight
The husband sighed "Thou knowest: be it so!"
His three sons heard their mother sentenced: "Pause!"
Outbroke the elder: "Be precipitate
Nowise, I pray thee I Take some gentler way,
Thou sage of much resource! I will not doubt
But science still may save foot, leg and thigh!"
The next in age snapped petulant: "Too rash!
No reason for this maiming! What, Sir Leech,
Our parent limps henceforward while we leap?
Shame on thee! Save the limb thou must and shalt!"
"Shame on yourselves, ye bold ones!" followed up
The brisk third brother, youngest, pertest too:
"The leech knows all things, we are ignorant;
What he proposes, gratefully accept!
For me, had I some unguent bound to heal
Hurts in a twinkling, hardly would I dare
Essay its virtue and so cross the sage
By cure his skill pronounces folly. Quick!
No waiting longer! There the patient lies:
Out then with implements ana operate!"'

'Ah, the young devil!'

'Why, his reason chimed
Right with the Hakim's.'

'Hakim's, ay—but chit's?
How ? what the skilled eye saw and judged of weight
To overbear a heavy consequence,
That—shall a sciolist affect to see?

All he saw—that is, all such oaf should see,
Was just the mother's suffering.'

'In my tale,
Be God the Hakim: in the husband's case,
Call ready acquiescence—aptitude
Angelic, understanding swift and sure:
Call the first son—a wise humanity,
Slow to conceive but duteous to adopt.
See in the second son—humanity,
Wrong-headed yet right-hearted, rash but land.
Last comes the cackler of the brood, our chit
Who. aping wisdom all beyond his years,
Thinks to discard humanity itself:
Fares like the beast which should affect to fly
Because a bird with wings may spurn the ground,
So, missing heaven and losing earth—drops how
But hell-ward? No, be man and nothing more—
Man who, as man conceiving, hopes and fears,
And craves and deprecates, and loves, and loathes,
And bids God help him, till death touch his eyes
And show God granted most, denying all.'

Man I am and man would be. Love—mere man and nothing more.
Bid me seem no other! Eagles boast of pinions—let them soar I
I may put forth angel's plumage, once unmanned, but not before.

Now on earth, to stand suffices,—nay, if kneeling serves, to kneel:
Hereyoufrontme,hereIfindtheallofheaven that earth can feel:
Sense looks straight,—not over, under, perfect sees beyond appeal.

Good you are and wise, full circle: what to me were more outside?
Wiser wisdom, better goodness? Ah, such want the angel's wide
Sense to take andholdand keep them ! Mine at least has never tried.

THE SUN

'AND what might that bold man's announcement be'—
Ferishtah questioned—'which so moved thine ire
That thou didst curse, nay, cuff and kick—in short,
Confute the announcer? Wipe those drops away
Which start afresh upon thy face at mere
Mention of such enormity: now, speak!'

'He scrupled not to say—(thou warrantest,
0 patient Sir, that I unblamld repeat
Abominable words which blister tongue?)
God once assumed on earth a human shape:
(Lo,Ihavespitten!) Dared I ask the grace,
Fain would I hear, of thy subtility,
From out what hole in man's corrupted heart
Creeps such a maggot: fancies verminous
Breed in the clots there, but a monster born
Of pride and folly like this pest—thyself
Only canst trace to egg-shell it hath chipped.*

The sun rode high. 'During our ignorance'—
Began Ferishtah—'folk esteemed as God
Yon orb: for argument, suppose him so,—
Be it the symbol, not the symbolized,
I and thou safelier take upon our lips.
Accordingly, yon orb that we adore
—What is he? Author of all light and life:
Such one must needs be somewhere: this is he.
Like what? If I may trust my human eyes,
A ball composed of spirit-fire, whence sprines
—What, from this ball, my arms could circle round?
All I enjoy on earth. By consequence,
Inspiring me with—what? Why, love and praise.
I eat a palatable fig—there's love
In little: who first planted what I pluck,
Obtains my little praise, too: more of both
Keeps due proportion with more cause for each:
So, more and ever more, till most of all
Completes experience, and the orb, descried
Ultimate giver of all good, perforce
Gathers unto himself all love, all praise,
Is worshipped—which means loved and praised at height.
Back to the first good: 'twas the gardener gave
Occasion to my palate's pleasure: grace,
Again on his part, demanded thanks on mine.
Go up above this giver,—step by step,
Gain a conception of what—(how and why,
Matters not now)—occasioned him to give,
Appointed him the gardener of the ground,—
I mount by just progression slow and sure
To some prime giver—here assumed yon orb—
Who takes my worship. Whom have I in mind,
Thus worshipping, unless a man, my like

Howe'er above me? Man, I say—how else,
I being man who worship? Here's my hand
Lifts first a mustard-seed, then weight on weight
Greater and ever greater, till at last
It lifts a melon, I suppose, then stops—
Hand-strength expended wholly: so, my love
First lauds the gardener for the fig his gift.
Then, looking higher, loves and lauds still more,
Who hires the ground, who owns the ground, Sheikh, Shah,
On and away, away and ever on,
Till, at the last, it loves and lauds the orb
Ultimate cause of all to laud and love.
Where is the break, the change of quality
In hand's power, soul's impulsion? Gift was grace,
The greatest as the smallest. Had I stopped
Anywhere in the scale, stayed love and praise
As so far only fit to follow gift,
Saying "I thanked the gardener for his fig,
But now that, lo, the Shah has filled my purse
With tomans which avail to purchase me
A fig-tree forest, shall I pay the same
With love and praise, the gardener's proper fee?"
Justly would whoso bears a brain object
"Giving is giving, gift claims gift's return,
Do thou thine own part, therefore: let the Shah
Ask more from who has more to pay." Perchance
He gave me from his treasure less by much
Than the soil's servant: let that be! My part
Is plain—to meet and match the gift and gift
With love and love, with praise and praise, till both
Cry "All of us is thine, we can no more!"
So shall I do man's utmost—man to man:
For as our liege the Shah's sublime estate
Merely enhaloes, leaves him man the same,
So must I count that orb I call a fire
(Keep to the language of our ignorance)
Something that's fire and more beside. Mere fire
Is it a force which, giving, knows it gives.
And wherefore, so may look for love and praise
From me, fire's like so far, however less
In all beside? Prime cause this fire shall be,
Uncaused, all-causing: hence begin the gifts,
Thither must go my love and praise—to what?
Fire? Symbol fitly serves the symbolized
Herein,—that this same object of my thanks,
While to my mind nowise conceivable
Except as mind no less than fire, refutes
Next moment mind's conception: fire is fire—
While what I needs must thank, must needs include
Purpose with power,—humanity like mine,
Imagined, for the dear necessity,
One moment in an object which the next
Confesses unimaginable. Power!
—What need of will, then? nought opposes power:
Why, purpose? any change must be for worse:
And what occasion for beneficence
When all that is, so is and so must be?
Best being best now, change were for the worse.
Accordingly discard these qualities
Proper to imperfection, take for type
Mere fire, eject the man, retain the orb,—
The perfect and, so, inconceivable,—
And what remains to love and praise? A stone
Fair-coloured proves a solace to my eye,
Rolled by my tongue brings moisture curing drouth,
And struck by steel emits a useful spark:
Shall I return it thanks, the insentient thing?
No,—man once, man for ever—man in soul
As man in body: just as this can use
Its proper senses only, see and hear,
Taste, like or loathe according to its law
And not another creature's,—even so
Man's soul is moved by what, if it in turn
Must move, is kindred soul: receiving good
—Man's way—must make man's due acknowledgment,
No other, even while he reasons out
Plainly enough that, were the man unmanned,
Made angel of, angelic every way,
The love and praise that rightly seek and find
Their man-like object now,—instructed more,
Would go forth idly, air to emptiness.
Our human flower, sun-ripened, proffers scent
Though reason prove the sun lacks nose to feed
On what himself made grateful: flower and man,
Let each assume that scent and love alike
Being once born, must needs have use! Man's part
Is plain—to send love forth,—astray, per-
No matter, he has done his part.'

'Wherefrom
What is to follow—if I take thy sense—
But that the sun—the inconceivable
Confessed by man—comprises, all the same,
Man's every-day conception of himself—
No less remaining unconceived!'

•Agreed!'

'Yet thou, insisting on the right of man
To feel as man, not otherwise,—man, bound
By man's conditions neither less nor more,
Obliged to estimate as fair or foul,
Right, wrong, good, evil, what man's faculty
Adjudges such,—how canst thou,—plainly bound
To take man's truth for truth and only truth,—
Dare to accept, in just one case, as truth
Falsehood confessed? Flesh simulating fire—
Our fellow-man whom we his fellows know
For dust—instinct with fire unknowable!
Where's thy man-needed truth—its proof, nay print
Of faintest passage on the tablets traced
By man, termed knowledge? 'Tis conceded thee,
We lack such fancied union—fire with flesh:
But even so, to lack is not to gain
Our lack's suppliance: where & the trace of such
Recorded?'

'What if such a tracing were?
If some strange story stood,—whate'er its worth,—
That the immensely yearned-for, once befell,
—The sun was flesh once?—(keep the figure!)'

•How?
An union inconceivable was fact?'

' Son, if the stranger have convinced himself
Fancy is fact—the sun, besides a fire,
Holds earthly substance somehow fire pervades
And yet consumes not,—earth, he understands,
With essence he remains a stranger to,—
Fitlier thou saidst" I stand appalled before
Conception unattainable by me
Who need it most"—than this—"What? boast he holds
Conviction where I see conviction's need,
Alas,—and nothing else? then what remains
But that I straightway curse, cuff, kick the fool!"'

Fire is in the flint; true,, once a spark escapes,
Fire forgets the kinship, soars till fancy shapes
Some befitting cradle where the babe had birth—
*Wholly heaven*s the product, unallied to earth.*
Splendours recognized as perfect in the star!—
In our flint their home was, housed as now they are.

MIHRABSHAH

QUOTH an inquirer, 'Praise the Merciful!
My thumb which yesterday a scorpion nipped—
(It swelled and blackened)—lo, is sound again!
By application of a virtuous root
The burning has abated: that is well:
But now methinks I have a mind to ask,—
Since this discomfort came of culling herbs
Nor meaning harm,—why needs a scorpion be?
Yea, there began, from when my thumb last throbbed,
Advance in question-framing, till I asked
Wherefore should any evil hap to man—
From ache of flesh to agony of soul—
Since God's All-mercy mates All-potency?
Nay, why permits He evil to Himself—
Man's sin, accounted such? Suppose a world
Purged of all pain, with fit inhabitant—
Man pure of evil in thought, word and deed-
Were it not well* Then, wherefore otherwise?
Too good result? But He is wholly good!
Hard to effect? Ay, were He impotent!
Teach me, Ferishtahl'

Said the Dervish: 'Friend,
My chance, escaped to-day, was worse than thine:
I, as I woke this morning, raised my head,
Which never tumbled but stuck fast on neck.
Was not I glad and thankful!*

•How could head
Tumble from neck, unchopped—inform me first!
Unless we take Firdausi's tale for truth,
Who ever heard the like?'

'The like might hap
By natural law: I let my staff fall thus—

It goes to ground, I know not why. Suppose,
Whene'er my held war-loosed, it skyward sprang
As certainly, and all experience proved
That, just as staves when unsupported sink,
So, unconfined, they soar?'

'Let such be law-
Why, a new chapter of sad accidents
Were added to humanity's mischance,
No doubt at all, and as a man's false step
Now lays him prone on earth, contrariwise,
Removal from his shoulder of a weight
Might start him upwards to perdition. Ay!
But, since such law exists in just thy brain,
I shall not hesitate to doff my cap
For fear my head take flight.'

'Nor feel relief
Finding it firm on shoulder. Tell me. now I
What were the bond 'twixt man and man, dost judge,
Pain once abolished? Come, be true I Our Shah-
How stands he in thy favour? Why that shrug?
Is not he lord and ruler?'

'Easily!
His mother bore him, first of those four wives
Provided by his father, such his luck:
Since when his business simply was to breathe
And take each day's new bounty. There he stands—
Where else had I stood, were his birth-star mine?
No, to respect men's power, I needs must see
Men's bare hands seek, find, grasp and wield the sword
Nobody else can brandish! Bless his heart,
'Tis said, he scarcely counts his fingers right!'

'Well, then—Ms princely doles! from every feast
Off go the feasted with the dish they ate
And cup they drank from,—nay, a change besides
Of garments'...

'Sir, put case, for service done,—
Or best, for love's sake,—such and such a slave
Sold his allowance of sour lentil soup
To therewith purchase me a pipe-stick,—nay,
If he, by but one hour, cut short his sleep
To clout my shoe,—that were a sacrifice!'

'All praise his gracious bearing.'

'All praise mine-*
Or would praise did they never make approach
Except on all-fours, crawling till I bade
"Now that with eyelids thou hast touched the earth,
Come close and have no fear, poor nothingness!"
What wonder that the lady-rose I woo
And palisade about from every wind.
Holds herself handsomely? The wilding, now,
Ruffled outside at pleasure of the blast.
That still lifts up with something of a smile
Its poor attempt at bloom'...

'A blameless life,
Where wrong might revel with impunity—
Remember thatr

'The falcon on his fist—
Reclaimed and trained and belled and beautified
Till she believes herself the Simorgh's match—
She only deigns destroy the antelope,
Stoops at no carrion-crow: thou marvel-fest?'

'So be it, then! He wakes no love in thee
For any one of divers attributes
Commonly deemed loveworthy. All the same,
I would he were not wasting, slow but sure,
With that internal ulcer"...

'Say'st thou so?
How should I guess? Alack, poor soul! But stay—
Sure in the reach of art some remedy
Must lie to hand: or if it lurk,—that leech
Of fame in Tebriz, why not seek his aid?
Couldst not thou, Dervish, counsel in the case?'

'My counsel might be—what imports a pang
The more or less, which puts an end to one
Odious in spite of every attribute
Commonly deemed loveworthy?'

'Attributes?
Faugh!—nay, Ferishtah,—'tis an ulcer, think!
Attributes, quotha ? Here's poor flesh and blood,
Like thine and mine and every man's, a prey
To hell-fire! Hast thou lost thy wits for once?'

' Friend, here they are to find and profit by!
Put pain from out the world, what room were left

For thanks to God, for love to Man? Why thanks,—
Except for some escape, whate'er the style,
From pain that might be, name it as thou mayst?
Why love,—when all thy kind, save me, suppose,
Thyfather,andthyson,and...well,thydog,
To eke the decent number out—we few
Who happen—like a handful of chance stars
From the unnumbered host—to shine o'erhead
And lend thee light,—our twinkle all thy store,—
We only take thy love! Mankind, forsooth?
Who sympathizes with their general joy
Foolish as undeserved? But pain—see God's
Wisdom at work!—man's heart is made to judge
Pain deserved nowhere by the common flesh
Our birthright,—bad and good deserve alike
No pain, to human apprehension! Lust,
Greed, cruelty, injustice, crave (we hold)
Due punishment from somebody, no doubt:
But ulcer in the midriff! that brings flesh
Triumphant from the bar whereto ar-

Soul quakes with reason. In theeyeof God
Pain may have purpose and be justified:
Man's sense avails to only see, in pain,
A hateful chance no man but would avert
Or, failing, needs must pity. Thanks to God
And love to man,—from man take these away,
And what is man worth? Therefore, Mihrab Shah,
Tax me my bread and salt twice over, claim
Laila my daughter for thy sport,—go on!
Slay my son's self, maintain thy poetry
Beats mine,—thou meritest a dozen deaths!
But—ulcer in the stomach,—ah, poor soul.
Try a fig-plaster: may it ease thy pangs!

Soothe head aches and the limbs are faint!
Flesh is a burthen—even to you!
Can I force a smile with a fancy quaint?
Why are my ailments none or few?

In the soul of me sits sluggishness:
Body so strong and will so weak!
The slave stands fit for the labour—yes,
But the master's mandate is still to seek.

You, now—what if the outside clay
Helped, not hindered the inside flame?
My dim to-morrow—your plain to-day,
Yours the achievement, mine the aim?

So were it rightly, so shall it be!
Only, while earth we pace together
For the purpose apportioned you and me,
Closer we tread for a common tether.

You shall sigh ' Wait for his sluggish soul!
Shame he should lag, not lamed as I!
May not I smile ' Ungained her goal:
Body may reach her—by-and-by?'

A CAMEL-DRIVER

'How of his fate, the Pilgrims' soldier-guide
Condemned' (Ferishtah questioned), 'for he slew
The merchant whom he convoyed with his bales
—A special treachery?'

'Sir, the proofs were plain:
Justice was satisfied: between two boards
The rogue was sawn asunder, rightly served.'

'With all wise men's approval—mine at least.'

'Himself, indeed, confessed as much. "I die
Justly" (groaned he) "through over-greediness
Which tempted me to rob: but grieve the most
That he who quickened sin at slumber,—ay,
Prompted and pestered me till thought grew deed,—
The same is fled to Syria and is safe.
Laughing at me thus left to pay for both.
My comfort is that God reserves for him
Hell's hottest" ...'

'Idle words.'

'Enlighten me!
Wherefore so idle? Punishment by man
Has thy assent,—the word is on thy lips.
By parity of reason, punishment
By God should likelier win thy thanks and praise.'

'Man acts as man must: God, as God beseems.
A camel-driver, when his beast will bite,
Thumps her athwart the muzzle: why?'

'How else
Instruct the creature—mouths should munch, not bite?'

' True, he is man, knows but man's trick to teach.
Suppose some plain word, told her first of all,
Had hindered any biting?'

A CAMEL-DRIVER

'Find him such.
And fit the beast with understanding first!
No understandifig.animals; like Rakhsh
Nowadays, Master! Till they breed on earth.
For teaching—blows must serve.*

'Who deals the blow—
What if by some rare method,—magic, say,—
He saw into the biter's very soul,
And knew the fault was so repented of
It could not happen twice?'

'That's something: still,
I hear, methinks, the driver say "No less
Take thy fault's due! Those long-necked sisters, see,
Lean all a-stretch to know if biting meets
Punishment or enjoys impunity.
For their sakes—thwack!"'

'The journey home at end,
The solitary beast safe-stabled now,
In comes the driver to avenge a wrong
Suffered from six months since,—apparently
With patience, nay, approval: when the jaws
Met i' the small of the arm, "Ha, Ladykin.
Still at thy frolics, girl of gold?" laughed he:
" Eat flesh ? Rye-grass content thee rather with,
Whereof accept a bundle!" Now,—what change!
Laughter by no means! Now'tis "Fiend, thy frisk
Was fit to find thee provender, didst jud$e?
Behold this red-hot twy-prong, thus I stick
To hiss i* the soft of thee!"'

'Behold? behold
A crazy noddle, rather! Sure the brute
Might wellnigh have plain speech coaxed out of tongue,
And grow as voluble as Rakhsh himself
At such mad outrage. "Could I take thy mind,
Guess thy desire? If biting was offence
Wherefore the rye-grass bundle, why each day's
Patting and petting, but to intimate
My playsomeness had pleased thee ? Thou endowed
With reason, truly!"'

'Reason aims to raise
Some makeshift scaffold-vantage midway, whence
Man dares, for life's brief moment, peer below:
But ape omniscience? Nay! The ladder lent
To climb by, step and step, until we reach
The little foothold-rise allowed mankind
To mount on and thence guess the sun's survey—
Shall this avail to show us world-wide truth
Stretched for the sun's descrying ? Reason bids
" Teach, Man, thy beast his duty first of all
Or last of all, with blows if blows must be,—
How else accomplish teaching? " Reason adds
" Before man's First, and after man's poor Last,
God operated and will operate."
—Process of which man merely knows this much,—
That nowise it resembles man's at all,
Teaching or punishing.'

'It follows, then,
That any malefactor I would smite
With God's allowance, God himself will spare
Presumably. No scape-grace? Then, rejoice
Thou snatch-grace safe in Syria!'

'Friend, such view
Is but man's wonderful and wide mistake.
Man lumps his kind i' the mass: God singles thence
Unit by unit. Thou and God exist—
So think!—for certain: think the mass—mankind—
Disparts, disperses, leaves thyself alone!
Ask thy lone soul what laws are plain to thee,—
Thee and no other,—stand or fall by them!
That is the part for thee: regard all else
For what it may be—Time's illusion. This
Be sure of—ignorance that sins, is safe.
No punishment like knowledge! Instance, now!
My father's choicest treasure was a book
Wherein he, day by day and year by year,
Recorded gains of wisdom for my sake
When I should grow to manhood. While a child,
Coming upon the casket where it lay
Unguarded,—what did I but toss the thing
Into a fire to make more flame therewith,
Meaning no harm? So acts man three-years old!
I grieve now at my loss by witlessness,
But guilt was none to punish. Man mature—
Each word of his I lightly held, each look
I turned from—wish that wished in vain —nay. will
That willed and yet went all to waste—'tis these
Rankle like fire. Forgiveness? rather grant

Forgetfulness! The past is past and lost.
However near I stand in his regard,
So much the nearer had I stood by steps
Offered the feet which rashly spurned their help.
That I call Hell; why further punishment?'

