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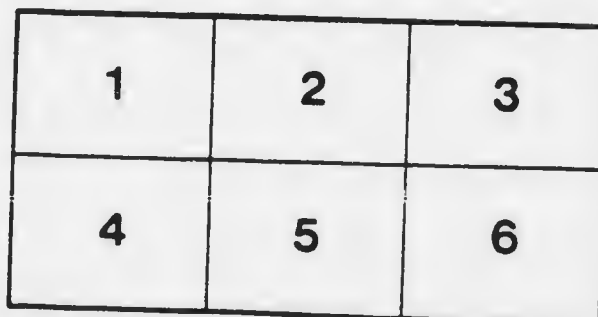
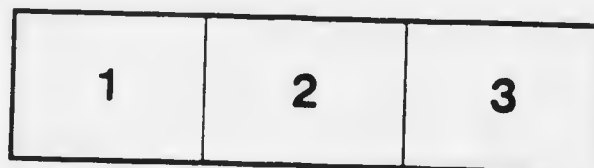
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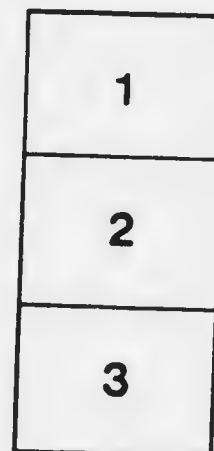
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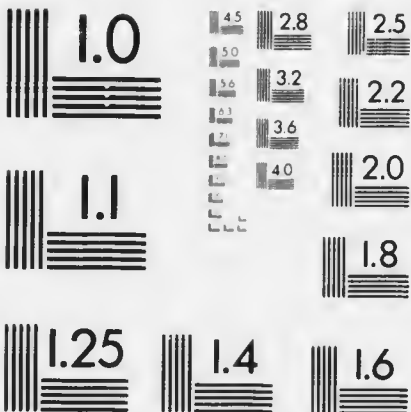
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ROBERT BROWNING





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THE POETICAL WORKS
OF
ROBERT BROWNING

WILLIAMS & CO., LIMITED

LONDON, NEW YORK AND TORONTO

1911



GEORGE BROWNING

THE POETICAL WORKS
OF
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ROBERT BROWNING

ROBERT BROWNING, one of the greatest English poets of the nineteenth century, and the most uncompromising of them all, was born in Southampton Street, Camberwell, an extensive parish in South London, on May 7th, 1812. Although this event was of comparatively recent date, it is believed that the house has disappeared from human ken. Browning's father, after whom he was named, was a man of considerable culture and taste. Engaged in one of the departments of the Bank of England, he was enabled to give free play in private life to his love of letters, scholarship and art. The poet's mother was the daughter of William Wiedemann, a German who carried on a modest shipowning business in Dundee and had taken unto himself a Scottish wife.

Browning was an apt and precocious child, and a dame who conducted a local infant-school, to which he was sent for a while, is credited with having detected the signs of his budding genius. The spell which music laid upon him in his tenderest years never lost its influence, and his veneration for poetry and painting was also innate. His education did not follow conventional lines, if we except the brief period during which he attended the school kept by the Rev. Thomas Ready, of Peckham. Stimulated by the poems of Shelley and Keats, which he first read in his fourteenth year, he showed plainly his intense sympathy with creative work, and his parents determined to educate him at home under a tutor. If he missed the advantage of a public school and University training, he was far from being reared as a milksop, for he was regularly taught riding, boxing and fencing, in all of which he became proficient, and among his other accomplishments were dancing, singing and music. His father departed from the plan of study so far as to allow him to attend for one session (1829-30) Professor George Long's Greek Class at University College, London.

When the question of a career grew urgent, Browning learned that his sister, Sarianna—the only other child of his parents—would be provided for and that no responsibility rested upon him in respect of her future. Thereupon he boldly chose the vocation of poet. Happily he was assured of a competence, and his father wisely decided to let the

confident youth have his own way. Robert cut no time to waste, and in 1833 his poem of *Pauline* was published as a surprise to his parents and at the cost of his aunt. The volume was favourably reviewed by W. J. Fox, the well-known Unitarian minister of South Place Chapel, in the *Monthly Repository*, but attracted little notice otherwise. The poem's defects were remediable. It gave ample promise, and Browning was neither "down-hearted" nor idle. Shortly after a trip to Russia he contributed several poems to Fox's magazine, amongst them "Porphyria's Lover" and "Johannes Agricola in Meditation." In 1835, following his first visit to Italy, appeared *Paracelsus*, which not only won the outspoken praise of John Forster in the *Examiner*, but brought him into close touch with Carlyle, Landor, Leigh Hunt, Talfourd, the Procters, and other eminent writers of books. His family had removed to a more commodious house at Hatcham, the fine garden of which was the poet's cherished retreat. Having formed the acquaintance of Macready, the famous actor, Browning was induced to turn his hand to a play, to keep the tragedian, as the latter said, "from going to America." *Strafford*, the drama thus originated, was produced at Covent Garden Theatre on May Day, 1837, the year in which Queen Victoria ascended the throne; but though Helen Faucit and Macready himself sustained the principal parts, the piece only ran for five nights.

