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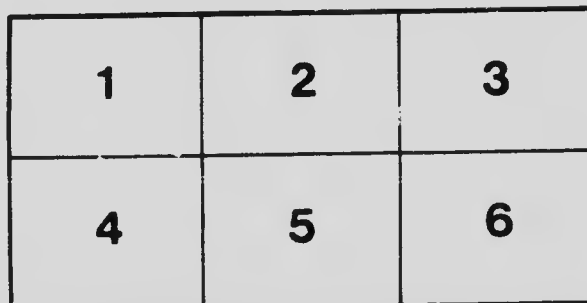
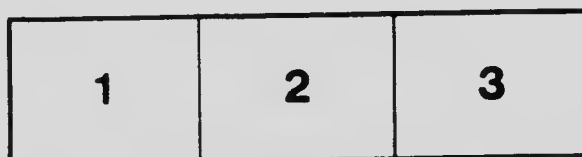
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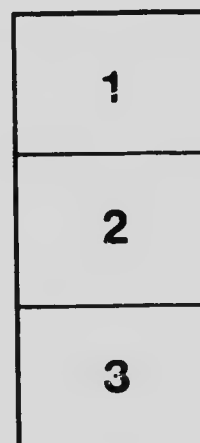
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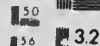
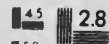
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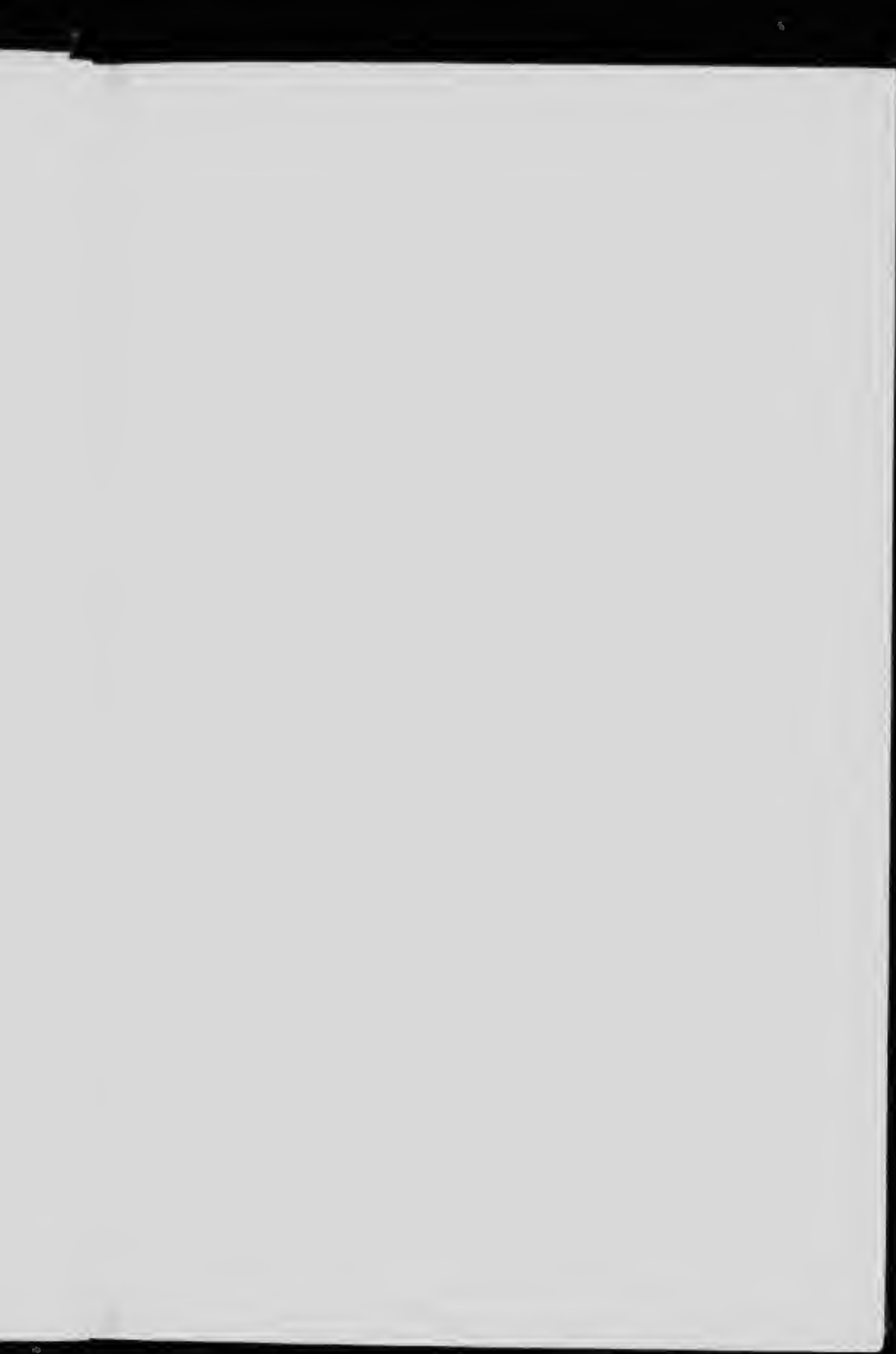
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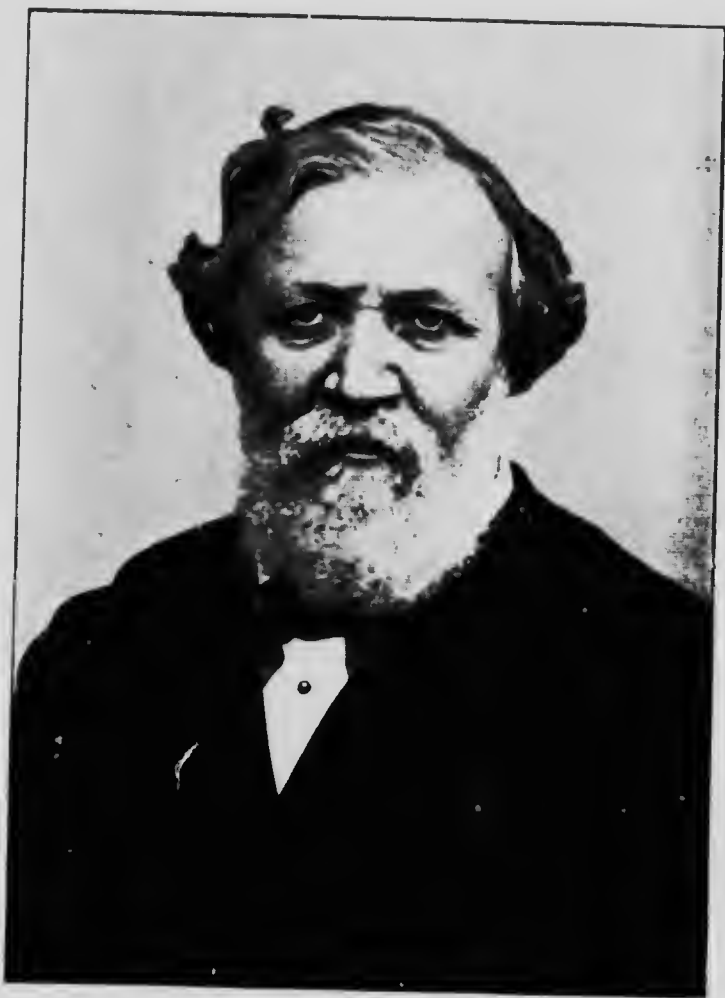
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ROBERT BROWNING
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305



OXFORD EDITION

POEMS OF
ROBERT BROWNING

CONTAINING

DRAMATIC LYRICS, DRAMATIC ROMANCES
MEN AND WOMEN, DRAMAS, PAULINE, PARACELSDS
CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY, AND SORDELLO



HENRY FROWDE
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NOTE

THIS volume includes (1) the contents of the three-volume edition of Browning's poems published in 1863; (2) *Pauline*, taken from the first edition (1833); (3) two short poems, a *Sonnet* and *Ben Karshook's Wisdom*, not reprinted by Browning in any collected edition of his poems. A few obvious misprints have been corrected, and the 'elucidatory headings' to *Sordello*, which first appeared in the edition of 1863, have been discarded, in accordance with Browning's own omission of them in the final edition of his poems (1889). No other alterations have been made in the text.



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 PROMPTTEST AND STAUCHEST HELPER,
SHOULD SEEM EVEN NEARER TO ME NOW THAN
THIRTY YEARS AGO.

R. B.

London, *April* 21, 1863.

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POEMS (1833-1863)

BY ROBERT BROWNING

In this Volume [pp. 1-163 of this edition] are collected and redistributed the pieces first published in 1842, 1845, and 1855, respectively, under the titles of 'Dramatic Lyrics,' 'Dramatic Romances,' and 'Men and Women.'

Part of these were inscribed to my dear friend John Kenyon: I hope the whole may obtain the honour of an association with his memory.

R. B. [1863.]

LYRICS

CAVALIER TUNES¹

I. MARCHING ALONG

I

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 parles!

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, sing-
ing this song.*

III

Hampden to Hell, and his obsequies'
knell

Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young
Harry as well!

¹ Such Poems as the majority in this volume [pp. 1-163 of this edition] might also come properly enough, I suppose, under the head of 'Dramatic Pieces'; being, though often lyric in expression, always dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine.—R. B.

England, good cheer! Rupert is near!
Kentish and loyalists, keep we not
here

(Chorus) *Marching along, fifty-score
strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, sing-
ing this song?*

IV

Then, God for King Charles! Pym and
his snarls
To the Devil that pricks on such pesti-
lent carles!

Hold by the right, you double your
night;
So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the
fight,

(Chorus) *March we along, fifty-score
strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, sing-
ing this song!*

II. GIVE A ROUSE

I

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 despoite
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 inspire 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 triumph for devils 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—]

I

I SPANG to the stirrup, and Joris, and
he;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped
all three;
'Goo! speed!' cried the watch, as the
gate-bolts undrew;
'Speed!' echoed the wall to us gallop-
ing through;
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank
to rest,
And into the midnight we galloped
abreast.

II

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 the cheek-strap, chained
slacker 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 Duffeld, 'twas morning as plain as
could be;
And from Meeheln church-steeple we
heard the half-chime,
So Joris broke silence with, 'Yet there
is time!'

IV

At Aerschot, 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 gallop-
ing 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 !'

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.

IX

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, 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.

X

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

1842

I

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 desiered, ways untried
As I ride, as I ride.

II

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

III

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.

IV

As I ride, as I ride,
Ne'er has spur my swift horso 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 viel strido with stride
As I ride, as I ride !

V

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
Stop 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
Of the hole, where up the bubbles glisten,
After my heart I look and listen.

II

Our laughing little flask, compell'd
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-warrior,
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 abut-
ting,

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
And 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,

Jiggling, as it were, and zig-zag-ziggling
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 sower, my chance
foot spurned,

To feed and forget it the leaves
among.

II

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.

V

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 shut pink mouth opens
 never !
 For while thus it pouts, her fingers
 wrestle,
 Twinkling the audacious leaves be-
 tween,
 Till round they turn and down they
 nestle—
 Is not the dear mark still to be seen ?

VI

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 SCHLAFNABURGENSIS

I

Plague take all your pedants, say I !
 He 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.

II

Into the garden I brought it to read,
 And under the arbut and laurastine
 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 Stone-
 henge ;
 Added up the mortal amount ;
 And then proceeded to my revenge.

III

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,
 —I knew at the bottom rain-drip-
 pings stagnate ;
 Next a handful of blossoms I plucked
 To bury him with, my bookshelf's
 magnate ;
 Then I went indoors, brought out a
 loaf,
 Half a 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 luctis,*
Cantate ! quoth I, as I got a rake,
 And up I fished his delectable trea-
 tise.

VI

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
 glisten

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 dear !

Made of her eggs a 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 !

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.

IX

Come, old martyr ! What, torment
 enough is it ?

Back to my room shall you take your
 sweet self !

Good-bye, mother-beetle ; husband-eft,
 suffice !

See the snug niche I have made on
 my shelf.

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

I

Gr-r-r—there go, my heart's abhor-
 rence !

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 trim-
 ming ?

Oh, that rose has prior claims—
 Needs its leaden vase filled brimming ?
 Hell dry you up with its flames !

II

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 ?

III

Whew ! We'll have our platter bur-
 nished,

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 !)

IV

Saint, forsooth ! While brown Dolores

Squats outside the Convent bank,

With Sanchicha, telling stories,

Steeping tresses in the tank,

Blue-black, lustrous, thick like horse-
 hairs,

—Can't I see his dead eye glow,

Bright as 'twere a Barbary corsair's ?

(That is, if he'd let it show !)

V

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!

VI

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 as can be,
 Spin him round and send him flying
 Off to Hell, a Manichee?

VIII

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 woeeful 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 RÉGIME]

I

Now that I, tying thy glass mask
 tightly,
 May gaze thro' these faint smokes curl-
 ing 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 am here.

III

Grind away, moisten and mash up thy
 paste,
 Pound at thy powder,—I am not in
 haste!
 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 plea-
 sures!
 To carry pure death in an carring, a
 casket,
 A signet, a fan-moult, 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 pastille, 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!

VIII

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!

X

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 for-
tune'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 buy 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 ceiling, there! and walls and floor,
There, lies, they lie—shall still be hurled
Till spite of them I reach the world!

II

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.

III

I had a lover—shame avant!
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.

V

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 he lies upon thy breast,
Thou may'st 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.'

VIII

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.

X

I told the father all his schemes,
Who were his comrades, what their
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.

XI

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!

XII

That horrible black scaffold drest,
That stapled block . . . God sink the
rest!

That head strapped back, that blind-
ing 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

I

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 weak-
ness)

What her look said!—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 return-
ing.'

III

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.

IV

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

V

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 ?

VI

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-bliss
Have been lost here. Doubt you
whether
This she felt as, looking at me,
Mine and her souls rushed together.

VII

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 cap-
ture.

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 the next life quickly !
This world's use will have been ended.

THE LOST MISTRESS

I

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

II

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'll resign :

IV

For each glance of that eye so bright
and black,
Though I keep with heart's endea-
vour,—
Your voice, when you wish the snow-
drops back,
Though it stay in my soul for ever !—

V

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

FAME

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 soda
 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 in the slushy
 sand.

II

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

I

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 prais-
 ing ;
 To praise, you search the wide world
 over :
 So, why not witness, calmly gazing,
 If earth holds aught—speak truth—
 above her ?
 Above this tress, and if I touch
 But cannot praise, I love so much !

A WOMAN'S LAST WORD

I

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 !

III

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—

V

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 :

X

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

EVELYN HOPE

I

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.

III

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 ?

IV

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 and much to forget
Ere the time be come for taking you.

V

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 gera-
nium'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 Hope !
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 even-
 ing smiles
 Miles and miles
 On the solitary pastures where our
 sheep
 Half-asleep
 Tinkle homeward thro' the twilight,
 stray or stop
 As they crop—

II

Was the site once 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.

III

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)

IV

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 prest,
 Twelve abreast.

V

And such plenty and perfection, see, of
 grass
 Never was !
 Such a carpet as, this summer-time,
 o'erspreads
 And embeds
 Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,
 Stock or stone—

VI

Where a multitude of men breathed joy
 and woe
 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.

VII

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—

VIII

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 dames
 Viewed the games.

IX

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 undistin-
guished grey
Melt away—

X

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.

XI

But he looked upon the city, every side,
Far and wide,
All the mountains topped with temples,
all the glades'
Colonnades,
All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts,—
and then,
All the men !

XII

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

XIII

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.

XIV

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

Oh, 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 rillels swell,
Must be dancing down the dell
With a foamy 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 go—
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 !

V

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 !

VIII

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.

IX

See, how she looks now, drest
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.

X

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.

XI

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 ?

XII

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 !

XIV

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 threatens the white !

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 ear ?
'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;
In that 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 giant's fee-faw-fum!

XX

Then, were the world well stript
Of the gear wherein equipped
We can stand apart,
Heart dispense with heart
In the sun, with the flowers unmipped,—
Oh, the world's hangings ripped,
We were both in a bare-walled crypt!

XXI

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, or let its fires out-fly?
Heart, shall we live or die?
The rest, . . . settle it by and by!

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:
Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads
at the window there!

II

Something to see, by Bacchus, some-
thing 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's 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!
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 of 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 the 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's
to see though you linger.
Except you cypress that points like
Death's lean lifted forefinger.
Some think fireflies pretty, when they
mix in the corn and mingle,
Or thrid the stinking hemp till the stalks
of it seem a-tingle.
Late August or early September, the
stunning cicada 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 opening your eyes in the city, the
blessed church-bells begin:
No sooner the bells leave off, than the
diligence 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
lectures more metnons 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,
tootle-te-tootle the fife;

No keeping one's hannels still: it's
the greatest pleasure in life.

X

But bless you, it's dear—it's dear!
fowls, wine, 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
another 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,
tootle-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 St. Mark's is, where the Doges
used to wed the sea with rings ?

III

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 !

IV

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 ?

V

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 ?

VI

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 thir so plain-
tive, sixths diminished, sigh on
sigh,

Told them something ? Those suspen-
sions, 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 came 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, creak-
ing 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.

XIII

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 its 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 ?

XV

'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 cloddy and grown old.

OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE

I

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 alced
arch
Of the villa-gate, this warm March
day,
No flash snapt, no dumb thunder
rolled
In the valley beneath where, white
and wide
And washed by the morning's water-
fall,
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?

III

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 dives 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 after-
noons,
By a gift God gave me now and then,
In the mild decline of those suns like
moons,
Who walked in Florence, besides her
men.

V

They might chirp and chatter, 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.

VI

Wherever a fresco peels and drops,
Wherever an outline weakens and
waned
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 Rafacts, 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 reckon 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 the
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
Dello.

IX

And here where your praise might yield
returns,

And a handsome word or two give help,
Here, after your kind, the mastiff gins
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.)

X

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.

XI

If 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
Lara?

Even so, you will not sit like Theseus,
You'd fain be 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 Alex-
ander.

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
fine 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
and 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, no-
wise polished;

They stand for our copy, and, once
invested

With all they can teach, we shall see
them abolished.

XVII

'Tis a life-long toil till our lump be
leaven—

The better! what's come to perfec-
tion perishes.

Things learned on earth, we shall prac-
tise in Heaven.

Works done least rapidly, Art most
cherishes.

Thyself shall 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.

XVIII

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 en-
deavour,

Man's face, have no more play and
action

Than joy which is crystallized for ever,
Or grief, an eternal petrification?

XIX

On which I conclude, that the early
painters,

To cries of 'Greek Art and what more
wish you?'—

Replied, 'To become now self-acquain-
ters,

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?

XX

Give these, I exhort you, their garden
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
folks leave college.

XXI

There's a fancy some lean to and others
hate—

That, when this life is over, begins
New work for the soul in a better state.

Where it strives and grows weary,
loses and wins;

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Where the strong and the weak, this
world's congeries,
Repeat in large what they practise
in small,
Through life after life in unlimite
series ;
Only the scale's to be changed, that's
all.

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 its 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,
And painter—who but Cimabue ?
Nor ever was man of then all indeed.
From these to Ghiberti and Ghir-
landajo,
Could say that he missed my critic-
meed.
So now to my special grievance—
heigh ho !

XXIV

Their ghosts now stand, as I said
before,
Watching each fresco flaked and
rasped,
Blocked up, knocked out, or white-
washed o'er
—No getting again what the church
has grasped !
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 on the old delusions, saggy
Each master his way through the black
streets taking,
When 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, that a captive's to be out-
ferreted ?
Why is it they never remember me ?

XXVI

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, Taddeo Gaddi,
To grant me a taste of your into-
naco—
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 crum-
bly—
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 ting-
lish—
Their pictures are 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 Carlino!

XXX

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-steps planting a weary
toe!
Nay, I shall have it yet! *detur
amanti!*
My Koh-i-noor—or (if that's a plati-
tude)
Jewel of Giamshid, the Persian Sofi'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 re-
voicing,
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 son 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 Witana-gemot
(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
Lorraine's,
And bring us the days of Orgagna
hither!

XXXIV

How we shall prologuize, how we shall
perorate,
Fitter fit things upon art and his-
tory—
Feel truth at blood-heat and the false
at a zero rate,
And make of the want of the age no
mystery!
Contrasting the fructuous and sterile
eras,
Show, monarchy ever its uncouth
cub licks
Out of the bear's shape into Chimac-
ra'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 'issima')
To end now our half-told tale of Cam-
busean,

And turn the Bell-tower's *alt* to
altissimo :
 And fine as the beak of a young bee-
 caccia
 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,
 unbaflled
 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—'

I

Your ghost will walk, yon 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 beanflowers' 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 cicadas die of drouth,
 And one sharp tree—'tis a cypress—
 stands,

By the many hundred years red-rusted,
 Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'er-
 crusted,

My sentinel to guard the sands
 To the water's edge. For, what ex-
 pands

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-flesh
 melons,

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

I

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 !

II

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
reapture
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 !

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

I

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 ser-
vants, of prayer or 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.

II

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 ser-
vant !' 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.

v

Then I tuned my harp,—took off the
lilies we twine round its chords
Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the
noontide—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 stilled 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 tune, for which quails on
the cornland will each leave his
mate
To fly after the player; then, what
makes the crickets clate,
Till for boldness they fight one another:
and then, what has weight
To set the quick jerboa a-musing out-
side 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.

vii

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 ex-
pand

And grow 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 balms-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
channt

Of the marriage,—first go the young
maidens, next, she whom we vaunt
As the beauty, the pride of our dwell-
ing.—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-sapphires, 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,—

ix

'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
conquered by his prey.

BIBLIOTHEQUE

du

COLLEGE SAINT-JEAN
—MONTON ALBERTA

And the meal—the rich dates yellowed
 over with gold dust divine,
 And the locust's-flesh steeped in the
 pitecher! 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 fit 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 word 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 heard 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 con-
 test, the working whence grew
 Such result as, from seething grape-
 bundles, 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 three
 That, a-weave in the rock, helps its
 labour and lets the gold go)
 High ambition and deeds which surpass
 it, fame crowning it,—all
 Brought to blaze on the head of one
 creature—King Saul!

X

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
 summons goes right to the aim,
 And some mountain, the last to with-
 stand 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 bequeath-
 ings 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 its 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 de-
 spair:
 Death was past, life not come: so he
 waited. Awhile his right hand
 Held the brow, helped the eyes left too
 vacant, with with 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
 intense: so, arm folded in 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 com-
 mend 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.

XII

Then fancies grew rife
 Which had come long ago on the
 pastures, 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 vagne thought eame again; I grew
 surer; so, once more the string
 Of my harp made response to my spirit,
 as thus—

XIII

'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 lip, the stag's
 antler; then safely outburst
 The fan-branches all round; and thou
 mindedst when these too, in turn
 Broke a-bloom and the palm-tree seemed
 perfect: yet more was to learn.
 Ev'n 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
 stanneh
 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 in-
 conscious, 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!
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 com-
prised 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 com-
ment. 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!

XIV

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 sum-
mit of human endeavour
And sealing 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 sun-
shine.

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 com-
posure, 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 com-
munion; 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
 Or his armoûr and war-cloak and
 garments, he leaned there awhile,
 And so 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 times, to
 the man patient there;
 And thus ended, the harp falling for-
 ward. 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 hel 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!

XVI

Then the truth came upon me. No harp
 more—no song more! outbroke—

XVII

'I have gone the whole round of Crea-
 tion: I saw and I spoke!
 I, a work of God's hand for that pur-
 pose, 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 I 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 dis-
 trust 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 insistent 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 insphering 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
 dayspring, death's minute of night ?
 Interpose at the difficult minute,
 smitten 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 win-
 ning intensified bliss,
 And the next world's reward and
 repose, by the struggles in this.

XVIII

'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 :
 I will ?—the mere atoms despise me ! I
 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 salva-
 tion joins issue with death !
 As Thy Love is discovered almighty,
 almighty 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—
 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 emo-
 tion, 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' new awe;
 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!
 Even 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 mur-
 mured, persistent and low,
 With their obstinate, all but hushed
 voices—'E'en so, it is so!

MY STAR

Alas 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

I

How well I know what I mean to do
 When the long dark Autumn even-
 ings come,
 And where, my soul, is thy pleasant
 hue?
 With the music of all thy voices,
 dumb
 In life's November too!

II

I shall be found by the fire, suppose,
 O'er a great wise book as besemeth
 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!

III

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.

V

The outside-frame, like your hazel-
 trees—
 But the inside-archway narrows fast,
 And a rarer sort succeeds to these,
 And we slope to Italy at last
 And youth, by green degrees.

VI

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 !

VII

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 ?

VIII

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.

X

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.

XI

Oh, the sense of the yellow mountain-
 flowers,
 And the 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,

XII

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-
 capped
 Elf-needled mat of moss,

XIII

By the rose-flesh mushrooms, un-
 divulged
 Last evening—nay, in to-day's first
 dew
 You sudden coral nipple bulged
 Where a freaked, fawn-coloured,
 flaky crew
 Of toad-stools 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.

XV

The chapel and bridge are of stone alike,
 Blackish-grey and mostly wet ;
 Out 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.

XXIII

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—

XXIX

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 archi-
tect'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 our life's safe hem !

XXIII

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,
Mutterly, my heart knows how—

XXIV

When, if I think but deep enough,
You are wont to answer, prompt as
rhyme ;
And you, too, find without a rebuff
The response your soul seeks many
a time
Piercing its fine flesh-stuff.

XXV

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 ?

XXVI

My own, see where the years conduct !
At first, 'twas something our two
souls
Should mix as mists do ; each is
sucked
Into 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 learn 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 !

XXVI

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 the noon-
day glare

You count the streaks and rings.

XXXII

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.

XXXIII

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.

XXXIV

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.

XXXV

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.

XXXVI

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 we crossed
before,

Take the path again—but wait!

XXXVII

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, the 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!

XL

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 wood-
land-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 fast!' runs the rhyme.

XLII

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 forestal!

XLIV

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 very hell on earth
For the hope of such a prize!

XLV

Oh, 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 you join two lives, there is oft a scar,
They are one and one, with a shadowy
third;
One near one is too far.

XLVII

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 second the powers
at play:
They had mingled us so, for once and
for good,
Their work was done—we might go
or stay,
They relapsed to their ancient mood.

XLIX

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!

L

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 hour'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!

LII

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!

LIII

So, the earth has gained by one man
more,
And the gain of earth must be
Heaven's gain too,
And the whole is well worth thinking
o'er
When the autumn comes: which I
mean to do
One day, as I said before.

ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND

I

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!

II

I have but to be by thee, and thy hand
Would never let mine go, nor heart
withstand

The beating of my heart to reach its place.
 When should I look for thee and feel thee gone?
 When ery 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

And 'twould 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.

VII

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's to
 thank.

IX

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 lie
 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 !

XII

'—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 slips
The dew-drop out of, must it be by
stealth ?

XIII

'It cannot change the love still kept
for Her,
Much more than, such a picture to
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 !

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, scaling up the
sum
Or lavish of my treasure, thou must
come
Back to the heart's place here I keep
for thee !

XVII

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 door-way's lintel. That
were cause
For lingering, though thou calledst,
if I durst!

XX

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.

XXI

Pride?—when those eyes forestal 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

1

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?

II

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,

IV

Where one small orange cup amassed
Five beetles,—blind and green they
grobe
Among the honey-meal: and last,
Everywhere on the grassy slope
I traced it. Hold it fast!

V

The champaign with its endless fleecy
Of feathery grasses everywhere!
Silence and passion, joy and peace,
An everlasting wash of air—
Rome's ghost since her decease.

VI

Such life there, through such long,
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
Of 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.

X

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

I

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!

II

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

I

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.

V

So wore 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 past away.

VI

What became 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 steps 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 task-master's curse
 Than such music on the roads!

IX

'When no moon succeeds the sun,
Nor can pierce the midnight's tent
Any star, the smallest one,
While some drops, where lightning
went,
Show the final storm begun—

X

'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 ?

XI

'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

I

ALL 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.

II

How many a month I strove to suit
These stubborn fingers to the lute !
To-day I venture all I know.
She will not bear 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

I

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 't
were,—
'If I tire of your June, will she greatly
care ?'

II

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 mends her bowers now, your
hand left unsightly
By plucking their 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 spinning,—why,
June will consider.

A PRETTY WOMAN

I

THAT fawn-skin-dappled hair of hers,
And the blue eye
Dear and dewy,
And that infantine fresh air of hers !

II

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 word's sake,
Or a sword's sake,
All's the same, whate'er the chance,
you know.

IV

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.

V

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!

VI

But for loving, why, you would not,
Sweet,
Though we prayed you,
Paid you, brayed you
In a mortar—for you could not, Sweet!

VII

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 for-
gone,
Scout mere liking?
Thunder-striking
Earth,—the Heaven, we looked above
for, gone!

X

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
'T would 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!

XVI

Thus the craftsman thinks to grace the
rose,—
Plucks a mould-flower
For his gold flower,
Uses fine things that efface the rose:

XVII

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?

II

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 finger to caress
 Your lip's 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

I

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 per-
 fume!
 As she brushed it, the cornice-wreath
 blossomed anew:
 Yon looking-glass gleamed at the wave
 of her feather.

II

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 drops 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 !

II

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 ?

III

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 embrowned 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 un-
tried,

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

I

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.

II

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.

III

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 the air I breathed,
Satisfied !
I, too, at love's brim
Touched the sweet :
I would die if death bequeathed
Sweet to him.

V

'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.

VII

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 ?

VIII

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.

IX

'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 ?'

X

Dear, the pang is brief,
Do thy part,
Have thy pleasure. How perplex
Grows belief !
Well, this cold clay clod
Was man's heart.
Crumble it—and what comes next ?
Is it God ?

WOMEN AND ROSES

I

I DREAM of a red-rose tree,
And which of its roses three
Is the dearest rose to me ?

II

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 unborn. And all, to one
cadence,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

III

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 !

But once of love, the poesy, the passion,
Drink once and die !—In vain, the
same fashion,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

V

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 yearn-
ing.

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 once ! But no—in their old
measure

They circle their rose on my rose tree

VII

Dear rose without a thorn,
Thy bud's the babe unborn :
First streak of a new morn.

VIII

Wings, lend wings for the cold, the
clear !

What's far conquers what is near.

Roses will bloom nor want beholders,
 Sprung from the dust where our own
 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

I

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.

II

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
 entoilment ?

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 !

IV

Better sin the whole sin, sure that God
 observes,
 Than 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.

V

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.

VI

What's the leopard-dog-thing, constant
 at his side,
 A leer and lie in every eye of its obse-
 quious 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 !

VIII

All or nothing, stake it ! trusts he God
 or no ?
 Thus far and no farther ? farther ? be
 it so !
 Now, enough of your chicanery 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 :
'T'over 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, may'st 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, dis-
carding

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 supprest

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 so 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 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 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 !

II

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 ;
'Other. Give best at first, but Thou
Forever set'st our table praising,
Keep'st the good wine till now !

V

Meantime, I'll draw you as you stand,
With few or none to watch and
vonder :

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 ?

VII

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'er-whispered !
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

X

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.

XI

Mere couchs ! not fit for warp or woof !
Till cunning comes to pound and
squeeze
And clarify,—refine to proof
The liquor filtered by degrees,
While the world stands aloof.

XII

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.

XIII

Hobbs hints blue,—straight he turtle
cats ;
Nobbs prints blue,—claret crowns
his cap ;
Nokes outdares Stokes in azure feats,—
Both gorge. Who fished the murex
up ?
What porridge had John Keats ?

MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE- GOTHA

I

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 moun-
tainous fugues ?
See, we're alone in the loft,—

II

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,
Banks 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 !
—Oh, you may challenge them, not
a response
Get the church-saints on their rounds !

V

(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—

VI

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.)

VII

Here's your brook, younger folks sheave !

Played I not of 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 !

VIII

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 !

X

Sure you said—'Good, the mere notes !

Still, couldst thou take my intent,
Knew what procured me our t'ompany's votes—

Masters being lauded and sciolists shent,

Parted the sheep from the goats !'

XI

Well then, speak up, never flinch !

Quick, ere my candle's a snuff

—Burnt, do you see ? to its uttermost inch—

I believe in you, but that's not enough :

Give my conviction a clinch !

XII

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 !

XIII

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 !

XIV

One dissertates, he is candid ;

Two must disceapt,—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 ease banded.

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 !

XVII

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 mould-
 ing and groining
 Under those spider-webs lying !

XX

So your fugue broadens and thickens,
 Greatens and deepens and lengthens,
 Till one exclaims—'But where's nusic,
 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's unfounded !
 Seems it surprising a lover grows
 jealous—
 Hopes 'twas for something his organ-
 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 throw-
 ing his shuttle,
 Death ending all with a knife ?

XXIII

Over our heads Trnth and Nature—
 Still our life's zigzags and dodges,
 Ins and outs, weaving a new legis-
 lature—
 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 inten-
 tions
 Down the past ages must know more
 than this age !
 Leave the web all 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, it's no trifle for pipe and for
 tabor—
 Four flats, the minor in F.

XXVII

Frien'd, 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' dust-clouds we fling her !

XXVIII

Hugues ! I advise *meâ poenâ*
 (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, yousacristan, 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 morn-
 ing-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 ?

ROMANCES

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP

I

You know, we French stormed Ratis-
 bon :

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.

III

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

'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,' his sol-
 dier'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.

IV

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.

V

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 in-
stead,

'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 Pan-
dolf'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 coun-
tenance,

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, 't
was not

Her husband's presence only, called
that spot

Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: per-
haps

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, 't was all one! 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
nurse

She rode with round the terrace—all
and each

Would draw from her alike the approv-
ing 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 chuse

Never to stoop. Oh, Sir, she smiled, no
doubt,

Whene'er I passed her; but who passed
without

Much the same smile? This grew; I
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,
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

AIX IN PROVENCE

I

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.

II

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.

III

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.

IV

They, too, so beauteous! 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!

V

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—

VI

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)—

VII

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

Howe'er that be, all eyes were bent
Upon me, when my cousins cast
Theirs down; 'twas time I should pre-
sent

The victor's crown, but . . . there,
'twill last

No long time . . . the old mist again
Blinds me as then it did. How vain!

IX

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!'

X

Bring torches! Wind the penance-
 sheet
 About her! Let her shun the elmste,
 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.

XII

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 hath set
 Himself to Satan; who would spend
 A minute's mistrust on the end?

XIII

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 content
 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.

XV

Did I not watch him while he let
 His armourer just brace his greaves,
 Rivet his hauberk, on the fret
 The while! His foot... my memory
 leaves
 No least stamp out, nor how anon
 He pulled his ringing gauntlets on.

XVI

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
 Of the sword, but open-breasted drove,
 Cleaving till out the truth he clove.

XVII

Which done, he dragged him to my
 feet
 And said 'Here die, 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.

XVIII

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.

XIX

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.

XX

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,
By which 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,
Praise'd 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 :
 Become 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 eates 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 under-ground mine :
 Till I looked from my labor 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 com-
 plete,
 The man sprang to his feet,
 Stood erect, caught at God's skirts,
 and prayed !
 —So, I was afraid !

MESMERISM

I

ALL I believed is true I
I am able yet
All I want to get
By a method as strange as new :
Dare I trust the same to you ?

II

If at night, when doors are shut,
And the wood-worm picks,
And the death-watch ticks,
And the bar has a flag of snut,
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,
Arms 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—

VIII

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 veils I reach
To her soul and never swerve,
Knitting an iron nerve—

XI

Commanding that to advance
And inform the shape
Which has made escape
And before my countenance
Answers me glanee for glanee—

XII

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—

XVII

Out of doors into the night !
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,
Not 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
Not 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 ?

XXII

Ha ! was the hair so first ?
What, unfilleted,
Made alive, and spread
Through the void with a rich outburst,
Chestnut gold-interspersed ?

XXIII

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 !

XXIV

'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 Thon
That ownest the soul,
Yet wilt grant control
To another, nor disallow
For a time, restrain me now !

XXVII

I admonish me while I may,
Not to squander guilt,
Since require Thon wilt
At my hand its price one day !
What the price is, who can say ?

THE GLOVE

(PETER RONSARD *loquitar*.)

'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 cloudlet :
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 pit-side;

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 opened a hole in the wire-work

Across it, and dropped there a firework,
And fled: one's heart's beating re-

doubled;
A pause, while the pit's mouth was
troubled,

The blackness and silence so utter,
By the firework's slow sparkling and

spntter;

Then earth in 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

Ilum 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 the space that might stand him in
best stead:

For who knew, he thought, what the
amazement,

The eruption of clatter and blaze meant,

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 fore-

head,
By the hope in those eyes wide and
stewdy,

He was leagues in the desert already,
Driving the flocks up the mountain,

Or earlike 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 else-

where,
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 ad-

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 pur-

suing
His suit, weighing out with nonchal-

ance
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
No'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 fall in the face of its owner
Flang 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-posses-
sion

Amid the Court's scoffing and merri-
ment,—

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 re-
ducible,

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 dross too.
She went out 'mid hooting and laugh-
ter ;

Clement Marot stayed ; I followed
after,

And asked, as a grace, what it all
meant ?

If she wished not the rash deed's
recalmment ?

'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, per-
force,

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, over-
awed,

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 :
Does 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,
mangre

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 stretch
His legs in the service, and fetching
His wife, from her chamber, thus
straying
Sad gloves she was always mislaying.
While the King took the closet to ch
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!

Vinienti occurrere 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's throbs and

'The working of his clamsy boots,'
I am sure that I should do,

As that stout I told of striking Two.
And I think I had rather . . . woe is

not

And I am sure he would not see,
And I am sure he would not see him there

And I am sure he would not see him there
And I am sure he would not see him there

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LIBRARY OF THE

JUNIORATE

OF ST. JOHN THE APOSTLE.