When I vexed you and you chid me,
And I owned my fault and turned
My cheek the way you bid me.
And confessed the blow well earned,—

My comfort all the while was
—Fault was faulty—near, not quite!
Do you wonder why the smile was?
O'erpunished wrong grew right.

But faults you ne'er suspected,
Nay, praised, no faults at all,—
Those would you had detected—
Crushed eggs whence snakes could crawl!

TWO CAMELS

QUOTH one: 'Sir, solve a scruple! No true sage
I hear of, but instructs his scholar thus:
"Wouldst thou be wise? Then mortify thyself!
Baulk of its craving every bestial sense!
Say 'If I relish melons—so do swine!
Horse, ass and mule consume their provender
Nor leave a pea-pod: fasting feeds the soul.'"
Thus they admonish: while thyself, I note,
Eatest thy ration with an appetite,
Nor fallest foul of whoso licks his lips
And sighs—" Well-saffroned was that barley soup!"
Can wisdom co-exist with—gorge-and-svvill,
I say not,—simply sensual preference
For this or that fantastic meat and drink?
Moreover, wind blows sharper than its wont
This morning, and thou hast already donned
Thy sheepskin over-garment: sure the sage
Is busied with conceits that soar above
A petty change of season and its chance
Of causing ordinary flesh to sneeze?
I always thought, Sir'.. •

'Son,'Ferishtah said,
'Truth ought to seem as never thought before.
How if I give it birth in parable?
A neighbour owns two camels, beasts of price
And promise, destined each to go, next

Swiftly and surely with his merchandise
From Nishapur to Sebzevar, no truce
To tramp, but travel, spite of sands and drouth,
In days so many, lest they miss the Fair.
Each falls to meditation o'er his crib
Piled high with provender before the start.
Quoth this: "My soul is set on winning praise
From goodman lord and master,—hump to hoof,
I dedicate me to his service. How?
Grass, purslane, lupines and I know not what.
Crammed in my manger? Ha, I see—I see!
No, master, spare thy money! I shall trudge
The distance and yet cost thee not a doit
Beyond my supper on this mouldy bran.*'
"Be magnified, O master, for the meal
So opportunely liberal!" quoth that.
"What use of strength in me but to surmount
Sands and simooms, and bend beneath thy bales
No knee until I reach the glad bazaar?
Thus I do justice to thy fare: no sprig
Of toothsome chervil must I leave unchewed!
Too bitterly should I reproach myself
Did I sink down in sight of Sebzevar.
Remembering how the merest mournful more
Had heartened me to manage yet a mile!"
And so it proved: the too-abstemious brute
Midway broke down, his pack rejoiced the thieves,
His carcass fed the vultures: not so he
The wisely thankful, who, good market-drudge,
Let down his lading in the market-place,
No damage to a single pack. Which beast,
Think ye, had praise and patting and a brand
Of good-and-faithful-servant fixed on flank?
So, with thy squeamish scruple. What imports
Fasting or feasting? Do thy day's work, dare
Refuse no help thereto, since help refused
Is hindrance sought and found. Win but the race—
Who shall object "He tossed three wine cups off,
And, just at starting, Lilith kissed his lips"?

'More soberly,—consider this, my Son.
Put case I never have myself enjoyed,
Known by experience what enjoyment means.
How shall I—share enjoyment?—no, indeed!—

Supply it to my fellows,—ignorant,
As so I should be of the thing they crave,
How it affects them, works for good or ill.
Style my enjoyment^*self-indulgence—sin—
Why should I labour to infect my kind
With sin's occasion, bid them too enjoy,
Who else might neither catch nor give again
Joy's plague, but live in righteous misery?
Just as I cannot, till myself convinced,
Impart conviction, so, to deal forth joy
Adroitly, needs must I know joy myself.
Renounce joy for my fellows' sake? That's joy
Beyond joy; but renounced for mine, not theirs?
Why, the physician called to help the sick,
Cries "Let me, first of all, discard my health!"
No, Son: the richness hearted in such joy
Is in the knowing what are gifts we give,
Not in a vain endeavour not to know!
Therefore, desire joy and thank God for it!
The Adversary said,—a Jew reports,—

In Persian phrase, Does Job fear God for nought?"
Job's creatureship is not abjured, thou fool!
He nowise isolates himself and plays
The independent equal, owns no more
Than himself gave himself, so why thank God?
A proper speech were this O^rPXp
"Equals we are, Job, labour for myself,
Nor bid me help thee: bear, as best flesh may,
Pains I inflict not nor avail to cure:
Beg of me nothing thou thyself mayst win
By work, or waive with magnanimity,
Since we are peers acknowledged,—scarcely peers,
Had I implanted any want of thine
Only my power could meet and gratify.'*
No: rather hear, at man's indifference—
" Wherefore did I contrive for thee that ear
Hungry for music, and direct thine eye
To where I hold a seven-stringed instrument,
Unless I meant thee to beseech me play ? "'

Once I saw a chemist take a pinch ofpowder
—Simple dust it seemed—and half-unstop a phial:
—Out dropped harmless dew, 'Mixed nothings make—quoth he—
• Something /' So they did: a thunderclap, but louder—
Lightning-flash, but fiercer—put spectators' nerves to trial:
Sure enough, we learned what was, imagined what might be.
Hadlno experience how a lip*s mere tremble.
Look's half hesitation, cheek's just change of colour,
These effect a heartquake,—-how should I conceive
What heaven there may be? Let it but resemble
Earth myself have known! No bliss that's finer, fuller,
Only—bliss that lasts, they say, and fain would I believe.

CHERRIES

'WHAT, I disturb thee at thy morning-meal:
Cherries so ripe already? Eat apace!
I recollect thy lesson yesterday.
Yet—thanks, Sir, for thy leave to interrupt' ...

'Friend, I have finished my repast, thank God!'

'There now, thy thanks for breaking fast on fruit!—
Thanks being praise, or tantamount thereto.
Prithee consider, have not things degree,
Lofty and low? Are things not great and small,
Thence claiming praise and wonder more or less?
Shall we confuse them, with thy warrant too.
Whose doctrine otherwise begins and ends
With just this precept" Never faith enough
In man as weakness, God as potency' ?
When I would pay soul's tribute to that same.
Why not look up in wonder, bid the stars
Attest my praise of the All-mighty One?
What are man's puny members and as mean
Requirements weighed with Star-King Mushtari?
There is the marvel!'

'Not to man—that's me.
List to what happened late, in fact or dream.
A certain stranger, bound from far away.
Still the Shah's subject, found himself before
Ispahan palace-gate. As duty bade,
He enters in the courts, will, if he may,
See so much glory as befits a slave
Who only comes, of mind to testify
How great and good is shown our lord the Shah.
In he walks, round he casts his eye about,
Looks up and down, admires to heart's content,
Ascends the gallery, tries door and door,
None says his reverence nay: peeps in at each,

Wonders at all the unimagined use,
Gold here and jewels there,—so vast, that hail-
So perfect yon pavilion!—lamps above
Bidding look up from luxuries below,—
Evermore wonder topping wonder,—last-
Sudden he comes upon a cosy nook,
A nest-like little chamber, with his name,
His own, yea, his and no mistake at all,
Plain o'er the entry: what, and he descries
Just those arrangements inside,—oh, the care!—
Suited to soul and body both,—so snug
The cushion—nay, the pipe-stand furnished so!
Whereat he cries aloud,—what think'st thou, Friend?
"That these my slippers should be just my choice,
Even to the colour that I most affect,
Is nothing: ah, that lamp, the central sun,
What must it light within its minaret
I scarce dare guess the good of! Who lives there?
That let me wonder at,—no slipper-toys
Meant for the foot, forsooth, which kicks them—thus!"

'Never enough faith in omnipotence,—
Never too much, by parity, of faith
In impuissance, man's—which turns to strength
When once acknowledged weakness every way.
How? Hear the teaching of another tale.

'Two men once owed the Shah a mighty sum,
Beggars they both were: this one crossed his arms
And bowed his head,—"whereof,"—sighed he,—"each hair
Proved it a jewel, how the host's amount
Were idly strewn for payment at thy feet!"
•' Lord, here they lie, my havings poor and scant!
All of the berries on my currant-bush,
What roots of garlic have escaped the mice,
And some five pippins from the seedling tree,—
Would they were half-a-dozen! anyhow,
Accept my all. poor beggar that I am!"
" Received in full of all demands!" smiled back
The apportioner of every lot of ground
From inch to acre. Littleness of love
Befits the littleness of loving thing.
What if he boasted "Seeing I am great,
Great must my corresponding tribute be?"
Mushtari,—well, suppose him seven times seven
The sun's superior, proved so by some sage:
Am I mat sage? To me his twinkle blue
Is all I know of him and thank him for,
And therefore I have put the same in verse—
"Like yon blue twinkle, twinks thine eye, my Love!"

'Neither shalt thou be troubled overmuch
Because thy offering,—littleness itself,—
Is lessened by admixture sad and strange
Of mere man's-motives,—praise with fear, and love
With looking after that same love's reward.
Alas, Friend, what was free from this alloy,—
Some smatch thereof,—in best and purest love
Proffered thy earthly father? Dust thou art,
Dust shalt be to the end. Thy father took
The dust, and kindly called the handful—gold,
Nor cared to count what sparkled here and there,
Sagely unanalytic. Thank, praise, love
(Sum up thus) for the lowest favours first,
The commonest of comforts! aught beside
Very omnipotence had overlooked
Such needs, arranging for thy little life.
Nor waste thy power of love in wonderment
At what thou wiselier lettest shine unsoiled
By breath of word. That this last cherry soothes
A roughness of my palate, that I know:
His Maker knows why Mushtari was made.'

Verse-making was least of my virtues: I viewed with despair
Wealth that never yet was but might be—all that verse-making were
If the life would but lengthen to wish, let the mind be laid bare'
So I said' To do little is bad, to do nothing is worse—*
And made verse.

Love-making,—how simple a matter! No depths to explore,
No heights in a life to ascend! No disheartening Before,
No affrighting Hereafter,—love now will be love evermore.
So I felt' To keep silence were folly:'—all language above,
I made love,

PLOT-CULTURE

•AY, but, Ferishtah,'—a discipl? smirked,—
'That verse of thine "How twinks thine eye, my Love,

Blue as yon star-beam!" much arrides myself
Who haply may obtain a.kiss therewith
This eve from Laila where the palms abound—
My youth, my warrant—so the palms be close!
Suppose when thou art earnest in discourse
Concerning high and holy things,—abrupt
I out with— Laila's lip, how honey-sweet!"—
What say'st thou, were it scandalous or no?
I feel thy shoe sent flying at my mouth
For daring—prodigy of impudence—
Publish what, secret, were permissible.
Well,—one slide further in the imagined slough,—
Knee-deep therein, (respect thy reverence!)—
Suppose me well aware thy very self
Stooped prying through the palm-screen, while I dared
Solace me with caressings all the same?
Unutterable, nay—unthinkable,
Undreamablea deed of shame! Alack,
How will it fare shouldst thou impress on me
That certainly an Eye is over all
And each, to mark the minute's deed, word, thought,
As worthy of reward or punishment?
Shall I permit my sense an Eye-viewed shame,
Broad daylight perpetration,—so to speak,—
I had not dared to breathe within the Ear,
With black night's help about me? Yet 1 stand
A man, no monster, made of flesh not cloud:
Why made so, if my making prove offence
To Maker's eye and ear?'

'Thou wouldst not stand
Distinctly Man,'—Ferishtah made reply,
'Not the mere creature,—did no limit-line
Round thee about, apportion thee thy place
Clean-cut from out and off the illimitable,—
Minuteness severed from immensity.
All of thee for the Maker,—for thyself,
Workings inside the circle that evolve
Thine all,—the product of thy cultured plot.
So much of grain the ground's lord bids thee yield
Bring sacks to granary in Autumn! spare
Daily intelligence of this manure,
That compost, how they tend to feed the soil:
There thou art master sole and absolute
—Only, remember doomsday! Twitt'st thou me
Because I turn away my outraged nose
Shouldst thou obtrude thereon a shovelful
Of fertilizing kisses? Since thy sire
Wills and obtains thy marriage with the maid,
Enough! Be reticent, I counsel thee,
Nor venture to acquaint him, point by point,
What he procures thee. Is he so obtuse?
Keep thy instruction to thyself! My ass—
Only from him expect acknowledgment
The while he champs my gift, a thistle-bunch,
How much he loves the largess: of his love
I only tolerate so much as tells
By wrinkling nose and inarticulate grunt,
The meal, that heartens him to do my work,
Tickles his palate as I meant it should.'

Not with my Soul, Love!—bid no Soul like mine
Lap thee around nor leave the poor Sense room!
Soul, — travel-worn, toil-weary, — would confine
Along with Soul, Soul's gains from glow and gloom,
Captures from soarings high and divings deep,
Spoil-laden Soul, how should such memories sleep?
Take Sense, too—let me love entire and whole—
Not with my Soul!
Eyes shall meet eyes and find no eyes between,
Lips feed on lips, no other lips to fear!
No past, no future—so thine arms but screen
*The present from surprise! not there, *tis here—*
Not then, 'tis now:—back, memories that intrude!
Make, Love, the universe our solitude,
And, over all the rest, oblivion roll—
Sense quenching Soul!

A PILLAR AT SEBZEVAR

'KNOWLEDGE deposed, then!'—groaned whom that most grieved
As foolishest of all the company.
'What, knowledge, man's distinctive attribute,
He doffs that crown to emulate an ass
Because the unknowing long-ears loves at least
Husked lupines, and belike the feeder's self
—Whose purpose in the dole what ass divines?'

•Friend,' quoth Ferishtah, 'all I seem to know
Is—I know nothing save that love I can
Boundlessly, endlessly. My curls were crowned
In youth with knowledge,—off, alas, crown slipped
Next moment, pushed by better knowledge still
Which nowise proved more constant: gain, to-day,
Was toppling loss to-morrow, lay at last
—Knowledge, the golden?—lacquered ignorance!
As gain—mistrust it! Not as means to gain:
Lacquer we learn by: cast in fining-pot,
We learn,—when what seemed ore assayed proves dross,—
Surelier true gold's worth, guess how purity
I' the lode were precious could one light on ore
Clarified up to test of crucible.
The prize is in the process: knowledge means
Ever-renewed assurance by defeat
That victory is somehow still to reach,
But love is victory, the prize itself:
Love—trust to! Be rewarded for the trust
In trust's mere act. In love success is sure,
Attainment—no delusion, whatsoe'er
The prize be: apprehended as a prize,
A prize it is. Thy child as surely grasps
An orange as he fails to grasp the sun
Assumed his capture. What if soon he finds
The foolish fruit unworthy grasping? Joy
In shape and colour,—that was joy as true—
Worthy in its degree of love—as grasp
Of sun were, which had singed his hand beside.
What if he said the orange held no juice
Since it was not that sun he hoped to suck?
This constitutes the curse that spoils our life
And sets man maundering of his misery,
That there's no meanest atom he obtains
Of what he counts for knowledge but he cries
"Hold here,—I have the whole thing,—know, this time,
Nor need search farther!" Whereas, strew his path
With pleasures, and he scorns them while he stoops:
"This fitly call'st thou pleasure, pick up this
And praise it, truly? I reserve my thanks
For something more substantial." Fool **not** thus
In practising with life and its delights!
Enjoy the present gift, nor wait to know
The unknowable. Enough to say "**I feel**
Love's sure effect, and, being loved, must love
The love its cause behind,—I can and do!"
Nor turn to try thy brain-power on the fact.
(Apart from as it strikes thee, here and now—
Its how and why, i' the future and elsewhere)
Except to—yet once more, and ever again,
Confirm thee in thy utter ignorance:
Assured that, whatsoe'er the quality
Of love's cause, save that love was caused thereby,
This—nigh upon revealment as it seemed
A minute since—defies thy longing looks,
Withdrawn into the unknowable once more.
Wholly distrust thy knowledge, then, and trust
As wholly love allied to ignorance!
There lies thy truth and safety. Love is praise,
And praise is love! Refine the same, contrive
An intellectual tribute—ignorance
Appreciating ere approbative
Of knowledge that is infinite? With us
The small, who use the knowledge of our kind
Greater than we, more wisely ignorance
Restricts its apprehension, sees and knows
No more than brain accepts in faith of sight,
Takes first what comes first, only sure so far.
By Sebzevar a certain pillar stands
So aptly that its gnomon tells the hour;
What if the townsmen said "Before we thank
Who placed it, for his serviceable craft,
And go to dinner since its shade tells noon,
Needs must we have the craftsman's purpose clear
On half a hundred more recondite points
Than a mere summons to a vulgar meal!"
Better they say "How opportune the help!
Be loved and praised, thou kindly-hearted sage
Whom Hudhud taught,—the gracious spirit-bird,—
How to construct the pillar, teach the time!"
So let us say—not "Since we know, we love,"
But rather "Since we love, we know enough."
Perhaps the pillar by a spell controlled
Mushtari in his courses? Added grace
Surely I count it that the sage devised,
Beside celestial service, ministry
To all the land, by one sharp shade at noon

A PILLAR AT SEBZEVAR

Falling as folk foresee. Once more then, Friend—
(What ever in those careless ears of thine
Withal I needs"ifiust round thee)—knowledge doubt
Even wherein it seems demonstrable!
Love,—in the claim for love, that's gratitude
For apprehended pleasure, nowise doubt!
Pay its due tribute,—sure that pleasure is,
While knowledge may be, at the most. See, now!
Eating my breakfast, I thanked God.—"For love
Shown in the cherries' flavour? Consecrate
So petty an example?" There 's the fault!
We circumscribe omnipotence. Search sand
To unearth water: if first handful scooped
Yields thee a draught, what need of digging down
Full fifty fathoms deep to find a spring
Whereof the pulse might deluge half the land?
Drain the sufficient drop, and praise what checks
The drouth that glues thy tongue,—what more would help
A brimful cistern? Ask the cistern's boon
When thou wouldst solace camels: in thy case,
Relish the drop and love the loveable!'

'And what may be unloveable?

•Why, hate!
If out of sand comes sand and nought but sand,
Affect not to be quaffing at mirage,
Nor nickname pain as pleasure. That, belike,
Constitutes just the trial of thy wit
And worthiness to gain promotion,—hence,
Proves the true purpose of thine actual life.
Thy soul's environment of things perceived.
Things visible and things invisible,
Fact, fancy—all was purposed to evolve
This and this only—was thy wit of worth
To recognize the drop's use, love the same,
And loyally declare against mirage
Though all the world asseverated dust
Was good to drink? Say, "what made moist my lip,
That I acknowledged moisture:" thou art saved!

'For why? The creature and creator stand
Rightly related so. Consider well!
Were knowledge all thy faculty, then God
Must be ignored: love gains him by first leap.
Frankly accept the creatureship: ask good
To love for: press bold to the tether's end
Allotted to this life's intelligence!
"So we offend?" Will it offend thyself
If.—impuissance praying potency,—
Thy child beseech that thou command the sun
Rise bright to-morrow—thou, he thinks supreme
In power and goodness, why shouldst thou refuse?
Afterward, when the child matures, perchance
The fault were greater if, with wit full-grown,
The stripling dared to ask for a dinar,
Than that the boy cried "Pluck Sitara down
And give her me to play with!" 'Tis for him
To have no bounds to his belief in thee:
For thee it also is to let her shine
Lustrous and lonely, so best serving him!'

Ask not one least word of praise!
Words declare your eyes are bright?
What then meant that summer day*s
Silence spent in one long gaze?
Was my silence wrong or right?

Words of praise were all to seek!
Face of you and form of you,
Did they find the praise so weak
When my lips Just touched your cheek—
Touch which let my soul come through?

A BEAN-STRIPE: ALSO, APPLE-EATING

'LOOK, I strew beans'...

(Ferishtah, we premise,
Strove this way with a scholar's cavilment
Who put the peevish question: 'Sir, be frank!
A good thing or a bad tiling—Life is which?
Shine and shade, happiness and misery
Battle it out there: which force beats, I ask?
If I pick beans from out a bushelful—
This one, this other,—then demand of thee
What colour names each justly in the main,—
"Black" I expect, and "White" ensues reply:
No hesitation for what speck, spot, splash
Of either colour's opposite, intrudes
To modify thy judgment. Well, for beans
Substitute days,—show, ranged in order, Life-
Then, tell me its true colour! Time is short,
Life's days compose a span,—as brief be speech!

Black I pronounce for, like the Indian
Black—present, past and future, interspersed
With blanks, no doubt, which simple folk style Good
Because not Evil: no, indeed? Forsooth
Black's shade on White is White too! What's the worst
Of Evil but that, past, it overshades
The else-exempted present?—memory,
We call the plague! "Nay, but our memory fades
And leaves the past unsullied!" Does it so?
Why, straight the purpose of such breathing-space,
Such respite from past ill, grows plain enough!
What follows on remembrance of the past?
Fear of the future! Life, from birth to death,
Means—either looking back on harm escaped.
Or looking forward to that harm's return
With tenfold power of harming. Black, not White,
Never the whole consummate quietude
Life should be, troubled by no fear!—nor hope—
I'll say, since lamplight dies in noontide, hope
Loses itself in certainty. Such lot
Man's might have been: I leave the consequence
To bolder critics of the Primal Cause;
Such am not I: but, man—as man I speak:
Black is the bean-throw: evil is the Life!')