In 1838 Browning made his second tour in Italy, where he was partly occupied in writing *Sordello*, the darkest and least intelligible of all his works. Having then no occasion to worry about his income, he wrote always to please himself, and was ready, of course, to pay the price of his inflexibility. Accordingly he fell into the obscurity of Scylla while trying to avoid the Charybdis of diffuseness. That he was capable of poetry of the highest order was proved by some of his shorter pieces of this date, such as "How they Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix," and still more by certain numbers of the series collectively known as *Bells and Pomegranates*, which came out at frequent intervals between 1841 and 1846. These eight numbers comprised *Pippa Passes* (1841), *King Victor and King Charles* (1842), *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842)—which contained the famous "Pied Piper of Hamelin," written to divert Macready's little boy William on his sick-bed—*The Return of the Druses* (1843), *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* (1843)—written for Macready and produced at Drury Lane Theatre on February 11th, 1843, with Helen Faucit and Samuel Phelps in the leading characters, but withdrawn after a few nights—*Colombe's Birthday* (1844), *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* (1845)—including half-a-dozen poems, among them "The Bishop Orders his Tomb at St. Praxed's Church," and "The Flight of the Duchess," contributed to Tom Hood's magazine to assist the editor, then on his deathbed—and *Luria* and *A Soul's Tragedy* (1846). Unfortunately the cavalier attitude which Macready adopted towards the *Blot in the 'Scutcheon* led to a breach with the poet that was not healed for nearly twenty years.

After a third holiday in Italy (1844) Browning was to experience the happiness of his lifetime. Through the medium of her cousin John Kenyon, Browning had entered into correspondence with Elizabeth Barrett Moulton Barrett, then more celebrated than himself as a poet, and met her for the first time on May 20th, 1845, in her father's house,

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50, Wimpole Street, London. Mr. Barrett was a selfish tyrant, opposed to the marriage of his children and to everything that interfered with his comfort, and the lovers had to meet without his knowledge. Miss Barrett had been an invalid all her life, and Browning saw that her only chance of recovery and health was to remove her from her unnatural environment. He proposed a private marriage, to which Miss Barrett finally consented, and they were accordingly married in St. Pancras Church on September 12th, 1846. A few days later they crossed the Channel and eventually resided at Pisa for six months. It may be explained that Browning offered to ask Mr. Barrett for his daughter's hand in the usual way, but was obliged to abandon the idea when he learned from Miss Barrett that her father's curse would kill her. Browning's conduct throughout was, of course, that of a gentleman, and the effect of his policy in withdrawing his wife from the unwholesome surroundings of her home was soon evident in a marked improvement in her health, while her deep and abiding affection for her husband was testified to by the exquisite sentiment and melody of her immortal group of *Sonnets from the Portuguese*.

From Pisa the Brownings flitted to Florence, where at length they settled in the Casa Guidi. Here their only child, Robert Wiedemann Barrett Browning, was born on March 9th, 1849, their joy being turned to mourning a few days afterwards by the tidings of Browning's mother's death, an event which greatly depressed the poet. Gradually, however, he recovered tone, and, in 1850, raised a noble monument to his mother in his *Christmas Eve and Easter Day*. During their residence in Florence the Brownings made excursions to various parts of Italy, but in 1851—the year of the first International Exhibition—returned to London. Mr. Barrett proving unamenable to every suggestion of reconciliation, Browning made a last appeal for a reasonable attitude. In reply to this overture of peace he received, still unopened, all the letters which his wife had sent to her father during their five years' absence from England. After a rebuff of such brutal sort, there was nothing for it but silence. The winter of this year was spent in Paris (where they saw something of the *coup d'état*), and in the following June they revisited London, returning to Florence in late autumn. On April 25th, 1853, Browning's play, *Colombe's Birthday*, was produced at the Haymarket Theatre, under the direction of Helen Faucit, and achieved more than a *succès d'estime*.

