

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  
 'he 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 won-  
 drous 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 weel,  
 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 con-  
 sequence?  
 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—