'Look, I strew beans'—resumed Fershtah—'beans
Blackish and whitish; what they figure forth
Shall be man's sum of moments, bad and good,
That make up Life,—each moment when he feels
Pleasure or pain, his poorest fact of sense,
Consciousness anyhow: there's stand the first;
Whence next advance shall be from points to line,
Singulars to a series, parts to whole,
And moments to the Life. How look they now,
Viewed in the large, those little joys and griefs
Ranged duly all a-row at last, like beans
—These which I strew? This bean was white, this—black,
Set by itself,—but see if, good and bad
Each following either in companionship,
Black have not grown less black and white less white,
Till blackish seems but dun, and whitish —grey,
And the whole line turns—well, or black to thee
Or white belike to me—no matter which:
The main result is—both are modified
According to our eye's scope, power of range
Before and after. Black dost call this bean?
What, with a whiteness in its wake, which —see—
Suffuses half its neighbour ?—and, in turn,
Lowers its pearliness late absolute.
Frowned upon by the jet which follows hard—
Else wholly white my bean were. Choose a joy!
Bettered it was by sorrow gone before,
And sobered somewhat by the shadowy sense
Of sorrow which came after or might come.
Joy, sorrow, — by precedence, subsequence—
Either on each, make fusion, mix in Life
That's both and neither wholly: grey or dun?
Dun thou decidest? grey prevails, say I:
Wherefore? Because my view is wide enough,
Reaches from first to last nor winks at all:
Motion achieves it: stop short—fast we stick,—
Probably at the bean that's blackest.

'Since—
Son, trust me,—this I know and only this—
I am in motion, and all things beside
That circle round my passage through their midst,—
Motionless, these are, as regarding me:
—Which means, myself I solely recognize.
They too may recognize themselves, not me,
For aught I know or care: but plain they serve
This, if no other purpose—stuff to try
And test my power upon of raying light
And lending hue to all things as I go
Moonlike through vapour. Mark the flying orb!
Think'st thou the halo, painted still afresh
At each new cloud-fleece pierced and passaged through,
This was and is and will be evermore
Coloured in permanence? The glory swims
Girdling the glory-giver, swallowed straight
By night's abysmal gloom, unglorified
Behind as erst before the advancer: gloom?
Faced by the onward-faring, see, succeeds

From the abandoned heaven a next surprise,
And where'the. gloom now?—silver-smitten sltfaight,
One glow and variegation! So with me,
Who move and make,—myself,—the black, the white,
The good, the bad, of life's environment.
Stand still! black stays black: start again! there's white
Asserts supremacy: the motion's all
That colours me my moment: seen as joy?
I have escaped from sorrow, or that was
Or might have been: as sorrow?—thence shall be
Escape as certain: white preceded black,
Black shall give way to white as duly,—so,
Deepest in black means white most imminent.
Stand still,—have no before, no after!—life
Proves death, existence grows impossible
To man like me. "What else is blessed sleep
But death, then?" Why, a rapture of release
From toil,—that's sleep's approach: as certainly,
The end of sleep means, toil is triumphed o'er:
These round the blank inconsciousness between
Brightness and brightness, either pushed to blaze
Just through that blank's interposition. Hence
The use of things external: man—that's I—
Practise thereon my power of casting light,
And calling substance,—when the light I cast
Breaks into colour,—by its proper name
—A truth and yet a falsity: black, white,
Names each bean taken from what lay so close
And threw such tint: pain might mean pain indeed
Seen in the passage past it,—pleasure prove
No mere delusion while I paused to look,—
Though what an idle fancy was that fear
Which overhung and hindered pleasure's hue!
While how. again, pain's shade enhanced the shine
Of pleasure, else no pleasure! Such effects
Came of such causes. Passage at an end,—
Past, present, future pains and pleasures fused
So that one glance may gather blacks and whites
Into a life-time,—like my bean-streak there,
Why, white they whirl into, not black—for me !

'Ay, but for me? The indubitable blacks,
Immeasurable miseries, here, there
And everywhere i' the world—world outside thine
Paled off so opportunely,—body's plague,
Torment of soul,—where's found thy fellowship
With wide humanity all round about
Reeling beneath its burden? What's despair?
Behold that man, that woman, child—nay, brute!
Will any speck of white unblacken life
Splashed, splotched, dyed hell-deep now from end to end
For him or her or it—who knows? Not I ! '

'Nor I, Son! "It" shall stand for bird, beast, fish,
Reptile, and insect even: take the last!
There's the palm-aphis, minute miracle
As wondrous every whit as thou or I:
Well, and his world's the palm-frond, there he's born,
Lives, breeds and dies in that circumference,
An inch of green for cradle, pasture-ground,
Purlieu and grave: the palm's use, ask of him!
"To furnish these," replies his wit: ask thine—
Who see the heaven above, the earth below,
Creation everywhere,—these, each and all
Claim certain recognition from the tree
For special service rendered branch and bole,
Top-tuft and tap-root:—for thyself, thus seen,
Palms furnish dates to eat, and leaves to shade,
—Maybe, thatch huts with,—have another use
Than strikes the aphis. So with me, my Son!
I know my own appointed patch i' the world,
What pleasures me or pains there: all outside—
How he, she, it, and even thou, Son, live,
Are pleased or pained, is past conjecture, once
I pry beneath the semblance,—all that's fit,
To practise with,—reach where the fact may lie
Fathom-deep lower. There's the first and last
Of my philosophy. Blacks blur thy white?
Not mine! The aphis feeds, nor finds his leaf

Untenable because a lance-thrust, nay,
Lightning strikes sere a moss-patch close beside,
Where certain other aphids live and love.
Restriction to his single inch of white,
That's law for him, the aphis: but for me,
The man, the larger-souled, beside my stretch
Of blacks and whites, I see a world of woe
All round about me: one such burst of black
Intolerable o'er the life I count
White in the main, and, yea—white's faintest trace
Were clean abolished once and evermore.
Thus fare my fellows, swallowed up in gloom
So far as I discern: how far is that?
God's care be God's ! 'Tismine—to boast no joy
Unsobered by such sorrows of my kind
As sully with their shade my life that shines.'

'Reflected possibilities of pain,
Forsooth, just chasten pleasure! Pain itself,—
Fact and not fancy, does not this affect
The general colour?'

'Here and there a touch
Taught me, betimes, the artifice of things—
That all about, external to myself,
Was meant to be suspected,—not revealed
Demonstrably a cheat,—but half seen through.
Lest white should rule unchecked along the line:
Therefore white may not triumph. All the same,
Of absolute and irretrievable
And all-subduing black,—black's soul of black
Beyond white's power to disintensify,—
Of that I saw no sample: such may wreck
My life and ruin my philosophy
To-morrow, doubtless: hence the constant shade
Cast on life's shine,—the tremor that intrudes
When firmest seems my faith in white. Dost ask
"Who is Ferishtah, hitherto exempt
From black experience? Why, if God be just,
Were sundry fellow-mortals singled out
To undergo experience for his sake,
Just that the gift of pain, bestowed on them,
In him might temper to the due degree
Joy's else-excessive largess?" Why, indeed!
Back are we brought thus to the starting-point—
Man's impotency, God's omnipotence,
These stop my answer. Aphis that I am.
How leave my inch-allotment, pass at will
Into my fellow's liberty of range.
Enter into his sense of black and white,
As either, seen by me from outside, seems
Predominatingly the colour? Life,
Lived by my fellow, shall I pass into
And myself live there? No—no more than pass
From Persia, where in sun since birth I bask
Daily, to some ungracious land afar,
Told of by travellers, where the might of snow
Smothers up day, and fluids lose themselves
Frozen to marble. How I bear the sun,
Beat though he may unduly, that I know:
How blood once curdled ever creeps apain,
Baffles conjecture: yet since people live
Somehow, resist a clime would conquer me,
Somehow provided for their sake must dawn
Compensative resource. "No sun, no grapes,—
Then, no subsistence!"—were it wisely said?
Or this well-reasoned—"Do I dare feel warmth
And please my palate here with Persia's vine,
Though, over-mounts,—to trust the traveller,—
Snow, feather-thick, is falling while I feast?
What if the cruel winter force his way
Here also?" Son, the wise reply were this:
When cold from over-mounts spikes through and through
Blood, bone and marrow of Ferishtah,—then,
Time to look out for shelter—time, at least,
To wring the hands and cry "No shelter serves!"
Shelter, of some sort, no experienced chill
Warrants that I despair to find.'

'No less,
Doctors have differed here; thou say'st thy say;
Another man's experience masters thine,
Flat controverted by the sourly-Sage,
The Indian witness who, with faculty
Fine as Ferishtah's, found no white at all
Chequer the world's predominating black,
No good oust evil from supremacy,
So that Life's best was that it led to death.
How of his testimony?'

'Son, suppose
My camel told me: "Threescore days and ten

I traversed hill and dale, yet never found
Food to stop hunger, drink to stay my drouth;_
Yet, here I stand alive, which take in proof
That to survive was found impossible!"
"Nay, rather take thou, non-surviving beast"
(Reply were prompt), "on flank this thwack of staff
Nowise affecting flesh that 's dead and dry!
Thou wincest? Take correction twice, amend
Next time thy nomenclature! Call white —white!"
The sourly-Sage, for whom life's best was death,
Lived out his seventy years, looked hale, laughed loud,
Liked—above all—his dinner,—lied, in short*

'Lied is a rough phrase say he fell from truth
In climbing towards it!—sure less faulty so
Than had he sat him down and stayed content
With thy safe orthodoxy, "White, all white,
White everywhere for certain I should see
Did I but understand how white is black.
As clearer sense than mine would. Clearer sense,—
Whose may that be? Mere human eyes I boast,
And such distinguish colours in the main,
However any tongue, that's human too,
Please to report the matter. Dost thou blame
A soul that strives but to see plain, speak true,
Truth at all hazards? Oh, this false for real,
This emptiness which feigns solidity,—
Ever some grey that's white, and dun that's black,—
When shall we rest upon the thing itself
Not on its semblance?—Soul—too weak, forsooth,
To cope with fact—wants fiction everywhere!
Mine tires of falsehood: truth at any cost!'

•Take one and try conclusions—this, suppose!
God is all-good, all-wise, all-powerful: truth?
Take it and rest there. What is man? Not God:
None of these absolutes therefore,—yet himself,
A creature with a creature's qualities.
Make them agree, these two conceptions! Each
Abolishes the other. Is man weak,
Foolish and bad? He must be Ahriman,
Co-equal with an Ormuzd, Bad with Good,
Or else a thing made at the Prime Sole Will,
Doing a maker's pleasure—with results
Which—call, the wide world over, "what must be"-
But, from man's point of view, and only point
Possible to his powers, call—evidence
Of goodness, wisdom, strength? we mock ourselves
In all that's best of us,—man's blind but sure
Craving for these in very deed not word,
Reality and not illusion. Well,-
Since these nowhere exist—nor there where cause
Must have effect, nor here where craving means
Craving unfollowed by fit consequence
And full supply, aye sought for, never found—
These—what are they but man's own rule of right?
A scheme of goodness recognized by man,
Although by man unrealizable,—
Not God's with whom to will were to perform:
Nowise performed here, therefore never willed.
What follows but that God, who could the best,
Has willed the worst,—while man, with power to match
Will with performance, were deservedly
Hailed the supreme—provided... here's the touch
That breaks the bubble this concept of man's
Were man's own work, his birth of heart and brain,
His native grace, no alien gift at all.
The bubble breaks here. Will of man create?
No more than this my hand which strewed the beans
Produced them also from its finger-tips.
Back goes creation to its source, source prime
And ultimate, the single and the sole.'

'How reconcile discordancy,—unite
Notion and notion—God that only can
Yet does not,—man that would indeed
But just as surely cannot,—both in one?
What help occurs to thy intelligence?'

'Ah, the beans,—or,—example better yet,—
A carpet-web I saw once leave the loom
And lie at gorgeous length in Ispahan!
The weaver plied his work with lengths of silk

Dyed each to match some jewel as it might,
And wove them, this by that. "How comes it, friend,"—
(Quoth I—"that while, apart, this fiery hue,
That watery dimness, either shocks the eye,
So blinding bright, or else offends again
By dulness,—yet the two, set each by each,
Somehow produce a colour born of both,
A medium profitable to the sight?"
"Such medium is the end whereat I aim,"—
Answered my craftsman: "there's no single tinct
Would satisfy the eye's desire to taste
The secret of the diamond: join extremes,
Results a serviceable medium-ghost,
The diamond's simulation." Even so
I needs must blend the quality of man
With quality of God, and so assist
Mere human sight to understand my Life.
What is, what should be,—understand thereby
Wherefore I hate the first and love the last,—
Understand why things so present themselves
To me, placed here to prove I understand.
Thus, from beginning runs the chain to end,
And binds me plain enough. By consequence,
I bade thee tolerate,—not kick and cuff
The man who held that natures did in fact
Blend so, since so thyself must have them blend
In fancy, if it take **a** flight so far.'

'A power, confessed past knowledge, nay, past thought,
—Thus thought thus known!'

'To know of, think about—
Is all man's sum of faculty effects
When exercised on earth's least atom, Son!
What was, what is, what may such atom be?
No answer! Still, what seems it to man's sense?
An atom with some certain properties
Known about, thought of as occasion needs,
—Man's—but occasions of the universe?
Unthinkable, unknowable to man.
Yet, since to think and know fire through and through
Exceeds man, is the warmth of fire unknown,
Its uses—are they so unthinkable?
Pass from such obvious power to powers unseen,
Undreamed of save in their sure consequence:
Take that, we spoke of late, which **draws** to ground
The staff my hand lets fall: it draws, at least—
Thus much man thinks and knows, if nothing more.'

'Ay, but man puts no mind into such power!
He neither thanks it, when an apple drops,
Nor prays it spare his pate while underneath.
Does he thank Summer though it plumped the rind?
Why thank the other force—whate'er its name—
Which gave him teeth to bite and tongue to taste
And throat to let the pulp pass ? Force and force,
No end of forces! Have they mind like man?'

' Suppose thou visit our lord Shalim-Shah,
Bringing thy tribute as appointed. "Here
Come I to pay my due I Whereat one slave
Obsequious spreads a carpet for thy foot.
His fellow offers sweetmeats, while a third
Prepares a pipe: what thanks or praise have they?
Such as befit prompt service. Gratitude
Goes past them to the Shah whose gracious nod
Set all the sweet civility at work;
But for his ordinance. I much suspect,
My scholar had been left to cool his heels
Uncarpeted, or warm them—likelier still—
With bastinado for intrusion. Slaves
Needs must obey their master: "force and force,
No end of forces," act as bids some force
Supreme o'er all and each: where find that one?
How recognize him ? Simply as thou didst
The Shah—by reasoning "Since I feel a debt,
Behoves me pay the same to one aware
I have my duty, he his privilege."
Didst thou expect the slave who charged thy pipe
Would serve as well to take thy tribute-bag
And save thee further trouble?'

'Be it so!
The sense within me that I owe a debt
Assures me—somewhere must be somebody
Ready to take his due. AH comes to this—
Where due is, there acceptance **follows:** find

Him who accepts the due! and why look far?
Behold thy kindjred^ompass thee about!
Ere thou wast born and after thou shalt die,
Heroic man stands forth as Shahan-Shah.
Rustem and Gew, Gudarz and all the rest.
How come they short of lordship thats' to seek?
Dead worthies! but men live undoubtedly
Gifted as Sindokht, sage Sulayman's match,
Valiant like Kawah: ay, and while earth lasts
Such heroes shall abound there—all for thee
Who profitest by all the present, past,
And future operation of thy race.
Why, then, o'erburdened with a debt of thanks,
Look wistful for some hand from out the clouds
To take it, when, all round, a multitude
Would ease thee in a trice?'

'Such tendered thanks
Would tumble back to who craved riddance, Son!
—Who but my sorry self? See! stars are o u t-
Stars which, unconscious of thy gaze beneath,
Go glorying, and glorify thee too
—Those Seven Thrones, Zurah's beauty, weird Parwin!
Whether shall love and praise to stars be paid
Or—say—some Mubid who, for good to thee
Blind at thy birth, by magic all his own
Opened thine eyes, and gave the sightless sight,
Let the stars' glory enter? Say his charm
Worked while thyself lay sleeping: as he went
Thou wakedst: "What a novel sense have I!
Whom shall I love and praise?" "The stars, each orb
Thou standest rapt beneath," proposes one:
"Do not they live their life, and please themselves,
And so please thee? What more is requisite?"
Make thou this answer: "If indeed no mage
Opened mv eyes and worked a miracle,
Then let the stars thank me who apprehend
That such an one is white, such other blue!
But for my apprehension both were blank.
Cannot I close my eyes and bid my brain
Make whites and blues, conceive without stars' help,
New qualities of colour? were my sight
Lost or misleading, would yon red—I judge
A ruby's benefaction—stand for aught
But green from vulgar glass? Myself appraise
Lustre and lustre; should I overlook
Fomalhaut and declare some fen-fire king,
Who shall correct me, lend me eyes he trusts
No more than I trust mine? My mage for me!
I never saw him: if he never was,
I am the arbitrator!" No, my Son!
Let us sink down to thy similitude:
I eat my apple, relish what is ripe—
The sunny side, admire its rarity
Since half the tribe is wrinkled, and the rest
Hide commonly a maggot in the core,—
And down Zerdusht goes with due smack of lips:
But—thank an apple? He who made my mouth
To masticate, my palate to approve,
My maw to further the concoction—Him
I thank, — but for whose work, the orchard's wealth
Might prove so many gall-nuts—stocks or stones
For aught that I should think, or know, or care.'

' Why from the world,' Ferishtah smiled, ' should thanks
Go to this work of mine? If worthy praise,
Praised let it be and welcome: as verse ranks,
So rate my verse: if good therein outweighs
Aught faulty judged, judge justly! Justice says:
Be just to fact, or blaming or approving:
But—generous? No, nor loving!

'Loving! what claim to love has work of mine?
Concede my life were emptied of its gains
To furnish forth and fill work s strict confine,
Who works so for the world's sake—he complains
With cause when hate, not love, rewards his pains,
I looked beyond the world for truth and beauty:
Sought, found and did my duty,'

EPILOGUE

O H, Love—no, Love! All the noise below, Love,
Groanings all and moanings—none of Life I lose!
All of Life's a cry just of weariness and woe, Love—
'Hear at least, thou happy one!' How can I, Love, but choose?

Only, when I do hear, sudden circle round me
—Much as when the moon's might frees a space from cloud—
Iridescent splendours: gloom—would else confound me—
Barriered off and banished far—bright-edged the blackest shroud!

Thronging through the cloud-rift, whose are they, the faces
Faint revealed yet sure divined, the famous ones of old?
'What'—they smile—'our names, our deeds so soon erases
Time upon his tablet where Life's glory lies enrolled?

'Was it for mere fool's-play, make-believe and mumming,
So we battled it like men, not boylike sulked or whined?
Each of us heard clang God's "Come!" and each was coming:
Soldiers all, to forward-face, not sneaks to lag behind!

'How of the field's fortune? That concerned our Leader!
Led, we struck our stroke nor cared for doings left and right:
Each as on his sole head, failer or succeeder,
Lay the blame or lit the praise: no care for cowards: fight!'

Then the cloud-rift broadens, spanning earth that's under.
Wide our world displays its worth, man's strife and strife's success:
All the good and beauty, wonder crowning wonder,
Till my heart and soul applaud perfection, nothing less.

Only, at heart's utmost joy and triumph, terror
Sudden turns the blood to ice: a chill wind disencharms
All the late enchantment! What if all be error—
If the halo irised round my head were, Love, thine arms?

PALAZZO GIUSTINIAN-RECANATI,
VENICE: *December* 1, 1883.

ASOLANDO

FANCIES AND FACTS

1889

TO MRS. ARTHUR BRONSON

To whom but you, dear Friend, should I dedicate verses—some few written, all of them supervised, in the comfort of your presence, and with yet another experience of the gracious hospitality now bestowed on me since so many a year,—adding a charm even to my residences at Venice, and leaving me little regret for the surprise and delight at my visits to Asolo in bygone days?

I unite, you will see, the disconnected poems by a title-name popularly ascribed to the inventiveness of the ancient secretary of Queen Cornaro whose palace-tower still overlooks us: Asolare—* to disport in the open air, amuse oneself at random.' The objection that such *a* word nowhere occurs in the works of the Cardinal is hardly important—Bembo was too thorough a purist to conserve in print a term which in talk he might possibly toy with: but the word is more likely derived from a Spanish source. I use it for love of the place, and in requital of your pleasant assurance that an early poem of mine first attracted you thither—where and elsewhere, at La Mura as Ca Alvisi, may all happiness attend you!

Gratefully and affectionately yours,

R. B.

ASOLO: *October* 15, 1889.

PROLOGUE

'THE Poet's age is sad. for why?
In youth, the natural world could show
No common object but his eye
At once involved with alien glow—
His own soul's iris-bow.