Most of the next two years were spent by the Brownings in leisurely holidays, sometimes at Bagni di Lucca (where Robert wrote "In a Balcony" and others of his shorter poems), sometimes at Florence, sometimes at Rome (where they met Leighton, Thackeray, Fanny Kemble and John Gibson Lockhart), but always on the lines of strictest economy, for increasing domestic expenses had to be met otherwise than by publishers' cheques, which had not yet begun to flow in in a constant stream. In 1855 they returned to England, the poet with his *Men and Women*, published at the end of the year, his wife with the manuscript of her *Aurora Leigh*. The call of the South, however, could not be neglected altogether, and 1856 saw them again in their beloved Italy. On December 3rd their constant friend John Kenyon died and his legacies of £6,500 to Robert Browning and £4,500 to his

wife placed them permanently beyond any apprehension of hardship and distress. Nothing in the whole of his Italian wanderings more saddened the poet in its fashion than the sudden apparition of Walter Savage Landor at Florence in 1859, aged, forlorn and penniless. Browning promptly befriended the irreconcilable old man and domiciled him in the rooms in Florence where the weary Titan drew his last breath five years later.

But the sorrow of Browning's life was about to cast its darkening shadow over him. His wife's high hopes for her darling Italy had been rudely shattered by the Treaty of Villa Franca, and she suffered a serious relapse from which she never entirely recovered. At Rome, in the winter of 1860, Browning wrote "Sludge the Medium" to relieve his feelings against the spiritualist cranks who had worried his wife. In the ensuing autumn the condition of her health had grown alarming, and lung trouble augmented his anxieties. By now they were back again in Florence, the poet unremitting in his devotion to his wife, whom he nursed with infinite pains and patience. No untoward result had been looked for, but in the early hours of the morning of June 29th, 1861, she passed away in the poet's arms, in the course of a few minutes, her head upon his cheek. "So God took her to Himself," wrote the bereaved husband, "as you would lift a sleeping child from a dark uneasy bed into your arms and the light. Thank God. Her last word when I asked 'How do you feel?' 'Beautiful.'" He laid her to rest in the Protestant cemetery at Florence, where a memorial in white marble now marks her grave.

For a time Browning was inconsolable, but fortunately the care of the child of his marriage with his best-beloved needed immediate attention, and the occupation thus providentially afforded drew his thoughts from the loss which looked like plunging him in all-consuming grief. As soon as he could he left Florence, which he never again visited, and ultimately made his home at 19, Warwick Crescent, Kensington, where, first, his wife's sister, Miss Arabel Barrett, and afterwards his own sister, kept house for him. In the early years of his mourning he led a greatly secluded life, until finding that the morbid state of mind threatened to become chronic, he determined to throw off a demeanour that was unworthy of him and take his proper place in the best and most intellectual society of the day. This decision had a stimulating effect upon his powers, and he entered upon a second period of remarkable activity. His *Dramatis Personæ* appeared in 1864, and he had also been pondering, at Biarritz and elsewhere, the subject of his masterpiece, *The Ring and the Book*, a "murder-poem" which had been suggested by a parchment-bound copy of the official report of the case that he had picked up in Florence for a few pence. This magnificent poem, a complete study in psychology, was published in four instalments in 1868-9, and was greeted with universal applause. With this success vanished the neglect that had overtaken his earlier works, and henceforth Browning shared with Tennyson the suffrages of the lovers of literature throughout the English-speaking world. To his sorrow his father had not been spared to witness his triumph, for he died in Paris on June 14th, 1866, and two years afterwards, almost to a day, Arabel Barrett, his wife's favourite sister, expired in his arms.

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Work, however, and not repining he had discovered to be the best specific for grief, and some of his most vigorous poems appeared in rapid succession. To 1871 belong *Balaustion's Adventure* and *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau*; to 1872 *Fifine at the Fair*; to 1873 *Red Cotton Nightcap Country*; to 1875 the *Inn Album*; to 1876 *Pacchiarotto*; to 1877 the translation of the *Agamemnon* of Æschylus; to 1878 *La Saisiaz* and *The Two Poets of Croisic*; to 1879 and 1880 the *Dramatic Idyls*; to 1883 *Jocoseria*; to 1884 *Ferishtah's Fancies*; to 1887 *Parleyings with Certain People of Importance in their Day*, and to 1889 *Asolando*, which, by a pathetic coincidence, actually saw the light on the very day he died, on December 12th, in his son's house, the Palazzo Rezzonico, in Venice. Whether we regard the variety of subject or the sustained excellence of treatment, this was an extraordinary output for a man who was verging on sixty years of age when it began. He was buried in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey on December 31st, 1889.