With the face 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 through 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 through 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 near 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 ; and
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,
One 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,
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 Tenebrae 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—
night

Beside the good of Italy,
For which I live and mean to die!
I never was in love; and since
Charles proved false, nothing could con-
vince

My inmost heart I had 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 Metterich 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 seared
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

FORRÒ, Forrò, 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,—specked with 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 sitting
—

In halves on the tree ;
And betwixt the loose walls of great
flint-tone,

Or in the thick dust
On the path, or straight out of the rock-
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-
nets

Which wake 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 tugger'd at
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 skill
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 months 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 be! 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 *l'aigne* 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:
 N y, 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.
 Smocco 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,
 For 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, so rosy and wondrous,
 Of hairy gold orbs!
 But my mule picked his sure, sober
 path 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-chasias and piles of loose
 stones
 Like the loose broken teeth
 Of some monster which clumbed there
 to die
 From the ocean beneath—
 Place was grudged to the silver-grey
 fume-weed
 That clung to the path,
 And dark ro-enary ever a-dying
 That, spite the wind's wrath,
 So loves the salt rock's face to seaward,
 And lentils as staunch
 To the stone where they root and bear
 berries,
 And . . . what shows a branch
 Coral-coloured, transparent, with cir-
 clets
 Of pale sea-green leaves;
 Over all trod my mule with the caution
 Of glaciers o'er chieve.

Still, foot after foot like a lady :
 So, 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
 movement !
 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
 slumbered
 As greenly as ever
 Those isles of the siren, your Galla ;
 No ages can sever
 The Three, nor enable their sister
 To join them, —halfway
 On the voyage, she looked at Ulysses—
 No further 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,
 Forth, 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
 windfall
 —An 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 dis-
 course
 Which (all nature, no art)
 The Dominican brother, these three
 weeks,
 Was getting by heart.

Not a pillar nor post but is dizen'd
With red and blue papers;
All the roof waves with ribbons, each
altur

A-blaze with long tapers;
But the great masterpiece is the
scaffold

Rigged glorions to hold
All the liddlers 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 pro-
cession

The priests mean to stomp,
And 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 Calva'io
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?
Forth, in my England at home,
Men meet gravely to-day
An I debate, if abolishing Corn-laws
Be righteous and wise
—If 'twere proper, Scirocco should
vanish
In black from the skies!

IN A GONDOLA

He sings

I SEW 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's streets to leave one's pace
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!

II

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 open 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

I

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

ay 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
 Thim 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 rilllet-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 eyes

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
 Deliance from you to the world !

Resene 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

I

What if the Three should catch at last
 Thy serenader ? While there's east
 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
 knives,
 Past every church that sains 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,

tought 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 Gindecca 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 loory 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 loory, 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 others' 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
That brought against their will together
These objects, and, while day lasts,
weave

Around them such a magic tether
That they look dumb : your harp,
believe,

With all the sensitive tight strings
That dare not speak, now to itself
Breathes slumberously as if some elf
Went in and out the chords, his wings
Make murmur whereso'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 time 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-Lake !
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
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
My Zamze : if the ribbon 's black,
The Three are watching ; keep away,

II

Your gondola —let Zorzi wreath
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, 'All 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, and on
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?

II

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

That 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!

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, blurs and
blottings,

Certain first steps were achieved

Already which—(is that your mean-
ing?)

'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'er-
weening

Pride alone, puts forth such claims

O'er the day's distinguished names.

IV

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
Dæmoniaco-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 ?

Ed say, ' to only have conceived
Your great works, though they ne'er
make progress,
Surpasses all we've yet achieved !'
Ed he so, I should be believed,
Ed make such havoc of the claims
Of the day's distinguished names
To feast him with, as feasts an ogress

Her sharp-toothed golden-crowned
child !

Or, as one feasts a creature rarely
Captured here, unreconciled
To capture ; and completely gives
Its pettish amorous licence, barely
Requiring that it lives.

VI

Ichabod, Ichabod,
The glory is departed !
Travels Waring East away ?
Who, of knowledge, by hearsay,
Reports a man upstart
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
To 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 gasp ?
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 melo-
dious 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 tire 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 sink,
 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 Polidoro.
 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 troubling 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 that can 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, some-
 how,
 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

I

'WHEN I last saw Waring . . .'
 (How all turned to him who spoke—
 You saw Waring ? Truth or joke ?
 In land-travel, or sea-faring ?)

II

'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 planks, a shrill voice cried,
 (A neck as bronzed as a Lascar's)
 "Bury 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."

III

'In truth, the boy leaped laughing back;
And one, half-hidden by his side
Under the furred 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
Of the sky, to overtake the sun
And reach the shore, like the sea-calf
Its singing cave; yet I caught one
Glance ere awny 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.'

I

Grand rough old Martin Luther
Bloomed fables—flowers on furze,
The better the encounter:
Do roses stick like burrs ?

II

A beggar asked an alms
One day at an abbey-door,
Said Luther; but, seized with qualms,
The Abbot replied, 'We're poor !

III

'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 Dabatur.

V

'While Date was in good case
Dabatur flourished too:
For Dabatur's lenten face,
No wonder if Date rue.

VI

'Would ye retrieve the one ?
Try and make plump the other!
When Date's penance is done,
Dabatur helps his brother.

VII

'Only, beware relapse !'
The Abbot hung his head.
This beggar might be, perhaps,
An angel, Luther said.

A LIGHT WOMAN

I

So far as our story approaches the end,
Which 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 improve-
ment yet,
When she crossed his path with her
hunting-noose
And over him drew her net.

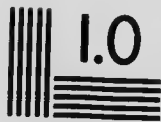
III

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 !



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IV

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 the wren in-
stead!

V

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.

VI

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 com-
prehends—
One should master one's passions, (love,
in chief)
And be loyal to one's friend!

IX

And she,—she lies in my hand as tame
As a pear late basking over a wall;
Just a touch to try an' off it came;
'Tis mine,—can I let it fall?

X

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-lies'
thirst.
When I gave its stalk a twist,

XI

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 all my love avails,
Still 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 me.

II

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.

III

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.

IV

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

V

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.

VI

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.

VIII

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.

IX

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 'th, dim-
 deried.

This foot once planted on the goal,
 This glory-garland round my soul,
 Could I desery 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.

x

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)

I

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 ladies,

Split open the kegs of salted sprats,
 Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,
 And even spoiled the women's chatts,
 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—shock-
 ing
 To think we buy gowns lined with
 ermine
 For dolts that can't or won't deter-
 mine

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 pack-
 ing !'

At this the Mayor and Corporation
 Quaked with a mighty consternation.

IV

An hour they sate 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 glu-
tinous)
' Only a scraping of shoes on the mat ?
Anything like the sound of a rat
Makes my heart go pit-a-pat ! '

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 cut 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-grand-
sire,

Starting up at the Trump of Doom's
tone,

Had walked this way from his painted
tomb-stone ! '

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 ex-
clamation

Of the astonished Mayor and Corpora-
tion.

VII

Into the street the Piper 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 grum-
bling ;

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-cup-
 boards,
 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 dry-
 saltery !
 So, munch on, crunch on, take your
 nuncheon,
 Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon !
 And just as a bulky sugar-punchon,
 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 thou-
 sand guilders !'

IX

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 ;
 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 !'

X

The piper's face fell, and he cried,
 'No trifling ! I can't wait, beside !
 I've promised to visit by dinner time
 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 to another fashion.'

XI

'How ?' cried the Mayor, 'd'ye think
 I'll 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 !'

XII

Once more he stept into the street ;
And to his lips 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—
And 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's 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 play-mates 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 that ascribe

The outlandish ways and dress

On which their neighbours lay such stress,

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.

XV

So, Willy, let me and you be wipers
Of 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

I

You're my friend :

I was the man the Duke spoke to ;

I helped the Duchess to cast off his
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 corn-field
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 dag, 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 hear of the great
sea-shore,

—And the whole is our Duke's country !

III

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 his huntspear he'd contrive
To get the killing-place transfix'd,
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 of crests 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, and 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, per-
fume :

—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 sun-
shine !

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 cask of white beer
from Berlin !

—Or if you incline to prescribe mere
wine

Put to his lips when they saw him pinc,
A cup of our own Moldavia fine,
Cotnar, for instance, green as May
sorrel,

And ropy with sweet,—we shall not
quarrel.

IV

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,

So, 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
 That 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 would 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 urox 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 glad-
 ness
 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 portenllis ;
 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 !

VII

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.

VIII

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, Hunts-
 man'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-satis-
 faction
 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.

IX

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.

X

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 clurruup,
 Or best pryer to St. 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;
 Blessed he who nobly sunk 'ols'
 And 'nls' while he tugged on his grandsire's trunk-hose;
 What signified hats if they had no rims on,
 Each stoneling 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 not time on't!

XI

Now you must know, that when the first dizziness
 Of flap-hats and luff-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 head 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, some falcon-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 cur-mudgean,
 If she cling 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 haunting,—
 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 pie-bald,
 Black-barred, cream-coated and pink eye-ball'd,—

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 eall 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 dis-
 tance ?
 And so, as I say, on the Lady's per-
 sistence,
 The Duke, dumb stricken with amaze-
 ment,
 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 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 rela-
 tion—
 In brief, my friend, set all the devils in
 hell free
 And turn them out to earouse 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 unстере
 grace
 Of ancient hero or modern paladin,
 From door to staircase—oh, such a
 solemn
 Unbending of the vertebral column !

XII

However, at sunrise our company
 mustered ;
 And here was the huntsman bidding
 unkennel,
 And there 'neath his bonnet the prickier
 blustered,
 With feather dank as a bough of wet
 fennel ;
 For the court-yard's four walls were
 filled with fog
 You might 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 lo, 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.

XIII

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 honey-
 comb,
 They sift and soften it, bake it and burn
 it—
 Whether they weld you, for instance,
 a snaffle
 With side-bars never a brate 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'll 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 bruise black-blooded mulberry ;
 And that other sort, their crowning
 pride,
 With long white threads distinct in-
 side,
 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,
 And the uses they turn and twist iron
 and sand to.
 And these made the troop, which our
 Duke saw sally
 Towards 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 impor-
 tune
 To let that same witch tell us our
 fortune.
 The oldest Gipsy then above ground ;
 And, so 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 fingers 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 return'd I 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 wellnigh
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
belicat.

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 intelli-
gence 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 while away a weary hour

For the Lady left alone in her bower,
Whose mind and body craved exertion

And yet shrank from all better diver-
sion.

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 surpris-
ing :

For first, she had shot up a full head in
stature,

And her step kept pace with mine nor
falter'd,

As if age had foregone its usurpatore,
And the ignoble mien was wholly

altered,

And the face looked quite of another
nature,

And the change reach'd too, whatever
the change meant,

Her shaggy wolf-skin cloak's arrange-
ment :

For where its tatters hung loose like
sedges,

Gold coins were glittering on the
edges,

Like the band-roll string with toman's
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 Jaeynth at the
entry

Of the Lady's chamber standing sentry ;
I told the command and produced my
companion,

And Jaeynth 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.

xv

And now, what took place at the very
first of all,

I cannot tell, as I never could learn it :
Jaeynth 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 the life holds
garrison,

—Jaeynth 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 Jaeynth 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 fan-
ning,

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 un-
winking,

—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 re-
dundant

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 con-
founded,

As still her cheeks burned and eyes
glistened.

As she listened and she listened :
When all at once a hand detained me,
And 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 furl'd
Its wings like a task fulfilled, and
dropped

From under the words it first had
propped,

And left them midway in the world,
And 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 recognise 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'll 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,
Yet vainly through the world should
ye 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 ere ?
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 I could foretell
Thy future portion, sure and well—
But those passionate eyes speak true,
 speak true,

And let them say what thou shalt do !
Oily, 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 is 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 clerklly fingers,
All that I've forgotten as well as what
fingers

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 tin-
tacks !

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 easement, 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
I never

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 should serve his wild creatures
 To tell one another all their desires,
 So that each knows what its 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 court-yard 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
 Owning 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 grudging)
 And ever, 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
 cumakin?
 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 snid 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 morn-
 ing,
 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 inquisi-
 tive,

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 muster-plaster
 Of muns and fuens 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,
 smlit,
 Our green Moldavia, the streaky syrup,
 Cotnar as old as the time of the Druids—
 Friendship may match with that
 monarch of fluids;
 Each supple a dry brain, fills you its
 ius-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
dribblets,

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
tl' all.

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-manners-
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 earn-
ings :

For, you see, in the churchyard Jaecynth
reposes,

And our children all went the way of
the roses :

It's a long lane that knows no turn-
ings.

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
skinfull,

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 fortunes 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 explain-
ing.

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 lay-
 men)
 To a world where will be no further
 throwing
 Pearls before swine that can't value
 them. Amen !

A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL

[Time—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 thorpes,
 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, citied 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 the
 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 born 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-side,
 Make for the city.)

He knew the signal, and stepped on
 with pride

Over men'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 least,

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 give !

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 contrive

Use for our 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 a-breast, 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

Found, or earth's failure :

' Wilt thou trust death or not ? ' He answered ' Yes !

Hence with life's pale lure !

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 unperplex

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 *Holi's* business—let it be !—

Properly based *Oun*—

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 purlicues,

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.

JOHANNES AGRICOLA IN MEDI- TATION

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, past,

I lay my spirit down at last.

I lie 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 irrevocably

Pledged solely its content to be.

Yes, yes, a tree which must ascend,

No poison-gourd foredoomed to
stoop !

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 dew turns 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 to 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 ?

THE HERETIC'S TRAGEDY

A MIDDLE-AGE INTERLUDE

ROSA MUNDI ; SEU, FULCITE ME FLORI-
BUS, A CONCEIT OF MASTER GYS-
BRECHT, CANON-REGULAR OF SAINT
JODOCT'S-BY-THE-BAR, YPRES CITY.
CANTIQUE, *Virgilius*. AND HATH
OFTEN BEEN S'NG AT HOCK-TIDE
AND FESTIVALS. GAVISUS ERAM,
Jessides.

(It would seem to be a glimpse from
the burning of Jacques du Bourge-
Molay, at Paris, A.D. 1314 ; as dis-

torted by the refraction from Flemish
beam to brain, during the course of a
couple of centuries.)

I

PREADMONISHETH 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 Aldebrand,
He sold it to Sultan Saladin :

Till, caught by Pope Clement, a-bag
there,

Hornet-prince of the mad wasps'
hive,

And clipt 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 con-
firm him who singeth—*

We bring John now to be burned
alive.

III

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 not 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 bayins that kindle forth-
with ;

Billets that blaze substantial and
slow ;

Pine-stump split deftly, dry as pith ;

Larch-heart that churs 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.

V

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, while a *bag* 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.*

VI

Jesus Christ—John had bought and
sold,

Jesus Christ—John had eaten and
drunk ;

To him, the Flesh meant silver and
gold.

(*Salvo reverentia.*)

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,

Thou a damsel's threat to her wanton
bird?—

For she too prattles of ugly mimes.

—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

Mack, there be roses and roses, John!

Some, homely 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 resumed of righteous-
ness

And of temperance and of judgment
to come,

Good Felix trembled, he could no less—
John, snickering, crook'd his wicked
thumb.

CHORUS

What cometh to John of the wicked
thumb?

IX

Hi ha, John plucketh now at his ree

To rid himself of a sorrow at heart!

Lo, —petal on petal, fierce rays un-
close;

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!

CHORUS

What maketh Heaven, That maketh
Hell.

X

So, as John called now, through the la-
main,

On the Name, he had cursed with, all
his life—

To the Person, he bought and sold
again—

For the Face, with his daily buffet-
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 DEODMET
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 meriful 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 bespitter-
upon beneath the feet of the guests.
And a moving sight in truth, this, of
so many of the besotted, blind, restive
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 par-
take 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 aban-
donance of conversions which did incontin-
ently reward him: though not to

my lord be altogether the glory.'—
Diary by the Bishop's Secretary, 1600.]

Though 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.

II

Beh, here's Barnabas! Job, that's
you?

Up stumps Solomon—bustling too?
Shame, man! greedy beyond your
years

To handsel the bishop's shoving-
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 sty,
Wasps in a bottle, frogs in a sieve,
Worms in a carcase, fleas in a sleeve.

Hst! square shoulders, settle your
thumbs

And buzz for the bishop—here he
comes.

IV

How, wow, wow—a bone for the dog!
I liken his Grace to an acorned hog.

What, a boy at his sible, with the bloom
of a lass,

To help and handle my lord's hour-
glass!

Didst ever behold so lithe a chime?
His cheek hath laps like a fresh-singed
swine.

V

Aaron's asleep—shove hip to haunch,
Or somebody deal him a dig in the
panch!

Look at the purse with the tassel and
knob,

And the gown with the angel and
thingumbob.

What's he at, quotha? reading his
text!

Now you've his curtsey—and what
comes next?

VI

See to our converts— you doomed black
dozen—

No stealing away—nor egg nor cozen!
You live that were thieves, deserve it
fairly;

You seven that were beggars, will live
less sparely;

You took your turn and dipped in the
bat,

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.

VIII

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.

IX

Groan all together now, whee—hee—
hee!

It's a work! it's a-work, ah, wee is
me!

It began, when a herd of us, picked and
placed,

Were sparred through the Corso,
stripped to the waist;

Jew-brutes, with sweat and blood well
spent
To usher in worthily Christian Lent.

X

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.

XI

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.

XIII

'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.

XIV

'Ay, the children of the chosen race
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 ?

XV

'God spoke, and gave us the word to
keep :

Bade never fold the hands nor sleep
'Mid a faithless 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 !

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 withstood 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 !

XXI

'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 fellow-
ship,—

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 !'

[The present Pope abolished this bad
business of the sermon.—R. B.]

PROTUS

Among these latter busts we count by
scores,
Half-emperors and quarter-emperors,
Each with his bay-leaf fillet, loose-
thonged vest,
Loric 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,
reconciled.

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 blossom-
ing

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.

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
before,—

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-
hammered head. Great eye
Gross jaw and gripped lips 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, 'Whorides by with the royal air?'

The brides-maids' prattle around her
ceased;

She leaned forth, one on either hand;

They saw how the blush of the bride
increased—

They felt by its beats her heart expand—
As one at each ear and both in a breath
Whispered, 'The Great-Duke Ferdi-
nand.'

That selfsame 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 the 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 pil 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 con-
ferred,

As the courtly custom was of yore.

In a minute can lovers exchange a word?
If 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 bed-chamber 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—

'If I spend the night with that devil
twice,

May his window serve as my loop of hell
Whence a damned soul looks on Para-
dise!

'I fly to the Duke who loves me well,
Sit by his side and laugh a borrow
Ere I count another ave-ben.

'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 morn-
ing'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 Apen-
nine

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 per-
chance.

To-day is not wholly lost, beside,
With its hope of my lady's counten-
ance :

'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 winter's fruits that supplant the
rose :

The world and its ways have a certain
worth !

And to press a point while these oppose
Were a 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 re-
move !

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-checked,

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 of hair, 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—

Eying ever with earnest eye

And quick-turned 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 es-
capes!

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 Donay 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
be.t,

For their end was a crime.'—Oh, a
crime will do

As well, I reply, to serve for a test,

As a vir'ne 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 evi-
gram

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 truly, use the same skill,
Do your best, whether winning or
losing it,

If you choose to play!—is my prin-
ciple.

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!*

PORPHYRIA'S 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 en-
deavour,

To set its straggling passion free
From pride, and vainer ties dis sever,
And give herself to me for ever.

But passion sometimes would prevail,
Nor could to-night's gay feast re-
strain

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 that 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 thorough-
fare,

III

If at his counsel I should turn aside
Into that ominous tract which, all
agree,

Hides the Dark Tower. Yet ac-
quiescingly

I did turn as he pointed : neither pre-
Nor hope rekindling at the end deserved.
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, finding failure in its
scope.

V

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 be fit.

VIII

So, quiet as despair, I turned from him,
That hateful cripple, out of his high-
way
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
To 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
grove!
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.

XI

No! pennury, inertness and grimace.
In some strange sort, were the land's
portion. 'See
Or shut your eyes,' said Nature
peevisly,
'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.'

XII

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 bank
All hope of greenness? 'tis a brute
must walk
Pashing their life out, with a brute's
intent.

XIII

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, gamut and colloped
neck a-strain,

And shut eyes underneath the rusty
mane;

Seldom went such grotesqueness with
such woe;

I never saw a brate 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 sol-
dier'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 L. nour—there
he stands

Frank as ten years ago when knighted
first.

What honest men should dare (he
said) he durst.

Good—but the scene shifts—touch!
what hangman's hands

Pin to his breast a parchment? his
own bands

Read it. Poor traitor, spit upon and
curs'd!

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 spume.

XX

So petty yet so spiteful! all along,

Low scrubby alders kneeled down
over it;

Drenched willows flung them head-
long in a fit

Of mute despair, a suicidal throng:

The river which had done them all the
wrong,

Whate'er that was, rolled by, de-
ttered no whit.

XXI

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 'at must so have seemed in that
hell 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 even-
ing, 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 recognise 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 moun-
tain . . . Dunce,
Fool, to be 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.*'

MEN, AND WOMEN

'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 proclusion and dis-
play,

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 hunter's 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 and hear and do not wonder
much:
If you could tell us what they mean,
indeed!
As Swedish Boehme never cared for
plants
Until it happened, 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—
Colloquised 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 past.
Then, who helps more, pray, to repair
our loss—
Another Boehme with a tougher book
And subtler meanings of what roses
say.—
Or some stont Mage like him of Halber-
stadt,
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.
The best of all you did before, believe,
Was your own boy's-face o'er the finer
chairs
Bent, following the chernub at the top
That points to God with his paired half-
moon wings.

HOW IT STRIKES A CONTEM- PORARY

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 no whither; now, they
breathed themselves

On the main promenade just at the
wrong time:

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 ferule of his stick

Trying the mortar's temper 'tween the
 chinks
 Of some new shop a-building, French
 and line,
 He stood and watched the cobbler at
 his trade,
 The man who slices lemons into drink,
 The coffee-roaster's brasier, and the boys
 That volunteer to help him turn its
 winch,
 He glanced over books on stalls with
 half an eye,
 And fly-le ballads on the vendor's
 string,
 And broad-edge bold-print posters by
 the wall,
 He took such cognisance 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,—they stared at
 him,
 And found, less to their pleasure than
 surprise,
 He seemed to know them 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 bed-room 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 fat?
 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 mani-
 fold,
 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
 conced
 The last thing duly at the dead of night,
 Did the man love his office? frowned
 our Lord,
 'Exhorting when none heard—' Be-
 seech 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 new, stuccoed, third house by
 the bridge,
 Fresh-painted, rather smart than other-
 wise!
 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 Cor-
ridor!'
I had been used to think that personage
Was one with lacquered breeches, bus-
trous 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's 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 his 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! Bless us,
all the while
How spruce 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

I AM a Goddess of the ambrosial courts,
And save by Here, Queen of Pride, sur-
passed
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 lends
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 billed, in jealousy dispatched
A noisome lust that, as the gadbee
stings,
Possessed his stepdame Phaidra for
himself

The son of Theseus her great absent
 spouse.
 Hippolitos 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 Hippolitos 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 reins, 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,
 Hippolitos, 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 reins of Hippolitos.
 But when his sire, too swollen with pride,
 rejoiced
 (Indomitable as a man foredoomed)
 That vast Poseidon had fulfilled his
 prayer,
 I, in a flood of glory visible,
 Stood o'er my dying votary and, deed
 By deed, revealed, as all took place, the
 truth.
 Then Theseus 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
 The trusting heart and loaded hand
 elsewhere,
 As they had climbed Olympos to report
 Of Artemis and nowhere found her
 throne—

Interposed: and, this eventful night,
 While round the funeral pyre the
 populace
 Stood with fierce light on their black
 robes to blind
 Each sobbing head, while yet their hair
 they clipped
 'Ere 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 frankin-
 cense,
 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 under-
 neath

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 phar-
 macies!
 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 His 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 snake-stone—
 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 hither-
ward :

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
laughest here !

'Sooth, it elates me, thus repose I 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 run-a-gate 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 gnm-traga-
canth

Scales off in purer flakes, shines clearer-
grained,

Cracks 'twixt the pestle and the por-
phyry,

In fine exceeds our produce. Scalp-
disease

Confounds me, crossing so with lep-
rosy—

Thou hadst admired one sort I gained
at Zoar—

But zeal outruns discretion. Here I
end.

Yet stay : my Syrian blinketh grate-
fully,

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 it 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 me but now,
Whose ailment is the subject of dis-
course.

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 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 just-retained 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 child

Some elders of his tribe, I should pre-
mise,

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'll call the treasure know-
ledge, 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 arma-
ments

Assembled to besiege his city now,
And of the passing of a mule with
gourds—

'Tis one! 'I 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 cheerful-
 ness,
 Or pretermission of his 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 perforce)
 Which runs across some vast distract-
 ing 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 perplex 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' balked 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 of the blood
 within
 Admonishes—then back he sinks at
 once
 To ashes, that 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' reassures 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 recognises 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 travels I have feigned

To be an ignoramus in our art
According to some preconceived design,

And happened 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 tumult 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

(Pretiguring, 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 to 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,

As—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

Like 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 ?

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 may'st con-
ceive 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.

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 ear which bore
 the freight,
 Through old streets named afresh
 from its 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 end,
 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 house-
 hold-stuff,
 And where they live our pictures
 needs must 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
 travertine,
 'Mid echoes the light footstep never
 woke.
 So die, my pictures ; surely, gently die !
 Oh, 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 foreches to my
 face.
 Zooks, what's to blame ? you think
 you see a monk !
 What, it's 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,—hurry out, if you must show your
 zeal,
 Whatever rat, there, haps on his wrong
 hole,

And nip each softling of a wee white
 mouse,
Weke, weke, that's crept to keep him
 company!
 Aha, you know your better? Then,
 you'll take
 Your hand away that's fiddling on my
 throat,
 And please to know me likewise. Who
 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,
 In the house that caps the corner.
 Boh! you were best!
 Remember and tell me, the day you're
 hanged,
 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 pilehards, 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 hang-
 dogs go
 Drink out this quarter-florin to the
 health
 Of the munificent House that harbours
 me
 (And many more beside, lads! more
 beside!)
 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 un-
 wiped!
 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
 whiffs of song,—
Flower o' the broom,
Take away hie, and our earth is a tomb!
Flower o' the quince,
I let Lisa go, and what good's 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 ent 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 monthful 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 belly-
ful,

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 con-
fess,

Such a to-do! they tried me with their
books.

Lord, they'd have taught me Latin in
pure waste!

Flower o' the dove,

All the Latin I coustruc is, 'amo' I love!

But, mind you, when a boy starves in
the 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 less

For admonitions 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 antiphony's
marge,

Joined legs and arms to the long music-
notes,

Found nose and eyes 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 they bade me danb away.
 Thank you! my head being crammed,
 their walls a blank,
 Never was such prompt disemburden-
 ing.
 First, every sort of monk, the black and
 white,
 I drew them, fat and lean: then, folks
 at church,
 From good old gossips waiting to con-
 fess
 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 tip-toe, said a word, dropped in a
 loaf,
 Her pair of earrings and a bunch of
 flowers
 The brute took growling, prayed, and
 then 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!
 But there my triumph 's straw-fire
 flared and fumed—
 Their better 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 all!
 Faces, arms, legs and bodies like the
 true
 As much as pea and pea! it 's devil-
 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 you praising,—why not stop
with him ?

Why put all thoughts of praise out of
our heads

With wonder at lines, colours, and what
not ?

Paint the soul, never mind the legs and
arms !

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 can'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 pret-
tiest 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 about the best thing God
invents,—

That 's 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 naught, there 's pretty sure to
come

A turn, some warm eye finds me at my
saints—
A laugh, a cry, the business of the
world—
(*Flourish of 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 for 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 significance 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—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 lake
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, 't
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. Art was
given for that—
God uses us to help each other so,

Lending our minds out. Have you
noticed, now,
Your cushion's hanging face? A bit of
chulk,

And trust me but you should, though!
How much more,
If 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 graves! This world's
no blot for us,
Nor blank—it means intensely, and
means good:

To find its meaning is my meat and
drink.

'Ay, but you don't so instigate to
prayer!'
strikes in the Prior: 'when your mean-
ing's plain

It does not say to folks—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 cross-wise, 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 re-
turns—

'Already not one phiz of your three
slaves

That 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

When 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't 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,

Tasting the air this 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 Saint Ambrogio's! Bless
the nuns!

They want a east of 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 in 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, (an U's without the z,
Painters who need his patience.) Well,

all these

Secured at their devotions, up shall
come

Out of a corner when you least expect,
As one by a dark stair into a great light,

Music and talking, who but Lippo ! I !—
Mazed, motionless and moon-struck—

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 perfect 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 pain 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 FAULTLESS 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 ?

I'll 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 !

I 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 hour forth on Fiesole,
Both of one mind, 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
curls inside.

Don't count the time lost, either ; you
must serve

For each of the five pictures we re-
quire—

It saves a model. So ! keep looking
so—

My serpentine 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 and calls 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
harmony!
A common greyness silvers every-
thing,—
All 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 of convent-wall across the
way
Holds the trees safer, huddled more
inside;
The last monk leaves the garden; days
decrease
And autumn grows, autumn in every-
thing.
Eh? the whole seems to fall into a
shape
As if I saw alike my work and self
And all that I was born to be and do,
A twilight-piece. Love, we are in
God's hand.
How strange now, looks the life He
makes us lead!
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 under-
stand
Nor care to understand about my art,
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 what many dream of all their lives
—Dream? strive to do, and agonise
to do,
And fail 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, Some-
one 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 what'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,
Enter and take their place there sure
enough,
Though they come back and cannot tell
the world.
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 man's reach should exceed his
 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 overlooked the
 world ! ' No doubt.
 Yonder 's a work, now, of that famous
 youth
 The Urbinat 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 re-
 plenish 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 : its soul is right,
 He means right—that, a child may
 understand.
 Still, what an arm ! and I could alter it.
 But all the play, the insight and the
 stretch—
 Out of me ! out of me ! 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 Angelo—
 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 Angelo ?
 In this world, who can do a thing, will
 not—
 And who would do it, cannot, I per-
 ceive :
 Yet the will's somewhat—somewhat,
 too, the power—
 And thus we half-men struggle. At the
 end,
 God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.
 'Tis safer for me, if 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 Fontaine-
 bleau !
 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 frank French eyes, and such a fire
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 tune, 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
heart.

The triumph was, to have ended there ;
then if

I reached it ere the triumph, what is
lost ?

Let my hands 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 grow—

My better fortune, I resolve to think.
For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God
lives,

Said one day Angelo, 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 brew
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 Michael
Angelo ?

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 compre-
hend ?

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 one-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 Virgi-
 face,
 Not your's this time ! I want you at
 side
 To hear them—that is, Michael Angelo—
 Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.
 Will you ? 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 com-
 plied,
 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 son
 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, Angelo and me
 To cover—the three first without a wife,
 While I have mine ! So—still they
 overcome
 Because there's still Lucrezia,—a 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 our-
selves,

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
seems all.

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, God 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 t' ~~three~~ nine columns round me,
tw and two,

The odd one at my feet where Anselm
stands :

Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the
ripe

A 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 white-grape vineyard where the
oil-press stood,

Drop water gently till the surface sinks,
And if ye find . . . Ah, God I know not,

I ! . . .

Bedded in store of rotten figleaves 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 Fraseati 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 mann-
 scripts,
 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
 line—
 Tully, 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
 crook,
 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,
 They 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 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! Iblessye. Fewertapers there,
 But in a row: and, going, turn your
 backs
 —Ay, like departing altar-ministrant,
 And leave me in my church, the church
 for peace,
 That I may watch at leisure if he lect—
 Old Gandolf, at me, from his onion-
 stone,
 As still he envied 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 every-
where;

It's just like breathing in a lime-kiln:
ch?

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 glass's edge when dinner's done.
And body gets its sop and hold its noise
And leaves soul free a little. Now's
the time—

'Tis 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 circum-
stance)

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 con-
fess!

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 argu-
ment)

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 played Death on a
stage

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 babbles
 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 land-
 man'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, till 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 fleet-
 ing 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 'twas 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 !'
 If you won't understand what six feet
 mean,
 Compute and purchase stores accord-
 ingly—
 And if in pique because he overhauls
 Your Jerome, piano and bath, you
 come on board
 Bare—why, you cut a figure at the first
 While sympathetic landmen see you
 off ;
 Not afterwards, when, long ere half sea
 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 contriv-
ances—

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; criti-
cize!

What's wrong? why won't you be a
bishop too?

Why, first, you don't believe, you
don't and can't,

(Not stately, 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, shakes us by fits,

Confounds us like its predecessor.

Where's

The gain? how can we guard our un-
belief,

Make it bear fruit to us?—the problem
here.

Just when we are safest, there's a sun-
set-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 help-
lessly,—

There the old misgivings, crooked que-
stions 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 must be,—

Once feel about, and soon or late you hit
Some sense, in 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 indeed a road;
While if he views it from the waste itself,

Up goes the line there, plain from base to brow,

Not vague, mistaken! 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 stumble 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:
We 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 of 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 hands

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's doubt before the day'spring's faith?

You, the philosopher, that disbelieve,
That recognize the night, give dream their weight—

To be consistent you should keep your bed,

Abstain from healthy acts that prove
 you a man,
 For fear you drowse perhaps at un-
 awares !
 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 of 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 . . . but 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 dares,
 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 fellows would choose other-
 wise :
 We let him choose upon his own
 account
 So long as he's consistent with his
 choice,
 But certain points, left wholly to him-
 self,
 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, whatsoever 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 or recover, 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, and 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, Hilde-
 brand'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 re-
 spect,

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 men
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 pro-
cured ;

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 other-
wise.

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 proved
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 I need ?

And that 's no way of holding up the
soul—

Which, nobler, needs men's praise per-
haps, yet knows

One wise man's verdict outweighs all
the fools',—

Wouldlikethe 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-
end

(The thing they gave at Florence,—
what 's its name ?)

While the mad houseful's plaudits near
out-bang

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 an-
swer here—

That even your prime men who appraise
 Are men — 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, demireps
 That love and save their souls in new
 French books—
 We watch while these in equilibrium
 keep
 The giddy line midway: one step
 aside,
 They're chased 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, scandal-
 ized
 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? Blou-
 gram 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 that write
 apace,
 Read somewhat seldomer, think per-
 haps even less—
 You disbelieve! Who wonders and
 who cares?
 Lord So-and-so—his coat bedropt with
 wax,
 All Peter's chains about his waist, his
 back
 Brave with the needlework of Noodle-
 dom,
 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 con-
 tempt.

—Except it 's yours! admire me as
 these may,

You don't. But whom at least do you
 admire?
 Present your own perfections, 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!—In our common primal ele-
 ment
 Of unbelief (we can't believe, you
 know—
 We're still at that admission, reco. et)
 Where do you find—apart from, tower-
 ing o'er
 The secondary temporary aims
 Which satisfy the gross tastes 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 our purpose 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 of the world for
 which you'd 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 instincts, 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 dimmest 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 Ansterlitz for reasons such and
 such ?
 No : for, concede me but the merest
 chance
 Doubt may be wrong—there's judg-
 ment, 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 Arch-Duchess, 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 poet's ? shall we
 write
 Hamlets, Othellos—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 Shakes, are, 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 prob-
 able,—
 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 pos-
 sess.
 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 with-
draw my plea.

But does he say so ? look upon his life !
Himself, who only can, gives judg-
ment there.

He leaves his towers and gorgeous
palaces

To build the trimmest house in Strat-
ford 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 car-
dinal.'

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 and 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

Shung 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 it when he
liked,

But not so thoroughly that if fate
allowed

He would not have it also in my sense.
We play one game. I send the ball

aloft
No less adroitly that of fifty strokes

Scarcely 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 man-
 kind ;
 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.
 Nor 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 soil ? it reared this
 tree—
 This broad life and whatever fruit it
 bears !
 What matter though I doubt at every
 pore,
 Head-doubts, heart-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 under-
 ground
 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 instant silenced long ago

That will break silence and enjoin you
love

What morified 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 contradictions 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 un-
belief

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 with 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 Ocean-
ter's knob,

Believe—and yet lie, kill, rob, fornicate
Full in belief's face, like the beast you'd
bel

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, in 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 whole-
somenely—
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 folks 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 where and
where?
King Bomba's lazzaroni foster yet
The sacred flame, so Antonelli writes;
But even of these, what ragai affin-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—than 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, declassify 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
said
About the need of trials to man's faith,
Still, when you bid me purify the same,
To such a process I discern no end,
Clearing off one exorcism 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 Him-
self?
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 all 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 that 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 calls for 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 mean-
while.

Let us concede (gratuitously though)
Next life relieves the soul of body, yields
Pure spiritual enjoyments: well, my

friend,

Why lose this life in 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,

Scents 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 it all,
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, acting 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
counterchecks.

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 thief
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 plain,
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, un-
reasoned-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,

Suppose 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
subjoin)

Disfigure such a life and call it names,

While, in 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 simpler 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 these the pleasant pastures of this 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 mate—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, that cut
curls
From your fat lap-dog's ears to grace a
brooch—
Dukes, that 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, or 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-
hyperite,
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 my chaplain who reflects my-
self—
My shade's so much more potent than
your flesh.
What's your reward, self-abnegating
friend ?
Stood you confessed of those excep-
tional
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 the
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 druggot'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 stately for Blackwood's Maga-
zine,
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 ?
‘ The Shum and Cellar—or Whitechapel
life
Linnéd after dark ! ’ it made me laugh,
I know,
And pleased a month and brought you
in ten pounds.
—Success I recognize and compliment,
And therefore 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 eye-
brow'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 Con-
fidence ’—
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 *portibus*
Episcopus, nec non—(the deuce knows
what

It's changed to hy our novel hier-
archy)
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
his mind.

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 readi-
ness
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 the 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. Ju t a
week

Sulthead 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'—

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 Protos 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 unloads
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 munifi-
cence!