'And now a flower is just a flower:
Man, bird, beast are but beast, bird, man—
Simply themselves, uncinct by dower
Of dyes which, when life's day began,
Round each in glory ran.'

Friend, did you need an optic glass,
Which were your choice? A lens to drape
In ruby, emerald, chrysopras,
Each object—or reveal its shape
Clear outlined, past escape,

The naked very thing?—so clear
That, when you had the chance to gaze,
You found its inmost self appear
Through outer seeming—truth ablaze,
Not falsehood's fancy-haze?

PROLOGUE

How many a year, my Asolo,
Since—one step just from sea to land—
I found you, laved yet-foared you so—
For natural objects seemed to stand
Palpably fire-clothed! No—

No mastery of mine o'er these!
Terror with beauty, like the Bush
Burning but unconsumed. Bend knees,
Drop eyes to earthward! Language? Tush!
Silence 'tis awe decrees.

And now ? The lambent flame is—where ?
Lost from the naked world: earth, sky
Hill, vale, tree, flower,—Italia's rare
O'er-running beauty crowds the eye-
But flame? The Bush is bare.

Hill, vale, tree, flower—they stand distinct,
Nature to know and name. What then?
A Voice spoke thence which straight unlinked
Fancy from fact: see, all's in ken:
Has once my eyelid winked?

No, for the purged ear apprehends
Earth's import, not the eye late dazed:
The Voice said ' Call my works thy friends!
At Nature dost thou shrink amazed?
God is it who transcends.'

ASOLO: *Sept.* 6,1889.

ROSNY

WOE, he went galloping into the war,
Clara, Clara!
Let us two dream: shall he 'scape with a scar?
Scarcely disfigurement, rather a grace
Making for manhood which nowise we mar:
See, while I kiss it,the flush on his face—
Rosny, Rosny!

Light does he laugh: 'With your love in my soul'—
(Clara, Clara!)
'How could I other than—sound, safe and whole—
Cleave who opposed me asunder, yet stand
Scatheless beside you, as, touching love's goal,
All who oppose the race kneels, craves reward at your hand—
Rosny, Rosny?'

Ay, but if certain who envied should see!
Clara, Clara,
Certain who simper: 'The hero for me
Hardly of life were so chary as miss
Death—death and fame—that's love's guerdon when She
Boasts, proud bereaved one, her choice fell on this
Rosny, Rosny!'

So,—go on dreaming,—he lies mid a heap
(Clara, Clara,)
Of the slain by his hand: what is death but a sleep?
Dead, with my portrait displayed on his breast:
Love wrought his undoing:' No prudence could keep
The love-maddened wretch from his fate.' That is best,
Rosny, Rosny!

DUBIETY

I WILL be happy if but for once:
Only help me, Autumn weather,
Me and my cares to screen, ensconce
In luxury's sofa-lap of leather!

Sleep? Nay, comfort—with just a cloud
Suffusing day too clear and bright:
Eve's essence, the single drop allowed
To sully, like milk, Noon's water-white.

Let gauziness shade, not shroud,—adjust,
Dim and not deaden, — somehow sheathe
Aught sharp in the rough world's busy thrust,
If it reach me through dreaming's vapour-wreath.

Be life so, all things ever the same!
For, what has disarmed the world? Outside,
Quiet and peace: inside, nor blame
Nor want, nor wish whate'er betide.

What is it like that has happened before?
A dream? No dream, more real by much.
A vision? But fanciful days of yore
Brought many: mere musing seems not such.

Perhaps but a memory, after all!
—Of what came once when a woman leant
To feel for my brow where her kiss might fall.
Truth ever, truth only the excellent!

Now

OUT of your whole life give but a moment !
All of your life that has gone before,
All to come after it,—so you ignore^
So you make perfect the present'condense.
In a rapture of rage, for perfection's endowment,
Thought and feeling and soul and sense

Merged in a moment which gives me at last
You around me tor once, you beneath me, above me—
Me—sure that despite of time future, time past,—
This **tisk** of our life-time's one moment you love me!
How long such suspension may linger? Ah, Sweet—
The moment eternal—just that and no more—
When ecstasy's utmost we **clutch at the** core
While cheeks burn, arms open, eyes shot and lips meet!

HUMILITY

WHAT girl but, having gathered flowers,
Stript die beds and spoilt the bowers,
From the lapful light she carries
Drops a careless bud?—nor tarries
To regain the waif and stray:
'Store enough for home'—she'll say.

So say I too: give your lover
Heaps of loving—under, over,
Whelm him—make the one the wealthy!
Am I all so poor who—stealthy
Work it was!—picked up what fell:
Not the worst bud—who can tell?

POETICS

'So say the foolish!' Say the foolish so, Love?
'Flower she is, my rose'—or else 'My very swan is she'—
Or perhaps 'Yon maid-moon, blessing earth below, Love,
That art thou!'—to them, belike: no such vain words from me.
'Hush, rose, blush! no balm like breath,' I chide it:
'Bend thy neck its best, swan,—hers the whiter curve!'
Be the moon the moon: my Love I place beside it:
What is she? Her human salf,—no lower word will serve.

SUMMUM BONUM

ALL the breath and the bloom of the year in the bag of one bee:
All the wonder and wealth of the mine in the heart of one gem:
In the core of one pearl all the shade and the shine of the sea:
Breath and bloom, shade and shine,—wonder, wealth, and—how far above them—
Truth, that's brighter than gem,
Trust, that's purer than pearl,—
Brightest truth, purest trust in the universe—all were for me
In the kiss of one girl.

A PEARL, A GIRL

A SIMPLE ring with a single stone
To the vulgar eye no stone of price:
Whisper the right word, that alone—
Forth starts a sprite, like fire from ice,
And lo, you are lord (says an Eastern scroll)
Of heaven and earth, lord whole and sole
Through the power in a pearl.

A woman ('tis I this time that say)
With little the world counts worthy . . .
Utter the true word—out and away
Escapes her soul: I am wrapt in blaze,
Creation's lord, of heaven and earth
Lord whole and sole—by a minute's birth-
Through the love in a girl!

SPECULATIVE

OTHERS may need new life in Heaven—
Man, Nature, Art—made new, assume!
Man with new mind old sense to leaven,
Nature—new light to clear old gloom,
Art that breaks bounds, gets soaring-room.

I shall pray: 'Fugitive as precious-
Minutes which passed,—return, remain!
Let earth's old life once more enmesh us,
You with old pleasure, me—old pain,
So we but meet nor part again!'

WHITE WITCHCRAFT

IF you and I could change to beasts, what beast should either be?
Shall you and I play Jove for once? Turn fox then, I decree!
Shy wild sweet stealer of the grapes I Now do your worst on me!

And thus you think to spite your friend—turned loathsome? What, a toad?
So, all men shrink and shun me! Dear men, pursue your road!
Leave but my crevice in the stone, a reptile's fit abode!

Now say your worst, Canidia! 'He's loathsome, I allow:
There may or may not lurk a pearl beneath his puckered brow:
But see his eyes that follow mine—love lasts there anyhow.'

BAD DREAMS. I

LAST night I saw you in my sleep:
And how your charm of face was changed!
I asked' Some love, some faith you keep ?'
You answered 'Faith gone, love estranged.'

BAD DREAMS. 1

Whereat I woke—a twofold bliss:
Waking was one, but next there came
This other: 'Though I felt, for this,
My heart break,! loved on the same.'

BAD DREAMS. II

You in the flesh and here—
Your very self! Now, wait!
One word! May I hope or fear?
Must I speak in love or hate?
Stay while I ruminate!

The fact and each circumstance
Dare you disown? Not you!
That vast dome, that huge dance,
And the gloom which overgrew
A—possibly festive crew!

For why should men dance at all—
Why women—a crowd of both—
Unless they are gay? Strange ball—
Hands and feet plighting troth,
Yet partners enforced and loth!

Of who danced there, no shape
Did I recognize: thwart, perverse,
Each grasped each, past escape
In a whirl or weary or worse:
Man's sneer met woman's curse,

While he and she toiled as if
Their guardian set galley-slaves
To supple chained limbs grown stiff:
Unmanacled trulls and knaves—
The lash for who misbehaves!

And a gloom was, all the while,
Deeper and deeper yet
O'ergrowing the rank and file
Of that army of haters—set
To mimic love's fever-fret.

By the wall-side close I crept,
Avoiding the livid maze,
And, safely so far, outstepped
On a chamber—a chapel, says
My memory or betrays—

Closet-like, kept aloof
From unseemly witnessing
What sport made floor and roof
Of the Devil's palace ring
While his Damned amused their king.

Ay, for a low lamp burned,
And a silence lay about
What I, in the midst, discerned
Though dimly till, past doubt,
'Twas a sort of throne stood out—

High seat with steps, at least:
And the topmost step was filled
By—whom? What vestured priest?
A stranger to me,—his guild,
His cult, unreconciled

To my knowledge how guild and cult
Are clothed in this world of ours:
I pondered, but no result
Came to—unless that Giaours
So worship the Lower Powers.

When suddenly who entered?
Who knelt—did you guess I saw?
Who—raising that face where centred
Allegiance to love and law
So lately—off-casting awe,

Down-treading reserve, away
Thrusting respect... but mine
Stands firm—firm still shall stay!
Ask Satan! for I decline
To tell—what I saw, in fine!

Yet here in the flesh you come—
Your same self, form and face,—
In the eyes, mirth still at home!
On the lips, that commonplace
Perfection of honest grace!

Yet your errand is—needs must be
To palliate—well, explain,
Expurgate in some degree
Your soul of its ugly stain.
Oh, you—the good in grain—

How was it your white took tinge?
'A mere dream'—never object!
Sleep leaves a door on hinge
Whence soul, ere our flesh suspect,
Is off and away: detect

Her vagaries when loose, who can!
Be she pranksome, be she prude,
Disguise with the day began:
With the night—ah, what ensued
From draughts of a drink hell-brewed?

Then She: 'What a queer wild dream!
And perhaps the best fun is—
Myself had its fellow—I seem
Scarce awake from yet. 'Twas this—
Shall I tell you? First, a kiss!

'For the fault was just your own,—
'Tis myself expect apology:
You warned me to let alone
(Since our studies were mere philo-
logy)
That ticklish (you said) Anthology.

(So, I dreamed that I passed *exam*
Till a question posed me sore:
"Who translated this epigram
By—an author we best ignore?"
And I answered "Hannah More"!'

BAD DREAMS. III

THIS was my dream: I saw a Forest
Old as the earth, no track nor trace
Of unmade man. Thou, Soul, explorest—
Though in a trembling rapture—space

Immeasurable! Shrubs, turned trees,
Trees that touch heaven, support its frieze
Studded with sun and moon and star:
While—oh, the enormous growths that bar
Mine eye from penetrating past
Their tangled twine where lurks—nay, lives
Royally lone, some brute-type cast
I' the rough, time cancels, man forgives.

On, Soul! 1 saw a lucid City
Of architectural device
Every way perfect. Pause for pity,
Lightning! nor leave a cicatrice
On those bright marbles, dome and spire,
Structures palatial,—streets which mire
Dares not defile, paved all too fine
For human footstep's smirch, not thine—
Proud solitary traverser,
My Soul, of silent lengths of way—
With what ecstatic dread, aver,
Lest life start sanctioned by thy stay!

Ah, but the last sight was the hideous!
A City, yes,—a Forest, true,—
But each devouring each. Perfidious
Snake-plants had strangled what I knew
Was a pavilion once: each oak
Held on his horns some spoil he broke
By surreptitiously beneath
Upthrusting: pavements, as with teeth,
Griped huge weed widening crack and split
In squares and circles stone-work erst.
Oh, Nature—good! Oh, Art—no whit
Less worthy! Both in one—accurst!

BAD DREAMS. IV

IT happened thus: my slab, though new,
Was getting weather-stained,—beside,
Herbage, balm, peppermint o'ergrew
Letter and letter: till you tried
Somewhat, the Name was scarce descried.

That strong stern man my lover came:
—Was he my lover? Call him, pray,
My life's cold critic bent on blame
Of all poor I could do or say
To make me worth his love one day—

One far day when, by diligent
And dutiful amending faults,
Foibles, all weaknesses which went
To challenge and excuse assaults
Of culture wronged by taste that halts—

Discrepancies should mar no plan
Symmetric of the qualities
Claiming respect from—say—a man
That's strong and stern." Once more he pries
Into me with those critic eyes I '

No question! so—' Conclude, condemn
Each failure my poor self avows!
Leave to its fate all you contemn}
There's Solomon's selected spouse:
Earth needs must hold such maids—choose them!'

Why, he was weeping! Surely gone
Sternness and strength: with eyes to ground
And voice a broken monotone—
'Only be as you were! Abound
In foibles, faults,—laugh, robed and crowned

'As Folly's veriest queen,—care I
One feather-flufn Look pity, Love,
On prostrate me—your foot shall try
This forehead's use—mount thence above,
And reach what Heaven you dignify! '

Now, what could bring such change about?
The thought perplexed: till, following
His gaze upon the ground,—why, out
Came all the secret! So, a thing
Thus simple has deposed my king!

For, spite of weeds that strove to spoil
Plain reading on the lettered slab,
My name was clear enough—no soil
Effaced the date when one chance stab
Of scorn ... if only ghosts might blab!

INAPPREHENSIVENESS

WE two stood simply friend-like side by side,
Viewing a twilight country far and wide,
Till she at length broke silence. 'How it towers
Yonder, the ruin o'er this vale of ours!
The West's faint flare behind it so relieves
Its rugged outline—sight perhaps deceives,
Or I could almost fancy that I see
A branch wave plain—belike some wind-sown tree
Chance-rooted where a missing turret was.
What would I give for the perspective glass
At home, to make out if 'tis really so!
Has Ruskin noticed here at Asolo
That certain weed-growths on the ravaged wall
Seem'... something that I could not say at all,
My thought being rather—as absorbed she sent
Look onward after look from eyes distent
With longing to reach Heaven's gate left ajar—
'Oh, fancies that might be, oh, facts that are!

INAPPREHENSIVENESS

What of a wilding ? By you stands, andmay
So stand unnoticed till the Judgment Day,
One who, if ones aware.that your regard
Claimed what his heart holds,—woke, as from its sward
The flower, the dormant passion, so to speak—
Then what a rush of life would startling wreak
Revenge on your inapprehensive stare
While, from the ruin and the West's faint flare,
You let your eyes meet mine, touch what you term
Quietude—that's an universe in germ—
The dormant passion needing but a look
To burst into immense life!'

•No, the book
Which noticed how the wall-growths wave' said she
'Was not by Ruskin.'

I said ' Vernon Lee?'

WHICH?

So, the three Court-ladies began
Their trial of who judged best
In esteeming the love of a man:
Who preferred with most reason was thereby confessed
Boy-Cupid's exemplary catcher and eager;
An Abbe crossed legs to decide on the wager.

First the Duchesse:' Mine for me—
Who were it but God's for Him,
And the King's for—who but he?
Both faithful and loyal, one grace more shall brim
His cup with perfection: a lady's true lover,
He holds—save his God and his king—none above her.'

'I require'—outspoke the Marquise—
'Pure thoughts, ay, but also fine deeds:
Play the paladin must he, to please
My whim, and—to prove my knight's service exceeds
Your saint's and your loyalist's praying and kneeling—
Shov. wounds, each wide mouth to my mercy appealing.'

Then the Comtesse:' My choice be a wretch,
Mere losel in body and soul,
Thrice accurst I What care I, so he stretch
Arms to me his sole saviour, love's ultimate goal,
Out of earth and men's noise—names of "infidel," "traitor,"
Cast up at him ? Crown me, crown's adjudicator!'

And the Abb6 uncrossed his legs,
Took snuff, a reflective pinch,
Broke silence: 'The question begs
Much pondering ere I pronounce. Shall I flinch?
The love which to one and one only has reference
Seems terribly like what perhaps gains God's preference.'

THE CARDINAL AND THE DOG

CRESCENZIO, the Pope's Legate at the High Council, Trent,
— Year Fifteen hundred twenty-two, March Twenty-five—intent
On writing letters to the Pope till late into the night,
Rose, weary, to refresh himself, and saw a monstrous sight:
(I give mine Author's very words: he penned, I re-indite.)

A black Dog of vast bigness, eyes flaming, ears that hung
Down to the very ground almost, into the chamber sprung
And made directly for him, and laid himself right under
The table where Crescenzio wrote—who called in fear and wonder
His servants in the ante-room, commanded everyone
To look for and find out the beast: but, looking, they found none.

The Cardinal fell melancholy, then sick, soon after died:
And at Verona, as he lay on his death-bed, he cried
Aloud to drive away the Dog that leapt on his bed-side.
Heaven keep us Protestants from harm: the rest... no ill betide!

THE POPE AND THE NET

WHAT, he on whom our voices unanimously ran,
Made Pope at our last Conclave ? Full low his life began:
His father earned the daily bread as just a fisherman.

So much the more his boy minds book, gives proof of mother-wit.
Becomes first Deacon, and the Priest, then Bishop: see him sit
No less than Cardinal ere long, while no one cries'Unfit!'

But someone smirks, some other smiles, jogs elbow and nods head:
Each winks at each: "I-faith, a rise! Saint Peter's net, instead
Of sword and keys, is come in vogue!' You think he blushes red?

Not he, of humble holy heart! ' Unworthy me!' he sighs:
'From fisher's drudge to Church's prince —it is indeed a rise:
So, here's my way to keep the fact for ever in my eyes!

And straightway in his palace-hall, where commonly is set
Some coat-of-arms, some portraiture ancestral, lo, we met
His mean estate's remainder in his fisher-father's net!

Which step conciliates all and some, stops cavil in a trice:
'The humble holy heart that holds of newborn pride no spice!
He'sjust the saint to choose for Pope!' Each adds "Tis my advice.'

So, Pope he was: and when we flocked— its sacred slipper on—
To kiss his foot, we lifted eyes, alack the thing was gone—
That guarantee of lowlihead,—eclipsed that star which shone!

Each eyed his fellow, one and all kept silence. I cried 'Pish!
I'll make me spokesman for the rest, express the common wish.
Why, Father, is the net removed?' 'Son, it hath caught the fish.'

THE BEAN-FEAST

HE was the man—Pope Sixtus, that Fifth, that swineherd's son:
He knew the right thing, did it, and thanked God when 'twas done:
But of all he had to thank for, my fancy somehow leans
To thinking, what most moved him was a certain meal on beans.

For one day. as his wont was, in just enough disguise
As he went exploring wickedness,—to see with his own eyes
If law had due observance in the city's entrail dark
As well as where, i' the open, crime stood an obvious mark,—

He chanced, in a blind alley, on a tumble-down once house
Now hovel, vilest structure in Rome the ruinous:

And, as his tact impelled him, Sixtus adventured bold,
To learn how lowliest subjects bore hunger, toil, and cold.

There sat they at high-supper—man and wife, lad and lass,
Poor as you please but cleanly all and carefree: pain that was
—Forgotten, pain as sure to be let bide aloof its time.—
Mightily munched the brave ones—what mattered gloom or grime?

Said Sixtus 'Feast, my children! who works hard needs eat well.
I'm just a supervisor, would hear what you can tell.
Do any wrongs want righting? The Father tries his best,
But, since he's only mortal, sends such as I to test
The truth of all that's told him—how folk like you may fare:
Come!—only don't stop eating—when mouth has words to spare—

'You'—smiled he—'play the spokesman, bell-wether of the flock!
Are times good, masters gentle? Your grievances unlock!
How of your work and wages?—pleasures, if such may be—
Pains, as such are for certain.' Thus smiling questioned he.

But somehow, spite of smiling, awe stole upon the group—
An inexpressible surmise: why should a priest thus stoop—
Pry into what concerned folk? Each visage fell. Aware,
Cries Sixtus interposing: 'Nay, children, have no care!

' Fear nothing! Who employs me requires the plain truth. Pelf
Beguiles who should inform me: so, I inform myself.
See!' And he threw his hood back, let the close vesture ope,
Showed face, and where on tippet the cross lay: 'twas the Pope.

Imagine the joyful wonder! 'How shall the like of us—
Poor souls—requite such blessing of our rude bean-feast?' 'Thus—
Thus amply!' laughed Pope Sixtus. 'I early rise, sleep late:
Who works may eat: they tempt me, your beans there: spare a plate!'

Down sat he on the door-step: 'twas they this time said grace:
He ate up the last mouthful, wiped lips, and then, with face

THE BEAN-FEAST

Turned heavenward, broke forth thankful: 'Not now, that earth obeys
Thy word in mme that through me the peoples know Thy ways—
But that Thy care extendeth to Nature's homely wants,
And, while man's mind is strengthened, Thy goodness nowise scants
Man's body of its comfort,—that I whom kings and queens
Crouch to, pick crumbs from off my table, relish beans!
The thunders I but seem to launch, there plain Thy hand all see:
That I have appetite, digest, and thrive-that boon's for me.'

MUCKLE-MOUTH MEG

FROWNED the Laird on the Lord:' So, red-handed I catch thee?
Death-doomed by our Law of the Border!
We've a gallows outside and a chiel to dispatch thee:
Lo trespass—hangs: all's in order.'