Robert Browning was long in coming into his kingdom, but his supremacy is now unchallenged and unassailable. Ashamed of their indifference to his unique versatility, commanding genius and astonishing virility, learned societies made haste to atone for their neglect. In 1868 he was invited to assume the Lord Rectorship of St. Andrews University in succession to John Stuart Mill, and on two other occasions (1877 and 1884) this honour was pressed upon him, as also was the Lord Rectorship of Glasgow University. But he could not see his way to undertake the responsibilities of either post. In 1868 he was made Honorary M.A. of Oxford and Honorary Fellow of Balliol College. Three years later he was elected Life Governor of University College, London, and but for a technical but insuperable difficulty—that he had not graduated M.A. in the ordinary course—he would have been appointed Professor of Poetry at Oxford—an office which he would have filled with quite exceptional distinction. In 1884 he received from Edinburgh the degree of LL.D., and, in 1886, became Foreign Correspondent to the Royal Academy. One singular compliment was paid to him in 1881, when the Browning Society was founded at the instigation of Dr. Frederick James Furnivall. The project tickled the ears of the groundlings, but it evinced the eagerness for the thorough exposition of his writings and demonstrated his growing popularity. The elucidation of an author's text in all its bearings is a work of necessity and not of grace, and students of Browning, like those of Shakespeare, could not fail to benefit by it. His character could not be better expressed than in his own noble pen-portrait—

One who never turned his back, but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake.

Similarly, his optimism and faith were summed up in the whole-hearted avowal—

God's in His heaven—
All's right with the world!

JAMES A. MANSON.

LIST OF WORKS DEALING WITH THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF ROBERT BROWNING

- "Essays on Robert Browning's Poetry." By John T. Nettleship . . . 1868
 "Balaustion's Adventure." By H. Buxton Folman . . . 1872
 "Browning's Women." By Mary E. Burt . . . 1877
 "Sordello, a Story from Robert Browning." By Frederick May Holland . . . 1881
 "A Bibliography of Robert Browning" (1833-1881) By Dr. F. J. Furnivall. 1881
 [Forming a portion of Part I of "The Browning Society's Papers."]
 "Copy of Correspondence between J. O. Halliwell Phillipps and Robert Browning." By J. O. Halliwell Phillipps 1881
 "Stories from Browning." By Frederick May Holland 1882
 "An Introduction to Robert Browning." By Bancroft Cooke 1883
 "Robert Browning: the Thoughts of a Poet on Art and Faith." By Howard S. Pearson 1885
 "A Handbook to the Works of Robert Browning." By Mrs. Sutherland Orr 1885
 [Several times reprinted, with revisions.]
 "Miss Alma Murray's 'Constance' in Robert Browning's 'In a Balcony.'" By M. L. Moseley, LL.B. 1885
 "Sordello's Story, retold in Prose." By Annie Wall 1885
 "Robert Browning's Poetry: Outline Studies." Published for the Chicago Browning Society. 1886
 [A limited number of copies were placed on sale in London.]
 "Sordello: A History and a Poem." By Caroline H. Dall. 1886
 "An Introduction to the Study of Browning." By Arthur Symons 1886
 "Studies in the Poetry of Robert Browning." By James Fotheringham 1887
 "Sordello: an Outline Analysis of Mr. Browning's Poem." By Jeanie Morrison 1889
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- "Exposition of Browning's Sordello, with Historical and other Notes."
By David Duff, M.A., B.D. 1906
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- "Life and Letters of Robert Browning." By Mrs. Sutherland Orr . 1908
- "Classical Elements in Browning's Aristophanes Apology." By
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- "Life of Robert Browning, with Notices of his Writings, his Family
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- "Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association: collected
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PAULINE :

A FRAGMENT OF A CONFESSION

Plus ne suis ce que j'ai été,
Et ne le saurois jamais être.—MAROT.