For so shall men remark, in such an act
Of love for him whose song gave 'Te 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 hulls of unapparent
growth,

Or when the general work 'mid good
acclaim

Climbed with the eye to cheer the archi-
tect,

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 nets.

The image of the sun-god on the phare
Men turn from the sun's self to see, is

mine;

The Poccile, 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,
 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 recog-
 nize,
 Throughout our seventeen islands.
 Marvel not.
 We of these latter days, with greater
 mind
 Than our forerunners, since more com-
 posite,
 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 achieve-
 ments here,
 Being, as I find much reason to con-
 ceive,
 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 oppo-
 site,
 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.
 Or where had been a progress, other-
 wise?
 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 pro-
 perties.
 And thus our soul, misknown, cried out
 to Zeus
 To vindicate his purpose in our life—
 Whystay we on the earth unless to grow?
 Long since, I imaged, wrote the fiction
 out,
 That he or other God, descended here
 And, once for all, showed simultane-
 ously
 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, every-
 where !
 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 upon her robe as if on clouds,
 Refines upon the women of my youth.
 What, and the soul alone deteriorates ?
 I have not chanted verse like Homer's,
 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 others'
 arts,
 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 pre-
 text
 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 joy,
 Dies altogether with my brain and arm,
 Is lost indeed ; since, what survive
 myself ?
 The brazen statue that o'erlooks 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, aught perceived,
 Thou, with the light now in thee, couldst have looked
 On all earth's tenantry, from worm to bird,
 Ere man had yet 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, the birds take flight, forth range the beasts,
 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 the 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.
 The man who hath this quality, is best.
 But thou, king, hadst mor-
 ably said:
 'Let progress end at once, —no more
 no step
 Beyond the natural man, as the
 beast,
 Using his senses, not the soul—
 In man there's failure, only, —no more
 The lower and inconsistent force—
 We called it an advantage, the
 plain
 A spirit might grow conscious of
 life,
 And, by new lore so added to the
 Take each step higher over the
 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 eludes it just to perish
 there,
 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 joy
 more
 Than ere thou climbedst 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 reciprocity,
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
up her tube; she smiles to see
rise.

What she told her, it is just a thread
from the great river which the hills
roll up,

And I tell her with my leave to take
the same?

The artificer has given her one small
tube

Last 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;

Or, 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 know-
ing 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 Phœbus, am I there-
fore young?

Methinks I'm older that I bowed my-
self

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 some-
thing 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 tripping on a mere word)
'what

Thou writest, paintest, stays: that
does not die:

Sappho survives, because we sing her
songs,

And Aeschylus, 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 dendlier 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
months,

Alive still, in the phrase of such as thou,
I, I, the feeling, thinking, acting man,
The man who loved his life so over-
much,

Shall 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 sweet 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 circum-
cised,

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 doctrines 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 like
face.

Men nobly call by many a name the
Mount

As over many a land of theirs its face

Calm front of snow like a triumphal
targe
Is reared, and still with old names,
fresh ones 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 pro-
ceed,
That I, French Rudel, choose for my
device
A sunflower outspread like a sacrifice
Before its idol. See! These inept
And hurried fingers could not fail to
hurt
The woven picture; 'tis a woman's
skill
Indeed; but nothing baffled etc, 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 MORE¹

TO E. R. R.

London, September, 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.

II

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.

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 title of this volume.

v

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 in the hair of the
wicked,
Back he held the brow and pricked its
stigma,
Bit into the live man's flesh for parch-
ment,
Loosed him, laughed to see the writing
rankle,
Let the writer 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 impor-
tance'
(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.

vii

You and I will never see that picture,
While he mused on love and Beatrice,
While he softened o'er his outlined
angel,
In they broke, those 'people of impor-
tance';
We and Bice bear the loss for ever.

viii

What of Rafael's sonnets, Dantr'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, his 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 drink
was pleasant'

Thus old memories mar the actual
triumph;

Thus the doing savours of disrelish;

Thus achievement lacks a grace
somewhat;

O'er-importuned brows becloud the
mandate,

Carelessness or consciousness, the con-
ture.

For he bears an ancient wrong about
him,
Sees and knows again those phalanx'd
faces,
Hears, yet one time more, the 'custom'd
prelude—
'How shouldst thou, of all men, smite,
and save us?'
Guesses what is like to prove the
sequel—
'Egypt's deth-pots—nay, the drought
was better.'

X

Oh, the crowd must have emphatic
warrant '
Their, the Sinai-forehead's cloven
brilliance,
Right-arm's rod-sweep, tongue's imperial
fiat.
Never dares the man put off the prophet.

XI

Did he love one face from out the
thousands,
(Were she Jethro's daughter, white and
wifely,
Were she but the Aethiopian bond-
slave.)
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 down to let his breast be
opened)
Hoard and life together for his mistress.

XII

I shall never, in the years remaining,
Paint yon pictures, no, nor carve you
statues,
Make you music that should all-express
me ;
So it seems : I stand on my attain-
ment,
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 freseo, 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,
Fittly 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 month,—the speech,
a poem.
Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows,
Hopes and fears, belief and disbelief-
ing :
I am mine and yours—the rest be all
men's,
Karshook, 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-trans-
figured.

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 Saumin-
iato,

Rounder 'twixt the cypresses and
rounder,

Perfect till the nightingales applauded.
Now, a piece of her old self, impo-
verished,

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
note-worthy?

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 my-
thos)

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 ice-
berg

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 clear-
ness

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 twi-
light,

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!

[The two following poems were not reprinted by Browning in any collected edition of his works. The Sonnet was written on August 17, 1834, and published in *The Monthly Repository*, 1834. *Ben Karshook's Wisdom* was written in April, 1854, and published in *The Keepsake*, 1856.]

SONNET

Eyes, calm beside thee, (Lady, could'st
thou know!)

May turn away thick with fast-
gathering tears:

I glance not where all gaze: thrilling
and low

Their passionate praises reach thee—
my cheek wears

Alone no wonder when thou passest by;
Thy tremulous lids bent and suffused
reply

To the irrepressible homage which doth
glow

On every lip but mine: if in thine ears
Their accents linger—and thou dost
recall

Me as I stood, still, guarded, very pale,
Beside each votarist whose lighted brow
Wore worship like an aureole, 'O'er
them all

My beauty,' thou wilt murmur, 'did
prevail

Save that one only:—Lady, could'st
thou know'

BEN KARSHOOK'S WISDOM

I

'Would a man 'scape the rod?'

Rabbi Ben Karshook saith,

'See that he turn to God

The day before his death.'

'Ay, could a man inquire
When it shall come!' I say.

The Rabbi's eye shoots fire—

'Then let him turn to-day!'

II

Quoth a young Sadducee:

'Reader of many rolls,

Is it so certain we

Have, as they tell us, souls?'

'Son, there is no reply!'

The Rabbi bit his beard:

'Certain, a soul have I—

We may have none,' he sneered.

Thus Karshook, the Hiram's-Hammer,

The Right-hand Temple-column,

Taught babes in grace their grammar,

And struck the simple, solemn.

TRAGEDIES AND OTHER PLAYS

PIPPA PASSES

A DRAMA

I DEDICATE MY BEST INTENTIONS, IN THIS FORM,
ADMIRINGLY TO THE AUTHOR OF 'ION,'—
AFFECTIONATELY TO MR. SERJEANT TALFOURD.

London, 1841.

R.B.

NEW YEAR'S DAY AT ASOLO IN THE
TREVISAN. *A large, mean, airy
chamber. A girl, PIPPA, from the
silk-mills, springing 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 spurning and supprest 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 supprest,
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 game-
 some mood—

All shall be mine ! But thou must treat
 me not

As the prosperous 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 particu-
 dearth,

Get more joy, one way, if another, less
Thou art my single day, God lends to
 heaven

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 win-
 dow-pane,

He will but press the closer, breathe
 more warm

Against her cheek; how should she
mind the storm?

Amb, 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 eye
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 brothers' 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 twelve-
month'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 cwer!

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 counter-wheeling,
Reeling, broken beyond bedding—

Now now together on the ceiling!

That will task your wits!

Whoever 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 murtagon?
New-blown and roddy 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 humps
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;

Give 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 morning, noon, eve, night—how
spend my day?

To-morrow I must be Pippa who wins
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 pleasure, and
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 Ocreana valley—
Why should not I be the bride as soon
As Ottima ? For I saw, 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 eye-
lash :
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 dun-
ness,
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 imparting sweet intent
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 cured 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 will bless
in turn
That heart which beats, those eyes
which noddily burn

With love for all men : I, to-night at least,
Would be that holy and 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 than this, ye will
I 'great event,' should come to pass,
Than that ? Untwine me from the mass*

*Of deeds which make up life, our deed
Power shall fall short in, or exceed !*

And more of it, and more of it !—oh, yes—

I will pass by, 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
As yet, nor cicada dared carouse—
Dared carouse !

[*She enters the street.*]

I.—MORNING. *Up the Hill-side, inside the Shrub-house. LARCA'S Wife, OTTIMA, and her Paramour, the German SEBALD.*

Sch. [sings.]

*Let the watching lids wink !
Day's a-blaze with eyes, think—
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's : 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 it full morning ?

Oh, don't speak then !

Sch. 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—his !

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.
Sch. 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

In the dust on the sill.

Otti. Oh shut the lattice, pray !

Sch. 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.

Sch. 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—

Sch. 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—

Sch. '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 is the wine :

I brought it when we left the house
above,

And glasses too—wine of both sorts,
Black ? white, then ?

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

Otti. There, trudges on his business
from the Duomo

Beneath 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 ?

Sch. 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.

Sch. 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 ?

Sch. Hark you, Ottima,
One thing's 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 sup-
posed

Proof upon proof was 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,
I have struck

His insolence back into him—and 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—'n
thing !'

Otti. Then, Venns' 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 to-
night,

Seb. What would come, think you, if
we let him lie

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

A plait of hair should wave across my
neck ?

No—this way !

Seb. Ottim, I would give your neck,
Each splendid shoulder, both those

breasts of yours,
That this were undone ! Killing ?—Kill

the world
So Luca lives again !—ay, lives to

sputter
His fulsome dotage on you—yes, and

feign
Surprise that I returned at eve to sup,
When all the morning I was loitering

here—
Bid me dispatch 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 venturesome 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 re-
proach

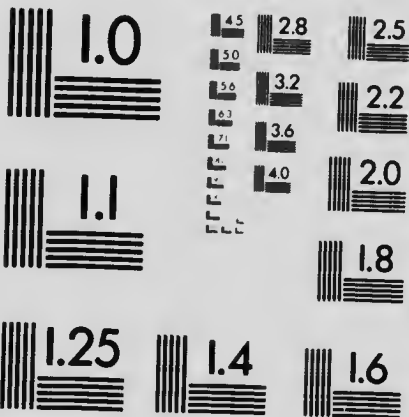
My pertidy, and threaten, and do more—
Had he no right ? What was to wonder

at ?



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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 me ?
 'Tis not for the crime's sake—I'd com-
 mit 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, then !
 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 to-
 gether ?
 Give up that noon I owned my love for
 you ?
 The garden's silence ! even the single
 bee
 Persisting in his toil, suddenly stopt ;
 And where he hid you only could surmise
 By some campanula's 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
 Nipt 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 the heaven's pillars seemed o'er-
 bowed with heat,
 Its black-blue canopy seemed let des-
 cend
 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 over-
 head ;
 And ever and anon some bright white
 shaft
 Burnt thro' the pine-tree roof, here
 burnt 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,
Tapering 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 hill-side '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 ! 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 hearts—
ease . . . 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 to-
gether,

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—speak 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 ; and show
herself

Superior—Guil ! 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 hurrying-down within me, as of
waters

Loosened to smother npsome ghastly pit :
There they go—whirls from a black, fiery
sea !

Otti. Not to me, God—to him be
merciful !

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing
from the Hill-side to Orcau. Foreign
Students of Painting and Sculpture,
from Venice, assembled opposite the
house of JULES, a young French
Statuary.*

First Student. Attention ! my own post
is beneath this window, but the pome-
granate 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.

Second 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 him-
self off to Trieste, immortal poem and all
—where to is this prophetic epigraph
appended already, as Bluphocks assures
me—' *Here a mammoth-poem lies, Foulled
to death by butterflies.*' His own fault,
the simpleton ! Instead of cramp com-
pacts, each like a knife in your entrails,
he should write, says Bluphocks, both
classically and intelligibly.—*Aesculapius
an Epic. Catalogue of the drugs : Hebi's
plaster—One strip Cools your lip.
Phoebus' emulsion—One bottle Chairs
your throttle. Mercury's bolus—One box
Cures . . .*

Third 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.

Second Stud. Good !—Only, so should
the poet's muse have been universally
acceptable, says Bluphocks, *et caeteris
nostris . . .* and Delia not better known to
our literary dogs than the boy—Giovac-
chino !

First 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 singly 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.

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

Gott. His discovery of the truth will be frightful.

Fourth 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 accustomed,' 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 real.' There you laugh again! I say, you wipe off the very dew of his youth.

First 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 . . .

First 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 resolutely 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 *Pietà* 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!

Fifth Stud. Tell him, about the women: go on to the women!

First 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 Tydens at the academy, and my picture was nothing to it—a profound admirer bade him persevere—

would make herself known to him ere long—(Paulina, 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, threetimes a day, to receive and dispatch! 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!

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

Fifth 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!

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

Sixth 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?

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

Sixth 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!

First 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. Over Orcaau. 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 no v; 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
chamber?

Where must I place you? When I
think that once

This room-full of rough block-work
seemed 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, my
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 survey, 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 sur-
prise

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 !

My 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 ' . . . a flower 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, unrecog-
nized ?

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 slew Hipparchus,"
cry the guests,

" While o'er thy head the singer's mythic
waves

As erst above our champions' : 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 Praiser'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 injured 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 ent 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,
 When o'er the sudden speaks my chisel
 trips ?
 —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, besides ; 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 your friends,—it is to keep
 myself
 Where your voice lifted me, by letting it
 Proceed ; but can it ? Even you, per-
 haps,
 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 or 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 so 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 you' . . .
 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
 —Far back here, in the brain yourself
 filled up.
 Natalia threatened me that harm would
 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 us 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 this
world

And make of God their tame confederate,
Purveyor to their appetites . . . you
know!

But no—Natalia said they were your
friends,

And they assented while 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, so that, 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 here read what I have got by heart—
I'll speak it,—'Do not die, love! I am
yours' . . .

Stop—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 love began.

*Through the Valley of Love I went,
In its loveliest 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 its hatefullest nook to dwell;*

*But lo, where I flung myself prone,
couched Love*

Where the deepest shadow fell.

*(The meaning—those black bride's-
eyes above,*

Not the 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,—so, do you tell,
indeed,*

*What needs some explanation—what
means this?'*

—And I am to go on, without a word—

*So, I grew wiser in Love and Hate,
From simple, that I was of late.*

*For once, when I loved, I would embrace
Brist, eyelids, hands, feet, form and*

face

*Of her I loved, in one embrace—
As if by mere love I could love im-*

mensely!

*And 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 in-*

trusely!

*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, or
hate more*

*Than ever man loved, ever hated,
before—*

*And seek in the Valley of Love,
The spot, or the spot in Hate's Grove,
Where my soul may the surest
reach*

*The essence, nought less, of each,
The Hate of all Hates, or the Love
Of all Loves, in its Valley or Grove,—
I find them the very warders
Each of the other's borders.*

*I love most, when Love is disguised
In Hate; and when Hate is sur-
prised*

*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 wound thee, and not 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, this gold—we cannot merit
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 prodnee 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 of 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!
(‘Hist!’—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 earthen’s to cleave, a son’s 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 the peasants keep

Her memory; and songs tell how many
a page

Pined for the grace of one so far above
His power of doing good to, as a queen—

‘She never could be wronged, be poor,’
he sighed,

‘For 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,
The blessing or the blest one, quern 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's,—fresh upon her
lips

Alit, the visionary butterfly,
Waiting my word to enter and make
bright,

Or flutter off and leave all blank us 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 out of 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 laughter ! Oh,
to hear

God's voice plain as I heard it first,
before

They broke in with that laughter ! I
heard them

Henceforth, not God.

To Ancona—Greece—some isle !
I wanted silence only : there is clay
Everywhere. One may do what'er
one likes

In Art : the only thing is, to make sure
That one does like it—which takes pains
to know.

Seatter all this, my Phene—this mad
dream !

Who, what is Lutwyche, what Natalin'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. Shall I meet

Lutwyche,
And save him from my statue's 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.*

Bluphocks ! 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 besides. *Oht were
but a very worm a maggot, Every fly a grig,
Every bough a Christmas faggot, Every
tone 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 Chaldean 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 Ralibi's

¹ 'He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.'

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—*Cedarent, Dirii, 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 henna-poest Egypt's land with fly and locust,'—or, 'How to Jonah sounded harshish, Get ther up and go to Tarshish,'—or, 'How the angel meeting Balaam, Straight his ass returned a salaam.' In no wise! 'Shackabrach—Boach—somebody or other—Launch, Re-ee-er, Pur-cha-ser 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 pocket-full of *zwinzigers*) . . . *To pay the Stygian ferry!*

First 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!

Second 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.

Blap. 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 Felippa—rhyming to *Punurge consults Hertrippa—Believ'st thou, King Agrippa?* Something might be done with that name.

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

Third 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.)

Second 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 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 disposed with us for our *visa* is really for his own use, they have misinformed the Office, and he means well; but let him stay over to-night—there has been the pretence we suspect, the accounts of his corresponding and holding intelligence with the Carbonari are correct, we arrest him at once, to-morrow comes Venice, and presently, Spielberg. Bluphocks makes the signal, sure enough! That is he, entering the turret with his mother, no doubt.

III.—*Evening. Inside the Turret. 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

Who lean out of their topmost fortress—
looking

And listening, mountain men, to what
we say,

Hands under chin of each grave earthy
face :

Up and show faces all of you !—‘ *All of
you !* ’

That ‘s the king’s dwarf with the scarlet
comb ; now hark—

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 Pellieos 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 daily virtues ; he is old,

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

giddiness,
And old quaint turns and passages of

my youth—
Dreams long forgotten, little in them-

selves—
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 cicale laugh ‘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

Of this wild enterprise : say, you are
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
 That 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 wreath
 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 here, here only.
 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 ?—it happens
 The wry spoilt branch 's a natural
 perfect bow !

Fancy the thrice-sage, thrice-precantioned man
 Arriving at the palace on my errand !
 No, no ! 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) on
 Thro' guards and gnards—I 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 thickest 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 ask 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 . . . Well ?
Mother.

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 times.

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

And, 'to such an one I give the morning-star !'

The gift of the morning-star—have I God'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
glaring poms

Which triumph at the heels of the god
June

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—beggard-
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, thickest brows :*

*And sometimes from the prison-house
The angry priests a pale wretch*

*brought,
Who through some chink had pushed*

*and pressed,
On knees and elbows, belly and breast,*

Worm-like into the temple,—caught

*At last there by the very God,
Who ever in the darkness strode
Backward and forward, keeping watch
O'er his brazen boulds, such rogues to
catch !*

*And these, all and every one,
The king judged, sitting in the sun.*

*Luigi. That king should still judge
sitting 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 forked tongue and eyes on flame,
Where the old king sat to judge away;
But when he saw the sweepy hair,
Girl 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,—
Beholding 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 in the city, on the throne,
And brave men, God would crown for
slaying him,*

*Lurkin 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.*

*First 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 !

*Second Girl. I ? This sunset
To finish.*

*Third 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,*

*To be let 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 !'—

Second Girl. How she can lie !

*Third Girl. Look there — by the
nails !*

*Second Girl. What makes your fin-
gers red ?*

*Third Girl. Dipping them into wine
to write bad words with,*

On the bright table : how he laughed !

First 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,*

*Denzans and junetings, leather-coats . . .
ah, I should say,*

This is away in the fields—miles !

*Third 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 out the chalk-mark of
how tall you were,*

Twisted your starling's neck, broken his cage,
Made a dunghill of your garden !

First 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'erhead

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.

Third 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's spoil at least !

First 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.

Second 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 !

Fourth Girl. Sick of yours, like enough !

Do you pretend you ever tasted lam-preys

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.

Second Girl. Why, there ! is not that Pippa

We are to talk to, under the window,—quick,—

Where the lights are ?

First Girl. No—or she would sing ;
For the Intendant said . . .

Third 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 !

Second Girl. [*Sings.*]

You'll 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 heartfull 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 !

Third 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 hand-some

Englishman has fallen so violently in love with ! I'll tell you all about it.

OF ST. JOHN THE APOSTLE

IV.—*Night. 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 you. Most I know something of already. What, a repast prepared? *Benedictio benedictur* . . . ugh . . . ugh! Where was I? Oh, as you were remarking, 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 the Intendant*] Not you, Ugo! [*The others leave the apartment*] I have long wanted to converse with you, Ugo!

Inten. Ugnccio—

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 3rd of . . . ber, 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 3rd 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 off you, 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 off-scouring 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 strenuous efforts will keep myself out of mortal sin, much less, keep others out. No: I do trespass, but will not doubt 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—No. 3!—ay, can you read the substance of a letter, No. 3, I 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 brother—that the Pontiff enjoins on me not merely the bringing that Maffeo to condign punishment, but the taking all pains, as guardian of that infant's heritage 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 that 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 to-morrow; 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 or 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 PIPPA, singing—

*Overhead the tree-tops meet,
Flowers and grass spring 'neath our feet;*

There was nought above me, and 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!

PIPPA'S Chamber again. She enters it.
*The bee with his comb,
The mouse at her dray,
The grub in its tomb,
Wile winter away;
But the fire-fly and hedge-shrew and
lob-worm, I pray,
How fare they?*

Ha, ha, best thanks for your counsel, my Zanze—

* Feast upon lampreys, quaff the Breganze!—

The summer of life 's 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,
prayer,

How fare they?

No bidding me then to . . . what did she 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,
t'ame, as she says, a month since, to inspect

Our silk-mills—none with blue eyes and thick rings

Of English-coloured hair, at all events.
Well, if old Luca keeps 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 pass'd 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,

Ill or well, I must be content!

Even my lily 's asleep, I vow:

Wake up—here 's a friend I've plucked
you!

See—call this flower a heart's-ease now!

And 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,

The old proportions and their fitness,

Here remain, unchanged, unmoved
now—

So, 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 what 's 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 throistle,
Bid them their betters jostle
From day and its delights!

But at night, brother Howlet, far over
the woods,

Toll the world to thy chantry;
Sing to the bats' sleek sisterhoods
Full complines with gallantry:
Then, owls and bats, crows 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 broider 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,
Though I passed by them all, and felt
no sign.

[*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 is 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

So far as I know, this Tragedy is the first artistical 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 (tolerable accounts of which are to be found, for instance, in Abbé Roman's *Récit*, 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 details 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.

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

PERSONS.

VICTOR AMADEUS, First King of Sardinia.

CHARLES EMMANUEL, his Son, Prince of Piedmont.

POLYXENA, Wife of Charles.

D'ORMEA, Minister.

SCENE.—The Council Chamber 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, 1730-1.

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'Ormea 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 D'Ormeas, no Sebastians 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 cottager's 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 !

Pol. 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
 born 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 con-
 tempt:
 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! '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 dissembled my insignificance—
 She and my father, and I sitting by,—
 I bore: I knew how brave a son they
 missed:
 Philip had gaily passed state-papers o'er,
 While Charles was spelling at them pain-
 fully!
 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 Dual turning to a Kingly crown,
 Where's time to be reminded 'tis his
 child
 He spurns?' And so I suffered—yet
 scarce 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 wasn't not like
 Our lot would alter? 'When he rest-
 takes breath,
 Glances around, and sees who'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:
 Could I—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 isn'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
 That he's your Father? All's so inci-
 dent
 To novel sway! Beside, our life must
 change:
 Or you'll acquire his kingerft, 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 it? don't I know that
 you, tho' bound
 To silence for my sake, are perishing
 Piecemeal beside me? and how other-
 wise?
 —When every creephole from the
 hideous Court
 Is stopt; 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. Come—
 Is it agreed that we forego complaints
 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

On the high-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
stared

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 D'Ormea'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 ! ' 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 ' ' can behold
Him, whose least whi . . . es my spirit

fast,

In this sweet brow, nought could divert
me from,

Save objects like Sebastian's shameless
lip,

Or, worse, the clipt 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 or-

dained, but I,
To make that memorable ? Both in

call,
As he declared ! Were't better gnash

the teeth,
Or laugh outright now ?

Cha. [to POL.] What's his visit for ?

D'O. [Aside.] I question if they even
speak to me.

Pol. [to CHA.] 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!
Well, 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, my-
self,

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 CHA.*] Tarry awhile:
what ails the minister?

D'O. Madam, I do not often trouble
you.

The Prince loathes, and you loathe me—
let that pass!

But since it touches him and you, not
me,

Bid the Prince listen!

Pol. [*to CHA.*] Surely you will listen!
—Deceit?—Those fingers crumpling up
his vest?

Cha. Deceitful to the very fingers'
ends!

D'O. [*who has approached them, over-
looks the other paper CHARLES con-
tinues to hold.*

My project for the Fiefs! As I sup-
posed!

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 glose
on me

Who bear in the world's face (that is, the
world

You've made for me at Turin) your
contempt?

—Your measures?—When was any
hateful task

Not 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 hands 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 before
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 them-
selves

Without the intervention of a friend)

Produce both treaties, and both
promises . . .

Cha. How?

D'O. Prince, a counsel!—And
the fruit of that?

Both parties covenant afresh, to fall
Together on their friend's blot out his
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. Clears 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 Cha.*] Gracious
sir, I go. [*Goes.*]

Cha. God, I forebore! 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 free from
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 incul-
cate

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
For 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 with-
stand 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

Teaching me in full council what I am.

—I have not breathed, I think, these
many years !

Pol. Why—it may be !—if he desire
to wed

That woman and 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 Pied-
mont, far,

Than Rivoli. I'll seek him—or, sup-
pose

You hear first how I mean to speak my
mind ?

—Loudly and firmly both, this time
be sure !

I yet may see your Rhine-land—who
can tell ?

Once away, ever then away ! I breathe.

Pol. And I too breathe !

Cha. Come, my Polyxena !

KING VICTOR : PART II

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

D'Ormea !—for patience fails me, tread-
ing thus

Among the trains that 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
trains—then !

Outbreak enough !

[Contemplating it.] To lose all, after all !
This—glancing o'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 un-
learnt

When past the use,—‘just this once more’ (I thought)

‘Use it with Spain and Austria happily,
And then away with trick!’ An over-sight

I’d have repaid 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’s also rid of thee
His prime of parasites?—Yet I delay!
D’Ormea! [*As D’ORMEA enters, the
King seats himself.*

My son, the Prince—attends he?
D’O. Sire,

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’O. The whole Annunziata.—If, my
liege,

Your fortunes 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 Instru-
ment;

On which, I enter.

D’O. Sire, this may be truth;
You, sire, may do as you affect—may
break

Your engine, me, to pieces: try at least
If not a spring remains 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 ally!—

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’ll trust
to guide

You safe (yes, on my soul) in 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 arma-
ment

When I burnt 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?
 You 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 eants you to another crest—
 I toss you to my son; ride out your ride!
 D'O. Ah, you so much despise me then?
 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'O.*] 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'O.*] 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,
 By speaking thus to D'Ormea?
 Cha. Let us not weary ourselves with D'Ormea! Those few words
 Have half unsettled what I came to say.
 His presence vexes to my very soul.
 Vic. One called to manage kingdoms, Charles, needs heart
 To bear up under worse annoyances
 Than D'Ormea seems—to me, at least.

Cha. [*Aside.*] Ah, good !
He keeps me to the point ! Then be it so.
[*Aloud.*] Last night, sire, 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. Sire, 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 !

'Tis, sire, 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 you ? [*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, and
D'Ormea, Charles !

Cha. 'Tis well I am a subject then,
not you.

Vic. [*Aside.*] D'Ormea has told him
everything.

[*Aloud.*] Aha !
I 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 thought. You penetrate what
I supposed

A secret. D'Ormea plies his trade be-
times !

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,—he 's insulted me, borne too—
Now you insult yourself, and I remember
What I believed you, what you really
are,

And cannot bear 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 in 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 con-
vened . . .

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.

Sire,

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 your-
self,

Decides it must be so. 'Faith, this
looks real !

My reasons after—reason upon reason
After—but now, obey me ! Trust in me !

By this, you save Sardinia, you save me !
Why, the boy swoons ! [*To D'O.*] 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. Sire, for the last time, pause !

Vic. Five minutes longer

I am your sovereign, Marquis. Hesi-
tate—

And I'll so turn those minutes to ac-
count

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, ' truth,' 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 Princee 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 des-
ponding-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's cured of
bustle,

And beats a quick retreat toward
Chambery

To 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, Sar-
dinia,

—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—(when the people here, and
nations there,

Clamour for you, the main delinquent,
slipt

From King to—Count of any little place)
—Surrender me, all left within his

reach,—
I, sir, forgive you: for I see the end—

See you on your return—(you will
return)—

To him you trust in for the moment . . .
Vic. How?

Trust in him? merely a prime-minister
This D'Ormea! How trust in him?

D'O. In his fear—
His love,—but pray 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 so
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! No, D'Ormea: 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, be tossed to the people like
a rag,
And flung by them to Spain and Austria
—so

Abolishing the record of your part
In all this perfidy !

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 vigi-
lance—

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 proceed-
ings—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,
untrammelled once,

Had little shamed your vaunted an-
cestry—

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 the 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 mul-
berry trees

Bound each to each by lazyropes 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. Have I 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 ten-
dered 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 have
to say

To Charles.

Cha. Pray speak, sire !

Vic. Faith, not much to say—
Only what shows itself, once in the
point

Of sight. You are 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'er-sweep 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—someshrewd
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
 Was 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 !
 Its barrier-guarder, if you please. You
 hold,
 Not take—consolidate, with envious
 French
 This side, with Austrians that, these
 territories
 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, tho' Europe wait
 the while
Pol. Nay, sire,—at Chambery, away
 for ever,
 As soon you'll be, 'tis a 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 sacredder your memory becomes.
 If I misrule Sardinia, how bring back
 My father ? No—that thought shall
 ever urge me.
Vic. I do not mean . . .
Pol. [*who watches* VICTOR *narrowly*
this while.]
 Your father does not mean
 That you are ruling for your father's
 sake :
 It is your people must concern you
 wholly
- Instead of him. You meant this, sire ?
 (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'm
 aware 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 what 's 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 moves 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, sire ?
 That Spanish claim, perchance ? And,
 now you speak,
 —This morning, my opinion was mature,
 Which, boy-like, I was bashful in pro-
 ducing
 To one, I ne'er am like to fear, in future !
 My thought is formed pon 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 CHA.] I was the 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. Even this commending : whatsoe' 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 services—would I could serve you, sire !

As for the Spanish matter . . .

Vic. But dispatch At least the dead, in my good daughter's phrase,

Before the living ! Help to house me safe

Ere you and D'Ormea 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 Tendenpon 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 does, is no concern of yours.

Cha. [after a pause.] The Spanish business, D'Ormea !

Vic. Why, my son, I took some ill-advised . . . one's age, in fact,

Spoils everything : though I was overreached,

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, sire !

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 afterward !

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, sire !

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—Say, 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

[Scenting herself in the royal seat.] I 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 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 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 !

Pol. 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 vowed to rest or smile no
more

Until I freed 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 dispatch 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 POLYXENA.*] 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, sire; you may not be used to read

Such evidence, however; therefore read

[*Pointing to POLYXENA's papers.*]

My evidence.

Cha. [to POLYXENA.] 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 now! D'Ormea at your ear,

Still in your hand! Silent?

Pol. As the wronged are.

Cha. And pray, 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 oftentimes serve yourself—I'd serve you here:

Use makes me not so 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 matters?—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 POL.] Him I knew of old, but you—

To hear that pickthank, further his 'esigns!

[To D'O.]

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, sire! [*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's, 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 passes—VICTOR.*

Pie. 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, D'Ormea won't be 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, my D'Ormea's still

His D'Ormea ; no ! 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 hairs 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 ! Is't to Turin—yes, or no ? 'Tis this relentless noontide-lighted

chamber,

Lighted like life, but silent as the grave, That disconcerts me ! There 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, or 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 out-
worn 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
Of 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 Moncagliè—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 yours,
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 great, full,
much-profiting son
Prepared to worst 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 further. 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,

—In 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 absolute rule
In Europe—do you think I will sit still
And see you throw all power off to the people—

See my Sardinia, that has stood apart,
Join in the mad and democratic whirl
Whereto I see all Europe haste full-tide?
England casts off her 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 argu-
 ments,
 And then confessed them futile, but
 said plainly
 That he forgot his promise, found his
 strength
 Fail him, had thought at savage tam-
 bery
 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 im-
 pregnable,
 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 you
 may choose!
 —If I must totter up and down the
 streets
 My sires built, where myself have intro-
 duced
 And fostered laws and letters, sciences,
 The civil and the military arts!
 Stay, Charles—I see you letting me
 pretend
 To live my former self once more—
 King Victor,
 The venturesome 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 the 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 withdrawing*
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'er-hear
 The little your importunate father
 thrusts
 Himself on you to say! Ay, they'll
 correct
 The amiable blind facility
 You showed in answering his peevish
 suit.
 What can he need to sue for? Bravely,
 D'Ormea,
 Have you 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 would be
granted

To build afresh my ruinous old pile!

But you remembered properly the list
Of wise precautions I took when I
gave

Nearly as much away—to reap the
fruits

I might 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 inter-
cede,

I might secure a chamber in Moncagli-
er—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 Moncagli-
er. 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 ex-
pressed.

Loose it!

D.O. There's none to loose, alas!—
I see

I never am to die a martyr.

Pol. Charles!

Cha. No praise, at least, Polixena—
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

For 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 safely by,

Impart to me among the rest! No
matter.

Prompt are the righteous ever with their
rede

To us the wicked—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 shrub then—a shrub 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. [*rises.*] Sire, 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 impost, this he manages :
But under the late monarch . . .

Cha. Peace. 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 pre-
cisely there.

For to suggest, impel, and set at work,
Is quite another function. Men may
slight,

In time of , the King who brought
the peace :

In war,—his voice, his eyes, help more
than fear.

They love you, sire !

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, sire, 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 CH.] The Count wrote yesterday to
your forces' Chief,

Rhebinder—made demand of help—

Cha. To try
Rhebinder—he 's of alien blood : ought
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 the 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

Upon his road to France for succour.

Cha. Good!

You do your duty, now, to me your monarch

Fully, I warrant?—have, that is, your project

For saving both of us disgrace, past 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 take

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 coming hither

By these.

D'O. What good of my proposing measures

Without a chance of their success? E'en 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—sire, This Forquiere's governor of Turin; And Rivarol and he have influence over Half of the capital.—Rabella, too?

Why, sire—

Cha. Oh, leave the fear to me!

D'O. [*still reading*]. You bid me Incarcerate the people on this list?

Sire—

Cha. Why, 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! but—

[*Still more troubled.*] Sire, Count Cumiane Is brother to your father's wife! What's here?

Arrest the wife herself?

Cha. You seem to think it A venial crime to 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 life 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 com-
 pelled
 To circumvent you ; and the crafty
 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—wings hasty
 speech
 And ill-considered threats from him ;
 that 's noted ;
 Then out you ferret papers, his amuse-
 ment
 In lonely hours of lassitude—examine
 The day-by-day report of your paid
 creatures—
 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 with-
 out !
Pol. Charles—
Cha. Ah, no question !
 You're for D'Ormea too !
 You'd have me eat and drink, and
 sleep, live, die
 With this lie coiled about me, choking
 me !
 No, no—he 's caught ! [*to D'ORMEA.*]
 You venture life, you say,
 Upon my father's perfidy ; and I
 Have, on the whole, no right to disre-
 gard
 The chains of testimony you thus wind
 About me ; though I 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,
 Are at the Marquis' orders : what he bids,
 Implicitly perform ! You are to bring
 A traitor here—the man that 's likeli-
 est
 At present, fronts me ; you are at his
 beck
 For a full hour ; he undertakes to show
 you
 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
 That I've 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 man-
 date, Count Perugia ?
 Obey me ! As your diligence, expect
 Reward ! All follow to Montcagliar !
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 pre-
 caution ?
Cha. It must be the best way. I
 should have else
 Withered beneath his scorn.
Pol. What would you say ?
Cha. Why, you don't think I mean to
 keep the crown,
 Polixena ?
Pol. You then believe the story
 In spite of all—that Victor 's coming ?
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 it,

I've just to bid him take it, and, that
ove.,

We'll fly away—fly—for I loathe this
Turin,

This Rivoli, all titles loathe, and 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 now 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,
And D'Ormea's 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, give D'Ormea leave
To outrage him ! We talk—perchance
they tear

My father from his bed—the old hands
feel

For one who is not, but who should be
there—

And 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 promptings 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—in His name you
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 achievements will blot out the
 Past,
 Envelope it in haze—nor shall we two
 Be 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 your-
 self,
 Of other courses, with far other issues.
 We might have taken this great night—
 such bear,
 As I will bear ! What matters happi-
 ness ?
 Duty ! 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.

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 see the
 ruin

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 woe-
 fully

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

That I'm their King still . . . but I can-
 not 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—
 That, 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'
 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 ?

Who ? —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 and so disgraced me.
Pol. Charles

Has never ceased to be your subject, sire !
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 POLYX.] 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 fore-
head ? 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 slip-
ping 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 ! Come nearer to your King !
Now stand !

[Collecting his strength as D'ORMEA
approaches.

But you lied, D'Ormea ! I do not repent.
[Dies.

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

A TRAGEDY

1843

PERSONS

The Grand-Master's Prefect.
 The Patriarch's Nuncio.
 The Republic's Admiral.
 LOYS DE DREUX, Knight-Novice.
 Initiated Druses—DJABAL.
 " " KHALIL.
 " " ANAEL.