He met frown with smile, did the young English gallant:
Then the Laird's dame: 'Nay, Husband, I beg!
He*s comely: be merciful! Grace for the callant
—If he marries our Muckle-mouth Meg!'

'No mile-wide-mouthed monster of yours do I marry:
Grant rather the gallows!' laughed he.
'Foul fare kith and kin of you—why do you tarry?'
'To tame your fierce temper!* quoth she.

'Shove him quick in the Hole, shut him fast for a week:
Cold, darkness and hunger work wonders:
Who lion-like roars now, mouse-fashion will squeak,
And "it rains" soon succeed to "it thunders.'"

A week did he bide in the cold and the dark
—Not hunger: for duly at morning
In flitted a lass, and a voice like a lark
Chirped' Muckle-mouth Meg still ye're scorning?

'Go hang, but here's parritch to hearten ye first!'
' Did Meg's muckle-mouth boast within some
Such music as yours, mine should match it or burst:
No frog-jaws! So tell folk, my Winsome!'

Soon week came to end, and, from Hole's door set wide.
Out he marched, and there waited the lassie:
'Yon gallows, or Muckle-mouth Meg for a bride!
Consider! Sky's blue and turf's grassy:

'Life's sweet: shall I say ye wed Muckle-mouth Meg ?'
'Not I' quoth the stout heart: 'too eerie
The mouth that can swallow a bubbly-jock's egg:
Shall I let it munch mine? Never, Dearie!'

'Not Muckle-mouth Meg? Wow, the obstinate man!
Perhaps he would rather wed me!'
* Ay, would he—with just for a dowry your can!'
'I'm Muckle-mouth Meg' chirruped she.

'Then so—so—so—so—' as he kissed her apace—
'Will I widen thee out till thou turnest
From Margaret Minnikin-mou', by God's grace,
To Muckle-mouth Meg in good earnest!'

ARCADES AMBO

A. You blame me that I ran away?
Why, Sir, the enemy advanced:
Balls flew about, and—who can say
But one, if I stood firm, had glanced
In my direction? Cowardice?
I only know we don't live twice,
Therefore—shun death, is my advice.

B. Shun death at all risks? Well, at some!
True, I myself, Sir, though I scold
The cowardly, by no means come
Under reproof as overbold
— I , who would have no end of brutes
Cut up alive to guess what suits
My case and saves my toe from shoots.

THE LADY AND THE PAINTER

She, Yet womanhood you reverence,
So you profess!
He, With heart and soul.
She. Of which fact this is evidence!
To help Art-study,—for some dole
Of certain wretched shillings,—you
Induce a woman—virgin too—
To strip and stand stark-naked?
He. True.
She, Nor feel you so degrade her?
He. What

—(Excuse the interruption)—clings
Half-savage-like around your hat?
She. Ah, do they please you? Wild-bird-wings
Next season,—Paris-prints assert,—
We must go feathered to the skirt:
My modi3te keeps on the alert.

Owls, hawks, jays—swallows most approve ...
He. Dare I speak plainly?
She. Oh, I trust!
He. Then, Lady Blanche, it less would move
In heart and soul of me diseust
Did you strip off those spoils you wear,
And stand—for thanks, not shillings—bare,
To help Art like my Model there.

She well knew what absolved her—praise
In me for God's surpassing good,
Who granted to my reverent gaze
A type of purest womanhood.
You—clothed with murder of His best
Of harmless beings—stand the test!
What is it *you* know?
She. That you jest!

PONTE DELL' ANGELO, VENICE

STOP rowing! This one of our bye-canals
O'er a certain bridge you have to cross
That's named 'Of the Angel': listen why!
The name 'Of the Devil' too much appals
Venetian acquaintance, so—his the loss,
While the gain goes ... look on high!

An angel visibly guards yon house:
Above each scutcheon—a pair—stands he,
Enfolds them with droop of either wing:
The family's fortune were perilous
Did he thence depart—you will soon agree.
If I hitch into verse the thing.

For, once on a time, this house belonged
To a lawyer of note, with law and to spare,
But also with overmuch lust of gain:
In the matter of law you were nowise wronged,
But alas for the lucre! He picked you bare
To the bone. Did folk complain?

'I exact' growled he 'work's rightful due:
'Tis folk seek me, not I seek them.
Advice at its price! They succeed or fail,
Get law in each case—and a lesson too:
Keep clear of the Courts—is advice *ad rem:*
They'll remember, I'll be bail!*
So, he pocketed fee without a qualm.
What reason for squeamishness? Labour done,
To play he betook him with lightened heart,
Ate, drank and made merry with song or psalm,
Since the yoke of the Church is an easy one—
Fits neck nor causes smart.

Brief: never was such an extortionate
Rascal—the word has escaped my teeth
And yet—(all's down in a book no ass
Indited, believe me!)—this reprobate
Was punctual at prayer-time: gold lurked beneath
Alloy of the rankest brass.

For, play *the* extortioner as he might,
Fleece folk each day and all day long,
There was this redeeming circumstance:
He never lay down to sleep at night
But he put up a prayer first, brief yet strong,
'Our Lady avert mischance!'

Now it happened at close of a fructuous week.
' I must ask' quoth he' some Saint to dine:
I want that widow well out of my ears
With her ailing and wailing. Who bade her seek
Redress at my hands? "She was wronged!" Folk whine
If to Law wrong right appears.

'Matteo da Bascio—he's my man !
No less than Chief of the Capucins:
His presence will surely surfumigate
My house—fools think lies under a ban
If somebody loses what somebody wins.
Hark, there he knocks at the grate!

'Come in, thou blessed of Mother Church!
I go and prepare—to bid, that is,
My trusty and diligent servitor
Get all things in readiness. Vain the search
Through Venice for one to compare with this
My model of ministrants: for—

'For—once again, nay, three times over,
My helpmate s an ape! so intelligent,
I train him to drudge at household work:
He toils and he moils, I live in clover:
Oh, you shall see! There's a goodly scent—
From his cooking, or I'm a Turk!

'Scarce need to descend and supervise:
I'll do it, however: wait here awhile!'
So, down to the kitchen gaily scuttles
Our host, nor notes the alarmed surmise
Of the holy man. 'O depth of guile!
He blindly guzzles and guttles,

PONTE DELL' ANGELO, VENICE

'While—who is it dresses the food and pours
The liquor? "-Some frend—I make no doubt—
In likeness of—which of the loathly brutes?
An ape! Where hides he? No bull that gores,
No bear that hugs—'tis the mock and flout
Of an ape, fiend's face that suits.

'So—out with thee, creature, wherever thou hidest!
I charge thee, by virtue of. .. right do I judge!
There skulks he perdue, crouching under the bed.
Well done! What, forsooth, in beast's 'l shape thou confidest? 'l
I know and would name thee but that I begrudge
Breath spent on such carrion. Instead—

'I adjure thee by——' 'Stay!' laughed the portent that rose
From floor up to ceiling: 'No need to adjure !
See Satan in person, late ape by command
Of Him thou adjurest in vain. A saint's
Scents brimstone though incense be burned for a lure

Thy friend's one good custom—he knows not—has screened
His flesh hitherto from what else would assail:
At "Save me, Madonna!" I pause.

'That prayer did the losel but once preter-mit
My pounce were upon him. I keep me attent:
He's in safety but till he's caught napping. Enough!'
'Ay, enough!' smiles the saint—'for the biter is bit,
The spy caught in somnolence. Vamsh! I'm sent
To smooth up what fiends do in rough/

vamsh? Through wall or through
. *roof ? the ripost* -
Grinned gaily. 'My orders were— Leave ,_ not unharmed
The abode of this lawyer! Do damage to prote
Twas for something thou quittedst the - land of the lost—
To add to their number this unit!" Though charmed
from descent there, on earth that's above
'I may haply amerce h i m . ' 'So do, and begone.

Yet, hence! for I'm safe, understand! I command thee ! look ! S n t t e e to convey to fit pinish And. t

This lawyer, my legeman, for cruelty
On his clients, the widow and orphan, noor souls
Hehasplaguedbyexactionswhichproved law's disgrace.
Made equity void and to nothingness brought
Gods pity. Fiends, on with fresh coals!
Stay! nowise confounded, withstands Hell its match:
How comes it, were truth in this story of thine,
God's punishment suffered a minute s
Weeks, months have elapsed since thou squattedst at watch
For a spring on thy victim: what caused thee decline
Advantage till challenged to-day?'

'That challenge I meet with contempt,' quoth the fiend.
'Thus much I acknowledge: the man's armed in mail:
I wait till a joint's loose, then quick ply my claws.

Leavea breach in the brickwork, a gap in
Forwhopassestostareat!"Sparespeech! resigned.
Here goes ! roaded the goblin as all
Wide bat-wings, spread arms and legs, tail out a-stream,
Crash obstacles went, right and left, as he soared
Or else sank, was clean gone through the hole anyhow.
The Saint returned thanks: then a satisfied gleam
On the bald polished pate showed that tri-umph was scored. 'To dinner with appetite now!'

Down he trips. 'In good time!* smirks the host. 'Didst thou scent
Rich savour of roast meat? Where hides he, my ape?
Look alive, be alert I He's away to wash plates.
Sit down, Saint! What's here' Dost ex-amine a rent
In the napkin thou twistest and twiriest?
Ha, blood is it drips nor abates

'From thy wringing a cloth, late was lavenderedfair?
What means such a marvel?' 'Just this does it mean:
I convince and convict thee of sin!' answers straight
The Saint, wringing on, wringing ever—O rare!—
Blood—blood from a napery snow not more clean.
'A miracle shows thee thy state!

'See—blood thy extortions have wrung from the flesh
Of thy clients who, sheep-like, arrived to be shorn
And left thee—or fleeced to the quick or so flayed
That, behold, their blood gurgles and grumbles afresh
To accuse thee! Ay, down on thy knees, get up sworn
To restore! Restitution once made,

'Sin no more! Dost thou promise? Absolved, then, arise!
Upstairs follow me! Art amazed at yon breach?
Who battered and shattered and scattered, escape
From thy purlieus obtaining? That Father of Lies
Thou wast wont to extol for his feats, all and each
The Devil's disguised as thine ape!'

Be sure that our lawyer was torn by remorse,
Shed tears in a flood, vowed and swore so to alter
His ways that how else could our Saint but declare
He was cleansed of past sin? 'For sin future—fare worse
Thou undoubtedly wilt,' warned the Saint, 'shouldst thou falter
One whit!' 'Oh, for that have no care!

'I am firm in my purposed amendment But, prithee,
Must ever affront and affright me yon gap?
Who made it for exit may find it of use
For entrance as easy. If, down in his smithy
He forges me fetters—when heated, mayhap,
He'll up with an armful! Broke loose—

'How bar him out henceforth?' 'Judiciously urged!'
Was the good man's reply. 'How to baulk him is plain.
There's nothing the Devil objects to so much,
So speedily flies from, as one of those purged
Of his presence, the angels who erst formed his train—
His, their emperor. Choose one of such!

'Get fashioned his likeness and set him on high
At back of the breach thus adroitly filled up:
Display him as guard of two scutcheons, thy arms:
I warrant no devil attempts to get by
And disturb thee so guarded. Eat, drink, dine and sup
In thy rectitude, safe from alarms!'

So said and so done. See, the angel has place
Where the Devil had passage! All's down in a book.
Gainsay me? Consult it! Still faithless? Trust *me?*
Trust Father Boverio who gave me the case
In his Annals—gets of it, by hook or by crook,
Two confirmative witnesses: three

Are surely enough to establish an act;
And thereby we learn—would we ascertain truth—
To trust wise tradition which took, at the time,
Note that served till slow history ventured on fact,
Though folk have their fling at tradition forsooth!
Row, boys, fore and aft, rhyme and chime!

BEATRICE SIGNORINI

THIS strange thing happened to a painter once:
Viterbo boasts the man among her sons
Of note, I seem to think: his ready tool
Picked up its precepts in Cortona's school—
That's Pietro Berretini, whom they call
Cortona, these Italians: greatish-small,
Our painter was his pupil, by repute
His match if not his master absolute,
Though whether he spoiled fresco more or less,
And what's its fortune, scarce repays your guess.
Still, for one circumstance, I save his name
—Francesco Romanelli: do the same!
He went to Rome and painted: there he knew
A wonder of a woman painting too—
For she, at least, was no Cortona's drudge:
Witness that ardent fancy-shape—I judge
A semblance of her soul—she called 'Desire'
With starry front for guide, where sits the fire

She left to brighten Buonarroti's house.
If you see Florence, pay that piece your vows,
Though blockhead Baldinucci's mind, imbued
With monkish morals, bade folk 'Drape the nude
And stop the scandal!' quoth the record prim
I borrow this of: hang his book and him!
At Rome, then, where these fated ones met first,
The blossom of his life had hardly burst
While hers was blooming at full beauty's stand:
No less Francesco—when half-ripe he scanned
Consummate Artemisia—grew one want
To have her his and make her ministrant
With every gift of body and of soul
To him. In vain. Her sphery self was whole—
Might only touch his orb at Art's sole point.
Suppose he could persuade her to enjoint
Her life—past, present, futures—all in his
At Art's sole point by some explosive kiss
Of love through lips, would love's success defeat
Artistry's haunting curse—the Incomplete?
Artists no doubt they both were,—what beside
Was she? who, long had felt heart, soul spread wide
Her life out, knowing much and loving well,
On either side Art's narrow space where fell
Reflection from his own speck: but the germ
Of individual genius—what we term
The very self, the God-gift whence had grown
Heart's life and soul's life,—how make that his own?
Vainly his Art, reflected, smiled in small
On Art's one facet of her ampler ball;
The rest, touch-free, took in, gave back heaven, earth,
All where he was not. Hope, well-nigh ere birth
Came to Desire, died off all-unfulfilled.
'What though in Art I stand the ablerskilled,'
(So he conceited; mediocrity
Turns on itself the self-transforming eye)
'If only Art were suing, mine would plead
To purpose: man—by nature I exceed
Woman the bounded: but how much beside
She boasts, would sue in turn and be denied!
Love her? My own wife loves me in a sort
That suits us both: she takes the world's report
Of what my work is worth, and, for the rest,
Concedes that, while his consort keeps her nest,
The eagle soars a licensed vagrant, lives
A wide free life which she at least forgives—
Good Beatrice Signorini! Well
And wisely did I choose her. But the spell
To subjugate this Artemisia—where?
She passionless?—she resolute to care
Nowise beyond the plain sufficiency
Of fact that she is she and I am I
—Acknowledged arbitrator for us both
In her life as in mine which she were loth
Even to learn the laws of? No, and no
Twenty times over! Ay, it must be so:
I for myself, alas!'
Whereon, instead
Of the checked lover's-utterance—why, he said
—Leaning above her easel: 'Flesh is red'
(Or some such just remark)—' by no means white
As Guido's practice teaches: you are right.'
Then came the better impulse: 'What if pride
Were wisely trampled on, whate'er betide?
If I grow hers, not mine—join lives, confuse
Bodies and spirits, gain not her but lose
Myself to Artemisia? That were love!
Of two souls—one must bend, one rule above:
If I crouch under proudly, lord turned slave,
Were it not worthier both than if she gave
Herself—in treason to herself—to me?'*

And, all the while, he felt it could not be.
Such love were true love: love that way who can!
Someone that's born half woman not whole man:
For man, prescribed man better or man worse,
Why, whether microcosm or universe,
What law prevails alike through great and small,
The world and man—world's miniature we call?
Male is the master. 'That way'—smiled and sighed
Our true male estimator—'puts her pride
My wife in making me the outlet whence
She learns all Heaven allows: 'tis my pretence
To paint: her lord should do what else but
f aint?
break brushes, cloister me turned saint?

Then, best of all suits sanctity her spouse
Who acts for Heaven, allows and disallows
At pleasure, past appeal, the right, the wrong
In all things. That's my wife's way. But this strong
Confident Artemisia—an adept
In Art does she conceit herself? "Except
In just this instance," tell her, "no one draws
More rigidly observant of the laws
Of right design: yet here,—permit me hint,—
If the acromion had a deeper dint,
That shoulder were perfection." What surprise
—Nay scorn, shoots black fire from those startled eyes!
She to te lessoned in design forsooth!
I'm doomed and done for, since I spoke the truth.
Make my own work the subject of dispute—
Fails it of just perfection absolute
Somewhere? Those motors, flexors,—don't I know
Ser Santi, styled "Tirititototo
The pencil-prig," might blame them? Yet my wife—
Were he and his nicknamer brought to life,
Tito and Titian, to pronounce again—
Ask her who knows more—I or the great Twain
Our colourist and draughtsman!
'I help her,
Not she helps me; and neither shall demur
Because my portion is } _ _ he chose to think—
'Quite other than a woman's: I may drink
At many waters, must repose by none—
Rather arise and fare forth, having done
Duty to one new excellence the more,
Abler thereby, though impotent before
So much was gained of knowledge. Best depart
From this last lady I have learned by heart!'

Thus he concluded of himself—resigned
To play the man and master:'Man boasts mind:
Woman, man's sport calls mistress, to the same
Does body's suit and service. Would she claim
—My placid Beatrice-wife—pretence
Even to blame her lord if, going hence,
He wistfully regards one whom—did fate
Concede—he might accept queen, abdicate
Kingship because of?—one of no meek sort
But masterful as he: man's match in short?
Oh, there's no secret I were best conceal!
Bice shall know; and should a stray tear steal
From out the blue eye, stain the rose cheek—bah!
A smile, a word's gay reassurance—ah,
With kissing interspersed,—shall make amends,
Turn pain to pleasure.'
'What, in truth so ends
Abruptly, do you say, our intercourse?'
Next day, asked Artemisia: 'I'll divorce
Husband and wife no longer. Go your ways,
Leave Rome! Viterbo owns no equal, says
The bye-word, for fair women: you, no doubt,
May boast a paragon all specks without,
Using the painter's privilege to choose
Among what's rarest. Will your wife refuse
Acceptance from—no rival—of a gift?
You paint the human figure I make shift
Humbly to reproduce: but, in my hours
Of idlesse, what I fain would paint is—flowers.
Look now!'
She twitched aside a veiling cloth.
'Here is my keepsake—frame and picture both:
For see, the frame is all of flowers festooned
About an empty space,—left thus, to wound
No natural susceptibility:
How can I guess? 'Tis you must fill, not I,
The central space with—her whom you like best!
That is your business, mine has been the rest.
But judge!'
How judge them? Each of us, in flowers,
Chooses his love, allies it with past hours,
Old meetings, vanished forms and faces: no—
Here let each favourite unmolested blow
For one heart's homage, no tongue's banal praise,
Whether the rose appealingly bade 'Gaze
Your fill on me, sultana who dethrone
The gaudy tulip!' or 'twas' Me alone
Rather do homage to, who lily am,
No unabashed rose!' 'Do I vainly cram
My cup with sweets, your jonquil?' 'Why forget
Vernal endearments with the violet?'
So they contested yet concerted, all
As one, to circle round about, enthral
Yet, self-forgetting, push to prominence
The midmost wonder, gained no matter whence.

There's a tale extant, in a book I **conned**
Long years ago, which treats of things beyond

The common, antique times and countries queer
And customs strange 'to match. ''Tis said, last year,'
(Recounts my author,)' that the King had mind
To view his kingdom—guessed at from behind
A palace-window hitherto. Announced
No sooner was such purpose than 'twas pounced
Upon by all the ladies of the land—
Loyal but light of life: they formed a band
Of loveliest ones but lithest also, since
Proudly they all combined to bear their prince.
Backs joined to breasts,—arms, legs,—nay, ankles, wrists,
Hands, feet, I know not by what turns and twists,
So interwoven lay that you believed
'Twas one sole beast of burden which received
The monarch on its back, of breadth not scant
Since fifty girls made one white elephant.'
So with the fifty flowers which shapes and hues
Blent, as I tell, and made one fast yet loose
Mixture of beauties, composite, distinct
No less in each combining flower that linked
With flower to form a fit environment
For—whom might be the painter's heart's intent
Thus, in the midst enhaloed, to enshrine?

'This glory-guarded middle space—is mine?
Forme to fill?'
'For you, my Friend! We part,
Never perchance to meet again. Your Art—
What if I mean it—so to speak—shall wed
My own, be witness of the life we led
When sometimes it has seemed our souls near found
Each one the other as its mate—unbound
Had yours been haply from the better choice
—Beautiful Bic6: 'tis the common voice,
The crowning verdict. Make whom you like best
Queen of the central space, and manifest
Your predilection for what flower beyond
All flowers find favour with you. I am fond
Of—say—yon rose's rich predominance,
While you—what wonder?—more affect the glance
The gentler violet from its leafy screen
Ventures: so—choose your flower and paint your queen!'

Oh but the man was ready, head as hand,
Instructed and adroit. ' Just as you stand,
Stay and be made—would Nature but relent—
By Art immortal!'
Every implement
In tempting reach—a palette primed, each squeeze
Of oil-paint in its proper patch—with these,
Brushes, a veritable sheaf to grasp!
He worked as he had never dared.
'Unclasp
My Art from yours who can!'—he cried at length,
As down he threw the pencil—'Grace from Strength
Dissociate, from your flowery fringe detach
My face of whom it frames,—the feat will match
With that of Time should Time from me extract
Your memory, Artemisia!' And in fact,—
What with the pricking impulse, sudden glow
Of soul—head, hand co-operated so
That face was worthy of its frame, 'tis said—
Perfect, suppose!
They parted. Soon instead
Of Rome was home,—of Artemisia—well,
The placid-perfect wife. And it befell
That after the first incontestably
Blessedest of all blisses (—wherefore try
Your patience with embracings and the rest
Due from Calypso's all-unwilling guest
To his Penelope?)—there somehow came
The coolness which as duly follows flame.
So, one day, 'What if we inspect the gifts
My Art has gained us?'
Now the wife uplifts
A casket-lid, now tries a medal's chain
Round her own lithe neck, fits a ring in vain
—Too loose on the fine finger,—vows and swears
The jewel with two pendent pearls like pears
Betters a lady's bosom—witness else!
And so forth, while Ulysses smiles.
'Such spells
Subdue such natures—sex must worship toys
—Trinkets and trash: yet, ah, quite other joys
Must stir from sleep the passionate abyss
Of—such an one as her I know—not this
My gentle consort with the milk for blood!
Why, did it chance that in a careless mood
(In those old days, gone—never to return-
When we talked—she to teach and I to learn)

I dropped a word, a hint which might imply
Consorts exist—how quick flashed fire from eye,
Brow blackened, lip was pinched by furious Up!
I needed no reminder of my slip:
One warning taught me wisdom. Whereas here ...
Aha, a sportive fancy! Eh, what fear
Of harm to follow? Just a whim indulged!

'My Beatric6, there's an undivulged
Surprise in store for you: the moment's fit
For letting loose a secret: out with it!
Tributes to worth, you rightly estimate
These gifts of Prince and Bishop, Church and State:
Yet, may I tell you? Tastes so disagree!
There's one gift, preciousest of all to me,
I doubt if you would value as well worth
The obvious sparkling gauds that men unearth
For toy-cult mainly of you womankind;
Such make you marvel, I concede: while blind
The sex proves to the greater marvel here
I veil to baulk its envy. Be sincere!
Say, should you search creation far and wide,
Was ever face like this?*

He drew aside
The *VEIL* displayed the flower-framed portrait kept
For private delectation.
No adept
In florist's lore more accurately named
And praised or, as appropriately, blamed
Specimen after specimen of skill,
Than Bice. 'Rightly placed the daffodil—
Scarcely so right the blue germander. Grey
Good mouse-ear! Hardly your auricula
Is powdered white enough. It seems to me
Scarlet not crimson, that anemone:
But there's amends in the pink saxifrage.
O darling dear ones, let me disengage
You innocents from what your harmlessness
Clasps lovingly! Out thou from their caress,
Serpent!*
Whereat forth-flashing from her coils
On coils of hair, the *spitta* in its toils
Of yellow wealth, the dagger-plaything kept
To pin its plaits together, life-like leapt
And—woe to all inside the coronal!
Stab followed stab,—cut, slash, she ruined all
The masterpiece. Alack for eyes and mouth
And dimples and endearment—North and **South,**
East, West, the tatters in a fury flew:
There yawned the circlet. What remained to do?
She flung the weapon, and, with folded arms
And mien defiant of such low alarms
As death and doom beyond death, Bice stood
Passively statuesque, in quietude
Awaiting judgment.
And out judgment burst
With frank unloading of love's laughter, first
Freed from its unsuspected source. Some throe
Must needs unlock love's prison-bars, let flow
The joyance.
*Then you ever were, still are,
And henceforth shall be—no occulted star
But my resplendent Bice, sun-revealed,
Full-rondure! Woman-glory uncon-cealed,
So front me, find and claim and take your own—
My soul and body yours and yours alone,
As you are mine, mine wholly! Heart's love, take—
Use your possession—stab or stay at will
Here—hating, saving—woman with the skill
To make man beast or god!'
And so it proved:
For, as beseemed new godship, thus he loved,
Past power to change, until his dying-day,—
Good fellow! And I fain would hope—some say
Indeed for certain—that our painter's toils
At fresco-splashing, finer stroke in oils,
Were not so mediocre after all;
Perhaps the work appears unduly small
From having loomed too large in old esteem,
Patronized by late Papacy. I seem
Myself to have cast eyes on certain work
In sundry galleries, no judge needs shirk
From moderately praising. He designed
Correctly, nor in colour lagged behind
His age: but both in Florence and in Rome
The elder race so make themselves at home
That scarce we give a glance to ceilingfuls
Of such like as Francesco. Still, one culls
From out the heaped laudations of the time
The pretty incident I put in rhyme.

FLUTE-MUSIC, WITH AN ACCOMPANIMENT

He. AH, the bird-like fluting
Through the ash-tops yonder—
Bullfinch-bubblings, soft **sounds** suiting

What sweet thoughts, I wonder?
Fine-pearled notes that surely
Gathet,ewdcop-fashion,
Deep-down in some heart which purely
Secrets globuled passion—
Passion insuppressive—
Such is piped, for certain;
Love, no doubt, nay, love excessive
Tis, your ash-tops curtain.

Would your ash-tops open
We might spy the player—
Seek and find some sense which no pen
Yet from singer, sayer,
Ever has extracted:
Never, to my knowledge,
Yet has pedantry enacted
That, in Cupid's College,
Just this variation
Of the old old yearning
Should by plain speech have salvation,
Yield new men new learning.

'Love!' but what love, nicely
New from old disparted,
Would the player teach precisely?
First of all, he started
In my brain Assurance—
Trust—entire Contentment—
Passion proved by much endurance;
Then came—not resentment,
No, but simply Sorrow:
What was seen had vanished:
Yesterday so blue! To-morrow
Blank, all sunshine banished.

Hark! 'Tis Hope resurges,
Struggling through obstruction-
Forces a poor smile which verges
On Joy's introduction.
Now, perhaps, mere Musing:
'Holds earth such a wonder?
Fairy-mortal, soul-sense-fusing
Past thought's power to sunder!'
What? calm Acquiescence?
'Daisied turf gives room to
Trefoil, plucked once in her presence—
Growing by her tomb too!'

She. All's your fancy-spinning!
Here's the fact: a neighbour
Never-ending, still beginning,
Recreates his labour:
Deep o'er desk he drudges,
Adds, divides, subtracts and
Multiplies, until he judges
Noonday-hour's exact sand
Shows the hourglass emptied:
Then comes lawful leisure,
Minutes rare from toil exempted,
Fit to spend in pleasure.

Out then with—what treatise?
Youth's Complete Instructor
How to play the Flute, Quidpetis?
Follow Youth's conductor
On and on, through *Easy,*
Up to *Harder, Hardest*
Flute-piece, till thou, flautist wheezy,
Possibly discardest
Tootlings hoarse and husky,
Mayst expend with courage
Breath—on tunes once bright now dusky—
Meant to cool thy porridge.

That's an air of Tulou's
He maltreats persistent.
Till as lief I'd hear some Zulu's
Bone-piped bag, breath-distent,
Madden native dances.
I'm the man's familiar:
Unexpectedness enhances
What your ear's auxiliar
—Fancy—finds suggestive.
Listen! That's *legato*
Rightly played, his ringers restive
Touch as if *staccato.*

He. Ah, you trick-betrayer!
Telling tales, unwise one?
So the secret of the player
Was—he could surprise one
Well-nigh into trusting
Here was a musician
Skilled consummately, yet lusting
Through no vile ambition
After making captive
All the world,—rewarded
Amply by one stranger's rapture,
Common praise discarded.

So, without assistance
Such as music rightly
Needs and claims,—defying distance,
Overleaping lightly
Obstacles which hinder,—
He, for my approval,
All the same and all the kinder
Made mine what might move all
Earth to kneel adoring:
Took—while he piped Gounod's
Bit of passionate imploring—
Me for Juliet: who knows?

No! as you explain things,
All's mere repetition,
Practise-pother: of all vain things
Why waste pooh or pish on
Toilsome effort—never
Ending, still beginning—
After what should pay endeavour
—Right-performance? winning

Weariness from you who,
Ready to admire some
Owl's fresh hooting—Tu-whit, tu-who—
Find stale thrush-songs tiresome.

She. Songs, Spring thought perfection,
Summer criticizes:
What in May escaped detection,
August, past surprises,
Notes, and names each blunder.
You, the just-initiate,
Praise to heart's content (what wonder?)
Tootings I hear vitiate
Romeo's serenading—
I who, times full twenty,
Turned to ice—no ash-tops aiding—
At his *caldamente.*

So, 'twas distance altered
Sharps to flats? The missing
Bar when syncopation faltered
(You thought—paused for kissing!)
Ash-tops too felonious
Intercepted? Rather
Say—they well-nigh made euphonious
Discord, helped to gather
Phrase, by phrase, turn patches
Into simulated
Unity which botching matches,—
Scraps redintegrated.

He. Sweet, are you suggestive
Of an old suspicion
Which has always found me restive
To its admonition
When it ventured whisper
'Fool, the strifes and struggles
Of your trembler—blusher—hsper
Were so many juggles,
Tricks tried—oh, so often!—
Which once more do duty,
Find again a heart to soften,
Soul to snare with beauty.'

Birth-blush of the briar-rose,
Mist-bloom of the hedge-sloe,
Someone gains the prize: admire rose
Would he, when noon's wedge—slow—
Sure, has pushed, expanded
Rathe pink to raw redness?
Would he covet sloe when sanded
By road-dust to deadness?
So—restore their value!
Ply a water-sprinkle!
Then guess sloe is fingered, shall you?
Find in a rose a wrinkle?

Here what played Aquarius?
Distance—ash-tops aiding,
Reconciled scraps else contrarious,
Brightened stuff fast fading.
Distance—call your shyness:
Was the fair one peevish?
Coyness softened out of slyness.
Was she cunning, thievish,
All-but-proved impostor?
Bear but one day's exile,
Ugly traits were wholly lost or
Screened by fancies flexile—

Ash-tops these, you take me?
Fancies' interference
Changed . ..
But since I sleep, don't wake me!
What if all's appearance?
Is not outside seeming
Real as substance inside?
Both are facts, so leave me dreaming:
If who loses wins I'd
Ever lose,—conjecture.
From one phrase trilled deftly,
All the piece. So, end your lecture,
Let who lied be left lie!

'IMPERANTE AUGUSTO NATUS EST——'

WHAT it was struck the terror into me?
This, Publius: closer! while we wait our turn
I'll tell you. Water's warm (they ring inside)
At the eighth hour, till when no use to bathe.

Here in the vestibule where now we sit,
One scarce stood yesterday, the throng was such
Of loyal gapers, folk all eye and ear
While Lucius Varius Rufus[1] in their midst
Read out that long-planned late-completed piece,
His Panegyric on the Emperor.
'Nobody like him' little Flaccus' laughed
'At leading forth an Epos with due pomp!
Only, when godlike Caesar swells the theme,
How should mere mortals hope to praise aright?
Tell me, thou offshoot of Etruscan kings!'
Whereat Maecenas smiling sighed assent.

I paid my quadrans," left the Thermae's roar
Of rapture as the poet asked 'What place
Among the godships Jove, for Caesar's sake.
Would bid its actual occupant vacate
In favour of the new divinity?'

[1] Poet and friend of Virgil. [2] Horace.
[2] Roman coin of small value.

And got the expected answer ' Yield thine own!'—
Jove thus dethroned? I'somehow wanted air,
And found myself a-pacing street and street,
Letting the sunset, rosy over Rome,
Clear my head dizzy with the hubbub—say
As if thought's dance therein had kicked up dust
By trampling on all else: the world lay prone,
As—poet-propped, in brave hexameters—
Their subject triumphed up from man to God.
Caius Octavius Caesar the August—
Where was escape from his prepotency?
I judge I may have passed—how many piles
Of structure dropt like doles from his free hand
To Rome on every side? Why, right and left,
For temples you've the Thundering Jupiter,
Avenging Mars, Apollo Palatine:
How count Piazza, Forum—there's a third
All but completed. You've the Theatre
Named of Marcellus—all his work, such work!—
One thought still ending, dominating all—
With warrant Varius sang 'Be Caesar God!'
By what a hold arrests he Fortune's wheel,
Obtaining and retaining heaven and earth
Through Fortune, if you like, but favour—no!
For the great deeds flashed by me, fast and thick
As stars which storm the sky on autumn nights—
Those conquests! but peace crowned them,—so, of peace!
Count up his titles only—these, in few—
Ten years Triumvir, Consul thirteen times,
Emperor, nay—the glory topping all—
Hailed Father of his Country, last and best
Of titles, by himself accepted so:
And why not? See but feats achieved in Rome—
Not to say, Italy—he planted there
Some thirty colonies—but Rome itself
All new-built, ' marble now, brick once,' he boasts:
This Portico, that Circus. Would you sail?
He has drained Tiber for you: would you walk?
He straightened out the long Flaminian Way.
Poor? Profit by his score of donatives!
Rich—that is, mirthful? Half-a-hundred games
Challenge your choice! There's Rome—for you and me
Only? The centre of the world besides!
For, look the wide world over, where ends Rome?
To sunrise? There's Euphrates—all between!
To sunset? Ocean and immensity:
North,—stare till Danube stops you: South, see Nile,
The Desert and the earth-upholding Mount.
Well may the poet-people each with each
Vie in his praise, our company of swans,
Virgil and Horace, singers—in their way—
Nearly as good as Varius, though less famed:
Well may they cry, 'No mortal, plainly God!'

Thus to myself myself said, while I walked:
Or would have said, could thought attain to speech.
Clean baffled by enormity of bliss
The while I strove to scale its heights and sound
Its depths—this masterdom o'er all the world
Of one who was but born,—like you, like me,
Like all the world he owns,—of flesh and blood.
But he—how grasp, how gauge his own conceit
Of bliss to me near inconceivable?
Or—since such flight too much makes reel the brain—
Let's sink—and so take refuge, as it were,
From life's excessive altitude—to life's
Breathable wayside shelter at its base!
If looms thus large this Caesar to myself
—Of senatorial rank and somebody—
How must he strike the vulgar nameless crowd,
Innumerous swarm that's nobody at all?
Why,—for an instance,—much as yon gold shape
Crowned, sceptred, on the temple opposite—
Fulgurant Jupiter—must daze the sense
Of—say, yon outcast begging from its step!
What, anti-Caesar, monarch in the mud,
As he is pinnacled above thy pate?
Ay, beg away! thy lot contrasts full well
With his whose bounty yields thee this support—
Our Holy and Inviolable One,
Caesar, whose bounty built the fane above!
Dost read my thought? Thy garb, alack, displays
Sore usage truly in each rent and stain—

Faugh! Wash though in Suburra! 'Ware the dogs
Who may not so disdain a meal on thee!
What, stretchest forth a palm to catch my alms?
Aha, why yes: I must appear—who knows?—
I, in my toga, to thy rags and thee—
Quaestor—nay, Ædile, Censor—Pol! perhaps
The very City-Praetor's noble self!
As to me Caesar, so to thee am I?
Good: nor in vain shall prove thy quest, poor rogue!
Hither—hold palm out—take this quarter-as!

And who did take it? As he raised his head,
(My gesture was a trifle—well, abrupt),
Back fell the broad flap of the peasant's-hat,
The homespun cloak that muffled half his cheek
Dropped somewhat, and I had a glimpse—just one!
One was enough. Whose—whose might be the face?
That unkempt careless hair—brown, yellowish—
Those sparkling eyes beneath their eyebrows' ridge
(Each meets each, and the hawk-nose rules between)
—That was enough, no glimpse was needed more!
And terrifyingly into my mind
Came that quick-hushed report was whispered us,
'They do say, once a year in sordid garb
He plays the mendicant, sits all day long,
Asking and taking alms of who may pass,
And so averting, if submission help,
Fate's envy, the dread chance and change of things
When Fortune—for a word, a look, a nought—
Turns spiteful and—the petted lioness—
Strikes with her sudden paw, and prone falls each
Who patted late her neck superiorly,
Or trifled with those claw-tips velvet-sheathed.'
'He's God!' shouts Lucius Varius Rufus: 'Man
And worms'-meat any moment!' mutters low
Some Power, admonishing the mortal-born.

Ay, do you mind? There's meaning in the fact
That whoso conquers, triumphs, enters **Rome,**
Climbing the Capitolian, soaring thus
To glory's summit,—Publius, do you mark—
Ever the same attendant who, behind,
Above the Conqueror's head supports the crown
All-too-demonstrative for human wear,
—One hand's employment—all the while reserves
Its fellow, backward flung, to point how, close
Appended from the car, beneath the foot
Of the up-borne exulting Conqueror,
Frown—half-descried—the instruments of shame,
The malefactor's due. Crown, now—Cross, when?

Who stands secure? Are even Gods so safe?
Jupiter that just now is dominant—
Are not there ancient dismal tales how once
A predecessor reigned ere Saturn came,
And who can say if Jupiter be last?
Was it for nothing the grey Sibyl wrote
' Caesar Augustus regnant, shall be born
In blind Judaea'—one to master him,
Him and the universe? An old-wife's tale?

Bath-drudge! Here, slave! No cheating! Our turn next.
No loitering, or be sure you taste the lash!
Two strigils, two oil-drippers, each a sponge!

DEVELOPMENT

MY Father was a scholar and knew Greek.
When I was five years old, I asked him once
'What do you read about?'
'The siege of Troy.'
'What is a siege and what is Troy?'
Whereat
He piled up chairs and tables for a town,
Set me a-top for Priam, called our cat
—Helen, enticed away from home (he said)
By wicked Paris, who couched somewhere close
Under the footstool, being cowardly,
But whom—since she was worth the pains, poor puss—
Towzer and Tray,—our dogs, the Atreidai,—sought
By taking Troy to get possession of
—Always when great Achilles ceased to sulk,
(My pony in the stable)—forth would prance
And put to flight Hector—our page-boy's self.
This taught me who was who **and what** was what:

So far I rightly understood the case
At five years old: a huge delight it proved
And still proves-thanlcS'to that instructor sage
My Father, who knew better than turn straight
Learning s full flare on weak-eyed ignorance,
Or, worse yet, leave weak eyes to grow sand-blind.
Content with darkness and vacuity.

It happened, two or three years afterward,
That—I and playmates playing at Troy's Siege—
My Father came upon our make-believe.
' How would you like to read yourself the tale
Properly told, of which I gave you first
Merely such notion as a boy could bear ?
Pope, now, would give you the precise account
Of what, some day, by dint of scholarship,
You'll hear — who knows? — from Homer's very mouth.
Learn Greek by all means, read the "Blind Old Man,
Sweetest of Singers"—*tuphlos* which means "blind,"
Hedistos which means "sweetest." Time enough!
Try, anyhow, to master him some day;
Until when, take what serves for substitute,
Read Pope, by all means!'
So I ran through Pope,
Enjoyed the tale—what history so true?
Also attacked my Primer, duly drudged,
Grew fitter thus for what was promised next—
The very thing itself, the actual words,
When I could turn—say, Buttmann to account.

Time passed, I ripened somewhat: one fine day,
'Quite ready for the Iliad, nothing less?
There's Heine, where the big books block the shelf:
Don't skip a word, thumb well the Lexicon!*

I thumbed well and skipped nowise till I learned
Who was who, what was what, from Homer's tongue.
And there an end or learning. Had you asked
The all-accomplished scholar, twelve years old,
'Who was it wrote the Iliad?'—what a laugh!
'Why, Homer, all the world knows: of his life
Doubtless some facts exist: it's everywhere:
We have not settled, though, his place of birth:
He begged, for certain, and was blind beside:
Seven cities claimed him—Scio, with best right,
Thinks Byron. What he wrote? Those Hymns we have.
Then there's the "Battle of the Frogs and Mice,"
That's all—unless they dig " Margites'' up
(I'd like that) nothing more remains to know.'

Thus did youth spend a comfortable time;
Until—'What's this the Germans say is fact
That Wolf found out first ? It's unpleasant work
Their chop and change, unsettling one's belief-
All the same, while we live, we learn, that's sure.'
So, I bent brow o'er *Prolegomena,*
And, after Wolf, a dozen of his like
Proved there was never any Troy at all,
Neither Besiegers nor Besieged,—nay, worse,—
No actual Homer, no authentic text,
No warrant for the fiction I, as fact,
Had treasured in my heart and soul so long-
Ay, mark you! and as fact held still, still hold,
Spite of new knowledge, in my heart of hearts
And soul of souls, fact's essence freed and fixed
From accidental fancy's guardian sheath.
Assuredly thenceforward—thank my stars!—
However it got there, deprive who could—
Wring from the shrine my precious tenantry,
Helen, Ulysses, Hector and his Spouse,
Achilles and his Friend?—though Wolf—ah, Wolf!
Why must he needs come doubting, spoil a dream?