Initiated Druses—MAANI.
 " " KARSHOOK.
 RAGHIN, AYOON, and others.
 Uninitiated Druses.
 Prefect's Guard, Nuncio's Attendants,
 Admiral's Force.

TIME, 14—.

PLACE, An Islet of the Southern Sporades, colonised 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, AYOON, 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-mountain ! 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
 Of 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,
 These cent' air, took heart now, and anon
 Lost heart, to buoy its breadths of
 gorgeousness
 Above the gloom they droop in—all the
 porch
 Is jewelled o'er with frostwork charac-
 tery ;
 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 handbreadths 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, per-
 chance,

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. Harken, 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! Hound! 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 inter-
pose,

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 pro-
fane,

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 your 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, raze 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 nationalities,
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 very 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 lord, the
Church,

Which licenses all crimes that pay it
thus.

You, from their Prefect, were to be an-
signed

(Pursuant to 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 Pro-
digies!

Kha. And as he said hath 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 Ven-
ice' 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 the 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 that—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, when'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 your-

selves: 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 mys-
tery,

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?

Ayoob. 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 : an-
nounce
His 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 !
Saidst 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 captives, 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 Dieu !* 'Tis as our Isle broke
out in song

For joy, its Prefect-inenbus 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 KAR.*] Loys, in truth !
Yet Djabal cannot err !

Kar. [*to KHA.*] And who takes charge
of Loys ? That 's forgotten.

Despite thy wariness ! Will Loys
stand

And see his comrade 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 overseas:

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 dispatch
A youngster. [*To Loys.*] Djabal passed some minutes since

Thro' yonder porch, and . . .

Kha. [*Aside.*] Hold! What, him dispatch?

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 pomps, a truest child of pride,—

Yet stood 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!

[*To Loys.*] Sir Loys,—

Loys. There, consins! Does Sir Loys strike you dead?

Kha. [*advancing.*] Djabal has intercourse with few or none

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?)—'Inter-course

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,

Plausibler stories . . .

Kha. Stories, say you?—Ah, The quaint attire!

Loys. 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 nightly 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 peaceullest 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
blne.

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 faine

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 my-
self

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 re-
quest

Was his dismissal ; and they graciously
Consigned his very office to myself—

Myself may heal whate'er's diseased !
And good

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 turns 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,

Nor less than Hakeem's? The persuad-
ing 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 Franks,—
a few

Of Europe's secrets that 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 immi-
nent

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 shout, and who gain-
says?

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!'
Prit I hear?

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 de-
ceived!

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 Ayooob, 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's shriek, here's yet
the scar

Of what was meant for my own death-
blow—say,

If you had woke like me, grown year by
year

Out of the tumult in a far-off elime,
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 Sheikh 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 re-
 nounce 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 sup-
 posed
 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 selfsame
 moment tend
 The Prefect, Nuncio, and the Admiral
 Hither, by their three sea-paths : nor
 forget
 Who were the trusty watchers !—thou
 forget ?

L e 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 first saw too 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 !
 I could gasp
 Doubtless one such word out, and die !
[Aloud.] You said
 That Anael . . .
Kha. . . . Fain would see thee,
 speak with thee,
 Before thou change, discard this L . . . 's
 shape
 She knows, for Hakeem's shape she is
 to know.
 Something's 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 revenge 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 ours

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 may'st 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
them

With Hakeem's vengeance, they would
mar the whole,

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,
Can rule them thus renewed.—I talk to
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—con-
fess,

Before at least the fortune of my deed
Half authorize its means ! Only to her

Let confess my fault, who in my
th

Curled up like incense from a mage-
king's tomb

When he would have the wayfarer
descend

Through the earth's rift and take hid
treasure up.

When should my first child's-careless-
ness have stopped

If not when I, whose lone youth hurried
past

Letting each joy 'scape for the Druses'
sake,

At length recovered in one Druse all
joys ?

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 con-
tent

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 it !

He lived with you ?

Well—and that morning Djabal saw me
first

And heard my 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 hopes 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! 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

That saffron-vestured sound the tabrets
there—

The girls who throng there in my
dreams! 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 of 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, that 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 so!
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 I will 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

Never 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 ap-
proach

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 others' frames, tho' not in mine, by
Loys

Or any merely mortal presence? Doubt
Is fading fast; shall I reveal it now?

How can I be rewarded presently,
With doubt unexpiated, undislosed ?

Dja. [*Aside.*] Avow the truth ? I
cannot ! In what words

Avow that all she loves in me is false ?
—Which yet has served that flower-like
love of hers

To climb by, like the elinging gourd, and
clasp

With its divinest wealth of leaf and
bloom.

Could I take down the prop-work, in it-
self

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 with-
drawn !

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 them—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,
who'er

The leader be, myself or any Druse—
Venice is pledged to that : 'tis for my-
self,

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 my-
self ?

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 disap-
pears.

And Hakeem, Anael loved, shall, fresh
as first,

Live in her memory, keeping her sub-
lime

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 dis-
posed

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 stilled so !

Kha. Can I have erred that thou so
gazeest ? 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 hangs !

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's with the more than mortal's
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 triller with our
people's wrongs,

The self-complacent boy-inquirer, loud
On this and that inflicted tyranny,

—Aught serving to parade an ignor-
ance

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 bnt 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,

I love. Forbear me ! Let my hand go !
Loys. Hinn

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 acknow-
ledge ? 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, over-
fond

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 companion-
ship

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

Irrevocably 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 pre-
ference,

No more. In Djabal, Hakeem is ab-
sorbed!

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
The 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 forever!
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 thoughts?

Why need I speak, if you can read my
thoughts?

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

Round to the full whether I choose or no ! His eyes met mine, he was about to

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 of 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 robes,
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 it-
self !

I slay him !

Kha. Anael, and no part for us !

[*To Dja.*] Hast thou possessed her
with . . .

Dja. [*to An.*] 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
lends

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 of you !

[*Trumpet without.*]

Kha. 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 re-
venged—our tribe

Set free? Oh, 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
LOYS.*

The Prefect, [to Guards.] Back, I say,
to the galley every guard!

That's my sole cure 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 disordered 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?
Blo' sweat traffic? Spare what
erday

We have 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 the Isle; our Hospitallers bade me
tame

These savage wizards, and reward my-
self—

Loys. The Knights who so repudiate
your crime?

Pref. Loys, the Knights! we doubt-
less 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 silter the town, too, as I passed.

Asyourecounted; felt he not 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 in-
fluence, 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 in-
fluence
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,
Where now 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 disinterested 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 !

I, who had so nigh given up happiness
For ever, to be linked with him and
them !

Oh, opportunist 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—Anael's
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 robes, &c., disposed.]

Mine should never so

Have hurried to accomplishment ! Thee,
Djabal,

Far other moods 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 serves, 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 foot-
step ! 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 late 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 beau-
teous 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 con-
fess

'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 ap-
proach,

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
 Lot 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 up and down.]
 Now! Change us both! Change me and change thou!
Dja. [sinks on his knees.] Thus!
 Behold my change! You have done nobly! I!—
An. Can Hakeem kneel?
Dja. No Hakeem, and scarce Djabal!
 I have spoken falsely, and this woe is come.
 No—hear me ere scorn blasts 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 ! Oh, 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 Tiar 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 I am to personate. No
word ? [ANAEI 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 understood 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,

You, 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 Prefect,—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 throw down all this 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 call you brother! I am Druse like you!

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, unknighly? 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 is come 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 ap-
prised

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 race,
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
here !

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 professedst 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 tribe are we.
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 when thou
concedest ?

—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
true !

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 have 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 may'st 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 may'st 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

Of 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 their 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, meanest, youngest 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, Ma-
hound, 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 !

Thou art

Strong in thy cause, then ! Dost out-
brave us, then !

Heardst thou that one of thine accom-
plices,

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 !

[*Loys 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.*]

Hearst 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, covering the stage tumultuously, and speaking together.

Here flock we, obeying the summons.
 Lo, Hakeem hath 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 accenseth him! And tell Sir Loys he is mine, the Church's hope: Bid him approve himself our Knight indeed!

Lo, this black disemboгуing of the Isle!
 [To the Druses.] Ah, children, what a sight for these old eyes

That kept themselves alive this voyage through

To snile 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, and God's above me!

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 of 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 be !

No ! With the Patriarch's licence, still
I bid ye

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 by-
stander 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 Attendants.*] What's this
of Venice ? Who's this boy ?

[*Attendants whisper.*] One Khalil ?
Djabal's accomplice, Loys called, 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 de-
luded youth !

Whom seek'st thou ? (I will teach him)
—Whom, my child ?

Thou knowest not what these know,
what these declare.

I am an old man, as thou seest—have
done

With earth ; 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'll 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,

And fain get footing here, stand close
by Rhodes!

Oh, to be duped this way!

Kha.

Ere he appears

To lead you gloriously, repent, I say!

Nuncio. [*Aside.*] Nor any way to
stretch the arch-wizard stark

Ere the Venetians come? Be he cut
off,

The rest were easily tamed. [*To the
Druses.*] He? Bring him forth!

Since so you needs will have it, I as-
sent!

You'd judge him, say you, on the spot?
Confound

The sorcerer in his very circle? Where's
Our short black-bearded fallow friend
who said

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!

What, not see...

(I tell thee, Nuncio, these are unin-
structed,

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 they would have
trusted him

Without the all-convincing glory—ay,
And did! Embrace the occasion, friends!

For, think—

What merit 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 DJA.*] 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 angury 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
DJA.*] as these bid me,

Forfeit for murder on thy lawful prince,
Thou conjurer that peepst and mut-
terest!

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

Away?—thou workest miracles? (At-
tend!

Let him but move me with his spells!)
I, Nuncio...

Dja. ... Which how thou camest 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 foes,
 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 sunk !
 That were a miracle ! One miracle !
 Enough of trifling, for 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 saidst, 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 ?
[Loud.] Bring in the witness, then, who, first of all,
 Disclosed 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 back? Thus go I back!

[*To AN.*] 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!

Dja. Thon, 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, Breton's
choicest stock,

Loys of Dreux, God's sepulchre's first
sword:

This wilt thou spit on, this degrade, this
trample

To earth?

Loys. [*to AN.*] Ah, who had foreseen,

'One day, Loys

Will 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,
boldly lived

Without the lies and blood,—or thou,
or thou?

I! Love me, Anael! Leave the blood
and him!

[*To DJA.*] Now speak—now, quick on
this that I have said,—

Thou with the blood, speak if thou art
a man!

Dja. [*to AN.*] And was it thou be-
trayedst me? 'Tis well!

I have deserved this of thee, and submit.
Nor 'tis much evil thou inflictest: 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 it been pre-
dominant,

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 true love it was not—

How could I love while thou adoredst me ?

Now thou despisest, art above me so

Inmeasurably—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 truth !

Hear, Druses, and hear, Nuncio, and hear, Loys !

An. HAKEEM ! *he falls dead.*

[The Druses scream, grovelling before him.]

Ah, Hakeem !—not on me thy wrath !

Bismallah, pardon ! never doubted I !

Ah, 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. Caitives ! 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 snit 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 !

Resume thy course, and, first amid 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.*]

Djo. [*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.
GRIEUDOLEN 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, sitting alone, his back to a table on which are flagons, &c.*

First 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 pousnivant?
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.

Second Ret. Now, Gerard, out with it!

What makes you sullen, this of all the days

Of the year? To-day that young, rich, bonny,

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?

Second 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 snees

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 !

Third 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 ?

Fourth 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 ?

First 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 ?

Fourth Ret. He 's only bowing, fool !
' The Earl 's man bent us lower by this
much.

First Ret. That 's comfort. Here 's
a very cavaleade !

Third 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 brush-
wood-shears !

Third Ret. Out on you, crab ! What
next, what next ? The Earl !

First 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 !

Sixth 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 !

First Ret. No ? That 's comfort.

Second 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.

Third Ret. His eyes are blue—
But leave my hawks alone !

Fourth Ret. So young, and yet
So tall and shapely !

Fifth 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 !

Second Ret. But you'd not have a
boy

—And what 's the Earl beside ?—
possess too soon

That stateliness ?

First 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 roseate 's a-coming
off !)

—At last I see our Lord's back and his
friend's—

And the whole beautiful bright com-
pany

Close round them—in they go ! [*Jump-*

ing down from the window-bench,

and making for the table and its jugs, &c.] Good health, long life, Great joy to our Lord Tresham and his House!

Sixth Ret. My father drove his father first to Court,

After his marriage-day—ay, did he!

Second 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!

Second Ret. [Aside.] He's vexed, now, that he let the show escape!

[To GER.] Remember that the Earl returns this way—

Ger. That way?

Second Ret. Just so.

Ger. Then my way's here. *[Goes.]*
Second 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 a point decorous, and such square by rule—

He knew such niceties, no herald more: And now—you see his humour: die he will!

Second 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.

Third Ret. I!—

Fourth 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!

First Ret. Have at you! Boys, hurrah!

SCENE II.—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 I 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 words,

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,

I 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 Aus.*] 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 miscon-
ceived.

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' thickets 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 Aus.*] Note that mode
Of faltering out that, when a lady
passed,

He, having eyes, did see her ! 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 lessoned 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 con-
stancy.

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

That 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—howsoever 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. & Aus. Thanks !

Tresh. Within three !

[*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 har-
rangues,

Instead of slipping over to my side
And softly whispering in my ear, 'Sweet

lady,

Your cousin there will do me detrimen-

He little dreams of: he's absorbed, I see,

In my old name and fame—he 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 vouchsafes . . .

Tresh. . . . 'To give a best of best accounts, yourself,

Of me and my demerits.' You are right!

He should have said what now I say for him.

You 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 him!

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,

forsooth,
He stood not as he'd carry us by

storm
With his perfections! You're for the

composed,
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 sug-

gest . . .

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 need?
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, acknowledge-

ment ;

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'm weary, Guendolen.— Bear with me !

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 sound-lier for me !

[*Going, she turns suddenly.*

Mildred !

Perdition ! all's discovered ! Thorold finds

—That the Earl's greatest of all grand-mothers

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 the noblest, yes,
and her sure faith 's the surest :
And her eyes are dark and humid, like
the depth on depth of lustre
Hid i' the harebell, while her tresses,
sunnier than the wild-grape
eluster,

Gush in golden-tinted plenty down her
neck 's rose-misted marble :

Then her voice's music . . . call it the
well's bubbling, the bird's warble !

*[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 tune-
less,

If you loved me not ! ' And I 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.]*

I may enter at her portal soon, as now
her lattice takes me,

And by noontide as by 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.

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,

And so familiar now ; this will not be !

Mer. Oh, Mildred, have I met your
brother's face,

Compelled myself—if not to speak un-
truth,

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, con-
fused

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 I am by you, to be ever by you,
When I have won you and may worship

you,
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 wicked-
ness

In its birth even—some fiercer 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 men 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 con-
tempt)

—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 in-
fantine

When first I met you—why, your hair
fell loose

On either side !—my fool's-cheek red-
dens 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, while 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 lie 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 light-mark and
device !

Mildred, I love you and you love me !

Mil. Go !

Be that your last word. I shall sleep
to-night.

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 per-
fected 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 sealed 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 II

SCENE. *The Library.*

Enter LORD TRESHAM hastily.

This way ! In, Gerard, quick !

[*As GERARD enters, TRESHAM secures
the door.*

Now speak ! or, wait—
I'll bid you speak directly.

[*Sits 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.

Tresh. Yes, yes. You ever were of
all
The servants in my father's house, I
know,
Tho trusted onc. 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 frantie thoughts upon ! He does
not enter ?

Gerard ?

Ger. There is a lamp that 's full in
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 mar-
auder ?

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 mind ! 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—

What man? 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.*]

TRESHAM paces the room. After a pause,
Oh, thought's absurd!—as with some

monstrous fact

That, 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 settles 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.*
Ah, 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 asse-
verate

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 'seuteheon come no longer

back
Than Arthur's time?

Tresh. When left you Mildred's
chamber?

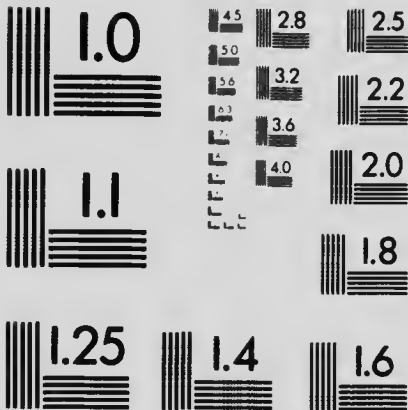
Guen. Oh late enough, I told you!
The main thing

To ask is, how I left her chamber,—sure,



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Content yourself, she'll grant this
paragon

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
conduct

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 practise
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, in-
structed,

Enriched her—so your love can claim
no right

O'er hers 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 bay.

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
new-comer !

The startling apparition—the strange
youth—

Whom one half-hour's conversing with,
or, say,

Mere gazing at, shall chango (beyond all chango

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 unworldli-
ness.

Mil. What is this for?

Tresh. This, Mildred, is it for!

Oh, 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 charge

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.

Tresh. Then judge yourself! How
should I act? Pronounce!

Mil. Oh, Thorold, you must never
tempt me 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 hide your shame
and mine

From every eye: the dead must heave
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 two will somehow wear this one day
out :
But with to-morrow hastens here—the
Earl !

The youth without suspicion that faces
come
From Heaven, and hearts from . . .
whence proceed such hearts ?
I have dispatched 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 counter-
mand

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. & 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
germess

To me with breath as foul ! no loosener

Of 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 e'en
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 re-
solve !

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 for-
gotten ?

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 thinks her all that's chaste, and
good, and pure,

—Invites me to betray him . . . 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 of tortures to me—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
have

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 accom-
pany you !

Guen. We ?

What, and leave Mildred ? We ? why,
where's my place

But by her side, and where's 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
—lives

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 hootings 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 chose 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 !
 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

Of the beech-wood.

Guen. Gone? All thwarts us!

Mil. Thorold too?

Guen. I have thought. First lead this 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 III

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 surecoat 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

In 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 see 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 easement 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. 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

When 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 disguise.*]

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 had been 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 out the 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's like a boy's
for one

Like you?)—that ruined me! I dreamed
of you—

You, all accomplished, courted every-
where,
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 gentle 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 have
you 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 re-
morse,

Perchance intend her . . . Die along
with me,

Dear Mildred!—'tis so easy—and you'll
'scape

So much unkindness! Can I lie at rest,
With rude speech spoken to you, under
deeds

Done to you—heartless men to 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? Die, Mil-
dred! 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 GUEN-
DOLEN, 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,
Gerard, 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
'elp—

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? I.

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 at all!
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 willingly 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. MIL-
DRED 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 woo
fell,

And the rest fall upon it, not on me:
Else could 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, all that 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 cheek 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 londest, 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 not, at every little thing
That touches you—I may with a wrong
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 loosed 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 . . .

Tresh. 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 his poor utmost to disarm your wrath

And respite me !—you let him try to give

The story of our loves, 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 gat'ered 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 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
peacefuller !

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. Re-
member me !

[Dies.

Guen. [letting fall the pulseless arm.]

Ah, Thorold, we can but—re-
member you !

COLOMBE'S BIRTHDAY

A PLAY

'Ivy and violet, what do ye here
With blossom and shoot in the warm spring weather,
Hiding the arms of Monchenci and Vere?'—HANMER.

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.

PERSONS.

COLOMBE OF RAVESTEIN, Duchess of Juliers and Cleves.	MAUFROY, } Courtiers.
SABYNE, } Her Attendants.	CLUGNET, }
ADOLF, }	VALENCE, Advocate of Cleves.
GUIBERT, }	PRINCE BERTHOLD, Claimant of the Duchy.
GAUCELME, }	MELCHIOR, his Confidant.

PLACE, *The Palace at Juliers.*

TIME, 16—.

ACT I

Morning.—SCENE. *A corridor leading to
the Audience-chamber.*

GAUCELME, CLUGNET, MAUFROY, and
other Courtiers, round GUIBERT,
who is silently reading a paper: as
he drops it at the end—

Gui. That this should be her birth-
day; 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!

First Court. Ay, indeed?

Second Court. Well, Guibert?

Third 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.

Gui. In time, sir—but, till time
comes, pardon me!

Our old Duke just disclosed his child's
retreat,

Declared her true succession to his rule,
And died: this birthday was the day,
last year,

We convoyed her from Castle Rave-
stein—

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 think!

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 ex-
press 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,
perhaps,

There'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 Rave-
stein ?

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 forefend !
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 raftsmen flings a guildler
in ;

—That's if he means 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 !

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 residuc,

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

at home

By presence-chamber porches, state-
room stairs,

Wherever warmth's perpetual: out-
side'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,

Lit up 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 ex-
tort—

Over and above necessity, a grace;
This prompt disbosoming of love, to
wit—

Their vine-leaf wrappage of our tribute-
penny,

And crowning attestation, all works
well.

Yet this precisely do they thrust on us!
These cappings quick, and crook-and-
eringings 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 you, the first do it you
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 signs 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 a do 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 mad-man press?

Close the doors quick on me!

Gui. Too late—he's here.

Enter, 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 the hearts,

Of 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,

I owed my whole estate to, three years back ?

Ay, well may you keep silence ! Why, my lords,

You've heard, I'm sure, how, Pente-cost three years,

I was so nearly ousted of my land By some knaves'-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

Completes 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 worthysir, 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 Juliers 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.* —I know that the great,

For pleasure born, should still be on the watch

To exclude pleasure when a duty offers : Even as the lowly too, for duty born,

May ever snatch a pleasure if in reach :

Both will have plenty of their birth-right, 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! Valence, friend,

I'll help you: we of the service, you're to mark,

Have special entry, while the herd . . . the folks

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.

Val. 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 towards 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 con-
ceive!

[*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 apostro-
phize?

Or is't the fashion you aspire to start,
Of that close-curved, 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 Rave-
stein,

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 pri-
vilege!

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
through

Scarcely 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,

Each 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?

The D. Surely, whoever's absent,
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,

And 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

Orill, 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 over-fearful. 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!

What succour may not next year bring
me? Plainly,

I feared too soon. [*To the Court.*] I
thank you, sirs: all thanks!

Val. [*Aside, as the DUCHESS passes
from one group to another, con-
versing.*]

'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 en-
tirely mine,

Who shall affirm, had she not raised my
soul

Ere she retired and left me—they ?

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 Court.*] 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 it !

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 insuppressible 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 trap-pings 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,

Clutehing, 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

Ebbd, 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 eried, lady ! I have brought the wrongs.

The D. Wrong? 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. I lay

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 eyesore 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* GUIBERT.] Sir Guibert,—k, t, 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 cognisance;
'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 Manfroy 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 Guilbert!)

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?

The D. 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 howsoever 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 ye 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 !

The D. 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, with 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 Clug. Let him talk! Fidelity, disinterestedness,

Excuse so much! Men claimed 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.

First Court. The Prince! This foolish business puts all out!

Second Court. Let Gaucelme speak first!

Third Court. Better I began About the state of Juliers: should one say

All's prosperous and inviting him?

Fourth Court. —Or rather

All's prostrate and imploring him!

Fifth Court. That's best!

Where's the Cleves' paper, by the way?

Fourth Court. [to VALENCE.] Sir—sir—If you'll but give that paper—trust it me, I'll warrant...

Fifth 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!

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 III

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, Frankfurt,—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 esteemed 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 . . . but a short 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 were far from being judged as
 plain
 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,—
 Plead, 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! who 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, body: 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 then. 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!

[*Sits 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; if you concede it, therefore,

I do not wonder: and the kings my friends

Protesting they will see such claim enforced,

You easily may offer to assist us.

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 made 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.] *First*

Court. Marshal! *Second Court.* Orator!

Gui. A variation of our mistress' way!

Wipe off his boots' dust, Clugnet!—that, he waits!

First Court. Your place!

Second Court. Just now it was your own!

Gui. The devil's!

Berth. [to GUIBERT.] 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 im-
 beciles ?
 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 conversa-
 tion with VALENCE, BERTHOLD
 and the Courtiers fall back a little.

The D. Presagefully it beats, pre-
 sagefully,

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 Princee 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 these I ruled, 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 thunder-
 cloud,

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. So, 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 sakes, 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, if you once forgot, I still remember.

But never must attack pass unrepelled.
Suffer, 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 discredit ?
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,

—So, 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 splash—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

From 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.]

First Court. So, this was their device!

Second Court. No bad device!

Third Court. You'd say they love each other, Guibert's friend

From Cleves, and she, the Duchess!

Fourth Court. —And moreover,
That all Prince Berthold comes for, is

to help

Their loves!

Fifth 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 self-same 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 man!

Your uncorrupted, if uncourtly friend!
The modest worth you mean to patronize!

He cares about no Duchesses, not he—
His sole contest is with the wrongs of Cleves!

What, Guibert? What, it breaks on you at last?

Gui. 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 antechamber!

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,—

Whom 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?

Val. 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.

Val. [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
reward—

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.*]—
Which love, these, perchance,
forbid.

Can I decide against myself—pro-
nounce

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 him, 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, more-
over,

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 pre-
ferred,

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 our-
selves,

Apprise the Prince.

Gau. —The Prince, ere then dis-
missed

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 sur-
prise !

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 sudden-
ness and shame !

Within her, the inclining heart—with-
out,

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 re-
newed ?

Gau. Never in noble natures ! With
the base ones,—

Twist off the crab's claw, wait a smart-
ing-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 share 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,

Whether 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,

I . . .

Enter PRINCE BERTHOLD.

Pardon, sir—I did not look for you Till night, in 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

Of the lady, all you offer I accept,
Since one clear right suffices : yours is
clear.

Proposo !

Berth. I offer her my hand.

Val. Your hand ?

Berth. A Duke's, yourself say ; and,
at no far time,
Something here whispers me—the
Emperor's.

The lady's mind is noble ; which in-
duced

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, Land-
graves, Markgraves,

Remains their daughter ; I shall scarce
gainsay !

Elsewhere or here, the lady needs must
rule :

Like the imperial crown's great chryso-
prase,

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 influence many 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 sub-
stitute

To rule the little burgh, I'll think of you.
You need not give your mates a charac-
ter !

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 ;

You 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 with-
drawn,

And to this be it that, in 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 esti-
mate

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 are 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 hence-
forth !

Val. And what a lot is Berthold'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, stateli-
ness, 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 æry 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, greating, till he
ends—

The man of men, the spirit of all flesh,
The fiery centre of an earthy 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 dis-
tant 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.

The D. 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?

Val. 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 grace-
fully:

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!

The D. 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 con-
fidence,

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 ne—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.

The D. 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!

The D. 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 ?

The D. 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 Princee, 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 she 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 !

The D. 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 east even these to shade)

The heart they sprung from,—none deserved like him

Who saved her at her need : if she said this,

What should not one I love, say ?'

Val. Heaven—this hope—

Oh, 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 D. Then, kneel to her !

[VALENCE sinks on his knee.

I dream !

Val. Have mercy ! Yours, unto the death,—

I have obeyed. L. rise, 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 nothing-
ness.

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 fore-
head ?

Berth. Oh,

Turned out no better than the forehead-
less—

Was dazzled not so very soon, that's
all !

For my part, this is scarce the hasty,
showy,

Chivalro—measure you give me credit
on

Perhaps I had a fancy,—but 'tis gone.

—Let her commence the unfriended
innocent,
And earry wrongs about from court to
court ?

No, truly ! The least shake of fortune's
sand,

—My unelesse chokes in a coughing-
fit,

King Philip 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, past o'er pre-
mises,

Follow in plenty. No: 'tis the safer 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 guile just
now

To lay, one moment, down their
privilege

With the notion they can any time at
pleasure

Retake it ? that may turn out hazard-
ous !

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 sun-
shine in,

And sleep off headache on our frippery :

But friend the other, who cunningly
stole out,

And, after breathing the fresh air out-
side,

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 eyes 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 end ; 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 with-
out bound !

Ill 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 voluble an hour before,
Abashed to earth at aspect of the
change !

Make her an Empress? Ah, that changed the case!

Oh, I read hearts! And for my own behoof,

I court her with my true worth: see the event!

I learned my final lesson on that head
When years ago,—my first and last essay!

Before my uncle could obtain the ear
Of his superior, help me from the dirt—
Priscilla left me for a Brabant Duke
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 have—

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 throes,

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 professions 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
 arbitrement !
 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
 Would 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 draw-
 ing nearer and nearer, interpose.*

Courtiers. —' Farewell,' Prince ? when
 we break in at our risk—

Clug. Almost upon court-licence
 trespassing—

Courtiers. —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 great enough

—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 next a keeper for my own's 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 . . . 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 other 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.

The D. Let all end !

Berth. The requisition !

Courtiers.

—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 still!

He's not the man to tamely acquiesce!

One passionate appeal—upbraiding even,

Might 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 comes,

Let me, but this once, work a problem out,

And ever more be dumb. The Empire wins?

To better purpose I have read my books!

Enter VALENCE.

Mel. [to the Courtiers.] Apart, my masters!

[*To VALENCE.*] Sir, one word with you! I am a poor dependent 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 teach the world

All men should pause, misdoubt their strength, since men

Could 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 this,—

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, and 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 are you,

Wedding her as you will, in spite of it,
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 your own ?

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, in saving

you

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

opportunist, 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 you, 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 off! 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 go 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!

LURIA

A TRAGEDY

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

<p>LURIA, a Moor, Commander of the Florentine Forces.</p> <p>HUSAIN, a Moor, his friend.</p> <p>PUCCIO, the old Florentine Commander, now LURIA's Chief Officer.</p>	<p>BRACCIO, Commissary of the Republic of Florence.</p> <p>JACOPO (LAPO), his Secretary.</p> <p>TIBURZIO, Commander of the Pisans.</p> <p>DOMIZIA, a noble Florentine Lady.</p>
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TIME, 14—.

SCENE.—LURIA's Camp between Florence and Pisa.

ACT I

MORNING.

BRACCIO, *as dictating to his Secretary ;*
PUCCIO *standing by.*

Brac. [to Puc.] Then, you join battle
in an hour ?

Puc.

Not I ;

Luria, the Captain.

Brac. [to the Sec.] ‘ In an hour, the
battle.’

[To Puc.] Sir, let your eye run o'er this
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.

Brac.

So sure ?

Tiburzio's a consummate captain too !

Puc. Luria holds Pisa's fortune in
his hand.

Brac. [to the Sec.] ‘ The Signory hold
Pisa in their hand.’

Your own proved soldiery'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,
 Raw 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.
Brac. [to the Sec.] 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.

Brac. [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 skill !—)
 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,—

Brac. 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 for me, 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, they
are such slaves ?

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,

'Gainst the blind bull-front of a brute-
force world ?

If Luria, that 's to perish sure as fate,
Should have been really guiltless after
all ?

Brac. Ah, you have thought that ?

Sec.

Here I sit, your scribe,
And in and out goes Luria, days and
nights ;

This Puccio comes ; the Moor his other
friend,

Husain ; they talk—all that 's 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 saved ! I only have to write,
'The man seemed false awhile, proves
true at last ;

Bury it ' . . . so I write to the Signory . . .

'Bury this Trial in your breasts 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 charecoal, 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 ?

Brac.

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
returned,

Have ever proved too much for Floren-
tines,

Even for the best and bravest of ourselves—

If in the struggle when the soldier's sword

Should sink its point before the statish'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 any 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

Py 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 its 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 comes—'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 swordsmen'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 advancing.

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 'hick

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 dispatch!
I censure you to Florence: will you
see?

Lur. See your dispatch, 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 circum-
stance;

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 instruc-
tions 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 dec., decisive and com-
plete,

For all of them, the simple as the wise,
Old, young, alike, that do not under-
stand

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 ex-
plain,

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's chance; no
service

Falls to the ground with Florence: we
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's personate, my visible Head.

As I am over Puccio,—taking life directly from her eye! They give me you:

But do you cross me, set me half to work?

I enjoy nothing—but 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's 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 he worshipped too.

Lur. Then I may walk and watch you in your streets

Leading the 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 Iaccios, no Domizias anywhere—

Not ever more!—Well, well, to-day is ours!

Dom. [to BRAC.] 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 minutes' 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. Oh, there are 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

In 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 characterized

By such unconsciousness 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.

Brac. Yes : and how worthy note, that these same great ones

In hand or head, with such unconsciousness

And all its due entailed humility, Should never shrink, so far as I perceive,

From taking up whatever offices Involve 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 soldier marshals troops who know as much—

Statist and soldier 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 turns 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

That I prepare 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 an end ?

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 its 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 Lucea ?

Lur. Ah, the Pisan trumpet
merely !

Tiburzio's envoy, I must needs receive.

Dom. Whom I withdraw 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 still

Remember who was first to promise it,
And envied those who also can per-
form !

[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 of yonder 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 was prepared to learn
the worst.

Hus. What is the worst ?

Lur. I will forestall them, Husain.
And speak my destiny, they dare not
speak—

Banish myself before they find the heart.
I will be first to say, 'The work re-
wards !

I know, for all your praise, my use is
over,

So may it prove !—meanwhile 'tis best
I go,

And 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 it or not,

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, this Braccio sworn
his foe,

As Braccio safely from Donizia'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-
wheels

For thunder, festal fire 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 not
overtures

For truce ?—I would not, for your
General's sake,

You spoke of truce—a time to fight is
come,

And, whatso'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 i' 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 ex-
treme,

How truly formidable by despair.

Still, probabilities should have their
weight—

The extremest 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 Floren-
tine . . .

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 appre-
ciate . . .

Brief, they are Florentines ! You,
saving them,

Will seek 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 com-
mand.

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's ; '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 up-
held.

Therefore, should the preponderating
gift

Of love and trust, Florence was first to
throw,

Which made you hers not Pisa's, void
the seal,—

Old ties dissolving, things resume their
place

And all begins again. Be seal and
read !

At least let Pisa offer for y . . 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—
Pisa will pay me much as Florence you ;
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 punish-
ment.

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, which to me stands for
mankind,

—If that breaks 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 returns 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
check.

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 gift 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 I 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 steps 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
subsides,

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 DOMIZIA.

Brac. Noon 's at an end: no Lucea?
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 precedents 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 greets us! what do I get
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 your crown palpably before me?
see!

Here lies my whole reward! Best
know it now,

Or keep it for the end's entire delight?

Brac. If you serve Florence as the
vulgar serve,

For swordsmen'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 grati-
tude

This letter can contain will never
balance

The after-feeling that your need's at
end!

This moment . . . Oh, the East has use
with you!

Its sword 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 preeursors,—would not
such

Look to themselves in such a chance as
this,

Secure the ground they trod upon,
perhaps?

For I have heard, by fits, or seemed to
hear,

Of strange occurrences, ingratitude,
Treachery even,—say that one of you

Surmised this letter carried what might
turn

To harm hereafter, cause him pre-
judice—

What would he do?

Dom. [*hastily.*] Thank God and take
revenge!

Turn 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 sink
The obligation you relieve me from,

Still deeper! [*To Puc.*] 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 subalterns like myself 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 sides 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 end.

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 PUC.] Say, at his pleasure I will see Tiburzio :

All's at his pleasure.

Dom. [to LUR.] Were I not so sure
You would reject, as you do constantly,
Praise,—I might tell you what you have deserved

Of Florence by this last and crowning feat :

But words are vain.

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 do without,

Seems not so easy to dispense with now :
After a battle half one's strength is gone—

And glorious passion in us once appeared,
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 give her rival place.
And I am growing nearer you, perhaps,
For I, too, want to know and be assured.
When a cause ceases to reward itself,
Its friend needs fresh sustainments;
praise is one,

And here stand you—yon, 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 of 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 doubt-
less . . .

—No, there's no doubt, we must—all
was well done.

Lur. In truth? But you are of the
trade, my Puccio!

You have the fellow-craftsman's sym-
pathy.

There's none knows like a fellow of the
craft,

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!—Oh, 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 Braceio now, for Florence—
here's our service—

Well done for us, is it well done for
him?

His chosen engine, tasked to its full
strength

Answers his end? Should he have
chosen higher?

Do we help Florence, now our best is
done?

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 turning-
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 Floren-
tines,

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 evil,—

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 ear That spite of all this smiling and kind speech

You are betraying me! What is it you do?

Have it your way, and think my use is over—

That 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 generous, 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 known at Florence! What is it?

Brac. Sir, I shall not conceal 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 *BRAC.*] 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 here 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 mummary up! Take all the experiences of the whole

world, Each knowledge that broke through a heart to life,

Each reasoning which, to work out, cost a brain,

—In other cases, know these, warrant these,

And then dispense with them—'tis very well!

Let friend trust friend, and love demand its like,

And gratitude be claimed for benefits,— There's grace in that—and when the

fresh heart breaks,

The new brain proves a martyr, 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 mis-
taken 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 i' the air
Under the sun's straight influence: that
is well!

That is worth heaven to hold, and God
to bless!

And so is Florence,—tho unseen sun
above,

Which draws and holds suspended all of
us,—

Binds transient mists and vapours into
one,

Differing from each and better than
they all.

And shall she dare to stake this per-
manence

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 re-
ceive reward,

Though they deserve it, did she only
know!

—What should she do for these?

Brac.

What does she not?

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 use-
lessness

Of strength exerted for its proper sake?
But tho truth is, she did create that
strength,

Drew 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, sole great and wise and
good!

But shall we, therefore, standing by
ourselves,

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
stands!

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 tiger that must turn
And fight his baiters to deserve their
praise?

Obedience has no fruit then?—Be it so!
Do you indeed remember I stand here
The Captain of the conquering army,—
mine—

With all your tokens, praise and pro-
mise, ready

To show for what their names were
when you gave,
Not what you style them now you take
away?

If I call in my troops to arbitrate,
And in their first enthusiastic thrill
Of victory, tell them how you menace
me—

Commending to their plain instinctive
sense,

My story first, your comment after-
ward,—

Will they take, think you, part with you
or me?