But then 'No dream's worth waking'—Browning says:
And here's the reason why I tell thus much.
I, now mature man, you anticipate,
May blame my Father justifiably
For letting me dream out my nonage thus,
And only by such slow and sure degrees
Permitting me to sift the grain from chaff,
Get truth and falsehood known and named as such.
Why did he ever let me dream at all,
Not bid me taste the story in its strength?
Suppose my childhood was scarce qualified

To rightly understand mythology,
Silence at least was in his power to keep:
I might have—somehow—correspondingly—
Well, who knows by what method, gained my gains,
Been taught, by forthrights not meanderings,
My aim should be to loathe, like Peleus' son,
A lie as Hell's Gate, love my wedded wife,
Like Hector, and so on with all the rest.
Could not I have excogitated this
Without believing such men really were?
That is—he might have put into my hand
The Ethics'? In translation, if you please,
Exact, no pretty lying that improves,
To suit the modern taste: no more, no less—
The 'Ethics': 'tis a treatise I find hard
To read aright now that my hair is grey,
And I can manage the original.
At five years old—how ill had fared its leaves!
Now, growing double o'er the Stagirite,
At least I soil no page with bread and milk,
Nor crumple, dogsear and deface—boys' way.

REPHAN[1]

How I lived, ere my human life began
In this world of yours,—like you, made man,—
When my home was the Star of my God Rephan?

Come then around me, close about,
World-weary earth-born ones! Darkest doubt
Or deepest despondency keeps you out ? screen ?

Nowise! Before a word I speak,
Let my circle embrace your worn, your *weak*
Brow-furrowed old age, youth's hollow cheek—

Diseased in the body, sick in soul,
Pinched poverty, satiate wealth,—your whole
Array of despairs! Have I read the roll?

All here? Attend, perpend! O Star
Of my God Rephan, what wonders are
In thy brilliance fugitive, faint and far!

Far from me, native to thy realm,
Who shared its perfections which overwhelm
Mind to conceive. Let drift the helm,
Let drive the sail, dare unconfined
Embark for the vastitude, O Mind,
Of an absolute bliss! Leave earth behind 1

Here, by extremes, at a mean you guess:
There, all's at most—not more, not less:
Nowhere deficiency nor excess.

No want—whatever should be, is now:
No growth—that's change, and change comes—how
To royalty born with crown on brow?

Nothing begins—so needs to end:
Where fell it short at first? Extend
Only the same, no change can mend!

I use your language: mine—no word
Of its wealth would help who spoke, who heard,
To a gleam of intelligence. None preferred,

None felt distaste when better and worse
Were uncontrastable: bless or curse
What—in that uniform universe?

Can your world's phrase, your sense of things
Forth-figure the Star of my God? No springs,
No winters throughout its space. Time brings

No hope, no fear: as to-day, shall be
To-morrow: advance or retreat need we
At our stand-still through eternity?

AH happy: needs must we so have been,
Since who could be otherwise? All serene:
What dark was to banish, what light to screen?

Earth's rose is a bud that's checked or . . grows
As beams may encourage or blasts oppose:
Our lives leapt forth, each a full-orbed rose—
Each rose sole rose in a sphere that spread
Above and below and around—rose-red:
No fellowship, each for itself instead.

One better than I—would prove I lacked
Somewhat: one worse were a jarring fact
Disturbing my faultlessly exact.

How did it come to pass there lurked
Somehow a seed of change that worked
Obscure in my heart till perfection irked?—

Till out of its peace at length grew strife-
Hopes, fears, loves, hates,—obscurely rife,—
My life grown a-tremble to turn your life?

[1] Suggested by a very early recollection of a prow story by the noble woman and imaginative writer, Jane Taylor, of Norwich [actually Ongar.]—R. B.

REPHAN

Was it Thou, above all lights that are,
Prime Potency, did Thy hand unbar
The prison-gatfr.Qf Repteinmy Star?

In me did such potency wake a pulse
Could trouble tranquillity that lulls
Not lashes inertion till throes convulse

Soul's quietude into discontent?
As when the completed rose bursts, rent
By ardors till forth from its orb are sent

New petals that mar—unmake the disc-
Spoil rondure: what in it ran brave risk,
Changed apathy's calm to strife, bright, brisk,

Pushed simple to compound, sprang and spread
Till, fresh-formed, facetted, floretted,
The flower that slept woke a star instead?

No mimic of Star Rephan! How long
I stagnated there where weak and strong,
The wise and the foolish, right and wrong,

Are merged alike in a neutral Best,
Can I tell? No more than at whose behest
The passion arose in my passive breast,

And I yearned for no sameness but difference
In thing and thing, that should shock my sense
With a want of worth in them all, and thence

Startle me up, by an Infinite
Discovered above and below me—height
And depth alike to attract my flight,

Repel my descent: by hate taught love.
Oh, gain were indeed to see above
Supremacy ever—to move, remove,

Not reach—aspire yet never attain
To the object aimed at! Scarce in vain,—
As each stage I left nor touched again.

To suffer, did pangs bring the loved one bliss,
Wring knowledge from ignorance,—just for this—
To add one drop to a love-abyss!

Enough: for you doubt, you hope, O men,
You tear, you agonize, die: what then?
Is an end to your life's work out of ken?

Have you no assurance that, earth at end.
Wrong will prove right? Who made shall mend
In the higher sphere to which yearnings tend?

Why should I speak? You divine the test.
When the trouble grew in my pregnant breast
A voice said 'So wouldst thou strive, not rest?

'Burn and not smoulder, win by worth,
Not rest content with a wealth that's dearth?
Thou art past Rephan, thy place be Earth!'

REVERIE

I KNOW there shall dawn a day
—Is it here on homely earth?
Is it yonder, worlds away,
Where the strange and new have birth,
That Power comes full in play?

Is it here, with grass about,
Under befriending trees,
When shy buds venture out,
And the air by mild degrees
Puts winter's death past doubt?

Is it up amid whirl and roar
Of the elemental flame
Which star-flecks heaven's dark floor,
That, new yet still the same,
Full in play comes Power once more?

Somewhere, below, above,
Shall a day dawn—this I know—
When Power, which vainly strove
My weakness to o'erthrow,
Shall triumph. I breathe, I move,

I truly am, at last!
For a veil is rent between
Me and the truth which passed
Fitful, half-guessed, half-seen,
Grasped at—not gained, held fast.

I for my race and me
Shall apprehend life's law:
In the legend of man shall see
Writ large what small I saw
In my life's tale: both agree.

As the record from youth to age
Of my own, the single soul—
So the world's wide book: one page
Deciphered explains the whole
Of our common heritage.

How but from near to far
Should knowledge proceed, increase?
Try the clod ere test the star!
Bring our inside strife to peace
Ere we wage, on the outside, war!

So, my annals thus begin:
With body, to life awoke
Soul, the immortal twin
Of body which bore soul's yoke
Since mortal and not akin.

By means of the flesh, grown fit,
Mind, in surview of things,
Now soared, anon alit
To treasure its gatherings
From the ranged expanse—to-wit,

Nature,—earth's, heaven's wide show
Which taught all hope, all fear:
Acquainted with joy and woe,
I could say 'Thus much is clear,
Doubt annulled thus much: I know.

'All is effect of cause:
As it would, has willed and done
Power: and my mind's applause
Goes, passing laws each one,
To Omnipotence, lord of laws.'

Head praises, but heart refrains
From loving's acknowledgment.
Whole losses outweigh half-gains:
Earth's good is with evil blent:
Good struggles but evil reigns.

Yet since Earth's good proved good—
Incontrovertibly
Worth loving—I understood
How evil—did mind descry
Power's object to end pursued—

Were haply as cloud across
Good's orb, no orb itself:
Mere mind—were it found at loss
Did it play the tricksy elf
And from life's gold purge the dross?

Power is known infinite:
Good struggles to be—at best
Seems—scanned by the human sight,
Tried by the senses' test—
Good palpably: but with right

Therefore to mind's award
Of loving, as power claims praise?
Power—which finds nought too hard,
Fulfilling itself all ways
Unchecked, unchanged: while barred,

Baffled, what good began
Ends evil on every side.
To Power submissive man
Breathes 'E'en as Thou art, abide!'
While to good 'Late-found, long-sought,

'Would Power to a plenitude
But liberate, but enlarge
Good's strait confine,—renewed
Were ever the heart's discharge
Of loving!' Else doubts intrude.

For you dominate, stars all!
For a sense informs you—brute,
Bird, worm, fly, great and small,
Each with your attribute
Or low or majestical!

Thou earth that embosomest
Offspring of land and sea-
How thy hills first sank to rest,
How thy vales bred herb and tree
Which dizen thy mother-breast—

Do I ask? 'Be ignorant
Ever!' the answer clangs:
Whereas if I plead world's want,
Soul's sorrows and body's pangs,
Play the human applicant,—

Is a remedy far to seek?
I question and find response:
I—all men, strong or weak,
Conceive and declare at once
For each want its cure. 'Power, speak!

'Stop change, avert decay,
Fix life fast, banish death,
Eclipse from the star bid stay,
Abridge of no moment's breath
One creature! Hence, Night, hail, Day!

What need to confess again
No problem this to solve
By impotence? Power, once plain
Proved Power,—let on Power devolve
Good's right to co-equal reign!

Past mind's conception—Power!
Do I seek how star, earth, beast,
Bird, worm, fly, gained their dower
For life's use, most and least?
Back from the search I cower.

Do I seek what heals all harm,
Nay, hinders the harm at first,
Saves earth? Speak, Power, the charm!
Keep the life there unamerced
By chance, change, death's alarm 1

As promptly as mind conceives,
Let Power in its turn declare
Some law which wrong retrieves,
Abolishes everywhere
What thwarts, what irks, what grieves!

Never to be! and yet
How easy it seems—to sense
Like man's—if somehow met
Power with its match—immense
Love, limitless, unbeset

By hindrance on every side!
Conjectured, nowise known.
Such may be: could man connde
Such would match—were Love but shown
Stript of the veils that hide-
Power's self now manifest!
So reads my record: thine,
O world, how runs it? Guessed
Were the purport of that prime line,
Prophetic of all **the** rest !

REVERIE

•In a beginning God
Made heaven and earth.' Forth flashed
Knowledge: from star to clod
Man knew things: doubt abashed
Closed its long period.

Knowledge obtained Power praise.
Had Good been manifest,
Broke out in cloudless blaze,
Unchequered as unrepressed,
In all things Good at best—

Then praise—all praise, no blame—
Had hailed the perfection. No!
As Power's display, the same
Be Good's—praise forth shall flow
Unisonous in acclaim I

Even as the world its life,
So have I lived my own—
Power seen with Love at strife,
That sure, this dimly shown,
—Good rare and evil rife.

Whereof the effect be—faith
That, some far day, were found
Ripeness in things now rathe,
Wrong righted, each chain unbound,
Renewal born out of scathe.

Why faith—but to lift the load,
To leaven the lump, where lies
Mind prostrate through knowledge owed
To the loveless Power it tries
To withstand, how vain! In flowed

Ever resistless fact:
No more than the passive clay
Disputes the potter's act,
Could the whelmed mind disobey
Knowledge the cataract.

But, perfect in every part,
Has the potter's moulded shape,
Leap of man's quickened heart,
Throe of his thought's escape,
Stings of his soul which dart

Through the barrier of flesh, till keen
She climbs from the calm and clear,
Through turbidity all between,
From the known to the unknown here,
Heaven's 'Shall be,' from Earth's 'Has been'?

Then life is—to wake not sleep,
Rise and not rest, but press
From earth's level where Mindly creep
Things perfected, more or less,
To the heaven's height, far and steep,

Where, amid what strifes and storms
May wait the adventurous quest,
Power is Love—transports, transforms
Who aspired from worst to best,
Sought the soul's world, spurned the worms'.

I have faith such end shall be:
From the first, Power was—I knew.
Life has made clear to me
That, strive but for closer view,
Love were as plain to see.

When see? When there dawns a day,
If not on the homely earth,
Then yonder, worlds away,
Where the strange and new have birth,
And Power comes full in play.

EPILOGUE

AT the midnight in the silence of the sleep-time,
When you set your fancies free.
Will they pass to where—by death, fools think, imprisoned—
Low he lies who once so loved you, whom you loved so,
—Pity me?

Oh to love so, be so loved, yet so mistaken!
What had I on earth to do
With the slothful, with the mawkish, the unmanly?
Like the aimless, helpless, hopeless, did I drivel
—Being—who?

One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake.

No, at noonday in the bustle of man's work-time
Greet the unseen with a cheer!
Bid him forward, breast and back as either should be.
[1] Strive and thrive!' cry' Speed,—fight on, fare ever
There as here!'

A CHRONOLOGICAL LIST

OF

ROBERT BROWNING'S POEMS AND PLAYS

1833. PAULINE: A Fragment of a Confession.

1835. PARACELSUS.

1837. STRAFFORD: An Historical Tragedy.

1840. SORDELLO.

1841. Bells and Pomegranates, No. I, PIPPA PASSES.

1842. Bells and Pomegranates, No. II, KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES.

1842. Bells and Pomegranates, No. Ill, DRAMATIC LYRICS.

Cavalier Tunes—
I. Marching Along.
II. Give a Rouse.
III. My Wife Gertrude.[1]

Italy and France—
I. Italy.[2]
II. France.[3]

Camp and Cloister—
I. Camp (French).'
II. Cloister (Spanish).'

In a Gondola.
Artemis Prologizes.
Waring.

Queen-Worship—
I. Rudel and the Lady of Tripoli.
II. Cristina.

Madhouse Cells—
I. [Johannes Agricola.[4]]
II. [Porphyria.[7]]

Through the Metidja to Abd-el-Kadr, 1842.
The Pied Piper of Hamelin.

1843. Bells and Pomegranates, No. IV, THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES: A Tragedy in Five Acts.

1843. Bells and Pomegranates, No. V, A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON: A Tragedy in Three Acts.

1844. Bells and Pomegranates, No. VI, COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY: A Play in Five Acts.

1845. Bells and Pomegranates, No. VII, DRAMATIC ROMANCES AND LYRICS-

HOW they brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix.
Pictor Ignotus. Florence, 15—.
Italy in England.[8]
England in Italy.'
The Lost Leader.
The Lost Mistress.
Home Thoughts from Abroad (I. 'Oh to be in England.' II. 'Here's to Nelson's Memory.'[10] III. 'Nobly Cape St. Vincent.'[11])
The Tomb at St. Praxed's."
Garden Fancies—
I. The Flower's Name.[12]
II. SibrandusSchafnaburgcnsis."
France and Spain—
I. The Laboratory (Ancien Regime).[15]
II. The Confessional.
The Flight of the Duchess."
Earth's Immortalities.

[1] Afterwards called 'Boot and Saddle'.
[2] Afterwards called 'My Last Duchess'.
[3] Afterwards called 'Count Gismond'.
[4] Afterwards called * Incident of the French Camp'.
' Afterwards called 'Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister'.
• Afterwards called 'Johannes Agricola in Meditation', was first printed in *TheMohthly Repository,* vol. x, N.S. 1836, pp. 45, 46.
[7] Afterwards called 'Porphyria's Lovery,, was first printed in *The Monthly Repository,* vol. x, N.S. 1836, pp. 43,44.
[8] Afterwards called 'The Italian in England'.
[9] Afterwards called 'The Englishman in Italy'.
[10] Afterwards printed as the third section of 'Nationality in Drinks'.
[11] Afterwards called 'Home Thoughts from Sea'.
[11] Afterwards called 'The Bishop orders his Tomb in St. Praxed's Church', was first printed in *Hood's Magazine,* vol. iii, March 1845, pp. 237-239.
[13] First printed in *Hood's Magazine,* vol. ii, July 1844, pp. 45-48.
[14] First printed in *Hood's Magazine,* vol. i, June 1844. pp. 513. 514.
[15] Sections 1 to 9, first printed in *Hood's Magazine,* vol. iii. April 1845, pp. 313-318.

DRAMATIC ROMANCES—*Contd.*

Song, Nay but you, who do not love her'.
The Boy and the Angel.[1]
Night and Morning (I. Night,[8] II. Morning).
Claret and Tokay.[4]
Saul.
Time's Revenges.
The Glove.

1846. Bells and Pomegranates, No. VIII and last. LURIA; and A SOUL'S TRAGEDY.

1850. CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY.

1855. MEN AND WOMEN. In Two Volumes—

Vol. I. Love among the Ruins.
A Lovers' Quarrel.
Evelyn Hope.
Up at a Villa—Down in the City. (As Distinguished by an Italian Person of Quality.)
A Woman's Last Word.
Fra Lippo Lippi.
A Toccata of Galuppi's.
By the Fireside.
Any Wife to Any Husband.
An Epistle containing the Strange Medical Experience of Karshish, the Arab Physician.
Mesmerism.
A Serenade at the Villa.
My Star.
Instans Tyrannus.
A Pretty Woman.
'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came.'
Respectability.
A Light Woman.
The Statue and the Bust.
Love in a Life.
Life in a Love.
How it Strikes a Contemporary.
The Last Ride Together.
The Patriot: An Old Story.

MEN AND WOMEN—*Contd.*

Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha.
Bishop Blougram's Apology.
Memorabilia.

Vol. II. Andrea del Sarto (called 'The Faultless Painter').
Before.
After.
In Three Days.
In a Year.
Old Pictures in Florence.
In a Balcony.
Saul. (See note[3].)
'De Gustibus—'
Women and Roses.
Protus.
Holy-Cross Day.
The Guardian Angel: A Picture at Fano.
Cleon.
The Twins.[8]
Popularity.
The Heretic's Tragedy. A Middle-Age Interlude.
Two in the Campagna.
A Grammarian's Funeral.
One Way of Love.
Another Way of Love.
'Transcendentalism': A Poem in Twelve Books.
Misconceptions.
One Word More. To E. B. B.

1864. DRAMATIS PERSONÆ—

James Lee.[7]
Gold Hair: A Legend of Pornic'
The Worst of It.
Dis aliter visum; or Le Byron de nos Jours.
Too Late.
Abt Vogler.
Rabbi Ben Ezra.
A Death in the Desert.
Caliban upon Setebos; or, Natural Theology in the Island.
Confessions.
May and Death.[9]
Prospice.[10]

[1] First printed in *Hood's Magazine*, vol. Ii. August 1844, pp. 140-142.
• Afterwards called 'Meeting at Night*.
• Afterwards called 'Parting at Morning*.
[4] Afterwards printed as the first and second sections of 'Nationality in Drinks*.
• First part only (sections 1-9); the second part was added and included with it in 'Men and Women. **1855, vol.** ii. **p. 111.**
[8] First printed in a pamphlet entitled *Two Poems. By Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning.* 8vo. London, 1854.
[7] Afterwards called 'James Lee's Wife*.
• First printed in *The Atlantic Monthly*, vol. xlii. May 1864, p. 596.
[9] First printed in *The Keepsake* for 1857.
[10] First printed in *The Atlantic Monthly*, vol. xiii, June 1864, p. 694.

DRAMATIS PERSON'Æ—*Contd.*
- Youth and Art.
- A Face.
- A Likeness.
- Mr. Sludge, 'The Medium'.
- Apparent Failure.
- Epilogue.

1864. Orpheus and Eurydice. F. Leighton.[1]
1868. Deaf and Dumb.[3]

Not included in this edition.

1868-9. THE RING AND THE BOOK. In Four Volumes.
1871. BALAUSTION'S ADVENTURE, including a Transcript from Euripides.
1871. PRINCE HOHENSTIEL-SCHWANGAU, SAVIOUR OF SOCIETY.
1872. FIFINE AT THE FAIR.
1873. RED COTTON NIGHT-CAP COUNTRY, OR TURF AND TOWERS.
1875. ARISTOPHANES' APOLOGY, including a Transcript from Euripides, being the Last Adventure of Balaustion.
1875. THE INN ALBUM.

1876. PACCHIAROTTO AND HOW HE WORKED IN DISTEMPER: with other Poems—
- Prologue.
- Of Pacchiarotto and how he worked in Distemper.
- At the 'Mermaid'
- House.
- Shop.
- Pisgah Sights. I.
- II.
- Fears and Scruples.
- Natural Magic.
- Magical Nature.
- Bifurcation.
- Numpholeptos.
- Appearances.
- St. Martin's Summer.
- Herve" Riel.[3]

PACCHIAROTTO—*Contd.*
- A Forgiveness.
- Cenciaja.
- Filippo Baldinucci on the Privilege of Burial.
- Epilogue.

1877. THE AGAMEMNON OF ÆSCHYLUS. *(Not included in this edition.)*
1878. LA SAISIAZ.[4]
1878. THE TWO POETS OF CROISIC.[4]
1879. DRAMATIC IDYLS—
- Martin Ralph.
- Pheidippides.
- Halbert and Hob.
- Ivan Ivanovitch.
- Tray.
- Ned Bratts.

1880. DRAMATIC IDYLS: SECOND SERIES—
- [Prologue.]
- Echetlos.
- Clive.
- Muleykeh.
- Pietro of Abano.
- Doctor——.
- Pan and Luna.
- [Epilogue.]

1883. JOCOSERIA—
- Wanting is—What?
- Donald.
- Solomon and Balkis.
- Cristina and Monaldeschi.
- Mary Wollstonecraft and Fuseli.
- Adam, Lilith, and Eve.
- Ixion.
- Jochanan Hakkadosh.
- Never the Time and the Place.
- Pambo.