When I say simply, I, the man they
know,

Ending my work, ask payment, and find
Florence

Has all this while provided silently
Against the day of pay and proving
words,

By what you call my sentence that's
to come—

Will they sit waiting it complacently?
When I resist that sentence 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 need of our precautions! here's
a man

Was far advanced, just touched on the
reward

Less subtle cities had accorded him;
But we were wiser: at the end comes
this!'

And from that minute all your strength
will go.

The very stones of Florence cry against
The all-exacting, unenduring Luria,
Resenting her first slight probation
thus;

As if he, only, shone and cast no shade,
He, only, walked the earth with privi-
lege

Against suspicion, free from causing
fear:

So, for the first inquisitive mother's-
word,

He turned, and stood 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 other-
wise!

Ay?—and what dropped from *you*,
just now, moreover?

Your information, Puccio?—did your
skill

And 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, not man's learned
eyes,

... I cannot fathom why you should
destroy

The unoffending one, you call your
friend—

So, looking at the good examples here
Of friendship, 'tis but natural I ask—

Had you a further end, in all you
spoke,

Than profit to me, in those instances
Of perfidy from Florence to her chiefs—

All I remember now for the first
time?

Dom. I am a daughter of the Traver-
sari,

Sister of Porzio and of Berto both.

I have foreseen all that has come to
pass.

I knew the Florence that could doubt
their faith,

Must needs mistrust a stranger's—
holding back

Reward from them, must hold back 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 ! All these against one foreigner !

And all this while, where is in the whole world

To his good faith a single witness ?

Tiburzio. [*who has entered during the preceding dialogue.*] Here !

Thus I bear witness to it, not in word

But deed— I live for Pisa ; she's not lost

By many chances—much prevents from that !

Her army has been beaten, I am here, But Lucca comes at last, one chance exists.

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 such : save yourself and her ! I, in her name, resign forthwith to you My charge,—the highest of her offices. You shall not, by my counsel, turn on Florence

Her army, give her calumny that ground—

Nor bring it with you : be you all we gain !

And all she'll lose,—a head to deck some bridge,

And save the crown's cost that should deck the head.

Leave her to perish in her pertidy, Plague-stricken and stripped naked to all eyes,

A proverb and a bye-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 selected man,

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

Through 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

Of 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 steadily advances, still 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 thick mid-forest, the real 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 in-
gratitude—

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
succeed!

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 Brac.] Let my complacent bland
accuser go,

And 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 their sentence, theirs
waits them!

[To Dom.] You, Lady,—you have black
Italian eyes!

I would be generous if I might . . . Oh,
yes—

remember how so oft you seemed
determined at heart to break the barrier
down

Which Florence finds God built between
us both.

Alas, for generosity! this hour
Demands strict justice: bear it as you
may!

I must—the Moor,—the Savage,—
pardon you.

[To Puc.] 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 to study what the next
should be,

In confidence that, when 'tis fixed upon,
You'll 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,—firmer 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 withdraws to Pisa—
well,—

Then, even if all happens 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 wher, at night the sentence really
comes,

And Florence authorizes past dispute
Luria's removal and your own advance,
You will perceive your duty and accept?

Puc. Accept what ? muster-rolls of
soldiers' names ?

An army upon paper ?—I want men,
Their hearts as well as hands—and
where 's a heart

That 's not with Luria, in the multitude
I come from walking through by Luria's
side ?

You gave them Luria, set him onto grow,
Head-like, upon their trunk, one blood
feeds both,

They feel him there, and live, and well
know why !

—For they do know, if you are ignorant,
Who kept his own place and respected
theirs,

Managed their ease, yet never spared
his own.

All was your deed : another might have
served—

There 's peradventure no such dearth
of men—

But you chose Luria—so, they grew to
him.

And now, for nothing they can under-
stand,

Luria 's 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 with Luria in the camp
Are left that know the secret ? You
think that ?

Hear what I saw : from rear to van, no
heart

But felt the quiet patient hero there
Was wronged, nor in the moveless ranks
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,

Lead him to Florence as their natural
lord,

Partake his fortunes, 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 succeeded with me too well
for that !

I am as you have made me, and shall
die

A mere trained fighting-hack to serve
your end ;

With words, you laugh at while they
leave your mouth,

For my life's rules 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 my-
self,

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, and moody, 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 gracious-

ness,
And cordial brother's-bearing ? This
was clear—

I, once the captain, was subaltern now,
And so must keep complaining like a
fool!

Go, take the curse of a lost man, I say!
You neither play your puppets to the end,
Nor treat the real man,—for his real-
ness' 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, are my services?
One word for all: whatever Luria does,
—If backed by his indignant troops he
turns

In self-defence and Florence goes to
ground,—

Or for a signal, everlasting shame,
He pardons you, simply seeks better
friends

And adds the Pisan and the Lucchese
troops

—And if I, for you ingrates past belief,
Resolve to fight against a man called
false,

Who, inasmuch as he was true, fights
there—

Whichever way he win, he wins for me,
For every soldier, for the true and good!
Sir, chronicle 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 eyes 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 but, listen only to these men
Once at their occupation! Ere ye 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 say!

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, each 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 per-
ceive 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 needs must
glove it first,

Lest peradventure it offend thy lip!

Love Woman! Why, a very beast
thou art!

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, in remembrance, 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 oft the 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 pro-
claim

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 angustest 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 com-
bined,

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 pass'd
away.

I lived when they departed ; lived to
cling

To thee, the mighty stranger ; thou
wouldst rise

And burst the thralldom, and avenge, I
knew.

I have done nothing ; all was thy
strong heart.

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 :

Break through and there extends the
sky above !

Go on to Florence, Luria ! 'Tis man's
cause !

Fail thou, and thine own fall is least to
dread !

Thou keepest Florence in her evil way,
Encouragest her sin so much the more—
And while the bloody Past is justified,
Thou all the surelier dost the Future
wrong.

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 see,
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 of-
fence,
They may speak rashly, suffer for their
speech:
But what could it have been in word or
deed
That 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 generous re-
venge,
I meditate! To stay here passively,
Go at their summons, be as they dis-
pose—
Why, if my very soldiers keep their
ranks,

And if I pacify my chiefs, what then?
I ruin Florence, teach her friends
mistrust,
Confirm her enemies in harsh belief,
And when she finds one day, as she
must find,
The strange mistake, and how my heart
was hers,
Shall it console me, that my Floren-
tines
Walk with a sadder step, a graver face,
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
In the council? Suffer for those old
fools' sakes—
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! 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 minds intent upon our battle here,
Found that he rose too soon, or else too
late,
Gave us no vantage, or gave Pisa
more—
And so we wronged him! Does he
turn in ire
To burn the earth that cannot under-
stand?
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, more dis-
posed

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
this!

I thought of adverse fortune, battles
lost,

The natural upbraidings 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

—If you see clear on every point.

Puc. Most clear.

Lur. Then all is said—not much, if
you count words,

Yet for 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 soldier-
ship

Which never failed me: yet, because it
seemed

A stranger's eye might haply note
defect

That skill, through use and custom,
overlooks,

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
me!

Farewell now!

Puc. Dare I speak?

Lur. —The 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. Lapo.

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

On the other side, by Staggia on the hills,
Who kept the Sienese at check!

Puc. One word—

Sir, I must speak! That you submit
yourself

To Florence' bidding, howsoever 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, peril even that!
 Refuge you seek at Pisa: yet these plans
 All militate for Florence, all conclude
 Your formidable work to make her queen
 Of 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—yon, 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 steps
 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 these, the State's gift, now add this
 of yours—
 That I may take to my peculiar store
 All your instructions to do 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 stum-
 bled 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 all—

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 prompt-

ing 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 your commands, 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 know yours:

And also there's Tiburzio, my new friend,

Will, at a word, confirm such evidence,
He being the chivalric soul we know.

I put it to your instinct—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 reason or the wrong of what befell

Those famous citizens, your country-

men?

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 satis-
fied!

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 the 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 hereto-
fore,

And offer 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, that you knew,
Performed her task, and died with it.
'Tis I,

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 con-
tent,—

So like a wall at the world's end it
stood,

With nought beyond to live for,—is it
reached?

Already are new undreamed energies
Outgrowing under, and extending
further

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 im-
pulse,

Which sought its ends and disregarded
yours?

Lur. Speak not against your nature:
best, each keep

His own—you, yours—most, now,
when 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
foregone.

I, born a Moor, lived half a Florentine:
But, punished properly, can end, a
Moor.

Beside, there is what makes me under-
stand

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

Wherein you found the purpose of
those tongues

That seemed innocuous in their lambent
play,

Yet, once made know such grace re-
quires such guard,

Your reason soon would acquiesce, I
think,

In the wisdom which made all things
for the best—

So, take them, good with ill, con-
tentedly,

The prominent beauty with the secret
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 stayed there and turned it
to account,

Giving Thought's character and per-
manence

To the too-transitory Feeling there—

Writing God's messages 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 feelings fresh from God, which,
could we know

O' the instant, where had been our need
of them ?

—Whose life re-teaches us what life
should be,

What faith is, loyalty and simpleness,
All, their revelation 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 taught
before.'

But still, the truth was shown ; and
though at first

It suffer from our haste, yet trace by
trace

Old memories reappear, the likeness
grows,

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, and I will trust to him!

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 it, as you say.

Enter HUSAIN.

Hus. The man returned from Flor-
ence!

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.

Lur. 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 its apparent welfare; and to
prove

Your rectitude, and duly crown the
same,

Imports it far beyond the day's event,
Its battle's loss or gain: the mass
remains,—

Keep but the model safe, new men will
rise

To study it, and other days to prove
How great a good was Luria's having
lived.

I might go try my fortune as you bade,
And joining Lucca, helped by your
disgrace,

Repair our harm—so were to-day's
work done;

But where find 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 it shone clearly!

Lur. Ah—till Braccio spoke!

Brac. Till Braccio told in just a word
the whole—

His old great error, and return to
knowledge:

Which told . . . Nay, Luria, I should
droop the head,

I, whom shame rests with! yet I dare
look up,

Sure of your pardon when I sue for it.
Knowing you wholly—so, let midnight
end!

Sunrise approaches! Still you answer
not?

The shadow of the night is past away;
Our circling faces here 'mid which it grew
Are all that felt it: they close round
you now

To witness its completest vanishing.
Speak, Luria! Here begins your true
career:

Look up to it! All now is possible,
The glory and the grandeur of each
dream:

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

PART FIRST, BEING WHAT WAS CALLED THE POETRY
OF CHIAPPINO'S LIFE: AND PART SECOND, ITS PROSE

PART I

Inside LUITOLFO'S house at Faenza.

CHIAPPINO, ERLAIA.

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

Few minutes, such a very few, to say!
How do you think, Chiappino? If our
lord

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,
shall 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, penni-
less,

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 Thee! 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, might
approve?

Eu. Ah, well—
Keep silence, then, Chiappino!

Ch. You would hear,
And shall now,—why the thing we're
pleased to style
My gratitude to you and all your
friends

For service done me, is just gratitude—
So much as yours was service—and no
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 play-
fellows,

Who took at church the holy-water
drop

One from the oth. 's finger, and so
forth,—

Were of two moods: Luitolfo was the
proper

Friend-making, everywhere friend-find-
ing 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-inflctors for their
leave!

—Why do you gaze, nor help me to
repeat

What comes so glibly from the common
month,

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 beds of rotten deaths ?

We all are outraged then, and I the first !

I, for mankind's sake, am long and smirky.

Each beck and bend, each nod and smile, you do to me.

I hate !

Eu. We slave to you, the more, then.

'Tis well you have not 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 eyes 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 eyes, 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

It all prove nought, because no mining 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-affianced 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 am all but wed to one I love, yet listen !

It may be, you are wronged, and that she 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 little—for,
see!

We all aspire to Heaven—and there is
Heaven

Above us—go there! Dare we go?
no, surely!

How dare we go without a reverent
pause,

A growing less unfit for Heaven?—
Even 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 what'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, bene-
fits?

Ch. No—the straight course had
been to call them so—

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—to
spurn

A trifle out of supersfluity:

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 write: 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 my mind too fully out, for
once,

This morning to our Provost; so, ere
night

I leave the city on pain of death: and
now

On my account there's gallant inter-
cession

Goes forward—that's so graceful!—
and anon

He'll noisily come back: 'the inter-
cession

Was made and fails—all's over for us
both—

'Tis vain contending—I would better
go.

And I do go—and so, to you he turns
Light of a load; and ease of that
permits

His visage to repair its natural bland
Oeconomy, 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 they woke;—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 helping 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, tho' 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 circum-
stance

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 per-
ceive

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 loved, 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! My God!
How when I prayed the Provost—
(he's my friend)—

To grant you a week's respite of his
sentence

That confiscates your goods, and
exiles you,

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, advent-
urous friend?

[As he opens the door, LUITOLFO
rushes in, his garments dis-
ordered.]

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 fair looks!

Now see my way! As God lives, I go
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. My 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! Look
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 this
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! 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 your-
selves, you two!

The dead back-weight of the beheading
axe!

The glowing trip-hook, thumbscrews
and the gadge!

Eu. They do come! Torches in the
Place! Farewell,

Chiappino! You can work no good to
us—

Much to yourself: believe not, all the
world

Must 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 straight-
way 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 fright-
ened? all my route

Is traced in that: at Venice you'll
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 ven-
geance fall

As our accomplice.

Ch. Mere accomplice? See!

[*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 court-yard. 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 see 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 down—

Come forth 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 !

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 !

PART II

The Market-place. LUITOLFO in disguise mingling with the Populace assembled opposite the Provost's Palace.

First Bystander (To LUIT.) 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 ?

Second 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 usage : for which reason, there is the assemblage you inquire about.

Luit. Chiappino—the old 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 ?

Third Bys. You were Luitolfo's friend ? So was I. Never, if you will credit me, did there exist so poor-spirited a milk-sop ! 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 ?

Third 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?

Third 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 pleasantries! I know Chiappino better.

First 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.

First 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 fremu're 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, 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!

Third 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:—'In that, I agree,' returns Chiappino, and so on.

Luit. But did Chiappino cede at once to this?

First 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, that 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,—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 . . .

First Bys. Why, that a month having gone by, the indomitable Chiappino, marrying as he will Luitolfo's love—at all events succeeding to Luitolfo's goods,—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—what could I else?—But if what 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 rather make the best of such an opportunity, 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 the so many and so various loves, united in the love of a woman,— manifold uses in one instrument, as the savage has his sword, sceptre and idol, all in one club-stick. Love is a very compound thing. I shall give the intellectual part of my love to Men, the mighty dead, or 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 OGNIEN. 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 professions! 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 the 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 God serves us!

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 . . .

Ogwi. Why, you must deal with people broadly. Begin at a distance from this matter and say,—new truths, old truths! sirs, there is nothing new possible to be revealed to us in the moral world—we know 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:—you have got a truth in your head about the 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: and as 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?

Ogwi. 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 advocates 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 spent their life in pushing it onward as those who gave 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! By the side of such a rejoicer, 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, and 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?

Opui. 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. He of Gath, 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 shung 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 proportionably 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 widerly I may extend its action. I desire to be able, with a quickened eye-sight, to deservy 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 is a confederacy immediately, from which exercise your individual right and dissent, and woe be to you!

Opui. And a journey over the sea to you!—That is the generous way. I try 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.

Ogni. 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 revered!

Ch. Ay, by the vulgar: not by Messere Stiatto the poet, who pays more assiduous court to him than anybody.

Ogni. What else should Stiatto 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 huddler twice as rich: but just such another talent as Stiatto's, added to what he now possesses, what would that profit him? Give the talent a purse added, 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 Stiatto 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 for entry with



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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 justice we all anticipate. Who dealt the blow that night, does anybody know?

Luitolfo. [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.

En. 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 sunk 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 has 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 *Four-and-twenty* leaders of revolts.

IN A BALCONY

A SCENE

1855

In a Balcony.

CONSTANCE and NORBERT.

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 what'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 one 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 him-elf, 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 cognisant 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 By saving what I cease to care about, The 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 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.
That 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:

Say, 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 gentle beside,

Make it your own ease. For example now,

I'll say—I let you kiss me and 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 labours 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

Chaces 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 com-
posedly ?

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 sym-
pathies,

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 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 wain real strug-
gling love

In to her of a sudden, and suppose
She'll keep her state untroubled ?

Here 's the truth—
She'll apprehend its 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 ! '

And 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 ! 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 folks 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,
 That you're 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 it's 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

Of the beautiful, which, while it
prompted work,

Suppress itself erewhile. This eve's
the time—

This eve intense with you 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,
The Nymph to her fawn, the 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 ap-
plaud.

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 all 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 pædagogic
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 need!
Does she love me, I ask you? not a
whit:

Yet, thinking that her justice was en-
gaged

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 loves Queens directly, none
dares 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 under-
stand)

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 ;

Howbeit we let our whims prescribe
despair,

Our very fancies thwart and cramp our
will,

And so, accepting life, abjure ourselves.

Constance, I had abjured the hope of love
And of being loved, as truly as you
palm

The hope of seeing Egypt from that plot.

Con. Heaven !

- Queen.* But it was so, Constance, And say 'she's old, she's grown un-
it was so lovely quite
Men say—or do men say it? fancies Who ne'er was beauxons: men want
say— beauty still.'
- 'Stop here, your life is set, you are Well, so I feared—the curse! so I felt
grown old. sure.
- 'Too late—no love for you, too late for *Con.* Be calm. And now you feel not
love— sure, you say?
- Leave love to girls. Be queen: let *Queen.* Constance, he came,— the
Constance love!' coming was not strange—
- One takes the hint—half meets it like Do not I stand and see men come and
a child, go?
- Asham'd at any feelings that oppose, I turned a half-look from my pedestal
'Oh, love, true, never think of love Where I grow marble—' one young man
again! the more!
- I am a queen: I rule, not love, indeed.' He will love some one,—that is nought
So it goes on; so a face grows like to me:
- this, What would he with my marble state-
liness?
- Hair like this hair, poor arms as lean as Yet this seemed somewhat worse than
these, heretofore:
- Till,—nay, it does not end so, I thank The man more gracious, youthful, like
God! a god,
- Con.* I cannot understand— And I still older, with less flesh to
Queen. The happier you! change—
- Constance, I know not how it is with We two those dear extremes that long
men: to touch.
- For women, (I am a woman now like It seemed still harder when he first
you) began
- There is no good of life but love—but Absorbed to labour at the state-affairs
love! The old way for the old end—interest.
- What else looks good, is some shade Oh, to live with a thousand beating
flung from love— hearts
- Love gilds it, gives it worth. Be Around you, swift eyes, serviceable
warned by me, hands,
- Never you cheat yourself one instant! Professing they've no care but for your
Love, cause,
- Give love, ask only love, and leave the Thought but to help you, love but for
rest! yourself,
- O Constance, how I love you! And you the marble statue all the time
- Con.* I love you. They praise and point at as preferred to
Queen. I do believe that all is come life.
- through you. Yet leave for the first breathing
woman's cheek,
- I took you to my heart to keep it warm First dancer's, gipsy's, or street bala-
When the last chance of love seemed dine's!
- dead in me: Why, how I have ground my teeth to
I thought your fresh youth warmed my hear men's speech
- withered heart. Stilled for fear it should alarm my ear,
- Oh, I am very old now, am I not? Their gait subdued lest step should
Not so! it is true and it shall be true! startle me,
- Con.* Tell it me: let me judge if true Their eyes declined, such queendom to
or false, respect,
- Queen.* Ah, but I fear you! you will
look at me

Their hands alert, such treasure to preserve,

While not a man of them broke rank and spoke,

Or 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?

Why, 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—

It must have finer aims to hire it on!

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 the love,

And so you both were in intelligence.

You could not loiter in the 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? cloud was on my eyes

And thunder in my ears at 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 did not hear . . . you thought he spoke

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 ribbon I had worn,
He kissed my hand, he looked into my eyes,

And love, love was the 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,
But teach me 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 was 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 myself;
'Tis all gone—put your cheek beside

my cheek—

Ah, what a contrast does the moon behold!

But then I set my life upon one chance,
The last chance and the best—am I not 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 love, the passionate faith, the sacrifice,

The constancy? I throw them at his feet.

Who cares to see the fountain's very shape,

And 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-checked
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 unhopèd-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-
ful now,

Mute, passive, acquiescent. I receive,
And bless 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,

And taller than he is, for 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 life,

With 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 my-
self.

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 the 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 would 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 cold. 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 I will seize and use 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! 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 take your face

And write of it and paint it—to what end?

For whom? what pale dietatress 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 days were short beside, to let me change

The craft my childhood learnt: my craft shall serve.

Men set me here to subjugate, enclose,
Mature their barren lives, and force the fruit

First for themselves, and afterward for me

In the due tithe; the task of some one man,

By ways of work appointed by themselves.

I am not bid create—they see no star
Transfiguring my brow to warrant that—
But bind in one and carry out their wills.
So I began: to-night sees how I end.

What if it see, too, my 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, the new man

Whose will they venture in the place of theirs,

And who, they trust, shall find them out new ways

To heights as new 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

And how my hand is plastic, and 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 lower men to see
The Graces in a dance all recognize

With turbulent applause and laugh 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 I have 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 dullness, 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 precious 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 else they had wandered out into despair,

And kept love constant towards its natural aim.

Enough, my part is played ; you stoop half-way

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 and 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 deem 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

Scarcely 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 but 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 opened out the truth. 'Tis very strange,

But takes a happy ending—in your love Which mine meets : be it so : as you choose 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.

I joy that thus you test me ere you grant The dearest, richest, beauteouslest 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, Con-
stance ? 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 therefore on 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, did love prove
itself.

I dared 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

Should such a step as this kill 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 pleased to
designate,

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 bal-
cony ?

Have I done ill ? Have I not spoken the
truth ?

How could I other ? Was it not your test,
To try me, and what my love for Con-
stance 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 should curse, I love you. I am love
Con. We are past harm now.
 And cannot change: love's self is at your feet. [*The QUEEN goes out.*]
Con. On the breast of God.
Nor. Feel my heart; let it die Tempting him with a crown!
 against your own! This must end here
Nor. It is too perfect!
Con. Against my own! explain not: There 's the music stopped
 let this be. What measured heavy tread? it is one
 blaze
Con. This is life's height. About me and within me.
Nor. Yours! Yours! Yours! Oh, some death
 You and I— Will run its sudden finger round this
 Why care by what meanders we are here spark
 In the centre of the labyrinth? men And sever us from the rest—
 have died
 Trying to find this place, which we have
Con. Found, found! And so do well.
Nor. Now the doors open—
 Sweet, never fear
 what she can do! 'Tis the guard comes.
 Kiss!

STRAFFORD

A TRAGEDY

DEDICATED, IN ALL AFFECTIONATE ADMIRATION,

TO

WILLIAM C. MACREADY

April 23, 1837.

PERSONS.

CHARLES I.
 Earl of HOLLAND.
 Lord SAVILE.
 Sir HENRY VANE.
 WENTWORTH, Viscount WENTWORTH,
 Earl of STRAFFORD.
 JOHN PYM.
 JOHN HAMPDEN.
 The younger VANE.
 DENZIL HOLLIS.
 BENJAMIN RUDYARD.

NATHANIEL FIENNES.
 Earl of LONDON.
 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, &c. 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;
 LONDON and other Scots Commis-
 sioners.

Vane. I say, if he be here—

Rud. (And he is here!—

Hol. 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!

Fam. 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?

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!

Fam. Here's Rudyard not ashamed
to wag a tongue

Stuff with ten years' disuse of Parlia-
ments:

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.

Fam. 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 upon 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
—If he dies under it, what harm? if not,
Why, one more trick is added to the rest
Worth a king's knowing, and what Ire-
land 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.

Fam. 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, Hamil-
ton.

The muckworm Cottington, the maniac
Land,

May yet be longed-for back again. I say,
I do despair.

Fam. 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
 underfoot,
 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, and
 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
 Runnymede !—
Voices. 'Tis well and bravely spoken,
 Vane ! Go on !
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 same 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,
 London ! you
 Have still a Parliament, and this your
 League
 To back it ; you are free in Scotland
 still :
 While we are brothers, hope's for
 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 him-
 self—
 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 Hamp-
 den 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 com-
 bined
 Might put down England. Well, Pym
 heard him out ;
 One glance—you know Pym's eye—one
 word was all :
 You leave us, Wentworth ! while your
 head is on,

I'll not leave you.'

Hamp. Has he left Wentworth, then?

Has England lost him? Will you let him speak,

Or put your rude 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 him work
enough.

Where's London? 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!

Hol. 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
That, chronicleing a nation's great
despair,

Tells they were long rebellious, and their
lord

Indulgent, till, all kind exponents tried,
He drew the sword on them and reigned
in peace.

Land'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 children, 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 Rights : 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 Aekdama.

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's

at Whitehall,
The King embracing him, now, as we

speak,
And he, to be his match in courtesies,

Taking the whole war's risk upon him-
self,

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 Land 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 sons 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 Went-
worth here—

Shall we break off the tactics which suc-
ceed

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! Fiennes,
read the list!

Fiennes. 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 Went-
worth, friends.

SCENE II.—Whitehall.

LADY CARLISLE and WESTWORTH.

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 mal-
contents,

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 Went-
worth, 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 foot-step! 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: and Vane, too, he's one too?

Go on—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 Land's! These Hollands, then, these Saviles

Nibble? They nibble?—that's the very word!

Lady Car. Your profit in the Customs, the 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!

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 Savile'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 Car. 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 well !

The King ! But now, to tell him . . . no—to ask

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. Oh, 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 prayer
just now

From Scotland not to be oppressed by
Land,

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—for-
bear 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 ob-
scene 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 . . . 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, as

Laud 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
In the dust. My whole heart stays with

you, my King!

[*WENTWORTH goes out, the QUEEN enters.*]

Cha. That man must love me!
Queen. Is it over then?

Why, he looks yellower than ever! well,
At least we shall not hear eternally

Of service—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, Went-

worth'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. O 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 sub-
sidies !

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 no
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 !

Hol. 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 !

Hol. 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 ease ; 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 !

Hol. 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 's 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 Bishop's war ! At once ! When next
we meet !

Pym. Much more when next we meet !
Friends, which of you

Since first the course of Strafford was in
doubt,

Has fallen the most away in soul from
me ?

Vane. I sat apart, even now, under
God's eye,

Pondering the words that should de-
nounce 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 dis-
solves 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 's
grown ripe.

Of those, who hatched it, leaving me to
loose

The mischief on the world ! Land
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 Land
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 ? Northum-
berland

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 terrible !
{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 sub-
 sidies

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 sup-
 plies

My place in Ireland. Here, we'll try the
 City :

If they refuse a loan—debase the coin
 And seize the bullion ! 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 ruin 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 . . . 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, &c. *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 Of counselling 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, Strafford : time
 shows. Perish,
 Body and spirit ! Fool to feign a doubt,
 Pretend the scrupulous and nice reserve
 Of one whose prowess should achieve
 the feat !
 What share have I in it ? Shall 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, &c. go out.
Straf. Pym, we shall meet again !

LADY CARLISLE enters.

Lady Car. You here, child ?
 Hush—
 I know it all : hush, Strafford !
Straf. Ah ? you know ?
 Well. I shall make a scerry 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 the 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 Scot-
 land ?

Straf. Am I sick
 Like your good brother, brave North-
 umberland ?
 Beside, these walls seem falling on me.
Lady Car. Strafford,
 The wind that saps these walls can under-
 mine
 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 in my heart 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

Offriends !'—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

That 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 sure !

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

Of 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 Car.

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 fall 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'll lie down

Hungry and 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 mourn-
ful 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?

Savile. And what kept you
From sharing their civility?

Sir H. Vane. Kept me?
Fresh news from Scotland, sir! 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 de-
tained me, sir!

Well now, before they thrust you out,—
go on,—

Their Speaker—did the fellow Lenthall
say

All we set down for him?

Hol. Not a word said.
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?

Savile. Not a bench
Without its complement of burly knaves:

Your hopeful son among them: Hamp-
den leant

Upon his shoulder—think of that!

Vane. I'd think
On Lenthall'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?

Hol. Just as we drilled him.

Vane. That the Scots will march
On London?

Hol. All, and made so much of it.
A dozen subsidies at least seemed sure

To follow, when . . .

Vane. Well ?

Hol. '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,—' a work for England.'

Hol. ' England's great revenge '
He talked of.

Sav. How should I get used to Pym
More than yourselves ?

Hol. However that may be,
'Twas something with which we had
nought to do,

For we were 'strangers' and 'twas
' England'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
That 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 . . .

Hol. 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 I
To keep off Pym—to screen a friend or

two !
I would we had reserved ' a yet awhile.

SCENE II.—*Whitchhall.*

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 grievance :

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 Parliam-
ments

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's away
At Theobalds.

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 cer-
tainly

Not spoken yet.

Queen. [To LADY CARLISLE.] You
hear?

Lady Car. I do not hear
That the King's sent for!

Sir H. Vane. Savile will be able
To tell you more.

HOLLAND enters.

Queen. The last news, Holland?

Hol. Pym

Is raging like a fire. The whole House
means

To follow him together to Whitehall
And force the King to give up Straf-
ford.

Queen. Strafford?

Hol. If they content themselves with
Strafford! Land

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.

Savile. Not to Whitehall—
'Tis to the Lords they go: they'll 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 him; 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 ?

Sar. 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 dimming you with ship-money complaints !

Queen. [To LADY CARLISLE.] Is 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 Pym !

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.

Hol. 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.

[To LADY CARLISLE.] Why, Lucy, what 's in agitation now

That all this muttering and shrugging, see,

Begins at me ? They do not speak !

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 's in you !

Sir H. 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 ?

Sar. 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 his 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.*] No 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?

Lady 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 Connuive at Pym's proce here! 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 help of, An angel's making.

Lady Car. (Is he mad?) Dear Strafford,

You 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 wicks 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,

Broke, 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 to-
night

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 oppor-
tune.

When all is over, Bryan, you'll 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 the lesser
knaves ;

Take care there 's no escaping at back-
doors :

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 collars 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 say !—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 im-
port

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.

—If 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 of one beside, whose little word

Unveils the King to him—one word from me,

Which yet I do not breathe!

Alas, 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, &c.

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 rufflers.

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

To serve 'King Pym'! There's Some one 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'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? Ye

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 ! Pym ! I never struck, I think,

The felon on that calm insulting mouth When it proclaimed—Pym's mouth proclaimed me . . . God !

Was 't not a word, only a word that held

The outrageous blood back on my heart which beat !

Which beats ! Some one word—'Traitor, did he say,

Bending that eye, brimfull 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 fellows' fate. None saves his life ?

None ?

[*Cries from within of 'STRAFFORD.'*
Slingsby, I've loved you at least :
make haste !

Stab me ! I haven't 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 ! I 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 east 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 STRAF-
FORD kneels, the scene shuts.*

ACT IV

SCENE I.—Whitehall.

The KING, 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 play-
fellow

Of other times. What wonder after all ?
Just so, I dreamed my People loved me.

Hol. 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)—

Hol. I may withdraw, sir ?
Lady Car. Hear them out !

'Tis the last chance for Strafford ! Hear
them out !

Hol. 'If we kill Strafford'—on the
eighteenth day
Of Strafford's trial—'We !'

Cha. Pym, my good Hollis—
Pym, I should say !

Hol. 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.
Pym 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.

Hol. Think ! This very day ?
Ere Strafford rises to defend himself ?

Cha. I will defend him, sir !—san-
ction the Past

This day : it ever was my purpose.
Rage

At me, not Strafford !

Lady Car. Nobly !—will he not
Do nobly ?

Hol. 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 !

Hol. You peril much,
But it were no bright moment save for
that.

Strafford, your prime support, the sole
roof-tree

That props this quaking House of Privi-
lege,

(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 mean
Calmly to consummate this wrong !
No hope ?

This ineffaceable wrong ! No pity then ?

Hol. 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 ?

Hol. 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 him-
self—

Fared he so well, does any fable say ?

Cha. What can you mean ?

Hol. 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 ?

Hol. 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 !

Hol. 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 ?

Hol. 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 con-
trived

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 cer-
tain charge

To set the King’s express command
aside,

If need were, and be blameless ! He
might add . . .

Cha. Enough !

Hol. —Who bade him break
the Parliament,

Find some pretext 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 !

Hol. 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 your brother bring the army up,
 Strafford shall head it and take full revenge.
 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 mement, 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 wondrous 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 preceede 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 content,

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, &c.

First 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 !

Second Spec. Stay : Pym's arm
Points like a prophet's rod.

Third Spec. Ay, ay, we've heard
Some pretty speaking : yet the Earl
escapes.

Fourth 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 . . .

Second Spec. What 's that
Pym 's saying now

Which makes the curtains flutter ? look !
A hand

Clutches them. Ah ! The King's hand !
Fifth Spec. I had thought

Pym was not near so tall. What said
he, friend ?

Second 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.
Third Spec. Now, said I true ?

Will the Earl leave them yet at fault or
no ?

First Spec. Never believe it, man !
'These notes of Vane's

Ruin the Earl.
Fifth 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 !
Fifth Spec. Why,

the Earl is coming hither !
Before the court breaks up ! His brother,
look,—

You'd say he deprecated some fierce act
In Strafford's mind just now.

An Officer. Stand back, I say !
Second 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,
&c. STRAFFORD converses with
LADY CARLISLE.

Hol. So near the end !
Be patient—Return !

Straf. [To his Secretaries.] Here—any-
where—or, 'tis freshest here !

To spend one's April here, the blossom-
month !

Set it down here !
[They arrange a table, papers, &c.

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 ; whatso'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 thro' 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, Shingsby!

[*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 disclaimed . . .

[*Calling after the Messenger.*] And Radcliffe, 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,

Say, even against Laud, with his grey hair—

Your good work, Hollis! Peace! to make amends

You, Lucy, shall be there 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 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 me! '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 t.

Enter HAMPDEN and VANE.

Vanc. O Hampden, save that great misguided man !

Plead Strafford's cause with Pym ! I have remarked

He moved no muscle when we all de-
clined

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, &c.*

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.

Vanc. 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 this hideous

mass

Of half-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.

Vanc.

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 !

Vanc. John Hampden, not this Bill !

Reject this Bill !

He staggers through the ordeal : let
him go,

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 pardoners at her expense,
Magnanimously waive advantages,

And, if he conquer us, applaud his skill ?

Vanc. He was your friend.

Pym. I have heard that before.

Fien. And England trusts you.

Hamp. Shame be to us, 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 des-
troy

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 here, 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 shall lay
his hand

Upon his breast, and judge.

Fane. 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 ?

Fane. 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.—Whitchall.

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, the
Future

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 at 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 ! Un-
announced !

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 elo-
quence

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 ware, 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. That
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, house-
hold cares,

Just as if we had never been. Ah, sir,
You are moved, even you, a solitary

man

Woe to your cause—to England if you
will !

Pym. Yes—think, my soul—to Eng-
land ! 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,
And I beside him ; Hampden loves me :

sir,
How can I breathe and not wish Eng-
land 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 angust,

More full of England's utter weal or woe.
If 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 inter-
fere !

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 lip
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!

ACT V

SCENE I.—Whitchall.

HOLLIS, LADY CARLISLE.

Hol. Tell the King, then! Come in
with me!

Lady Car. Not so!
He must not hear till it succeeds.

Hol. Succeed?

No dream was half so vain—you'd
resene 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, re-
member—Charles

Has saved him! He would hardly value
life

Unless his gift. My staunch friends
wait. Go in—

You must go in to Charles!

Hol. 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,

I ought to make his youth my own as
well.

Tell me,—when he is saved!

Hol. 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!

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think,

eward

on his

airs

row of

latter

: but,

own as

friend,

n, but

now!

'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!

Hol. 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!

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, Faine, 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,

Ingenuous 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?

Hol. 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 one's self awake? What would you do

After this bustle, Hollis, in my place?

Hol. 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.

Hol. 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.

Hol. 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 Theobalds?

Hol. 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.

Hol. The King—I hear

His message, Strafford: pray you, let me speak!

Straf. Go, William! Aime, try o'er
your song again!

[*The child, in retire.*
They shall be loyal, friend, at all events.
I 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 it
once

His order of release! I've heard, as well,
Of certain poor manœuvrings 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?

Hol. Spare me!

Straf. What he'd not have
me steal away?

With an old doublet and a steeple hat
like Prynne's? He smuggled into
France perhaps?

Holles, 'tis for my children! 'Twas for
them

I first consented to stand day by day—
And give your Puritans the best of
words.

Be patient, speak when called upon,
observe

Their rules, and not return them prompt
their lie

What's in that boy of mine 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.

Hol. Whom forgive,

As one to die!

Straf. True, all die, and all need
Forgiveness: I forgive him from my
soul.

Hol. 'Tis a world's wonder: Straff-
ford, 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 fond for
glad to hear!

'Strafford shall take no hurt'—read
it, I say!

'In person, honour, nor estate'—

Hol. The King . . .

Straf. I could smother him by a breath!
You sit

Where London sat, who came to pro-
phesy

The certain end, and offer me Pym's
grace

If I'll renounce the King: and I stood
arm

On the King's faith. The King who
lives . . .

Hol. 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!

Hol. Trust in God.

The scaffold is prepared: they wait for
you:

He has consented. Cast the earth
behind!

Cha. You would not see me, Straff-
ford, at your foot!

It was wrung from me! Only curse me
not!

Hol. [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,

And you've got Radcliffe safe, Laud's turn comes next :

I've found small time of late for my affair—

But I trust any of you, Pym 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 food,

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 shame that you should owe me aught.

Or, no, not shame ! Strafford, you'll not feel shame

At being saved by me ?

Hol. 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

I love you, you would be repaid, my friend !

Lady Car. Then, for my sake !
Straf. Even for your sweet sake,

I stay.
Hol. 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, &c. 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 Future waste, to offer up

Her sacrifice—this man, 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 bitter 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—for 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, it too
 Dies, smothered up. Poor grey old little Land
 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, 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 ?
 You will not say a word—to me—to Him ?
Pym. England,—I am thine own !
 Dost thou exact
 That service ? I obey thee to the end.

PAULINE

A FRAGMENT OF A CONFESSION

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 sneaks a poisoned
 wound
 Envenoms his own veins,—thou art so
 good,
 So calm—if thou should'st wear a brow
 less 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 wonder-
 ing 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
 thee,
 Thro' youth, and saved, as one at length
 awakened,
 Who has slept thro' a peril. Ah ! vain,
 vain !
 Thou lovest me—the past is in its grave,
 Tho' its ghost haunts us—still this much
 is ours,
 To cast away restraint, lest a worse
 thing
 Wait for us in the darkness. 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, and 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, would'st 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
 blackthorn boughs,
 So dark in the bare wood ; when glis-
 tening
 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 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,
 Bad me look up and bewhat 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 tho' my soul had floated from its
 sphere
 Of wide 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 thro' 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 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 suf-
 fered 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 beauti-
 ful.'
 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,
For all the wandering and all the weak-
ness

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 cares, and strife, and
toil,

Seem strangely va' ess, 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.

Him 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—life and light be thine for
ever !

Thou art gone from us—years go by,
and spring

Gladdens, and the young earth is beau-
tiful,

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 gathe-
round

Like mountains,—and I felt of mould
like them,

And creatures of my own were mixed
with them,

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 wert 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 drooping-
 ingly,
 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 track-
 less 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
 Wert 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 loved long silently.
 In her first loveliness, in some retreat,
 When first emerged, all gaze and glow to
 view
 Her fresh eyes, and soft hair, and lips
 which bleed
 Like a mountain berry. Doubtless it is
 sweet
 To see her thus adored—but there have
 been
 Moments, when all the world was in his
 praise,
 Sweeter than all the 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 am proud to feel I would have thrown
 up all
 The wreaths of fame which seemed o'er-
 hanging me,

To have seen 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 tho' I feel how low I am to him,
 Yet I aim not even to catch a tone
 Of all the harmonies he called up,
 So one gleam still remains, altho' 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,
 But more is honoured. I was thine in
 shame,

And now when all 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 old life—for 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.
O 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

But 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 mer 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 ele-
ments

I shall unveil—not as they struggled
forth

In infancy, nor as they now exist,
That I am grown above them, and can
rule them,

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 ele-
ments

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 all—

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 desires
Confined to clay—which is the only one
Which marks me—an imagination which
Has been an angel to me—coming not
In fitful visions, but beside me ever,
And never failing me; so tho' 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 wasted,
Or progressed as I looked toward 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 ab-
horred.

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—having always felt
His presence—never acting from myself,
Still trusting in a hand that leads me
through

All danger; and this feeling still has
fought

Against my weakest reason and resolves,

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 sought in
vain
To trace how they were formed by
circumstance,
For I still find them—turning my wild
youth
Where they alone displayed themselves,
converting
All objects to their use—now e 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 Tene-
dos ;—

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 Proser-
pine'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 powers folded up—
A sense that tho' those shadowy times
were past,
Their spirit dwelt in me, and I 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
time,

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, which
so long

Have spotted me—at length I was
restored,

Yet long the influence remained : and
nought

But the still life I led, apart from all,
Which left my soul to seek its 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 moun-
tain-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 as 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
 While 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
 No wish to paint, no yearning—but I
 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 mind had yet achieved. No fear
 was mine
 As I gazed on the works of mighty bards.
 In the first joy at finding my own
 thoughts
 Recorded, and my powers exemplified,
 And feeling their aspirings were my
 own.
 And then I first explored passion and
 mind;
 And I began afresh; I rather sought
 To rival what I wondered at, than form
 Creations of my own; so much was
 light
 Lent back by others, yet much was my
 own.
 I paused again—a change was coming
 on,
 I was no more a boy—the past was
 breaking
 Before the coming, and like fever
 worked.
 I first thought on myself—and here 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 them, to seek out
 some one
 To be my own; as one should wander
 o'er
 The White Way for a star.

 On one, whom praise of mine would 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, which
 first
 Caught me, and set me, as to a sweet
 task,
 To gather every breathing of his songs.
 And woven with them there were words,
 which seemed
 A key to a new world; the muttering
 Of angels, of some thing unguessed by
 man.
 How my heart beat, as I went on, and
 found
 Much there I felt my own mind had
 conceived,
 But there living and burning; soon the
 whole
 Of his conceptions dawned on me; their
 praise
 Is in the tongues of men; men's brows
 are high
 When his name means a triumph and a
 pride;
 So my weak hands may well forbear to
 dim
 What then seemed my bright 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 be,
 My whole soul rose to meet it. Now,
 Pauline,
 I shall go mad, if I recall that time.

 Oh let me look back, e'er I leave for ever
 The time, which was an hour, that one
 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 joy, 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 go on : my mind rests
not.

'Twas in my plan to look on real life,
Which was all new to me : my theories
Were firm, so I left them, to look upon
Men, and their cares, and hopes, and
fears, and joys ;

And, as I pondered on them all, 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 walled gardens,
thick with trees,

Where singing goes on, and delicious
mirth,

And laughing fairy creatures peeping
over,

And on the morrow, when he comes to
live

For ever by those springs, and trees
fruit-flushed,

And fairy bowers—all his search is vain.
Well I remember . . .

First went my hopes of perfecting man-
kind,

And faith in them—then freedom in
itself,

And virtue in itself—and then my
motives' ends,

And powers and loves ; and human love
went last.

I felt this no decay, because new powers
Rose as old feelings left—wit, mockery,

And happiness : 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 look'd again to see how all went on.

My powers were greater—as some tem-
ple 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

Kneel 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
kneel low,

And cried, 'Lord, we are here, and we
will make

A way for thee—in thine appointed life
Oh look on us !' And I said, 'Ye will
worship

Me ; but my heart must worship too.'
They shouted,

'Thyself—thou art our king !' So I
stood there

Smiling

And buoyant and rejoicing was the
spirit

With which I looked out how to end my
days ;

I felt once more myself—my powers
were mine ;

I found that youth or health solifted me,
That, spite of all life's vanity, no grief
Came nigh me—I must ever be light-
hearted ;

And that this feeling was the only veil

Betwixt me and despair: so if age came,
 I should be as a wreck linked to a soul
 Yet fluttering, or mind-broken, and
 aware
 Of my decay. So a long summer morn
 Found me; and e'er noon came, I had
 resolved
 No age should come on me, ere youth's
 hopes went,
 For I would wear myself out—like that
 morn
 Which wasted not a sunbeam—every
 joy
 I would make mine, and die. And thus
 I sought
 To chain my spirit down, which I had
 fed
 With thoughts of fame. I said: the
 troubled life
 Of genius, seen so bright when working
 forth
 Some trusted end, seems sad when all in
 vain—
 Most sad, when men have parted with
 all joy
 For their wild fancy's sake, which
 waited first
 As an obedient spirit when delight
 Came not with her alone; but alters
 soon,
 Coming darkened, seldom, hasting to
 depart,
 Leaving a heavy darkness and warm
 tears.
 But I shall never lose her; she will
 live
 Brighter 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
 The radiant sights which dazzle me;
 but now
 They shall be all my own, and 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 sprung up—that it
 were well
 To leave all shadowy hopes, and weave
 such lays
 As would encircle me with praise and
 love;

So I should not die utterly—I 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,
 And all the influence poets have o'er
 men!
 'Tis a fine thing that one, weak as my-
 self,
 Should sit in his lone room, knowing the
 words
 He utters in his solitude shall move
 Men like a swift wind—that tho' he be
 forgotten,
 Faireyes shall glisten when his beauteous
 dreams
 Of love come true in happier frames
 than his.
 Ay, the still night brought thoughts like
 these, but morn
 Came, and the mockery again laughed
 out
 At hollow praises, and smiles, almost
 sneers;
 And my son's idol seemed to whisper me
 To dwell with him and his unhonoured
 name—
 And I well knew my spirit, that would
 be
 First in the struggle, and again would
 make
 All bow to it; and I would sink again,
 And then know that this curse will come
 on us,
 To see our idols perish—we may wither;
 Nor marvel—we are clay; but our low
 fate
 Should not extend them, whom trust-
 ingly
 We sent before into Time's yawning
 gulf,
 To face whate'er may lurk in darkness
 there—
 To see the painters' glory pass, and feel
 Sweet music move us not as once, or
 worst,
 To see decaying wits ere the frail body
 Decays. Nought makes me trust in
 love so really

As the delight of the contented lowness
With which I gaze on souls I'd keep for
ever

In beauty—I'd be sad to equal them ;
I'd feed their fame e'en from my heart's
best blood,
Withering unseen, that they might
flourish still.

Pauline, my sweet friend, thou dost not
forget

How this mood swayed me, when thou
first wert mine,

When I had set myself to live this life,
Defying all opinion. Ere thou camest
I was most happy, sweet, for old delights
Had come like birds again ; music, my
life,

I nourished more than ever, and old lore
Loved for itself, and all it shows—the
king

Treading the purple calmly to his death,
—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, and
striving hard

To tell his story ere his reason goes.
And when I loved thee, as I've loved so
oft,

Thou lovedst me, and I wondered, and
looked in

My heart to find some feeling like such
love,

Believing I was still what I had been ;
And soon I found all faith had gone from
me,

And the late glow of life—changing like
clouds,

'Twas not the morn-blush widening into
day,

But evening, coloured by the dying sun
While darkness is quick hastening :—
I will tell

My state as though 'twere none of mine
—despair

Cannot come near me—thus it is with
me.

Souls alter not, and mine must progress
still ;

And this I knew not when I flung away
My youth's chief aims. I ne'er sup-
posed the loss

Of what few I retained ; for no resource
Awaits me—now behold the change of
all.

I cannot chain my soul, it will not rest
In its clay prison ; this most narrow
sphere—

It has strange powers, and feelings, and
desires,

Which I cannot account for, nor explain,
But which I stifle not, being bound to
trust

All feelings equally—to hear all sides ;
Yet I cannot indulge them, and they
live,

Referring to some state or life un-
known . . .

My selfishness is satiated not,

It wears me like a flame ; my hunger for
All pleasure, how-soe'er minute, is pain ;
I envy—how I envy him whose mind

Turns with its energies to some one end ;
To elevate a sect, or a pursuit,

However mean—so my still baffled hopes
Seek out abstractions ; I would have
but one

Delight on earth, so it were wholly mine ;
One rapture all my soul could fill—and
this

Wild feeling places me in dream afar.
In some wide country, where the eye can
see

No end to the far hills and dales be-
strewn

With shining towers and dwellings.
I grow mad

Well-nigh, to know not one abode but
holds

Some pleasure—for my soul could grasp
them all,

But must remain with this vile form.
I look

With hope to age at last, which quench-
ing much.

May let me concentrate the sparks it
spares.

This restlessness of passion meets in me
A craving after knowledge: the sole
proof

Of a commanding will is in that power
Repressed; for I beheld it in its dawn,
That sleepless harpy, with its budding
wings

And I considered whether I should
yield

All hopes and fears, to live alone with it,
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 my delights,—
So it lies in me a chained thing—still
ready

To serve me, if I loose its slightest
bond—

I cannot but be proud of my bright
slave.

And thus I know this earth is not my
sphere,

For I cannot so narrow me, but that
I still exceed it; in their elements
My love would pass my reason—but
since here

Love must receive its objects from this
earth,

While reason will be chainless, the few
truths

Caught from its wanderings have suf-
ficed to quell

All love below;—then what must be
that love

Which, with the object it demands,
would quell

Reason, tho' it soared with 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,

For here myself stands out more hid-
eously.

I can forget myself in friendship, fame,
Or liberty, or love of mighty souls.

But I begin to know what thing hate is—

To sicken, and to quiver, and to gr-
white,

And I myself have furnished its first
prey.

All my sad weaknesses, this wavering
will,

This selfishness, this still decaying
frame . . .

But I must never grieve while I can pass
Far from such thoughts—as now—
Andromeda!

And she is with me—years roll, I shall
change,

But change can touch her not—so beau-
tiful

With her dark 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 face and 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

You doubt not, nor fear for, secure that
God

Will come in thunder from the stars to
save her.

Let it pass—I will call another change.
I will be gifted with a wondrous soul,

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 straight I fling age, sorrow, sickness

off,

And I rise triumphing over my decay.

And thus it is that I supply the chasm
'Twixt what I am and all that I 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 is 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 not at a slave's name proudlier
than now,

And sympathy obscured by sophistries.
Why have not I sought refuge in myself.
But for the woes I saw and could not
stay—

And love!—do I not love thee, my
Pauline?

I cherish prejudice, lest I be left
Utterly loveless—witness this belief
In poets, tho' 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

Of her's in a strange tongue makes my
heart beat!

Pauline, I could do anything—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 tales 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 moun-
tain tree,

Or rise cheerfully springing to the
heavens,

Or like a fish breathe in the morning air
In the misty sun-warm water, or with
flowers

And trees 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 inspired—come with me, Pauline!

Night, and one single ridge of narrow
path

Between t' e sullen river and the woods
Waving and muttering—for the moon-
less night

Has shaped them into images of life.

Like the upraising 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,—
 Half in the air, like creatures of the
 place,
 Trusting the element—living on high
 boughs
 That swing in the wind—look at the
 golden 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 over-arch 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
 wildness—
 No turf nor moss, for boughs and plants
 pave all,
 And tongues of bank go shelving in the
 waters,
 Where the pale-throated snake reclines
 his head,
 And old grey stones lie making eddies
 there;
 The wild mice cross them dry-shod—
 deeper in—
 Shut thy soft eyes—now look—still
 deeper in:
 This is the very heart of the woods—all
 round,
 Mountain-like, heaped above us; yet
 even here

One pond of water gleams—far off the
 river
 Sweeps like a sea, barred out from land;
 but one—
 One thin clear sheet has over-leaped and
 wound
 Into this silent depth, which gained, it
 lies
 Still, as but let by sufferance; the trees
 bend
 O'er it as wild men watch a sleeping girl,
 And thro' their roots long creeping
 plants stretch out
 Their twined hair, steeped and spark-
 ling; farther on,
 Tall rushes and thick flag-knots have
 combined
 To narrow it; so, at length, a silver
 thread
 It winds, all noiselessly, thro' the deep
 wood,
 Till thro' a cleft way, thro' the moss
 and stone,
 It joins its parent-river with a shout.
 Up for the glowing day—leave the old
 woods:
 See, they part, like a ruined arch, the
 sky!
 Nothing but sky appears, so close the
 root
 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 tho' 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,
see, set

On a heap of rocks, which look o'er the
far plains,

And envious climbing shrubs would
mount to rest,

And peer from their spread boughs.
There they wave, looking

At the muleteers, who whistle as they go
To the merry chime of their morning
bells, and all

The little smoking cots, and fields, and
banks,

And copses, bright in the sun; my
spirit wanders.

Hedgerows for me—still, living, hedge-
rows, where

The bushes close, and clasp above, and
keep

Thought in—I am concentrated—I
feel;—

But my soul saddens when it looks
beyond;

I cannot be immortal, nor taste all.

O God! where does this tend—these
struggling aims! ¹

What would I have? what is this 'sleep,'
which seems

To bound all? can there be a 'waking'
point

Of crowning life? The soul would never
rule—

It would be first in all things—it would
have

Its utmost pleasure filled,—but that
complete

Commanding for commanding sickens it.
The last point that 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 tho' nought else existed: we alone.
And as creation crumbles, my soul's

spark
Expands till I can say, 'Even from my-
self

I need thee, and I feel thee, and I love
thee;

I do not plead my rapture in thy works
For love of thee—or 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?

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?—*Non.*

¹ Je crains bien que mon pauvre ami ne soit pas toujours parfaitement compris dans ce qui reste à lire de cet étrange fragment—mais il est moins propre que tout autre à éclaircir ce qui de sa nature ne peut jamais être que songe et confusion. D'ailleurs je ne sais trop si en cherchant à mieux co-ordonner certaines parties l'on ne court pas le risque de nuire au seul mérite auquel une production si singulière peut prétendre—celui de donner une idée assez précise du genre qu'elle n'a fait qu'ébaucher.—Ce début sans prétention, ce renouement des passions qui va d'abord en accroissant et puis s'apaise par degrés, ces élans de l'âme, ce retour soudain sur soi-même, et, par-dessus tout, la tonnerre d'esprit toute particulière de mon ami, rendent les changements presque impossibles. Les raisons qu'il fait valoir ailleurs, et d'autres encore plus puissantes, ont fait trouver grâce à mes yeux pour cet écrit qu'autrement je lui eusse conseillé de jeter au feu.—Je n'en crois pas moins au grand principe de toute composition—à ce principe de Shakspeare, de Ruffelle, de Beethoven, d'où il suit que la concentration des idées est due bien plus à leur conception, qu'à leur mise en exécution. . . j'ai tout lieu de craindre que la première de ces qualités ne soit encore étrangère à mon ami—et je doute fort qu'un redoublement de travail lui fasse acquérir la seconde. Le mieux serait de brûler ceci; mais que faire?

Je crois que dans ce qui suit il fait allusion à un certain examen qu'il fit autrefois de l'âme ou plutôt de son âme, pour découvrir la suite des objets auxquels il lui serait possible d'attacher, et dont chacun une fois obtenu devant former une espèce de plateau d'au l'on pouvait apercevoir d'autres buts, d'autres projets, d'autres jouissances qui, à leur tour, devaient être surmontés. Il en résultait que l'oubli et le sommeil devaient tout terminer. Cette idée que je ne sais pas parfaitement lui est peut-être aussi intelligible qu'à moi.

PAULINE.

Can I forgo the trust that he loves me ?
Do I not feel a love which only ONE . . .
O thou pale form, so dimly seen, deep-
eyed,

I have denied thee calmly—do I not
Pant when I read of thy consummate
deeds,

And burn to see thy calm, pure truths
out-flash

The brightest gleams of earth's philo-
sophy ?

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 tho' 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 thy bursting 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
Deserting me : and old shades gathering
on :

Yet while its last light waits, I would say
much.

And chiefly, I am glad that I have said
That love which I have ever felt for thee,
But seldom told ; our hearts so beat
together,

That speech is mockery, but when dark
hours come :

And I feel sad ; and thou, sweet, deem'st
it strange ;

A sorrow moves me, thou canst not
remove,

Look on this lay I dedicate to thee,
Which thro' thee I began, and which
I end,

Collecting the last gleams to strive to
tell

That I am thine, and more than ever
now—

That I am sinking fast—yet tho' I sink,
No less I feel that thou hast brought me
bliss,

And that I still may hope to win it back.
Thou know'st, dear friend, I could not
think all calm,

For wild dreams followed me, and bore
me off,

And all was indistinct. Ere one was
caught

Another glanced : so dazzled by my
wealth,

Knowing not which to leave nor which
to choose,

For all my thoughts so floated, nought
was fixed—

And then thou said'st a perfect bard
was one

Who shadowed out the stages of all life,
And so thou badest me tell this my first
stage ;—

'Tis done ; and even now I feel all dim:
the shift

Of thought. These are my last thoughts ;
I discern

Faintly immortal life, and truth, and
good.

And why thou must be mine is, that e'en
now,

In the dim hush of night—that I have
done—

With fears and sad forebodings : I look
thro'

And say, '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 in the sun like
broods of swans.

How the blood lies upon her cheek, all
spread

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 dear thing to kiss
and love,

Standing beneath me—looking out to
me.

As I might kill her and be loved for it.

Love me—love me, Pauline, love nought
but me ;

Leave me not. All these words are wild
and weak :

Believe them not, Pauline. I stooped
so low

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 to thee, nor
seek

Again the world of good thoughts left
for me.

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 the dim whole.
And a 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
for 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.' I am very weak,

But what I would express is,—Leave
me not,

Still sit by me—with beating breast, and
hair

Loosened—watching earnest by my
side,

Turning my books, or kissing me when I
Look up—like summer wind. Be still
to me

A key to music's mystery, when mind
fails,

A reason, a solution, and a clue.

You see I have thrown off my prescribed
rules :

I hope in myself—and hope, and pant,
and love—

You'll find me better—know me more
than when

You loved me as I was. Smile not ;
I have

Much yet to gladden you—to dawn on
you.

No more of the past—I'll look within no
more—

I have too trusted to my own wild
wants—

Too trusted to myself—to intuition,
Draining the 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, and ends

Hard to be dreamed of, stared at me as
fixed,

And others suddenly became all foul,
As a fair witch turned an old hag at

night.
No more of this—we will go hand in
hand,

I will go with thee, even as a child,
Looking no further than thy sweet

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 all girt

With ropes of snow—where nature lies
all bare,

Suffering none to view her but a race
Most stunted and deformed—like the

mute dwarfs

Which wait upon a naked Indian queen.
And there (the time being when the
heavens are thick

With storms) I'll sit with thee while thou
dost sing

Thy native songs, gay as a desert bird
Who crieth as he flies for perfect joy,
Or telling me old stories of dead knights.
Or I will read old lays to thee—how
she,

The fair pale sister, went to her chill
grave

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 doubts. So when
spring comes,

And sunshine comes again like an old
smile,

And the fresh waters, and awakened
birds,

And budding woods await us—I shall be
Prepared, and we will go and think
again,

And all old loves shall come to us—but
changed

As some sweet thought which harsh
words veiled before ;

Feeling God loves us, and that all that
errs

Is a strange dream which death will
dissipate :

And then when I am firm we'll seek
again

My own land, and again I will approach
My old designs, and calmly look on all
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 tho' it
fade,

And tho' ere the cold morning all be
gone

As it will be ;—tho' music wait for me,

And fair eyes and bright wine, laughing
like sin,

Which steals back softly on a soul half
saved ;

And I be first to deny all, and despise
This verse, and these intents which seem
so fair :

Still this is 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 treasures—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 forever,
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, having thus again been visited,
Shall doubt not many another bliss
awaits,

And tho' this weak soul sink, and dark-
ness come,

Some little word shall light it up again,
And I shall see all clearer and love better ;

I shall again go o'er the tracts of thought,
As one who has a right ; and I shall live

With poets—calmer—purer still each
time,

And beauteous shapes will come to me
again,

And unknown secrets will be trusted me,
Which were not mine when wavering—

but now
I shall be priest and lover, 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

Helix indeed—so, I would lean on thee;
Thou must be ever with me—most in
gloom
When such shall come—but chiefly when
I die,
For I seem dying, as one going in the
dark
To fight a giant—and live 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.

PARACELSUS

INSCRIBED TO
AMÉDÉE DE RIPERT-MONCLAR,
BY HIS AFFECTIONATE FRIEND

March 15th, 1835.

R. B.

PERSONS.

AUREOLUS PARACELUS, a student. FESTUS and MICHAËL, his friends.
APRILE, an Italian poet.

I. PARACELUS ASPIRES.

SCENE, Würzburg; a garden in the
environs. 1512.

FESTUS, PARACELUS, MICHAËL.

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 wayward-
ness

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 over-
look

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 their frailty.
Mich. Aureole!

Par. Drop by drop! she is weeping
like a child!

Not so! I am content—more than con-
tent;

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 flies,

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: langh
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. Now, Aureole, stay those wan-
dering 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 Würzburg 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
Enroaching 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, behold 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
eye.
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 . . . ! 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 Würzburg. Oh, one
day
You shall be very proud ! Say on, dear
friends !
Fest. In truth ? 'Tis for my proper
peace, indeed,
Rather than yours ; for vain all pro-
jects seem
To stay your course : I said my latest
hope
Is fading even now. A story tells
Of some far embassy dispatched to win
The favour of an eastern king, and
how
The gifts they offered proved but daz-
zling dust
Shed from the ore-beds native to his
cline.
Just so, the value of repose and love,
I meant should tempt you, better far
than I
You seem to comprehend ; and yet de-
sist
No whit from projects where repose nor
love
Have part.
Par. Once more ? Alas ! as I fore-
bode.
Fest. A solitary briar 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 pur-
suit,
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 de-
sign,

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 ? I
wish

To send my son in good hopes after you ;
Never to sorrow that uncertain words

Erringly apprehended, a new creed
Ill 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 thrivelless
 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 ostentations 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 con-
 firmed,
 That you prepared to task to the utter-
 most
 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,
nor 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 your sages.

Fest. Such the aim, then,
God sets before you; and 'tis doubt-
less 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 obe-
dience

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 pur-
pose

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 gier-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,
 beside
 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 splen-
 dours 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 vast 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 their 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 and un-
 tired force,
 As at old games a runner snatched the
 torch
 From runner still : this way success
 might be.
 But you have coupled with your enter-
 prise,
 An arbitrary self-repugnant scheme
 Of seeking it in strange and untrod
 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 panted but would
not stay,

Old ravaged cities that, renouncing her,
She called an endless curse on, so it
came:

Or, worst of all, now—men you visit, men,
Ignoblest troops that 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, pre-
cept,

Aidless 'mid these he thinks to stand
alone:

Thick like a glory round the Stagirite
Your rivals throng, the sages: here
stand you!

Whate'er 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 I would 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' of the breath so
light

Upon my eyelids, of the fire of my
Among my bones, of the music of my
yet never

So dull, so dim, when that sun
beamed

I turned to see, so dimly
tossing

A water-nake, and then, as his
scales

And having this, I turned about
me

While Einsiedeln, its cornucopia, 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 ap-
peared

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 man-
kind,

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 wilder-
ness,
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-weathered and radiant, forehead
and full eye.
Well pleased was I their state should
thus at once

Interpret my own 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 ob-
tained,
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 counte-
nance,
No veil between ; and can thy faltering
hands
Unguided by thy brain the sight ab-
sorb
Pursue their task as earnest blinker 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.

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 inter-
course

With the human mind : I understood,
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,
imbed

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 results, 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. I 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 fire-balls, 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 com-
pletely

But scattered wrecks enough of it
remain,

Dim memories, as now, when seems once
more

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 com-
missary ! 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 help

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 damned 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 further 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 . . .

To me! 'er! I deny myself but little

In wanting 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, nor bound 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. I 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 owe you one
Of higher order, under other laws

Than bind us; therefore, curb not our bold glance!

'Tis best aspire. Once mingled with us all . . .

Mich. Stay with us, Aureole! cast these 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.

See, 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
Blinds 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 eape

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 a kness, 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 untried 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 the 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 lorn 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 His, like those who set them-
 selves
 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 theirs 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 schistons
 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. We wait you when you rise!

II. PARACELSUS'S ATTAINS.

SCENE. *Constantinople; the House of a Greek conjurer.* 1521.

PARACELSUS'S.

Over the waters in the vaporous West
The sun goes down as in a sphere of gold
Behind the arm of the city, which be-
tween,
With all 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 you
cloud
Should voyage unwreck'd o'er many
a mountain-top
And break upon a molehill. I have
dared
Come to this with knowledge; scan
the
The height already reached, without
To the centre above; fairly compute
All I have clearly gained; for once
excludin
A faint hint to supply and perfect
All half-gains and conjectures and crude
opes—
And an, because the 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, 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 scrutinize 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 life—
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 long seasons pass o'er him
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
back-shrinking—
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 mo-
 ments! 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 the
 request
 My labour qualified me to present
 With no fear of refusal? Had I gone
 Slightly 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-courts
 so far
 That he descends 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
 Where to 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 vows,
 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 barren-
 ness,
 Would seem one day, remembered as it
 was,
 Beside the parched sand-waste which
 now it is,
 Already strewn with faint blooms, view-
 less 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 Würzburg, 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
th'ok 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, Anreole, 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 all,
 Mistaken the wild nursling of my breast ?
 Knowledge it seemed, and Power, and Recompense !
 Was she who glided through 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 frequency 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-labourum 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 was 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 ask 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, come !
 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 shall we clothe, how arm the spirit
 Who next shall 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 sur-
 mise
 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 with-
 stood her lips,
 The siren's ! Yes, 'tis like thou hast
 attained !
 Tell me, dear master, wherefore now
 thou comest ?

I thought thy solemn songs would have
 their need

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 hadst
 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-springs, as some crys-
 tal-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,

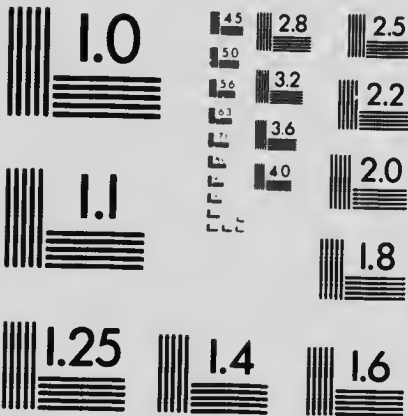
Born for thy fate—because I could not
 curb

My yearnings to possess at once the full
 Enjoyment, but neglected all the means



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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, triumph-
 ing,
 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 !
 O 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
 creature 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 form 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 wants :
 So, I create a world for these my slaves
 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
If 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 con-
trived

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
flag.'

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 desery 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 tracts 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 ex-
plored,

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 moun-
tain snow

And comforts violets in their hermitage.
But, master, poet, who hast done all
this,

How didst thou 'scape the ruin wheeling
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, not 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 well-fare 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,

Whoin 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 unhop'd 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 eirclet 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,

Not dreaming you are near ? Her carols
dropt

In flakes through that old leafy bower
built under

The sunny wall at Würzburg, from her
lattice

Among the trees above, while I, un-
seen,

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 mother-

hood ;
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
seenre

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, incom-
plete—

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, have thoughts like these e'er

shaped 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 your-
self

To tranquil pleasures, must at heart
despise . . .

Par. Festus, strange secrets are let
out by Death,

Who blabs sooft 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 princees' 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 pansies¹, eyes that laugh, 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
Should 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 ?

¹ Citrinula (clauumula) herba Paracelso multum familiaris. Dons.

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, besides,
are clearly

Guiltless of understanding more, a whit,
The subject than your stool—allowed
to be

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 herds-
men's souls

Of ancient time, whose eyes, calm as
their flocks,

Saw in the stars mere garnishry of
heaven,

In earth a stage for altars, nothing more.
Never change, Festus : I say, never
change !

Fest. My God, if he be wretched after
all !

Par. 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,
awakes

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 search-

ing 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 'tis 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 Würz-
burg days !

Not to prolong a time 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 hare,
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,

Here Oecolampadius, looking worlds of
wit,

Here Castellanus, as profound as he,
Munsterus here, Frobenius there, all
squeezed.

And staring—that to many of the show,
Even Paracelsus, all put off before
them

His trappings with a grace but seldom
judged

Expedient in such a case :—the grim
smile

That will go round, not therefore
best

To venture a rehearsal of the present
In a small way ? What are the signs
I seek,

The first-fruits and fair sample of the
scorn

Due to all quacks ? What, this will
never do !

Fest. These are four signs—
nought beside !

The effect of watching, studs

Were there a spark of truth in the con-
fusion

Of these wild words, you would not out-
rage 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 Michael'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 dis-
comfiture

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 steps ? 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 prophesying goes ;
At fault a little in detail, but quite

Precise enough in the main ; and hereupon

I 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 fret-work 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 unflinching, and in spite of
this,

You have experienced a defeat, why,
then

I say not, you would cheerfully with-
draw

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, ap-
proved

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,—

Far be it 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
ceased the earth

For me, but that the droll despair which
sciz'd

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 recom-
pense—

Much largess from his highness to the
monks—

And the vast solace of his loving people,

Whose general satisfaction to increase,
The prince was pleased no longer to
defer

The burning of some dozen hereties,
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—
had 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 sup-
port a pile

Of patents, licences, diplomas, titles,
From Germany, France, Spain, and
Italy ;

They authorize some honour ; ne'erthe-
less,

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 favours'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 to-
gether.

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 to
me

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 admire—
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 character'd

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's,
As knows some dumb and tortured
brute what Man,

His stern 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 im-
posed,

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, un-
dreamed 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 too 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 further toil,
Which you find heinous, would be as
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 : there-
fore 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 ap-
prise 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 to-day,

Remove the full half sheer amazement
draws,

Mere novelty, nought else ; and next,
the tribe

Whose innate blockish dulness just per-
ceives

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 ser-
vice,

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 !

Those 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 display.

Another. Had renown been 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 to 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 inclinations 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 words
To further my own aims ! 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 conscious-
ness
Of failure is assumed.

Par. My friend, my friend,
I tell, 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 re-
counts

The perilous journey he has late per-
formed,

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 things, much less to undergo
Another's scrutiny ; but so it chances
That I am led to trust my state to
you :

And the event is, you combine, con-
trast,

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 or 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 lazari-
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 stanch our wounds, secure from
further harm :

We are assailed to life's ex- . . . est 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,
And 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 or
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 'twas not my desire to set abroad
Such memories and forebodings : I
foresaw

Where they would drive. 'Twere better
to discuss

News of Lucerne or Zurich ; or to 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 Anreole !
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 will.

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 confess endears you more,
 Like the far traces of decay in suns.
 I bid you have good cheer !
Par. Praeclarè ! Optimè !
 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
 Writs 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, whatsoever 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
 Their 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, and withhold
 Its arms until you have taught 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-times;
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 me

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,
Aëtius, Oribasius, Galen, Rhasis,

Serapion, Avicenna, Averröes,—
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 Æcolampadius. 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 Wittenburg—(you
know,

I make no doubt, the differences of late
With Carolostadius)—and returning

sought
Basil and...

Par. I remember. Here's a case,
now,

Will teach 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-
stiffening

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 in-
structor.

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
beneath the load:

This he has done and nobly. Speed
that may!

Whatever be my chance or my mis-
chance,

What benefits mankind must glad me
too:

And men seem made, though not as I
believed,

For something better than the times
produce.

Witness these gangs of peasants your
new lights

From Snabia have possessed, whom
Münzer 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 all together! 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
moaning 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 so-
ever,

To some fine life to come? Man must
be fed

With angel's 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 consti-
tute

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 dark-
ness seems

Dilated ; 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, is 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 glistening 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 ;

Fer 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 OFORINUS,
his secretary.] *Sic itur ad*
astra ! Dear Von Visenburg

Is scandalized, and poor Torinus para-
lysed,

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 Pütter had not frowned us
dumb.

We live ; and shall as surely start to-
morrow

For Nuremburg, as we drink speedy
seathe

To Basil in this mantling wine, suffused
A delicate blush, no fainter tinge is born
I' th' shut heart of a bud. Pledge me,
good John—

' Basil ; a hot plague ravage it, and
Pütter

Oppose the plague !' Even so ? Do you
too share

Their panic, the reptiles ? Ha, ha ; faint
through *them*,

Desist for *them* ! They managematters so
At Basil 'tis like : but others may find
means

To bring the stoniest 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 thenceforth 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 dispatch,
Dispatch, 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 Nuremburg! Now leave us; this grave clerk
Has divers weighty matters for my ear:
[DORINUS 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 folks 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 expense,
Knowing 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 anties 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 ne-
begin
To teach them, not amaze them.
impart
The spirit which should instigate
search
Of truth,' just what you bade me
spoke out.
Forthwith a mighty squadron, in dis-
gust,
Filed off—the sifted chaff of the sacra-
I said,
Redoubling my endeavour to secure
The rest. When lo! one man had
tarried so long
Only certain if I supported
This or of his, or that; another
loved
To hear impartially before he judged,
And having heard, now judge this
bland disciple
Passed for my dupe, but all along, it
seems,
Spied error where his neighbours mar-
velled most;
That fiery doctor who had hailed me
friend,
Did it because my by-paths, once
proved wrong
And beacons properly, would com-
mend 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 cold and what not. *Quid multa?*
The end
Was a dear class-room, and a quiet
lect-
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—
which the example was some luckless
wight
from my arrival had discomfited,
at now, it seems, the general voice
recalled
fill his chair and so efface the stain
which 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
Be then!
But just as I proposed to rid the tribe
Of my burdensome back, I could not spare
them
The pleasure of a parting kick.
You smile:
Deserve them as they merit!
If I smile,
This is as very contempt as ever
turned
Flashed into stone. This courteous
compense!
The faithful . . . Festus, were your
are fit
To be led, your eyes the eyes to ache
At gangrene-blotches, eating poison-
blains,
The ulcerous barky scurf of leprosy
Which linds—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.
O, 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, under-
go

In silence and resist 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 dic-
tates,

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, em-
bracing

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? But
still

They were dreams, 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 seaside 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 un-
rolled;

Or shredded perfume, like a cloud
From closet long to quiet vowed.

With moth 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 pos-
shed things,

Themselves fair and forgotten; yes, for-
gotten,

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, Anreole,

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 right-hearted
in my prime,

I am light-hearted now; what would
you have?

Aprile was a poet, I make songs—
'Tis the very angury 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 balk me

Of the meanest, earthliest, sensuallest
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 season-
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, siekne
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
heads,

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 Pütter, 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 illus-
trate

(*Fiat experientia corpore . . .*)

Your medicine's soundness in his person.

Wait,

Good Pütter!

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 swag-
gering; 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 sup-
plant

My youth's desires. You are no stupid
dupe:

You find me out! Yes, I 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 degrad-
ation;

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 other wise.
A stray wolf which the winter forces down

From our bleak hills, suffices to affright
A village in the vales—while foresters
Sleep ealm though all night long the
famished troops
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 stimu-
lants,

Will ne'er content you . . .

Par. Hush! I once despised them,
But that soon passes. We are high at
first

In our demands, 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
The 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 know-
ledge:

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 dis-
turbed me once,

But now, far from rejecting, I invite
What bids me press the closer, lay my-
self

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
quits me

To give place to some credulous disciple
Who holds that God is wise, but Para-
celsus

Has his peculiar merits: I suck in
That homage, chuckle o'er that ad-
miration,

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 throb-
bing 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—which, 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 Miehah...

Why do you start? I say, she listening
here,

(For yonder's Würzburg through the
orchard-boughs)

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 firstfruits 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 this?