1884. FERISHTAH'S FANCIES—
- Prologue.
- 1. The Eagle.
- 2. Melon-Seller.
- 3. Shah Abbas.
- 4. The Family.
- 5. The Sun.
- 6. Mihrab Shah.
- 7. A Camel-Driver.
- 8. Two Camels.
- 9. Cherries.
- 10. Plot-Culture.
- 11. A Pillar at Sebzevah.

[1] First printed in the Catalogue of the Royal Academy Exhibition 1864. afterwards called 'Eurydice to Orpheus'.

[3] First printed in *The Poetical Works of Robert Browning*, six vols. 1868; vol. vi, p. 151.

[4] First printed in *The Cornhill Magazine*, March 1871.

[6] Published together in one volume.

FERISHTAH'S FANCIES—*Contd.*

12. A Bean-Stripe: also Apple Eatings
Epilogue.

1887. PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN PEOPLE OF IMPORTANCE IN THEIR DAY. *(Not included in this edition.)*

1889.[1] ASOLANDO: FANCIES AND FACTS—

Prologue.
Rosny.
Dubiety.
Now.
Humility.
Poetics.
Summum Bonum.
A Pearl, A Girl.
Speculative.
White Witchcraft.

ASOLANDO—*Contd.*

Bad Dreams. I.
„ II.
„ HI.
„ IV.
Inapprehensiveness.
Which?
The Cardinal and the Dog.
The Pope and the Net.
The Bean-Feast.
Muckle-mouth Meg.
Arcades Ambo.
The Lady and the Painter.
Ponte dell* Angelo, Venice.
Beatrice Signorini.
Flute-Music, with an Accompaniment.
'Imperante Augusto natus est—.
Development.
Rephan.
Reverie.
Epilogue.

[1] **Published on December 12th, 1889, the day of Browning's death.**

INDEX OF TITLES

ABBAS, Shah . . . 644
Abd-el-Kadr, Through the Metidja to . . . 209
Abt Vogler . . . 479
Adam, Lilith, and Eve . . . 627
After . . . 244
Agricola (Johannes) in Meditation . . . 426
Amphibian . . . 520
Andrea del Sarto . . . 432
Another Way of Love . . . 239
Any Wife to Any Husband . . . 235
Apparent Failure . . . 518
Appearances . . . 535
Arcades Ambo . . . 672
Artemis Prologizes . . . 421
Asolando . . . 665
At the 'Mermaid' . . . 528

BAD Dreams . . . 657-9
Balcony, In a . . . 456
Baldinucci (Filippo) on the Privilege of Burial . . . 546
Bean-Feast, The . . . 671
Bean-Stripe (A): also, Apple-Eating . . . 658
Beatrice Signorini . . . 675
Before . . . 243
Bifurcation . . . 533
Bishop Blougram's Apology . . . 437
Bishop (The) orders his Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church . . . 435
Blot in the 'Scutcheon, A . . . 272
Boot and Saddle . . . 207
Boy (The) and the Angel . . . 320
Bratts, Ned . . . 597
By the Fire-side . . . 232

CALIBAN upon Setebos; or, Natural Theology in the Island . . . 492
Camel-Driver, A . . . 651
Camels, Two . . . 653
Campagna, Two in the . . . 237
Cardinal and the Dog, The . . . 670
Cavalier Tunes . . . 207
Cenciaja . . . 543
Cherries . . . 654
'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came' . . . 359
Christmas-Eve . . . 396
Cleon . . . 448
Clive . . . 603
Colombe's Birthday . . . 291
Confessional, The . . . 213
Confessions . . . 495
Count Gismond . . . 317
Cristina . . . 214
Cristina and Monaldeschi . . . 626
Croisic, The Two Poets of . . . 565

DE Gustibus___ . . . 225
Deaf and Dumb; a Group by Woolner . . . 496
Death in the Desert, A . . . 483
Development . . . 683
Dis aliter visum; or, le Byron de nos Jours . . . 475
Doctor— . . . 617
Donald . . . 622
Dramatic Idyls. First Series . . . 584
„ „ Second Series . . . 603
" Lyrics . . . 207
„ Romances . . . 317
Dramatis Persona? . . . 467
Dreams, Bad . . . 667-9
Drinks, Nationality in . . . 210
Druses, The Return of the . . . 248
Dubiety . . . 666
Duchess, My Last . . . 317
Duchess, the Flight of the . . . 340

EAGLE, The . . . 643
Earth's Immortalities . . . 215
Easter-Day . . . 409
Echetlos . . . 603
England, the Italian in . . . 325
Englishman (The) in Italy, . . . 327
Epilogue to 'Asolando' . . . 688
Epilogue to 'Dramatis Persona;' . . . 519
Epilogue to 'Ferishtah's Fancies' . . . 664
Epilogue to •Pacchiarotto' . . . 551
Epistle (An) containing the Strange Medical Experience of Karshish the Arab Physician . . . 422
Eurydice to Orpheus; a Picture by Leighton . . . 497
Evelyn Hope . . . 216

FACE, A . . . 498
Failure, Apparent . . . 518
Family, The . . . 646
Fears and Scruples . . . 532
Ferishtah's Fancies . . . 642
Fifine at the Fair; prelude and epilogue . . . 520
Filippo Baldinucci on the Privilege of Burial . . . 546
Flight of the Duchess, The . . . 340
Florence, Old Pictures in . . . 221
Flower's Name, The . . . 210
Flute-Music, with an Accompaniment . . . 679
Forgiveness, A . . . 538
Fra Lippo Lippi . . . 427
French Camp, Incident of the . . . 317
Fuseli, Mary Wollstonecraft and . . . 627

GALUPPI'S, A Toccata of . . . 220
Garden Fancies . . . 210
'Ghent to Aix, How they brought the Good News from* . . . 208
Girl. A Pearl, a . . . 667
Give a Rouse . . . 207
Glove, The . . . 323
Gold Hair: a Story of Pornic . . . 472
Gondola, In a . . . 330

INDEX OF TITLES

Grammarian's Funeral, A 350
Guardian-Angel, The. A Picture at Fano 244

HAKKADOSH, Jochanan 630
Halbert and Hob 588
Heretic's Tragedy, The . 351
HerveRiel 537
Holy-Cross Day 353
Home-Thoughts, from Abroad . 226
Home-Thoughts, from the Sea . 226
House 529
Householder, The 521
How it Strikes a Contemporary 419
'How they brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix' 208
Hugues (Master) of Saxe-Gotha 246
Humility 666

'IMPERANTE Augusto natus est——' . 681
In a Balcony 456
In a Gondola 330
In a Year 242
In Three Days 241
Inapprehensivencss . 669
Incident of the French Camp . 317
Instans Tyrannus 321
Italian (The) in England 325
Italy, The Englishman in . 327
Ivan Ivanovitch 590
Ixion 628

JAMES Lee's Wife . 467
Jochanan Hakkadosh 630
Jocoseria 622
Johannes Agricola in Meditation 426

KINO Victor and King Charles . 185

L A Saisiaz 554
Laboratory, The 212
Lady and the Painter, The 672
Last Duchess, My . 317
Last Ride Together, The . 335
Last Word, A Woman's . 216
Life in a Love. 241
Light Woman, A . 335
Likeness, A 498
Lippo Lippi, Fra 427
Lost Leader, The . 208
Lost Mistress, The . 215
Love among the Ruins 217
Love in a Life 241
Lovers' Quarrel, A . 218
Luria 362

MAGICAL Nature 533
Marching Along 207
Martin Relph 584
Martin's (St.) Summer 536
Mary Wollstonecraft and Fuseli . . 627
Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha . . . 246
May and Death 496
Meeting at Night 215
Melon-Seller, The 643
Memorabilia . • . . . 245
Men and Women 419
Mesmerism 321
MihrabShah 649
Misconceptions 238
Monaldeschi, Cristina and . . . 626
Muckle-Mouth Meg 671
Mulcykeh 607
My Last Duchess 317
My Star 232

NATiONALrrY in Drinks 210
Natural Magic 533
NedBratts 597
Net, The Pope and the 670
Never the Time and the Place . . . 641
Now 666
Numpholeptos 534

OLD Pictures in Florence . , . . 221
One Way of Love 239
One Word more. To E. B. B. . . . 453

PACCHIAROTTO (Of) and how he Worked in Distemper 522
Painter, The Lady and the . . . 672
Pambo 641
Pan and Luna 620
Paracelsus 14
Parting at Morning 215
Patriot, The 317
Pauline; A Fragment of a Confession . 1
Pearl, a Girl. A 667
Pheidippides 536
Pictor Ignotus 426
Pictures (Old) in Florence . . . 221
Pied Piper of Hamelin, The—A Child's Story 337
Pietroof Abano 609
Pillar at Sebzevar, A 656
Pippa Passes 165
Pisgah Sights, I 531
" " II 531
" " *III.* 554
Plot-Culture 655
Poetics 666
Ponte dell' Angelo, Venice . . . 673
Pope and the Net, The . . . . , 670
Popularity 245
Porphyria's Lover 358
Pretty Woman, A 239
Prospice 496
Protus 355

QUARREL, A Lovers' . 218

RABBI Ben Ezra 481
Relph, Martin 584
Rephan 685
Respectability 240
Return (The) of the Druses . . . 248
Reverie 686
Roses, Women and , 242

Rosny 666
Rudel to the Lady of Tripoli . . . 452

ST. MARTIN'S Summer 536
Saisiaz, La 554
Saul 226
Saxe-Gotha, Master Hugues of . . 246
Scruples, Fears and 532
Sebzevar, A Pillar at 656
Serenade (A) at the Villa . . . 238
Shah Abbas 644
Shop 530
Sibrandus Schafnaburgensis . . 211
Sludge (Mr.),'The Medium' . . 499
Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister . 212
Solomon and Balkis 625
Song 215
Sordello 97
Soul's Tragedy, A 384
Spanish Cloister, Soliloquy of the . 212
Speculative 667
Star, My 232
Statue (The) and the Bust . . 355
Strafford 66
Summum Bonum 667
Sun, The 647

TALE, A 582
Through the Metidja to Abd-el-Kadr. . 209
Time's Revenges 325
Toccata of Galuppi's, A 220
Too Late 477
'Transcendentalism' 419
Tray 596
Tripoli, Rudel to the Lady of . . 452
Twins, The 334
Two Camels 653
Two in the Campagna 237
Two Poets of Croisic, The . . 565
Tyrannus, Instans 321

VILLA, Up at a—Down in the City . . 219
Vogler, Abt 479

WALL, A 522
Wanting is—What? 622
Waring 332
Which? 669
White Witchcraft 667
Wife (Any) to Any Husband . . 235
Wollstonecraft (Mary) and Fuseli . . 627
Woman's Last Word, A 216
Women and Roses 242
Worst of It, The 474

YEAR, In a 242
Youth and Art 497

INDEX TO FIRST LINES

OF

SHORTER POEMS AND SONGS

A CERTAIN neighbour lying sick to death . 646
A king lived long ago . . . 180
A Rabbi told me: On the day allowed 617
A simple ring with a single stone 667
Ah, but how each loved each, Marquis! 626
Ah, did you once see Shelley plain 245
Ah, Love, but a day 467
Ah, the bird-like f l u t i n g 679
All I believed i s true! 321
All I can say is—I saw it!. 533
All June I bound the rose in sheaves . 239
All service ranks the same with God . 167
All's over, then: does truth sound bitter . 215
All that I know 232
All the breath and the bloom of the year in the bag of one bee: 667
Among these latter busts we count by scores 355
And so you found that poor room dull 535
* And what might that bold man's announcement be' 647
Anyhow, once full Dervish, youngsters came 644
As I ride, as I ride 209
Ask not one least word of praise 658
* As like as a Hand to another Hand! ' 471
At the midnight in the silence of the sleep-time 688
'Ay, but, Fershtah,'—a disciple smirked . 655

BEAUTIFUL Evelyn Hope is dead 216
Boot, saddle, to horse, and away 207
But do not let us quarrel any more . 432
But give them me, the mouth, the eyes, the brow! 497

CHRIST God who savest man, save most . 318
Cleon the poet (from the sprinkled isles 448
Could I but live again 531
Crescenzio, the Pope's Legate at the High Council, Trent 670

DARED and Done: at last I stand upon the summit 554
Dear and great Angel, wouldst thou only leave **244**
Dear, had the world in its caprice **240**
Dervish—(though yet un-dervishcd, call him so 643

ESCAPE me? **241**

'FAME!'Yes, I said it and you read it 565
Fear death?—to feel the fog in my throat . 496
Fee, faw, fum! bubble and squeak! . 353
Fire is in the flint: true, once a spark escapes 649
First I salute this soil of the blessed, river and rock! 586
Flower—I never fancied, jewel—I profess you! 533
Fortu, Fortu, my beloved one . 327
Frowned the Laird on the Lord: 'So, red-handed I catch thee? 672

GIVE her but a least excuse to love me 176
Going his rounds one day in Ispahan 643
Good to forgive 554
Grand rough old Martin Luther 334
Grow old along with me! 481
Gr-r-r—there go, my heart's abhorrence! . 212

H A D I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare 219
Hamelin Town's in Brunswick . 337
Heap cassia, sandal-buds and stripes . 46
He was the man—Pope Sixtus, that Fifth, that swineherd's son 671
'Heigho!' yawned one day King Francis . 323
Here is a story shall stir you! Stand up, Greeks dead and gone 603
Here is a thing that happened. Like wild beasts whelped, for den 588
Here's my case. Of old I used to love him. 532
Here's the garden she walked across . 210
Here's to Nelson's memory! 210
Here was I with my arm and heart . 477
High in the dome, suspended, of Hell, sad triumph, behold us! . . , 628
Hist, but a word, fair and soft . 246
How I lived, ere my human life began 685
How of his fate, the Pilgrims* soldier-guide. 651
How very hard it is to be 409
How well I know what I mean to do 232

I AM a goddess of the ambrosial courts 421
I am a painter who cannot paint 175
I am indeed the personage you know. 538
I am poor brother Lippo, by your leave 427
I and Clive were friends—and why not? Friends! I think you laugh, my lad . 603
I could have painted pictures like that youth's 426
I dream of a red-rose tree. 242
I hear a voice, perchance I heard 27
I know a Mount, the gracious Sun perceives 452
I know there shall dawn a day . 686
I leaned on the turf 469
I—'Next Poet?' No, my hearties 528
I only knew one poet in my life 419
I said—Then, dearest, since 'tis so 335
I send my heart up to thee, all my heart . 330

I sprang to the stirrup, and Joris, and he . 208
I've a Friend, over the sea 325
I will be happy if but for once . 666
I will be quiet and talk with you 468
I wish that when you died last May . 496
I wonder do you feel to-day 237
If a stranger passed the tent of Hoseyn, he cried'A churl's!' 607
If one could have that little head of hers . 498
If you and I could change to beasts, what beast should either be? 667
Is all our fire of shipwreck wood 467
It happened thus: my slab, though new 669
It is a lie—their Priests, their Pope . 213
It once might have been, once only . 497
It was roses, roses, all the way . 317

JUNE was not over 239
Just for a handful of silver he left us . 208

KARSHISH, the picker-up of learning's crumbs 422
Kentish Sir Byng stood for his King . 207
King Charles, and who'll do him right now? 207
'Knowledge deposed, thenl*—groaned whom that most grieved . • 656

LAST night I saw you in my sleep 667
Let them fight it out, friend! things have gone too far 243
Let's contend no more, Love . 216
Let us begin and carry up this corpse 350
'Look, I strew beans* 658

MAN I am and man would be, Love—merest man and nothing more 647
May I print, Shelley, how it came to pass , 543
Morning, evening, noon and night . 320
Moses the Meek was thirty cubits high 641
My Father was a scholar and knew Greek . 683
My first thought was, he lied in every word 359
My grandfather says he remembers he saw, when a youngster long ago. 584
My heart sank with our Claret-flask . 210
My love, this is the bitterest, that thou 235

NAY but you, who do not love her . 215
Never any more 242
Never the time and the place . 641
Nobly, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the North-west died away 226
'No, boy, we must not'—so began . 546
No, for I'll save it! Seven years since 518
No more wine? then we'll push back chairs and talk 437
No protesting, dearest 536
Not with my Soul, Love!—bid no Soul like mine 656
Now, don't, sir! Don't expose me! Just this once! 499
Now that I, tying thy glass mask tightly . 212

O THE old wall here! How I could pass 522
O worthy of belief I hold it was 620
Of the million or two, more or less . 321
Oh but is it not hard, Dear? . 627
Oh Galuppi, Baldassaro, this is very sad to find! 220
Oh, good gigantic smile o' the brown old earth 470
Oh, Love—no, Love! All the noise below, Love 664
Oh, the beautiful girl, too white 472
Oh, to be in England 226
Oh, what a dawn of day 218
Once I saw a chemist take a pinch of powder 654
On the first of the Feast of Feasts . 519
On the sea and at the Hogue, sixteen hundred ninety-two 537
One day it thundered and lightened . 627
Only the prism's obstruction shows aright . 496
Others may need new life in Heaven . 667
Out of the little chapel I burst . 396
Out of your whole life give but a moment! 666
Overhead the tree-tops meet 184
Over the ball of it 531
Over the sea our galleys went . 49

PETRUS Aponensis—there was a magician! 609
Plague take all your pedants, say I! . 211
Pray, Reader, have you eaten ortolans 642

QUERY: was ever a quainter 522
Quoth an inquirer, 'Praise the Merciful! 649
Quoth one: 'Sir, solve a scruple! No true sage 653

ROOM after room 241
Round the cape of a sudden came the sea . 215
Round us the wild creatures, overhead the trees 643

SAID Abner, 'At last thou art come! Ere I tell, ere thou speak 226
Savage I was sitting in my house, late 521
See, as the prettiest graves will do in time . 215
Shall I sonnet sing you about myself? 529
She should never have looked at me . 214
Sing me a hero! Quench my thirst . 596
So far as our story approaches the end 335
So, friend, your shop was all your house! . 530
So, I shall see her in three days 241
'So say the foolish!' Say the foolish so, Love? 667
So, the head aches and the limbs are faint . 651
So, the three Court-ladies began 670
So, the year's done with! 215
Solomon King of the Jews and the Queen of ShebaBalkis 625
Some people hang portraits up . 498
Stand still, true poet that you are! 245
Still ailing, Wind? Wilt be appeased or no? 469
Still you stand, still you listen, still you smile! 534
Stop, let me have the truth of that! . 475
Stop playing, poet! May a brother speak?. 419
Stop rowing! This one of our bye-canals . 673
Such a starved bank of moss . 565
Suppose that we part (work done, comes play) 641
[Supposed of Pamphylax the Antiochenc . 483

INDEX TO FIRST LINES

TAKE the cloak from his face, and at first . 244
That fawn-skin-dappled hair,of hers . 239
That second time they hunted me 325
That's my last Duchess painted on the wall 317
That was I, you heard last night 238
The fancy I had to-day 520
The grey sea and the long black land. 215
The Lord, we look to once for all 352
The morn when first it thunders in March . 221
* The Poet's age is sad: for why?' 665
'The poets pour us wine—' 551
The rain set early in to-night . 358
The swallow has set her six young on the rail 468
The year 's at the spring 171
There is nothing to remember in me . 471
There's a palace in Florence, the woild knows well 355
There's a woman like a dew-drop 277
There's heaven above, and night by night . 426
There they are, ray fifty men and women . 453
*They tell me, your carpenters,' quoth I to my friend the Russ 590
This is a spray the Bird clung to 238
This now, this other story makes amends . 630
This strange thing happened to a painter once 675
This was my dream: I saw a Forest . 668
Thus the Mayne glideth 57
Touch him ne'er so lightly, into song he broke 622
'Twas Bedford Special Assize, one daft Mid-summer's Day 597

UP jumped Tokay on our table. 210

VANITY, saith the preacher, vanity! . 435
Verse-making was least of my virtues: I viewed with despair 655

WANTING is—what? 622
We two stood simply friend-like side by side 669
We were two lovers; let me lie by her 533
What a pretty tale you told me. 582
What girl but, having gathered flowers 667
What, he on whom our voices unanimously 670
What, I disturb thee at thy morning-meal . 654
What is he buzzing in my ears?. 495
What it was struck the terror into me? 681
What's become of Waring 332
When I vexed you and you chid me . 653
Where the quiet-coloured end of evening smiles 217
'Why from the world,' Ferishtah smiled, 'should thanks 664
'Will sprawl, now that the heat of day is best 492
Will you hear my story also 622
Wish no word unspoken, want no look away! 644
Woe, he went galloping into the war . 666
Would it were I had been false, not you 474
Would that the structure brave, the manifold music I build 479

YET womanhood you reverence. 672
'You are sick, that's sure'—they say . 603
You blame me that I ran away 672
You groped your way across my room i' the dear dark dead of night 646
You in the flesh and here 668
You know, we French stormed Ratisbon . 340
Your ghost will walk, you lover of trees . 225
You'll love me yet!—and I can tarry . , 181
You're my friend 181

SET IN
GREAT BRITAIN
AT THE
UNIVERSITY PRESS
OXFORD
PRINTED BY
RICHARD CLAY AND
COMPANY, LTD.
BUNGAY
SUFFOLK