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 sighs what we recover, mocking it.
This is the record; and my voice, the
wind's.

[*He sings.*

Over the seas 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 't and supplid 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 star-shine
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 nigh ;
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 and 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 we 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

May still be read on that deserted rock,
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, Anreole ; 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
Anreole !

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,

Envyng 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, and 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 nods,

And they 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 eall 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. Oporinus
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 ! 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, my petty subterfuges,
My rhymes and all this frothy shower
of words,

My glozing self-deceit, my outward
crust

Of lies which wrap, as tetter, morpheus,
furfair

Wrap the sound flesh ?—so, see you
flatter not !

Even God flatters ! but my friend, at
least,

Is true. I would depart, secure hence-
forth

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 calls

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 to me is most inexplicable ?

And should you perish without recom-
pense

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 mis-
reants dared

Insult me—me she loved : so, grieve
her not.

Fest. Your ill success can little grieve
her now.

Par. Michal 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 de-
spairing,

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 !—Be-
hold !

V. PARACELsus ATTAINS.

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

FESTUS, PARACELsus.

Fest. No change ! The weary night
is wellnigh 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 month, 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 creep-
ing 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 live, 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 meed—
 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 to 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 art not made like us ;
 We should be wroth in such a case ; but
 Thou
 Forgive—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 wakes ! Aureole, I am here ! 'tis Festus !
 I cast away all 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 !

Let me speak to him in another's name.
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.

O, 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 ?

I 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
their 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 under-
foot,

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
contempt,

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 ink
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 stand 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 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 eringe 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 eave 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 mummings,

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 contract—

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 black-

ness

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 ! Ye clear voice

Vibrates too like a harp-string. Do you ask

How could I still remain on earth, should God

Grant me the great approval which I seek ?

I, you, and God can comprehend each other,

But men would murmur, and with cause enough ;

For when they saw me, stainless of all sin,

Preserved and sanctified by inward light,
They would complain that comfort,

shut from them,
I drank thus unspied ; that they live

on,

Nor taste the quiet of a constant joy.
For ache and care and doubt and weariness,

While I am calm ; help being vouchsafed to me,

And hid from them !—'Twere best consider 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. It at first
I sought . . . but wherefore bear 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
 willingly
 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
 That fed my youth! One only 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.

They 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 Jane: 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 pre-
 pared
 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
 That 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 to me,
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 redemp-
tion 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 trick,

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 splendour : 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 convul-
sive throes

With which thy deeds were born, would
scorn as well

The winding sheet of 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, any thing—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 zeanty 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 stont;
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, erep 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?

Fest. A lone: you know me?
This cell?

Par. An unexceptionable vault:
Good brick and stone: the bats kept
out, 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 the 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 half 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 sub-
sides,

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'er-
strewn

With ravaged boughs and remnants of
the shere ;

And now some islet, loosened from the
land,

Swims past with all its trees, sailing to
ocean ;

And now the air is full of upturned 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 looker-on and nothing more !

Indifferent and amused 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 slipped
Away from me ; it will return 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 ap-
proval,

Where was it gone so long, so well pre-
served ?

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 Anreole, 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 pur-
pose : 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 more ! Stay :
this posture

Hardly befits one thus about to speak :
I will arise,

Fest. Nay, Anreole, 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 ; ha, 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, Anreole, all
your sin ?

Par. Ay, pardoned ! yet why par-
doned ?

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 Him-
self ?

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 done! 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
inseparable!

Par. Yes, it was in me; I was born
for it—

I, 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 to
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
wrong

As an extreme, last boon, from destiny,
Into occasion for new covetings,
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 majestic!
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 ...! flashing splendour, set
my heart

Trembling so much as warned me I
stood there

On suffering—not to idly gaze, but
earnest

Light on a darkling race; save for that
accident,

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 ever
more,

Yet whom existence in its lowest form
Includes where dwells enjoyment
there is He !

With still a flying point or bliss remote,
A happiness in store afar, a sphere
Of distant glory in full view ; thus climbs
Pleasure its heights for ever and forever !
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, out-
branches bright

In hidden mines, spots barrer 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 unconth-
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, be-
tween

The withered tree-roots and the cracks
of frost,

Like a smile striving with a wrinkled
face ;

The grass grows bright, the boughs are
sworn 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 here 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, east 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,

A 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, in a wail or 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,
 Ashape 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 this 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's self is not yet Man !
 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'erlooks 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 ? O, long ago
 The brow was twitched, the tremulous lids astir,
 The peaceful month 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,
 Thence 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 run by life.
 For men begin to pass their nature's bound,

And find new hopes and cares which fast
supplant
Their proper joys and griefs ; they out-
grow all
The 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 dis-
perse
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 en-
dowed,
I failed : I gazed on power till I grew
blind.
On power ; I could not take my eyes
from that :
That only, I thought, should be pre-
served, 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, imbecility,
The record of disgraces best forgotten,
A sullen page in human chronicles
Fit to erase. I saw no cause why man
Should not be 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 its
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 tools, 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 : the
Present for thee
Shall have distinct and trembling
beauty, seen
Beside that Past's own shade whence,
in relief,
Its brightness shall stand out : nor on
thee yet
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 de-
creased,
While obstacles sprung up this way and
that
To keep me from effecting half the sum,
Small as it proved ; as objects, mean
within
The primal aggregate, seemed, even the
least,

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JUNIORATE
OF ST. JOHN THE APOSTLE

Itself a match for my concentrated
 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 dis-
 burthened
 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 its present
 means,
 And earnest for new power to set it free.
 I learned this, and supposed the whole
 was learned:
 And thus, when men received with
 stupid wonder
 My first revealings, would have wor-
 shipped me,
 And I despised and loathed their pro-
 ferred praise—
 When, with awakened eyes, they took
 revenge
 For past credulity in casting scorn
 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 man-
 kind,
 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 tal-
 lacies,
 Their prejudice and fears and eares and
 doubts;
 Which all touch upon nobleness, despite
 Their error, all tend upwardly 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 light-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.
 You understand me? I have said
 enough?
Fest. Now die, dear Aureole!
Par. Festus, let my hand—
 This hand, lie in your own, my own true
 friend!
 Aprile! Hand in hand with you, Aprile!

Fest. And this was Paracelsus!

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY

FLORENCE, 1850

CHRISTMAS-EVE

I.

Out of the little chapel I flung,
Into the fresh night-air again.
Five minutes I waited, held my tongue
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,
Four feet long by two 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
safeguard 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 priestli-
ness

Lending itself to hide their beastliness

Socleverly (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.

II.

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 handker-
 chief,
 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 ven-
 tured
 To take with us, the elect, your station ?
 A carer for none of it, a Gallio ?'—
 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 lip 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 Candle-
 stick.
 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 ex-
 clusiveness,
 And, taking God's word under wise
 protection,
 Correct its tendency to diffusiveness,
 And bid one reach it over hot plough-
 shares,—
 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-vesti-
 ment :
 So, shut your mouth and open your
 Testament,
 And carve me my portion at your
 quickest !'
 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 spike-
 wise
 At the shutting door, and entered like-
 wise,
 Received the hinge's accustomed greet-
 ing,
 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
 elover,
 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 neighbor'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 stu-
 pidity,
 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 got our friend an inkling
 Of treasure hid in the Holy Bible,
 (Whene'er 'twas that 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 Scrip-
 tures.
 And you picked them up, in a sense, no
 doubt :
 Nay, had but a single face of my neigh-
 bours
 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 quail 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.

IV.

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 the 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
 n' hill.
 I stooped under and soon felt better ;
 My head grew light, 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,

—How this 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 or reproducing,
More or less perfectly, (who can tell ?—)

Of the mood itself, that strengthens by
using ;

And how it happens, I understand well.
A time 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
again,

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-

Even,

Does the selfsame 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 that power, an equal evidence
That His love, there too, was the nobler
dower.

For the loving worm within its elod,
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 con-
tinent,

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 : he love less or more
In the heart of man, he keeps it shut
Or opens 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 a 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 I shall behold Thee, face to face,
O God, and in Thy light retrace
How in all I loved here, still wast Thou !
Whom pressing to, then, as I fain would
now,

I shall find us able to satiate
The love, Thy gift, as my spirit's wonder
Thou art able to quicken and sublimiate,
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 !

VI.

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,

Spring 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 com-
pressed,

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 frequency,
Till the heaven of heavens were circum-
flect.

Another rainbow rose, a mightier,
Fainter, blushier, 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 ?

VII.

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,
Someone man knew God called his name.
For me, I think I said, ' Appare !
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
Glittered 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 serpentine 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 remembered, He did say
Doubtless, that, to this world's end,
Where two or three should meet and
pray,

He would be in their 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 if 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 earest sinning ?
Am I not weak as Thou art strong ?
Have looked to Thee from the beginning,
Straight up to Thee through all the
world

Which, like an idle scroll, lay fabled
To nothingness on either side :
And since the time Thou wast deserted,
Spate of the weak heart, so have I
Lived ever, and so fain would die,
Living and dying, Thee before !
But if Thou leavest me—'

IX.

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, and 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 shake

At the poorest love was ever offered :

And because it was 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 !'

X.

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 this colonnade

With arms wide open to embrace

The entry of the human race

To the breast of . . . what is it, you
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 !
 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
 U' 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 ! '

XI.

Yet I was left outside the door.
 Why sat I there 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 me. 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 tram-
pled 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 a filthy saint rebuked the gust
With which he chanced to get a sight
Of some dear naked Aphrodite
He glanced a thought above the toes of,
By breaking zealously her nose off.
Love, surely, from that music's lin-
gering,
Might have filched her organ-linging,
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 un-
buckled,

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 the senses' 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
levy.

They take, as it were, a padlock, and 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 in-
cessant,

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 of it.

I will rejoice that God had the pre-
ference.

XII.

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 minds of the public to finish
 it,
 Since cut it ruefully short he must :
 On the face alone he expends his devo-
 tion,
 He rather would mar than resolve to
 diminish it,
 —Saying, ' Applaud me for this grand
 notion
 Of what a face may be ! As for com-
 pleting 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, or Frankfurt,
 Or Göttingen, that I have to thank
 for 't ?
 It may be Göttingen,—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 folks 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, wellnigh 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 silence ;
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 spectaeles,
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's discourse.

XV.

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, gave, 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 omniseient,
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.

XVI.

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 by a 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 told)
 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 Attie 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 Göttingen,
 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 proponnd
 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 where
 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.—
 For thus inventing thing and title
 Worship were that man's 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.
 I 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 his 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 eistern 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 a 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 a con-
 dition,
 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 the damage done
 rewardingly,
 So, prize we our dust and ashes accord-
 ingly !
 ' 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 com-
 pass 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,
 While we lounged on at our indebted
 case :

Instead of which, a tricky 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 the plainest Heavenly
 warrant,

I were ready and glad to give this
 world up—

But still, when you rub the 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 ridicu-
 lous !

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 mockhorse,
 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, forgetfulness !
Better a mild indifferentism,
Teaching that all our faiths (tho'gh
duller

His shine through a dull spirit's prism)
Originally had one colour—
Sending me on a pilgrimage
Through ancient and through modern
times

To many peoples, various climes,
Where I may see Saint, Savage, Sage
Fuse their respective creeds in one
Before the general Father's throne !

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 !—
Swept forward from my stupid hand,
While I watched my foolish heart ex-
pand

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.
For I, a man, with men am linked,
And not a brute with brutes ; no
gain

That I experience, must remain
Unshared : but should my best en-
deavour
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 seems
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 of the wandering world of rain,
Into the little chapel again.

XXII.

How else was I found there, bolt up-
right
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 self-
same 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 mis-
takable,

Of her milk of kindness turning rancid.
In short, a spectator might have fancied
That I 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 a 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 judged
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 may
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, dispatched 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 a word, convulse
The world with the leap of its river-
pulse,—

Therefore I turned from the oozeings
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,

That the waterless cup will quench my
thirst.

—Better have knelt at the poorest
stream

That trickle 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 east 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,
Turn'd sick at last of the day's buffoonery,

Of its posturings and its petticoatings,
Beside his Bourbon bully's gloatings

In the bloody orgies of drunk poltroonery !
Nor may the Professor forego its peace

At Göttingen, presently, when, in the dusk
Of his life, if his cough, as I fear, should

increase,

Propheesied of by that horrible husk ;
When, thicker and thicker, the dark-
ness fills

The world through his misty spectacles,
And he gropes for something more sub-
stantial

Than a fable, myth, or personification,—
May Christ do for him, what no mere
man shall.

And stand confessed as the God of sal-
vation !

Meantime, in the still recurring fear
Lest myself, at unawares, be found,
While attacking the choice of my neigh-
bours round,

Without 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 aw-
ful,—

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 the frothy spume and frequent
sputter

Prove that the soul's depths boil in
earnest !

May the 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 in Whitfield's

Collection,

To conclude with the doxology.

EASTER-DAY

I.

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?'
 Ah, that's a question in the dark—
 And the sole thing that I remark
 Upon the difficulty, this;
 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.

II.

At first you say, 'The whole, or chief
 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 made acquit,
 Through the brief minute's fierce annoy,
 Of God's eternity of joy.'

III.

—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.

IV.

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 . . .

V.

I see!

You would grow as a natural tree,
 Stand as a rock, soar up like fire.
 The world's so perfect and entire.
 Quite above faith, so right and fit!
 Go 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.—
 Besides, 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 on a huge curtain so,
 Grandly, no, seeks to have it go
 Foddlless 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 clap her wings and erow
 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 re-
 mains ?
 '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
 God's dispensation's merciful,
 More pettishly we try and cull
 Briars, thistles, from our private plot,
 To mar God's ground where thorns are
 not !'

VIII.

Do you say this, or I ?—Oh, you !
 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
 earth
 Shuddered at,—all, the heavens grew
 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 ! Were 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 formal licence and complete
 To the fair and pick the sweet
 But to be certain 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 !
 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 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 ?'

X.

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
 Our friends were 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 condemn,—
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 St. Paul for Aeschylus ?
—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 ! Cath' loined
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 . . .

XIII.

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, watching 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—
You've 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 ease, now, did I fall
 Dead here, this minute—should I lie
 Faithful or faithless?'—Note that I
 Inclined thus ever!—little prone
 For instance, when I lay alone
 In childhood, 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 might: but how improbable!
 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,—
As when great conflagrations kill
Night overheard, 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 ne'ertheless 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 empty
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 !

XIX.

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 paradisaal 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 dread, 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 bared
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.

XX.

' 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 of God's own 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 en-
dure,—

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
For ever—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 cloe-flower ?

XXIV.

Then the Voice, ‘Welcome so to rate
The errar folds that variegate
The earth's 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 expire

The secret, mimner 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 relledge !
 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 the poor tentatives 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 form, 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
 Enblazoning 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 ;
 Nothing to heighten nor abate :
 Transfer the same completeness here,
 To serve a new state's use, — and dread
 Deficiency gapes every side !
 The good, tried once, were bad, retrieved.
 See the enwrapping rocky niche,
 Sufficient for the sleep, in which
 The lizard breathes for ages safe :
 Split the mould — and as this would chafe
 The creature's new world-widened sense,
 One minute after day dispense
 The thousand sounds and sights that
 broke

In, on him, 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 !
 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, —
 Whe, 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 out-
side !'

XXVII.

I cried in anguish, ' Mind, the mind,
So miserably cast behind,
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 equipt
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 tire-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—
" Where to 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,
That 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
rechanged—

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 earth, which 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 !'

XXIX.

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 loving 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 of a woman yet
With eyes to help me to forget,
Shall live with me ; and I will match
Departed love with love, attach
Its fragments to my whole, 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,
For love, then, 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 ?

SORDELLO

1840

TO J. MILSAND, OF DIJON.

Dear Friend,—Let the next poem be introduced by your name, 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, I trust, though away and past it, to continue ever yours, R. B.

LONDON, June 9, 1863.

BOOK THE FIRST

Who will, may hear Sordello's story
told:
His story? Whobelieves meshall 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, I single out
Sordello, compassed mnrkily about
With, ravage of six long sad hundred
years.
Only believe me. Ye believe?
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,
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 dis-
 grace;
 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,
 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 under-
stood,

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 in-
trigue.

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; Este makes
Mirth for the devil when he undertakes
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 un-
known,

That quick with prey enough her hunger
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 lly 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 enrougls
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, Guelfs rebuilt
Their houses; not a drop of blood was
spilt

When Cino Bocchimpano chanced to
meet

Buccio Virtù—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, Podestà, "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 Guelfs
laugh, drunk

A week with joy. The next, their
laughter sunk

In sobs of blood, for they found, some
strange way,

Old Salinguerra back again—I say.

Old 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
 woe!"
 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 cata-
 logue
 Of burnt Guelph 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!
 Such the time's aspect and peculiar woe
 Yourselves may spell it yet in chronicle:
 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 Tenton come to
 life!'
 Groaned the Great League; and,
 arming for the strife,
 Wide Lombardy, on tiptoe to begin,
 Took up, as it was Guelph 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,
 Nothing save such another throe can
 wrest
 From out (conceive) a certain choke-
 weed 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
 mured
 Dispread themselves, mantling the
 troubled main,
 And, shattered by those rocks, took
 hold again.
 So kindly blazed:—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 purr

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 the Trevisan,
Conrad describes no fitter, rear or van,
Than Ecelo ! They laughed 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 Snabian's
fief !

No laughter when his son, 'the Lom-
bard Chief'

Forsooth, as Barbarossa's path was bent
To Italy along the Vale of Trent,
Welcomed him 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 besecms
The grisliest nightmare of the Church's
dreams,

—A Signory firm-rooted, unestranged
From its old interests, and nowise
changed

By its new neighbourhood ; perchance
the vauut

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 stly 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 instru-
ment,

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 writen hands to
pray,

Lost at Oliero's convent.

Hill-cats, face

With Azzo, our Guelf Lion !—nor dis-
grace

A worthiness conspicuous near and far
(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 brother-
hood,

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 Hilde-
brand.

The same night wears. V. . . rule
of yore

Was vested in a certain . . .
And while within his palace the debate
Concerning Richard and . . . fate,
Glide we by clapping . . .
glare

Of cressets vented on the . . .
For aught that's . . .
shut

The smother in, the light . . .
The carroch's booming . . .

Why strange

Such a recess should lurk behind . . .
Of banquet-rooms? Your . . .
—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 sharp-
ened 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 reels he, saturate with her,
Until an outcry from the square beneath
Pierces the chain: he springs up, gl
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

the Armenian bridegroom's dying-
lay.

To his wool wedding-robe. For he—
he,

late— of this hearts' blood of Lomb-
ardy,

(If I stand falter now)—for he is Thine!
Forth to, thy forerunner, Florentine!

A herald-star I know thou didst absorb
Releas'd 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 brilliance for, bleat
Uttered 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, discus-
twine

That under-current soft and argentine
From its fierce mate in the majestic mass

Leavened as the sea whose fire was mixt
with lass

In John's transcendent vision,—launch
once more

That lustre? Dante, pacer of the shore
Where glutted hell disgorgeth filthiest

gloom,
Unbitten by its whirling 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,

Go to ; 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 ! But
quick

To the main wonder, *see*. A vault,
see ; thick

Black shade about the opening, 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 lily

flesh
Beneath her Maker's finger when the
fresh

First pulse of life shot brightening the
snow.

The font's edge lurchens 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
he dregs.

And every eve, Sordello's visit begs
Burden 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

Sunset 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 slits 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 brodered
 forms,
 On tiptoe, lifting in both hands a light
 Which makes yon warrior's visage flutter
 bright
 —Ecce, dismal father of the brood,
 And Ecce, 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! Your-
 selves 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; and 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 to 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 sealed 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 passionately he kneels to it,
Whence grew the idol's empery. So
rims

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 eagerly looks,
too,

On beauty, but, unlike the gentler crew,
Proclaims each new revelation 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 their
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; 'where-
fore 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
stamp

With individuality—unrampant
By living its faint elemental life,

Dost soar to heaven's completest
essence, rife

With grandeur, 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 such 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

Emprise—the world's occasion worth-
less since

Not absolutely fitted to evince
Its mastery! 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 abyss
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,
Forehend on hand: a painful birth
must be

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,
i' 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
(Antoine)
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, trawl in then, hag, and
conch 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 choicest gifts of
gold.

Who will may hear Sordello's story
told,
And how he never could remember
when
He dwelt not at fioito. Calmly, then,
About this secret lodge of Adelaide's
glided his youth away: beyond the
glades
On the fir-forest's 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,

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 en-
grossed

Sordello in his drowsy Paradise:
The day's adventures for the days suffice—
Its constant tribute of perceptions
strange,

With sleep and stir in healthy inter-
change,

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 scarcely
or scant,

Puts forth two wondrous winglets, alters
quite,

And hies him after unforeseen delight.
So fed Sordello, not a shard disheathed:
As ever, round each new discovery,
wreathed

Luxuriantly the fancies infantine
His admiration, bent on making fine
Its novel friend at any risk, would thrice
In gay profusion forth: a ticklest 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 bur-
lesque

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-estooning every interval,
As the adventurous spider, making light
Of distance, shoots her threads from
depth to height.

From barbeian 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 banked 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 ruthless 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 filmless
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,

Byright the world should have imposed:
bereft

Of its good offices, Sordello, left
To study his companions, managed rip
Their fringe off, learn the true relation-
ship,

Core with its crust, their natures with his
own:

Amid his wild-wood sights helived alone.
As if the poppy felt with him! 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 flannets 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, one-self,'
(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 flame, 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 live 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 (hent 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 Tusean up,—her
eyes,

The maiden's, also, bluer with surprise)
—But the entire out-world: whatever
seraps

And snatches, song and story, dreams
perhaps,

Conceited the world's offices, and he
Had hitherto transferred to flower or tree,

Nor 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 szzerain,
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 clond's thunder or a dove's
brood-song?

—While they live each his life, least
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,

Irk some 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 a foreign recognition 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 con-
ceal—

This arbitrary good of theirs o'ergloss
What he have lived without, nor felt
the loss—

Qualities strange, ungainly, wearisome,
—What matter? so must speech ex-
pand the dumb

Part-sigh, part-smile with which Sor-
dello, late

No foolish woodland-sight could satiate,
Betakes himself to study hungrily

Just what the puppets his crude fantasy
Supposes notabest, 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, that on a marshalled flock
Of authorized enjoyments he may spend
Himself, be men, now, as he used to
blend

With tree and flower—nay more en-
tirely, 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?) 'Tis he in his tent

Remissly? Be it so, y head is bent

Deliciously amid n s to sleep.

What if he stalks Treachery—

Yon steel

I climbed an h with his toil—

We are alike re out can I too, foil

'The Gnelfs' and s abber, carelessly
afford

Saint Mark's spectacle, the sleight o'
the sw

Baffling their project 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 happil apt,
In fancy at his beck. 'One d

Accomplish it! Are they not all
—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 lend 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 Eccelin 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 into 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 beseechingnesses, and re-
duced

Themselves eventually, graces loosed,
And lavished strengths, 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—
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 spell-

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 dis-
spread,

Dispart, disperse, lingering overhead
Like an escape of angels ? 'Tis the tune,
Nor much unlike the words the women
croon

Smilingly, colourless and faint-designed
Each, as a worn-out queen's face some
remind

Of her extreme youth's love-tales,
'Eglamor

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 purdle the array
He climbed with (June at deep) some
close ravine

'Mid clatter of its million pebbles sheen,
Over which, singing soft, the rannel
slipt

Elate with rains : into whose streamlet
dipt

He foot, yet trod, you thought, with
unwet sock—

Though really on the stubs of living rock
Ages ago it crenneled ; 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, strait 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 glistening
detached

A shrub, oak-boles shrunk into ilex-
stems !

Yet could not he denounce the strata-
gems

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 eye 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 ! Same that

glow
O' the instant, more with earlier loves
to wrench

Away, reserves to quell, disdains to
quench ;

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 swola a richer violet
where

The languid blood lies heavily ; yet
calm

On her slight prop, each flat and out-
spread 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-ap-
pointed 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 Ilits

Back to her place disburthened of a care.
Strange—to be constant here if he is
there!

Is it distrust? Oh, never! for they both
Goad Ecelin alike—Romano's growth
So daily manifest, that Azzo's dumb
And Richard wavers: let but Friedrich
come!

—Find matter for the minstrel'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, obse-
quies!

Which in their very tongue the Trouba-
dour

Records; and his performance makes
a tour,

For Trouveres bear the miracle about,
Explain its cunning to the vulgar rout,
Until the Formidable Horse is famed
Over the country—as Tanrello 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
of 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 ex-
hausted 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 be-
sprent

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 ad-
vanced,

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 startlingspectacle—
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 Palma'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 Yon, 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

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 his
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 and 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
 Squarcialupo
 And Tagliafer ; how strange ! a child-
 hood spent
 In taking, well for him, so brave a bent !
 Since Eglamor,' they heard, ' 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 circum-
 stance,
 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
 sang 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 sorted
 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
 Such a performance might exact ap-
 plause
 From men, if they had fancies too ?
 Could 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 top-
 most rocks
 Sun-blanch'd 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 if some few, above themselves, and
yet
Beneath me, like their Eglamor, have
net

An impress on our gift? So, men believe
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, dis-
tinct?'

He pondered this.

Meanwhile, sounds low and drear
Stole on him, and a noise of footsteps,
near

And nearer, and 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 mid-
day 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
Hence hither in the woods. 'Twere
surely sweet

Far from the scene of one's forlorn
defeat

To sleep!' judged Naddo, who in
person led

Jongleurs 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 proposed
amends.

'Let us but get them safely through my
song
And home again!' quoth Naddo.

All along,
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

That 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,

Like Perseus when he loosed his naked
love,

Faltering; so distinct and far above
Himself, these fancies! He, no genius
rare,

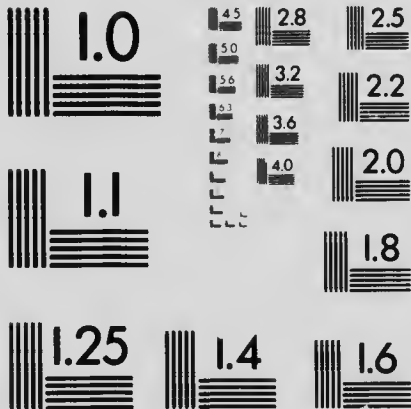
Transfiguring in fire or wave or air
At will, but a poor gnome that, cloistered
up

In some rock-chamber with his agate
cup,



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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—(Eg-
 lamor
 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 through
 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 knew that, 'mid the April woods, he
 east
 Conceits upon in plenty as he past,
 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,
 And what was Eglamor ? who, bending
 down
 The same, 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 rung
 To answer yours ! nay, sing them !'
 And he sung
 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 was 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 valleys, plains and
 groves,
 Wherein, no doubt, this lay was
 roughly east,
 Polished by slow degrees, completed last
 To Eglamor's discomfiture and death.
 Such form the chanter 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,
Prinaeval pines o'er canopy 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 it on his 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

Which whiten 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 Baiac, 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 con-
fined

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

While aught of that old life, superbly
drest

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 Ecclin,
Reviled him as he followed; he for spite
Must fire their quarter, though that self-
same night

Among the flames young Ecclin 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 Pistor'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 re-
trieve

That pledge of Agnes Este—loath to
leave

Mantua unguarded with a vigilant
 eye,
 Taurello biding there 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 pro-
 claimed
 —How shall I phrase it? —Monarch of
 the World!
 For, on the morning that array was
 furled
 For ever, 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,
 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 nowisedistinct 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 ex-
 press
 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, un-
 cramped
 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,
 Lay clogged forever thence, averse to
 change
 As that: whereas it left her free to range,
 Remains itself a blank, cast into shade,
 Encumbers little, if it cannot aid.
 So, range, my soul!—who, by self-con-
 sciousness,
 The last drop of all beauty dost ex-
 press—
 The grace of seeing grace, a quintessence
 For thee: but for the world, that can
 dispense
 Wonder on men who, themselves, won-
 der—make
 A shift to love at second-hand, and take
 Those for its idols who but idolize,
 Themselves,—world that loves souls as
 strong or wise,
 Who, themselves, love 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 them
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—who take no pains to
speak,

Change no old standards of perfection,
vex

With no strange forms created to per-
plex,

But will 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 its 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, and receive their
sense

Of its existing ; but would be 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 un-
seemly 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 landstorm : 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, be 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 pro-
fuse

Praise, not the toilsome process which
procured

That praise, enticed Apollo: dreams
abjured,

No over-leaping means for ends—take
both

For granted or take neither! I am loth
To say the rhymes at last were Eglaamor's;

But Naddo, chuckling, bade com-
petitors

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 con-

tented 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 happi-
ness

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, virelai 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 con-
fess,

It seemed too much but yestereve!'—
the 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 ar-
ranged

Ethereal ways to take them, sorted,
changed,

Digested. Courtied thus at unawares,
In spite of his pretensions and his cares,
He caught himself shamefully hankering
After the obvious petty joys that spring
From real 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, frus-
trated, 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
re-wrought

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 per-
ception'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 exprest
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, up-
springs

The angel, sparkles off his mail, and
rings

Whirled from each delicatest limb it
warps,

As might Apollo from the sudden corps

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, ad-
miring 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, after 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. Where-
fore then

Continue, make believe to find in men
A use he found not?

Weeks, months, years went by;
And, lo, 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; that sauntered
forth in dream,

Drest 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 opinioned That 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 same 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 or sirvent—
£ 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.

And if internal struggles to be one
That frittered him incessantly piecemeal,
Referred, ne'er so obliquely, to the real
Mantuan! intruding 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-revelment, 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 foel,
His murrey-coloured robe for philamot,

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, ala,
One of God's large ones, tardy to con-
dense

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, rather-ripe,
rotten-rich,

Sweet-sour, all tastes to take: a prac-
tice which

He too had not impossibly attained,
Once either of those fancy-flights
restrained;

For, at conjecture how might words
appear

To others, playing there what happened
here,

And occupied abroad by what he
spurned

At home, 'twas slipt, the occasion he
returned

To seize: he'd strike that lyre adroitly
—speech,

Would but a twenty-enbit plectre
reach;

A clever hand, consummate instrument,
Were both brought close; each excel-
lency 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 a 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 re-
produce

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 well 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,
 Tuned, from Boeafoli's stark-naked
 psalms,
 To Plara's sonnets spoilt by toying with,
 ' As knops that stud some alms to the
 pith
 Pricked for gum, wry thence, and
 crinkled worse
 Than pursèd eyelids of a river-horse
 Sunning himself o' the slime when whirrs
 the breeze '—
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 Squar-
 cialupe'
 (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, en-
 hance
 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'er-
 toise

Sordello? Fifty creepers to elude
 At once! They settled stanchly;
 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 rectify—
 a grin

List—slur it over! How? If dreams
 were tried,

His will swayed sickly from side to
 side,

Nor merely neutralized his waking act
 But tended e'en in fancy to distract

The intermediate will, the choice of
 menus.

He lost the art of dreaming: Mantuan
 scenes

Supplied a baron, say, he sung before,
 Handsomely reckless, full to running o'er
 Of gallantries; 'abjure the soul, content

With body, therefore!' Scarcely had
 he bent

Himself 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 Eccelin confers with,
 glance

His gay apparel o'er; that countenance
 Gathered his shattered fancy into one,
 And, body clean abolished, soul alone

Sufficed the grey Paulician: by and by,
 To balance the ethereality,

Passions were needed; foiled he sunk
 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? And help me! for I
 catch

My children's greedily 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!' Half a 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 Ie'er 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 Otto'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 en-
shrine,

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! Strojavecchia looks askint,
The rough fat sloven; and there's
plenty hint

Your pinions have received of late a
shock—

Out-soar them, cobsman 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
'hat 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 ere-
while

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 waiting 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

And nooks retained their long ranged
vesture-chests

Empty and smelling of the iris-root

The Tuscan grated o'er them to recruit
Her wasted wits. Palua was gone that
day,

Said the remaining women. Lant, he lay
Beside the Carian group preserved and still.

The Body, the Machine for Acting
Will,

Had been at the commencement proved
unfit ;

That for Reflecting, Demonstrating 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 with-
drew

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

AND the font took them : let our laurels
 lie !
 Braid moonfern now with mystic trifoly
 Because oncemore Goito gets, oncemore,
 Sordello to itself ! A dream is o'er,
 And the suspended life begins anew ;
 Quiet those throbbing temples, then,
 subdue
 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
 I' the sea, and vexed a satrap ; so the
 stain
 O' the world forsakes Sordello, with its
 pain,
 Its pleasure : how the tinct loosening
 escapes,
 Cloud after cloud ! Mantua's familiar
 shapes
 Die, fair and foul die, fading as they
 flit,
 Men, women, and 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
 eglantines,
 The last voice murmurs 'twixt the
 blossomed vines
 Of Men, of that machine supplied by
 thought
 To compass self-perception with, he
 sought
 By forcing half himself—an insane pulse
 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,
 A 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 re-
 main
 Myself, yet yearn . . . 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, bright with exploring once,
 grew dim
 And satiate with receiving. Some dis-
 tress
 Was caused, too, by a sort of conscious-
 ness

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
slow
His own blood's measured clicking at
his brow.

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's now. 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

I' the steady wind, burned like a spilt
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
to 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-
time-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-checked, lank-haired, toothed
whiter than the morse,

Queens of the eaves 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, mollitions alcoves gilt
 Superb as Byzant domes that devils
 built !
 —Ah, Byzant, there again ! no chance
 to go
 Ever like august pleasant 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 his 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, happi-
 ness
 Awaited me ; the way life should be
 used
 Was to acquire, and deeds like you con-
 duced
 To teach it by a self-revelment, deemed
 The 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 ! Bliss 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 en-
 dowed,
 However slight, distinct from what they
 Sec,
 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 corre-
 spond
 With Will are so unworthy, 'twas my
 bond
 To tread the very joys that tantalize
 Most now, into a grave never to rise.
 I die 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 em-
 braced
 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, and yet forbore,
Preferred elaborating in the dark
My casual stuff, by any wretched spark
Born of my predecessors, though one
stroke

Of mine had brought the flame forth!
Mantua's yoke,
My minstrel's-trade, was to behold
mankind,—

My own concernment—just to bring my
mind

Behold, just extricate, for my acquit,
Each object suffered stifled in the mist
Which hazard, use and blindness could
impose

In their relation to myself.'

He rose.

The level wind carried above the firs
Clonds, 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

Somewhat my will upon it, rather!
Slake

This thirst somehow, the poorest im-
press take

That serves! A blasted bud displays
you, torn,

Faint rudiments of the full flower un-
born;

But who divines what glory coats o'er-
clasp

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 fast rises after
smoke

I' the valley, like a spout of hell new-
broke.

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 Gueffs: 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.' Here
was told

The tale from the beginning—how,
made bold

By Salinguerra's absence, Gueffs had
burned

And pillaged till he unawares returned
To take revenge: how Azzo and his
friend

Were doing their endeavour, how the
end

Of 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 poetie vest
These doings, at Verona? Your res-
ponse

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 take me? Curse the cicale!'

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 detri-
ment,

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

Of warfare with the Pontiff, disengage
His barons from the burghers, and
restore

The rule of Charlemagne, broken of yore
By Hildebrand.

In 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 laughs: 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 arms
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 be the first break

tryst
To-morrow with the League!'

Enough. Now turn—
Over the eastern eypresses: discern—

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 bird'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, as him—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 wholly

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,
represt

At once, such jetting power shrunk to
the rest!

Was I to have a chancee 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 whi my cheek, so idly my blood
beat,

Sitting that morn beside the Lady's feet

And saying as she prompted; till out-
burst

One face from all the faeces—not then
first

I knew it; where in maple chamber
glooms,

Crowned with what sanguine-heart
pomegranate blooms

Advance'd it ever? Men's acknow-
ledgment

Sanctioned my own: 'twas taken,
Palma's bent,—

Sordello, accepted.

And the Tuscan dumb
Sat scheming, scheming. Eeelin 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 froward Chief!—induced
return

Much 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,

I—

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 eager-
ness

To blank smooth snow. What sem-
blance of success

To any of my plans for making you
Mine and Romano's? Break the first

wall through,

Treado'er the ruins of the Chief, supplant
His sons beside, still, vainest were the

vault:

There, Salinguerra would obstruct me
sheer,

And the insuperable Tuscan, here,
Stayed me! But one wild eye 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!—
 for 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 your 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
 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 bootéd 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
 St. 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
 beside
 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
 relaxed
 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-principle which late allied
 Our House with other Houses—what
 beside

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 cineture 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, " Con-
front

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 Podestà among
The Vincentines, 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 " Alberic ? " 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's rentine 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 ad-
vance,

Your father's method, your inheritance ! "
That day I was betrothed to Boniface
At Padua by Taurello's self, took place
The outrage of the Ferrarese : again,
That 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,—
Ricard, 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 recent 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
 Of 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 sub-
 serve,
 Nor Ecelin impose." Lest this unnerve
 Taurello at this juncture, slack his grip
 Of Richard, suffer the occasion slip,—
 I, in his sons' default (who, mating with
 Este, forsake Romano as the frith
 Its mainsea for the 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. Mid-
 night—
 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 miscon-
 ceived
 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 aggre-
 gate
 Of souls and bodies, and so conquer fate
 Though he should live—a centre of
 disgust
 Even—apart, core of the outward crust
 He vivified, assimilated. 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—
 And, 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,
 His Will, 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 that
 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 lagoon: 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 lagoon.

Sordello said once, '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's purpose answered, his in it
Or its in him: while from true works
(to wit

Sordello's dream-performances that will
Be never 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
seoff

In "Charlemagne," (his poem, dreamed
divine

In every point except one silly line
About the restful daughters!—what
may lurk

In that? "My life commenced before
that work,"

(Thus 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, of 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 com-
press

The future gains, his life's true business,
Into the better lay which—that one
float,

Howe'er inopportune it be, lets ont—
Engrosses him already, though pro-
fessed

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's 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 ador-
 able
 Enough reclaim a — no Sordello's Will
 Alack!—be queen to me? That Bas-
 sanese
 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 sea-
 weed
 Drifting has sucked down three, four,
 all indeed
 Save one pale-red striped, pale-blue
 turbaned post
 For gondolas.
 You sad disheveled ghost
 That pluck at me and point, are you
 advised
 I breathe? Let stay those girls (e'en her
 disguised
 —Jewels in the locks that love no
 crownlet 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 con-
 tent
 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 earlier 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 diseards
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 under-
stood.

Only, do finish something! Pensants
or queens,

Take them, made happy by whatever
means,

Parade them for the common credit,
vouch

That a luckless residue, we send to
crouch

In corners out of sight, was just as
framed

For happiness, its portion might have
claimed

As well, and so, obtaining it, had
stalked

Fatuous as any!—such my project,
balked

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

Should be thy mistress, and into one
face

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? An
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 upon my 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 re-
 instate
 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
 fellow clutch
 One pleasure from a multitude of such
 Denied him.' Then assert, 'all men
 appear
 To think all better than themselves, by
 here
 Trusting a crowd they wrong; but
 really,' say,
 'All men think all men stupider than
 they,
 Since, save themselves, no other com-
 prehends
 The complicated scheme to make amends
 —Evil, the scheme by which, thro'
 Ignorance,
 Good labours to exist.' A slight ad-
 vance,—
 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 with-
 out 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 dew-
 drop safe!
 What, dullard? we and you in smothery
 chafe,
 Babes, baldheads, stumbled thus far
 into Zin
 The Horrid, getting neither out nor in,
 A hungry sun above us, sands that bring
 Our throats,—each dromedary lolls
 a tongue,
 Each camel churns a sick and frothy
 chup,
 And you, 'twixt tales of Potiphar's
 mishap,
 And sonnets on the earliest ass that
 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 pre-
vise—

The scope of the whole engine's to be
proved ;

We die: which means to say, the whole's
removed,

Dismounted wheel by wheel, this com-
plex gin,—

To be set up anew elsewhere, begin
A task indeed, but with a clearer clime
Than the murky 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 ?
who shuts

Both eyes this time, so close the hazels
meet !

Thus, prisoned in the Piombi, I repeat
Events once rove occasioned, o'er and
o'er,

Putting 'twixt me and madness ever-
more

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 sunk, a huge flame on its socket's
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, pro-
ceed!

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 o.a. 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, curse them, bruise lips,
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, Plataeas and Salamis being
scant,

Put up with Aetna 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 prest

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
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

Disheveled form, wherein I put man-
kind

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 mistle-
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) Poly-
carp,

Soft Charicle, next year no wheel could
warp

To swear by Caesar's fortune, with the rest
Were ranged; thro' whom the grey
disciple prest,

Busily blessing right and left, just stopt
To pat one infant's curls, the hangman
cropt

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 can-
dlestick'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 Xan-
thus' hearth,

Portrayed with sooty garb and features
swarth—

Ah Xanthus, am I to thy roof be-
guiled

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 pas-
toral cross,

You're painted with!' His puckered
brows unfold—

And you shall hear Sordello's story
told.

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 Gueff
 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 sumptuous 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 lag-
 gards know
 The Pope's as good as here ! They
 paced the streets
 More soberly. At last, ' 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, mangonel, 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
 narc ? '
 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-curved
 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 Ade-
 laide ?
 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.
Oninous

That Ghibellins should get what cautious

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! — and 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 Vital, 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, Cavalier Ecelin* —
A silence; he gets warmer, elinks 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,

Born 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 about 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
O' the instant after you their arms!
Unplucked
By this or that, you pass, for they con-
duct
To terrace raised on terrace, and, be-
tween,
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
Ont of the eyelids just held open beneath
Those shading fingers in their iron
sheath,
Steadied his strengths amid the buz and
stir
Of the dusk hideous amphitheatre
At the announcement of his over-match
To wind the day's diversion up, dis-
patch
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 caval-
cade—
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? desisted he
aught
Novel in the anticipated sight
Of all these livers upon all delight?
This phalanx, as of myriad points com-
bined,
Whereby he still had imaged that man-
kind
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 with-
out—
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 Tanrello'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 months and
eyes,

Petty enjoyments and huge miseries,—
Mingled with, and made veritably great
Those chiefs: he overlooked not
Mainard's state

Nor Concorezzi's station, but instead
Of stopping there, each dwindled to be
head

Of infinite and absent Tyrolese
Or Paduans; startling all the more,
that these

Seemed passive and disposed of, uncared
for,

'Yet doubtless on the whole' (quoth
Eglamor)

'Smiling—for if a wealthy man decays
And out of store of robes must wear, all
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 to 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

To that anticipated: strange to say,
They were too much below him, more
in thrall

Than he, the adjunct than the principal.
What bootied scattered units?—here a
mind

And there, which might repay his own
to find,

And stamp, and use?—a few, how'er
angust,

If all the rest were groveling 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 which might be satis-
fied,—

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 deeper 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 thrush-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 under-
stood

The meaning now of Palma ; why the jar
Else, the ado, the trouble wide and far
Of Guelfs and Ghibellins, the Lombard's
hope

And Rome's despair ?—'twixt Emperor
and Pope

The confused shifting sort of Eden tale—
Still hardihood 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, drest

As the dislodging angel of that pest,
Then—yet that pest bedropt, flat head,
full fold,

With coruscating dower of dyes.
' Behold

The secret, so to speak, and master-
spring

Of 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 herenpon 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, mangonel,
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. Scarcely an hour
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 stripped
shred by shred,

So that, in place of huddling with their
dead

Indoors, to answer Salinguerra's ends,
Its folk made shift to crawl forth, sit
like friends

With any one. A woman gave him
choicé

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
pair

Though thrumming on the sleeve that
hid his knife.

Night set in early, autumn dews were
rife,

They kindled great fires while the
Leagner's 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 fire, when voices violent

Began, 'Affirm not whom the youth
was like

That, striking from the porch, I did not
strike

Again ; I too have chestnut hair ; my
kin

Hate Azzo and stand up for Ecehin.
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 oehre 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' chief-

tainship
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 receipt there, would either hush
 Old Eeelin'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,
 Cires 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 it 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—unwarned,
 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 late the 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 baldrick; while,—another thing that
marred
Alike emprise, achievement and re-
ward,—

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
Gueff,

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 Gueffs, the Raven-
nese

Arrive, assault the Pietro quarter, seize
Linguetta, and are gone! 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 Gueffs, 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's
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 Con-
stance; he

Was gracious nor his guest incapable;
Each underood 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 terry 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 Tomà,
To visit Mantua. When the Podestà

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, ex-
pelled

Both plotters: but the Guefs 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, con-
tent

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 recon-
ciled

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 ser-
pentine,

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

Of the great Matilda,—soon they over-
bore

The rest of Lombardy,—not as before

By an instinctive trueulence, 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 sur-
prise

The man;—who shamed Sordello
(recognize!)

In this as much beside, that, uncon-
cerned

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 to Bassano, see Saint Francis'
 church
 And judge of Guido the Bolognian's piece
 Which, lend Taurello credit, rivals
 Greece—
 Angels, with aureoles like golden quills
 Pitched home, applauding Ecelin's
 exploits.
 For elegance, he string 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; Taurello's choicest instru-
 ments
 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—ill fatigue
 The vigilance of Este and the League!
 The Ghibellins gain on us!'—as it
 happened.
 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 of 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,—much more, 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
 stanch
 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 stilled hate. He bore to Este—how it would out-break

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 crumbings, and 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, leaped in the embrace absently, Ammel with his own efforts, now, to trace

With his steel-sheathed forefinger Friedrich's face

For the dust: but as the trees waved sore, 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 Verona!—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 wine,

The bones-and-muscles! sound of wind and limb,

Spoke he the set excuse I framed for him. And now he sits me, slaving and mute, Intent on chafing each starved purple foot

Bemused past aching with the altar shrub—

Will no vein throb there when some monk shall blab

Spitefully to the circle of old scalps, "Friedrich's affirmed to be our side the Alps"

—Eh, brother Lactance, brother Anaclet?

Sworn to abjure the world, its fame and fret,

God's own now? Dropt the dormitory bed, Enfold the scanty grey serge scapular

Twice o'er the cowl to muffle memorie out—

So! but the midnight whisper turns a shout,

Eyes wink, mouths open, pulses circulate

In the stone walls: the Past, the world, yon hate

Is with you, ambush, open field—once The surging flame—were 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 they block 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
hailed

The Adelaide he dared scarce view un-
veiled

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 am 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

Hiscrown at such a juncture! still, if hold
Our Friedrich's purpose, if this chain
enfold

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
vane

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 overthrow 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 life must 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, fatter men's
 tongues
 Like this poor minstrel with the foolish
 songs—
 To which, despite our bustle, he is
 linked ?
 —Flowers one may tease, that never
 grow extinct.
 Ay, that patch, surely, green as ever,
 where
 I 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, Eecin ap-
 pears
 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 Eecin—your Prefect's badge !
 a prize
 Too precious, certainly.
 How now ? Compete
 With my old comrade ? shuffle from
 their seat
 His children ? Paltry dealing ! Don't
 I know
 Eecin ? 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 play-
 thing
 To carry, Bacchus ! And he laughed.
 Remark
 Why schemes wherein cold-blooded men
 embark
 Prosper, when your enthusiastic ort
 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
 Methodie 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 party but immediate doubt
 If he could pacify the agne 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 guide him back
 To his own tribe again, where he is king;
 And laughs because he guesses, num-bering
 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 the desert blast)
 That he has reached its boundary, at last
 May breathe:—thinkso'er enchantments of the South
 Sovereign to plague his enemies, their month,
 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 innermost mind
 This morn, a recreant to my race—man-kind
 Overlooked 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'erbeast off to chaos and disgrace,
 Why vaunt so much my unincumbered 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
foe.

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,
left

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 Tanarello? 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

Appreciated 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
drest

In white, called Roman Consul for a jest,
Taking the people at their word, forth

stept

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, be-
guiled

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—
 (for I
 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 great Two, either principle,
 Struggled to change—but to possess—
 Rome, still,
 Gneff Rome or Ghibellin Rome.
 Let Rome advance !
 Rome, as she struck Sordello's ignor-
 ance—
 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 man-
 kind
 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! A...
 possest
 Of thy wish now—rewarded for thy
 quest
 To-day among Ferrara's squalid scums—
 Are this and this and this the hining
 ones
 Meet for the Shining City? Sooth to
 say,
 Your favoured tenantry pursue their
 way
 After a fashion! This companion slips
 On the smooth cansey, 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
 dries
 Who puts the lustral vase to such an
 use?

Oh, huddle up the day's disasters! Took each, nor too fit,—to one task,
 March, one time,—
 Ye runagates, and drop thou, arch by No leaping o'er the petty prime,
 arch, When just the substitut'n s'ier lithe
 Rome! For brittle bulrush, sound wood for soft
 Yet before they quite disband— withe,
 a whim— To further loam-and-rougeast-work a
 Study mere shelter, now, for him, and stage,—
 him, Exacts an architect, exacts an age:
 Nay, even the worst, —just house them! No tables of the Mauritanian tree
 Any cave For men whose maple-log 's their
 Suffices: throw out earth! A loophole? luxury!
 Brave! That way was Rome built. 'Better'
 They ask to feel the sun shine, see the (say you) 'merge
 grass At once all workmen in the demiurge,
 Grow, hear the larks sing? Dead art All epochs in a lifetime, every task
 thou, alas, In one! 'So should the sudden city hark
 And I am dead! But here's our son I the day—while those we'd feast then,
 excels want the knack
 At hurdle-weaving any Seythian, fells Of keeping fresh-chalked gowns from
 Oak and devises rafters, dreams and speck and brack,
 shapes Distinguish not rare peacock from vile
 His dream into a door-post, just escapes swan.
 The mystery of hinges. Lie we both Nor Mareotic juice from Coccinbar.
 Perdue another age. The goodly growth 'Enough of Rome! 'Twas happy to
 Of brick and stone! Our building-pelt conceive
 was rough, Rome on a sudden, nor shall fate bereave
 But that descendant's garb suits well Me of that credit: for the rest, her
 enough spite
 A portico-contriver. Speed the years— Is an old story—serves my folly right
 What 's time to us? at last, a city rears By adding yet another to the dull
 Itself! nay, enter—what 's the grave List of abortions—things proved beauti-
 to us? ful
 Lo, our forlorn acquaintance carry thus Could they be done, Sordello cannot do.
 The head! Successively sewer, forum, He sat upon the terrace, plucked and
 cirque— threw
 Last age, an aqueduct was counted work. The powdery aloe-cusps away, saw shift
 But now they tire the artificer upon Rome's walls, and drop arch after arch,
 Blank alabaster, black obsidian, and drift
 —Careful, Jove's face be duly fulgorant, Mist-like afar those pillars of all stripe,
 And mother Venus' kiss-creased nipples Mounds of all maje-ty. 'Thou arche-
 pant type,
 Back into pristine pulpiess, ere fixed Last of my dreams and loveliest, depart!
 Above the baths. What difference be- And then a low voice wound into his
 twist heart:
 This Rome and ours—resemblance what, 'Sordello!' (low as some old Pythoness
 between Conceding to a Lydian King's distress
 That senryy dumb-show and this The cause of his long error—one mis-
 pageant sheen— take
 These Romans and our rabble? Use thy Of her past oracle) 'Sordello, wake!
 wit! God has conceded two sights to a man
 The work marched: step by step,—a One, of men's whole work, time's com-
 workman fit pleted 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,
 desisted
 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 æry magnificence,
 That last step you'd take first?—an
 evidence
 You were told: 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 disconcert 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 hilled 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 mid-
 night
 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 in the midst? The rout
 Was checked, a breathless ring was
 formed about
 That sudden flower: get round at any
 risk
 The gold-rough pointed, silver-blazing
 disk
 O' the lily! Swords across it! Reign
 thy reign
 And serve thy frolic service, Charle-
 magne!
 —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 con-
 fessed
 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 the multitude, already
 whole,
 Into its body? Speak plainer! Is't so
 sure
 God's church lives by a King's investi-
 ture?

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 premat-
 urely thrust
 Aside, perchance!—but the 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, Hilde-
 brand
 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 leapt 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 seem 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 at
 length.
 Yet hark—from Mantuan Albert
 making cease
 The fierce ones, to Saint Francis preach-
 ing 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 Know-
 ledge? No—
 E'en were Sordello ready to forego
 His life for this, 'twere overleaping work
 Some one has first to do, how'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
 On 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, per-
 chance 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
 desery
 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 pre-ently: 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
 "Polit-foot," sang they, "was in a pit-
 fall now."
 Cheering each other from the engine-
 morn,—
 That crippled spawling idiot who re-
 counts
 How, lopt 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,
 Tomà, where Richard's kept, because
 that whore
 Marisa, 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, recon-
 ciled
 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
 —Yon, plucking purples in Goito's
 moss
 Like edges of a trabeca (not to cross
 Your consul-humour) or dry aloe-shafts
 For fascies, 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 per-
 suade:
 Fail! then'—
 'No—no—which latest
 chance secure!'
 Leapt up and cried Sordello: 'this
 made sure,
 The Past were yet redeemable; its work
 Was—help the Gueffs, whom I, how'er
 it irk,
 Thus help!' (He shook the foolish aloe-
 haelm
 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 Eleorte's happy
 sprout?
 Few such'—(so finishing a speech no
 doubt
 Addressed to Palma, silent at his side)
 —'My sober councils have diversified.
 Eleorte'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, spar 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
 He meant should compensate the Past
 and reach
 Through his youth's daybreak of un-
 profit, quite
 To his noon's labour, so proceed till
 night
 Leisurely! The great argument to
 bind
 Tanrello 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 break-
 ing 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 Guef?

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's 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.
Then means he 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

Tanrello!

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

Of the truth!'—Sordello muttered, and
renewed

His propositions for the Multitude.

But Salinguerra, who at this attack
Had thrown great breast and ruffling
corset 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 Guef domination, fill the scope
Of the Church, thus based on All, by All,
for All—

Change Secular to Evangelical'—
Echoing his very sentence: all seemed
lost,

When sudden 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 Guef, 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
H neeforward? or pronounce, as Hein-
rich used,

"Spear-heads for battle, burr-heads for
the joust!"

—When Constance, for his complets,
would promote

Aleamio, from a parti-coloured coat,
To holding her lord's stirrup in the wars.
Not that I see where complet-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 niling vassal think
The world and him bound in some
special link?

Abrupt the visionary tether burst—
What were rewarded here, or what
amereed

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 percep-
tions 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, out-
poured

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 theirsake must not beignobly 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—and yet 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
 need—
 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 up-
 sprung,
 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 clus-
 tered 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 pro-
 fessed
 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 proto-
 plast
 Of nature : what could 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, whatsee'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, hail I brother of the
 train
 Deeds once sufficed: for, let the world
 roll back,
 Who fails, through deeds how'er
 diverse, re-track
 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
 part
 And protest against Chaos, some first
 fact
 If 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,
 Is soul 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 dawns 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, what'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. Appre-
 hend
 Which sinner is, which saint, if I allot
 Hell, Purgatory, Heaven, a blaze or blot,
 To those you doubt concerning! I en-
 womb
 Some wretched Friedrich with his red-
 hot tomb;
 Some dubious spirit, Lombard Agilolph
 With the black chastening river I en-
 gulph;
 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! My-
 self, the while,
 As one of you, am witness, shrink or
 smile
 At my own showing! 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, wa—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 Yester-
 day :

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 to : 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 ?
 nevertheless

Even he must stoop contented to express
No title 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,
And bid me cast aside such fancies, how
Taurello to the Guelph cause, disallow
The Kaiser's coming—which with heart,
 soul, strength,

I labour for, this eve, who feel at length
My past career's outrageous vanity,
And would, as its emends, die, even die
Now I first estimate the boon of life,
If death might win compliance—sure,
 this strife

Is right for me—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 sur-
 prise,

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 Alberie, a patch the Trevisan
Clutches already; extricate, who can,
Treville, Villarazzi, Puissolo,
Cartiglione, Loria!—all go,
And with them go my hopes. 'Tis lost,
then! Lost

This eve, our crisis, and some pains it cost
Provening; 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 Alberies 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,

Not even 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.

'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
Nigh at its ebb, Palma 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 con-
voy's flight,

Cut off a moment, coiled inside the
flame

That wallowed like a dragon at his game
The topping 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 Tanrello'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 ?

Ontstripping time, her infant there
burst swathe,

Stood up with eyes haggard beyond the
seathie

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 Salinghera's for his child : scorn,
hate

Rage, startled her from Ecelin—too late !
Then was the moment ! rival's foot had
spurned

Never that brow to earth ! Ere 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 Tanrello 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

Oneither 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
Slipt 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,

Tanrello'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 half recital, she contrived

To hide from him Tanrello'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

The 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,

' Not stir—should Fate defraud him of
a shred

Of his son's infancy ? much less of his
youth !'

(Laughingly all this)—' which to aid, in
truth,

Himself, re-erved 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 propnesying 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 sweatdrops
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, boy,—in Pisa's
case,

By land as she by sea ; with Pisa ours.
And Florence, and Pistoia, one devout

The land at leisure ! Gloriously dis-
persed—

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 bravé 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 with-
draw

Taurello from his child, she, without
awe

Took off his iron arms front, one by one,
Sordello's shrinking shoulders, and, that
done,

Made him avert his visage and relieve
Sordello (you might see his corselet
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 Visconti 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 stopt the truncheon ; only to com-
mence

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 top-
most rocks

Sun-blanch'd 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 that matter, 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 sus-
pect

The wit in him?—whose clansman,
recollect,

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 Tanrello
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 un-
checked

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, ginglyly
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

From the stone, and whirl of some loose
embossed thong

That crashed against the angle eye 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 sur-
mounted, 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 Know-
ledge, 'if we deign

Accept that compromise and stoop to
give

Rome law, the Cæsars' 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 still,

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 then

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 votress—)

Triumph at height, and thus Sordello
crowned—

Above the passage suddenly a sound
Stops speech, stops walk: back shrinks—

Tanrello, 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 insignificant 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!' 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.

What's the persisting hermit-bee . . . ha!
wait

And anger—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 out of 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

Panted with this eve; ere she precipitate
Herself,—put off strange after-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,
His truth, 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,—this moon's
control,

Over the 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 amorphous,
 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
 Shi in the sunshine, now a blinding
 race
 Of whitest ripples o'er the reef—found
 place
 For much display; not gathered up and,
 hurled
 Right from its heart, encompassing the
 world.
 So had Sordello been, by consequence,
 Without a function : others made pre-
 tence
 To strength not half his own, yet had
 some core
 Within, submitted to some moon, before
 Them still, superior still whate'er 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
 away,
 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,
 And may 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 towering
 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 : wherefore
 doubt.
 That Love meet for such Strength, some
 moon without
 Would match his sea?—or fear, 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 ! plant
 earth,
 The plastic flame—what balks the mage
 his birth
 —Jacynth in balls, or lodestone by the
 block ?
 Flinders enrich the strand, and veins
 the rock—
 Nought more ! Ask creatures ? Life's
 i' the tempest, Thought
 Clothes the keen hill-top, mid-day woods
 are fraught
 With fervours : ah, these forms are well
 enough !
 But we had hoped, encouraged by the stuff
 Profuse at Nature's pleasure, men
 beyond
 These men ! and thus, perchance, 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 pronder
 fate)
 A law to his own sphere?—need to
 remove
 All incompleteness, for that law, that
 love?
 Nay, if all other laws be such, though
 veiled
 In mercy to each vision that had failed
 If unassisted by its want,—for lure,
 Embodied? Stronger vision could
 endure
 The unbodied want: no bauble for a
 truth!
 The People were himself; and, 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! . . . as alien woe—the
 Guelf
 To succour, proud that he forsook him-
 self?
 No! All's himself; all service, there-
 fore, 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 manya giant's
 beard
 Ere long, O 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 laeks
 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, oh 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; up-
 rose 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
 Have been 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's to spend ere this he
 chain,

To the poor crowd's complacence; ere
 the crowd
 Pronounce it captured, he deserves 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
 thrall'd
 —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,
 Crown'd bestial, dreaming how become
 divine.
 ' Yet to surmount this obstacle, com-
 mence
 With the commencement, merits
 crowning! Hence
 Must truth be casual truth, elicited
 In sparks so mean, at intervals disspread
 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 its breast,
 would stream
 Sky-ward!'
 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—
 If 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
 sun
 Of service, Now as filled as the To-come
 With evidence of good—nor too minute
 A share to vie with evil! No dispute,
 'Twere fittest 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 ad-
 vanced
 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 unparcell'd 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
 speak,
 The Legate saved by his sole lightish
 flock?
 This were work, true—but work per-
 formed at cost
 Of other work—ought gained here, else-
 where 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
harm's,

Were not, from highest to the lowest,
charris ?

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 shape. 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,—the 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 Ill

Claimed you alike ! Whence rose their
claim but still

From Ill, as fruit of Ill—what else could
knit

You theirs but Sorrow ? Any free from
it

Were also free from you ! Whose happi-
ness

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 earriest green and yellow tokens in
Thy very face that thou art Ghibel-
lin !"—

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 its summit
left,

Heaven plain above them, yet of wings
bereft—

But lower laid, as at the mountain's foot,
While, 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 thee on a voluptuous
 shame
 That thou, a pageant-city's denizen,
 Art neither vilely lodged midst Lombard
 men—
 Canst force joy out of sorrow, seem to
 truck
 Thine attributes away for sordid muck,
 Yet manage from that very muck educe
 Gold; then subject, nor scruple, to thy
 cruce
 The world's discardings! Though real
 ingots pay
 Thy pains, the clods that yielded them
 are clay
 To all save thee,—would clay remain,
 though quenched
 Tny purging-fire; who's robbed then?
 Had you wrenched
 An ampler treasure forth!—As 'tis, they
 crave
 A share that ruins you and will not save
 Them. Why should sympathy com-
 mand 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 mit till, some pre-determined
 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
 All 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 prolit though at his whole joy's
 expense.
 Make nothing of my day because so
 brief?
 Rather make more—instead of joy, use
 grief
 Before its novelty have time subside!
 Whut not for the late savour—leave un-
 tried
 Virtue, the creaming honey-wine, quick
 squeeze
 Vice like a biting spirit from the lees
 Of life!—together let wrnth, 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 slept
 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 alway streaming! Hindrances?
 They pique—
 Helps? such . . . but why repeat, my
 soul o'ertops
 Each height, than every depth pro-
 foundlier 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 it? What may serve for sun—
 what still
 Wander a moon above me—what else
 wind
 About me like the pleasures left behind,
 And how shall some newflesh 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 the
 rocky fount
 Above i' the clouds, while here she's
 provident
 Of pure loquacious pearl, the soft tree-
 tent
 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
 anteroom
 To the 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,
 Pnges to dice with, waiting-girls unlace
 The plaquets of, pert claimants help
 displace,
 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 here!—But did 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 blessed? Then, my own
 way
 Bless me! give firmer arm and fleet-
 er foot.
 I'll thank you: but to no mad wings
 transmute

These limbs of mine—our greensward
 was so 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 Tian 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 ! For-
 get
 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
 opposite ?
 Where's abstract Right for me ?—in
 youth endured
 With Right still present, still to be
 pursued,
 '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 goshout
 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 Ill 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 cinet
 Quite otherwise—with Good and Ill
 distinct,
 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
aware

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 wrecked
in Time

On Matter,—let the Soul's attempt
sublime

Matter beyond the scheme and so
prevent

By more or less that deed's accomplish-
ment,

And Sorrow follows: Sorrow how avoid?
Let the employer match the thing em-
ployed,

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,—

Scarce the one minute for enjoying
here,

The soul must needs instruct her weak
compeer,

Run o'er its capabilities and bring
A joy thence, she had with experien-
cing—

Which, far from half discovered even,—
lo,

The minute gone, the body's power let go
That's portioned to that joy's acquire-
ment! 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 frayed
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 left alone

Through her officious proffered help,
deprived

Of this and that enjoyment Fate con-
trived,

Virtue, Good, Beauty, each allowed slip
hence,—

Vain-gloriously were fain, for recom-
pense,

To stem the ruin even yet, pretract
The body's term, supply the power it
lacked

From her infinity, compel it learn
These qualities were only Time's con-
cern,

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 Ill
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
Exceeded, so was 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 enthrallment 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 surer 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—and every quality
Save some sole and immutable Great and
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 desery 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 befriended
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 and this last
revealed—

This Human clear, as that Divine con-
cealed—

What utter need !

What has Sordello found ?
Or can his spirit go the mighty round,
End where poor Eglamor begun ? as
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 Sor-
dello found ?

For they approach—approach—that
foot's rebound . . .

Palma? No, Salinguerra though in mail;
They mount, have reached the thresh-
hold, 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 prest

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 remem-
brance 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 mulet,
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, con-
tent

No blame at least the brothers had in-
curred,

—Despatched 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 rules so long as these
Lingered in pupilage,—and last, no mode

Apparent else of keeping safe the road
From Germany direct to Lombardy

For Friedrich,—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 'Salinguerra's sole son Giacomo
Deceased, fatuous and doting, ere his
sire,'

The townfolk 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, next year, as Guelph chiefs
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? ('twas hard to
intercept

Sordello till his plain withdrawal.) Stept,
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 Podestà, thro' his ancestral worth.
Ecelin flew there, and the town hence-
forth

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 Guelphs 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 appointed 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 pro-
fessed;

Undoubtedly a brawler: for the rest,
Known by each neighbour, and allowed
for, let

Keep his incorrigible ways, nor fret
Men who had missed 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 threads

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
 aught
 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 men, 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 rend and
 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 Rù
 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 ramée 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 !
 Cherups 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 unheard
 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 stilled 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?
Thet'roniers of Mantua tired their pen
Telling how *Sordello Prince Vi conti*
saved

Mantua, and elsewhere notably be-
haved—

Who thus, by fortune's 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: Ecclm 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
bad,

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: bad 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 crost
The whole hill-side of dew and powder-
frost

Matting the balm and mountain camo-
mile.

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 looks

Stained like pale honey oozed from top-
most rocks

Sunblanched the livelong summer,—all
that's left

Of the Goito lay! And thus bereft,
Sleep and forget, Sordello! In effect

He sleeps, the feverish poet—I suspect
Not utterly companionless; but,
friends,

Wake up; 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 same pungency ensures
An after-gust—but that were overbold.

Who would has heard Sordello's story
told.

NOTE TO PARACELSUS

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 Bombastus ab Hohenheim) was born in 1493 at Einsiedeln (1), a little town in the canton of Schwitz, 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, pretends¹. 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 Trithem (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 Sigismund 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 Œcolampadius (4), to fill a chair of physic and surgery at the

¹ I shall disguise M. Renaudin's next sentence a little. 'Hic (Erastus sc.) Paracelsum triumphum a milite quodam, alii a sue exortum ferunt; constat imberbem illum, mathematicosorem fuisse.' A standing High-Dutch joke in these days at the expense of a number of learned men, as may be seen by referring to such ruddish as Melander's *Joaneria*, &c. In the prints from his portrait by Tintoretto, painted a year before his death, Paracelsus is *barbatus*, at all events. But Erastus was never without a good reason for his faith *c. q.* 'Helvetium fuisse (Paracelsum) vix credo, vix enim ea regio tale monstrum ediderit' (*De Medicant. Novis*).

University of Basil. There Paracelsus began by burning publicly in the amphitheatre the works of Avicenna and Galen, assuring his auditors that the latches 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, Vienna¹, 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 mine²."

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 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 theosophist³. Accordingly 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 Hospital 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 Latin Eremus, whence Paracelsus is sometimes called, as in the correspondence of Erasmus, Erenita: Bombast, his proper name, probably acquired.

¹ Erasmus, who relates this, here oddly remarks, 'mirum quod non et Garamantas, 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 Baechonem.'

² 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 universæ academice. Prolite, et signum date, qui viri sitis, quid roboris habeatis? quid autem sitis? Doctores et magistri, pediculos pectentes et fricantes podicem.' (Frag. Med.)

³ '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.'

from the characteristic phraseology of his lectures, that unlucky signification which it has ever since retained.

(2) Then Bishop of Spanheim, and residing at Würzburg in Franconia; a town situated in a grassy fertile country, whence its name, Herbigopolis. He was much visited there by learned men, as may be seen by his *Epistolæ Familiæres*, 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. Philosoph.*, which last contains the following ominous allusion to Agrippa's sojourn: 'Quoniam nuper tecum, R. P. in cœnobio tuo apud Herbigopolim aliquamdiu conversatus, multa de chymicis, multa de magicis, multa de cabalisticis, cæterisque quæ adhuc in occulto delitescunt, arcanis scientiis atque artibus una contulissemus, &c.

(3) 'Inexplebilis illa aviditas naturæ 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 et cum viris naturæ scrutatoribus, chymicis præsertim, ore tenus conferret, et quæ diuturnis laboribus nocturnisque vigiliis invenerant una vel altera communicatione obtineret' (Bitiskius, in *Præfat.*). 'Patris auxilio primum, deinde propria industria doctissimos viros in Germania, Italia, Gallia, Hispania, aliisque Europæ regionibus, nactus est præceptores; 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 mortalium neminem' (Melch. Adam. in *Vit. Germ. Medic.*). 'Paracelsus qui in intima naturæ viscera sic penitus introierit, metallorum stirpiumque vires et facultates tam incredibili ingenii acumine exploraverit ac perviderit; ad morbos omnes vel desperatos et opinione hominum insanabiles percurandum; ut cum Theophrasto nata primum medicina perfecta que videtur' (*Petri Rami Orat. de Basilea*). His passion for wandering is best described in his own words: 'Ecce amatorem adolescentem difficillimi itineris haud piget, ut venustam saltem puellam vel feminam aspiciat: quanto minus nobilissimarum artium amore laboris ac cujuslibet tædii pigebit?' &c. (*Defensiones Septem adversus Emulos suos*, 1573, Def. 4ta. *De peregrinationibus et exilio*.)

(4) The reader may remember that it was in conjunction with Ecolampadius, then Divinity-Professor at Basil, that Zuinglius published, in 1528, an answer to Luther's *Confession of Faith*: and that both proceeded in company to the subsequent conference with Luther and Melancthon at Marburg. Their letters fill a large volume.—*D. D. Johannis Ecolampadii et Huldrici 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 Ecolampadius 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 Luther's school one Ecolampadius, 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 Sec of Rochester 20 years' (*Life of Bishop Fisher*, 1655). Now, there is no doubt of the Protestantism of Paracelsus, Erasmus, Agrippa, &c., but the nonconformity of Paracelsus was always scandalous. L. Crasso (*Elogj d' Huomini Letterati*, Ven. 1666) informs us that his

books were excommunicated by the Church. Quensledt (*de Patr. Doct.*) affirms 'nec tantum novæ medicinæ, verum etiam novæ theologiæ autor est.' Delrio, in his *Disquisit. Magicar.*, classes him among those 'partim atheos, partim hereticos' (lib. 1, cap. 3). 'Omnino tamen multa theologica in ejusdem scriptis plane atheismum olent, ac duriuscule sonant in auribus vere Christiani' (*D. Gabrielis Claudi 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 redaeturum in ordinem minabatur, neque enim eorum qui hactenus in scripturam sacram seripeissent, sive veteres, sive recentiores, quenquam scripturæ nucleum recte eruisse, sed circa corticem et quasi membranam tantum hære' (*Th. Erastus, Disputat. de Med. Nova*). These and similar notions had their due effect on Oporinus, who, says Zuingerus, in his *Theatrum*, 'longum vale dixit ei (Paracelso) ne ob præceptoris, alioqui amicissimi, horrendas blasphemias ipse quoque aliquando pœnas Deo Opt. Max. lueret.'

(5) His defenders allow the drunkenness. Take a sample of their excuses: 'Gentis hoc, non viri vitium est, a Taciti seculo ad nostrum usque non interrupto filo devolutum, sinceritati forte Germanæ cœvum, et nescio an aliquo consanguinitatis vinculo junctum' (Bitiskius). The other charges were chiefly trumped up by Oporinus: 'Doni, quod Oporinus amanuensis ejus sæpe narravit, nunquam nisi potus ad explicanda sua accessit, atque in medio conclavi ad columnam τετυφωμένος adstans, apprehenso manibus capulo ensis, cujus κοίλωμα hospitium præbuit ut aiunt spiritui familiari, imaginationes aut concepta sua protulit:—alii illud quod in capulo habuit, ab ipso Azoth appellatum medicinam fuisse præstantissimam aut lapidem Philosophicum putant' (Melch. Adam). This famous sword was no laughing-matter in those days, and 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 Gonsward,
Or Paracelsus with his long sword.
Volpone, Act ii. Scene 2.

Bumbustus kept a Devil's bird
Shut in the pommel of his sword,
That taught him all the cunning pranks,
Of past and future mountebanks.

Hedderas, Part ii. Cant. 3.

This Azoth was simply '*landanum 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 prociis a medentibus illius urbis, et vaniloquus deceptorque proclamatus, qui, ut laboranti famæ subveniat, viros quosdam autoritatis summx in Republica illa adit, et infantiæ amoliendæ, ætisque suæ asserendæ, specimen ejus pollicetur editurum, nullo stipendio vel accepto pretio, horum faciles præbentium aures jussu elephantiacos aliquot, a communionem hominum cæterorum segregatos, et in valetudinarium detrusos, alieno arbitrio eliguntur, quos virtute singulari remedium suorum Theophrastus a fœda Græcorum lepra mundat, pristinaque sanitati restituit; conservat illustre harum curationum urbs in archivis suis testimonium' (Bitiskius)¹. It is to be remarked that Oporinus afterward

¹ The premature death of Paracelsus casts no manner of doubt on the fact of his having possessed the Elixir Vitæ: the alchemists have abundant reasons to adduce, from which I select

repented of his treachery: 'Sed resiquit tandem, et quem vivum convitiis insectatus fuerat defunctum veneratione prosequutus, infames fame praeceptoris morsus in remorsus conscientiae conversi penitentia, hen nimis tardu, vulnera clausere exanimi quae spiranti illixerant.' For these 'bites' of Oporinus, see *Disputat. Erasti*, and Andreas Jociseus *Oratio de vit. et ob. Opori*; 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 Vegerus².

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^o et Philos^o sectis*, thus prefaces the ninth section of cap. 9, 'De Chymia'—'Nobilem hanc medicinam partem, diu sepultam avorum aetate quasi ab ore revocavit Th. Paracelsus.' I 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' (see 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 *Prefat. in Paramyr.*) declares 'quod ad librorum Paracelsi copiam attinet, audio, a Germanis prope trecentos recenseri.' 'O fecunditas ingenii!' adds he, ap-positely. 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 haec ipsius scripta in lucem prodire videntur; quippe quae muro inclusa ipso absente servi ejusdem indicio, futo surrepta atque sublata sunt,' says Valentius. These have been the study of a host of commentators, among whose labours are most notable, Petri Severini, *Idea Medicinæ Philosophicæ*, Bas. 1571; Mic. Toxetis, *Onomastica*, Arg. 1574; Dornei, *Dict. Parac.*, Frane. 1584; and *Pi Philos^o Compendium cum scholiis auctore 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 professione tali, quæ a tam 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 following, as explanatory of the property of the Tincture not calculated on by its votaries:—'Objectionem illam, quod Paracelsus non fuerit longævus, nonnulli quoque solvunt per rationes physicas: vitæ nimirum abbreviationem fortasse talibus accidere posse, ob Tincturam frequentiore ac largiore dosi sumtam, dum a summe efficaci et penetrabili hujus virtute calor innatus quasi suffocatur.' (Gabrielis Clanderii Schediasma.)

² For a good defence of Paracelsus I refer the reader to Olaus Borrichius' treatise—*Hermæticæ 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.

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