Non dubito, quin titulus libri nostri raritate sua quamplurimos alliciat ad legendum : inter quos nonnulli obliquæ opinionis, mente languidi, multi etiam maligni, et in ingenium nostrum ingrati accedent, qui temeraria sua ignorantia, vix conspecto titulo clamabunt : Nos vetita docere, hæresium semina jacere : plis auribus offendiculo, præclaris ingeniis scandalo esse : . . . adeo conscientia sua consulentes, ut nec Apollo, nec Musæ omnes, neque Angelus de cælo me ab illorum execratione vindicare queant : quibus et ego nunc consulo, ne scripta nostra legant, nec intelligant, nec meminerint : nam noxia sunt, venenosa sunt : Acherontis ostium est in hoc libro, lapides loqui, et caveant, ne cerebrum illis excutiat. Vos autem, qui æqua mente ad legendum venitis, si tantam prudentiæ discretionem adhibueritis, quantum in mello legendo apes, jam securi legite. Puto namque vos et utilitatis haud parum et voluptatis plurimum accepturos. Quod si qua repereritis, quæ vobis non placeant, mittite illa, nec utimini. NAM ET EGO VOBIS ILLA NON PROBO, SED NARRO. Cætera tamen propterea non respuite . . . Ideo, si quid liberius dictum sit, ignoscite adolescentiæ nostræ, qui minor quam adolescens hoc opus composui.—*Hen. Corn. Agrippa, De Occult. Philosoph. in Prefat.*

London, January, 1833.

V. A. XX.

PAULINE, mine own, bend o'er me—
thy soft breast
Shall pant to mine—bend o'er me—
thy sweet eyes,
And loosened hair and breathing lips,
and arms
Drawing me to thee—these build up a
screen
To shut me in with thee, and from all
fear;
So that I might unlock the sleepless
brood
Of fancies from my soul, their lurking
place,
Nor doubt that each would pass, ne'er
to return
To one so watched, so loved and so
secured.
But what can guard thee but thy naked
love?
Ah dearest, whoso sucks a poisoned
wound
Envenoms his own veins! Thou art so
good,
So calm—if thou should'st wear a brow
less light
For some wild thought which, but for
me, were kept
from or 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 wander-
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 awaked
Who has slept through 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 with-
out 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, wouldst that I
essay
The task which was to me what now
thou art:
And why should I conceal one weak-
ness more?

Thou wilt remember one warm morn
when winter
Crept aged from the earth, and spring's
first breath
Blew soft from the moist hills; the
black-thorn boughs,
So dark in the bare wood, when glisten-
ing
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
Bade me look up and be what I had
been,
I felt despair could never live by thee:
Thou wilt remember. Thou art not
more dear
Than song was once to me; and I ne'er
sung
But as one entering bright halls where
all
Will rise and shout for him: sure I
must own
That I am fallen, having chosen gifts
Distinct from theirs—that I am sad
and fain
Would give up all to be but where I
was,
Not high as I had been if faithful found,
But low and weak yet full of hope, and
sure
Of goodness as of life—that I would
lose
All this gay mastery of mind, to sit
Once more with them, trusting in truth
and love,
And with an aim—not being what I am.
Oh Pauline, I am ruined who believed
That though my soul had floated from
its sphere
Of wild dominion into the dim orb
Of self—that it was strong and free
ever!
It has conformed itself to that dim orb
Reflecting ail its shades and shapes
and now

Must stay where it alone can be adored.
I have felt this in dreams—in dreams
in which

I seemed the fate from which I fled ; I
felt

A strange delight in causing my decay ;
I was a fiend in darkness chained for
ever

Within some ocean-cave ; and ages
rolled,

Till through the cleft rock, like a moon-
beam, came

A white swan to remain with me ; and
ages

Rolled, yet I tired not of my first joy
In gazing on the peace of its pure
wings :

And then I said " It is most fair to me,
" Yet its soft wings must sure have
suffered change

" From the thick darkness, sure its
eyes are dim,

" Its silver pinions must be cramped
and numbed

" With sleeping ages here ; it cannot
leave me,

" For it would seem, in light beside its
kind,

" Withered, tho' here to me most
beautiful."

And then I was a young witch whose
blue eyes,

As she stood naked by the river springs,
Drew down a god ; I watched his radiant
form

Growing less radiant and it gladdened
me ;

Till one morn, as he sat in the sunshine
Upon my knees, singing to me of
heaven,

He turned to look at me, ere I could
lose

The grin with which I viewed his
perishing :

And he shrieked and departed and sat
long

By his deserted throne, but sunk at
last

Murmuring, as I kissed his lips and
curled

Around him, " I am still a god—to
thee."

Still I can lay my soul bare in its fall,
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 valueless, while the
old trees

Which grew by our youth's home, the
waving mass

Of climbing plants heavy with bloom
and dew,

The morning swallows with their songs
like words,

All these seem clear and only worth
our thoughts :

So, aught connected with my early life,
My rude songs or my wild imaginings,

How I look on them—most distinct
amid

The fever and the stir of after years !

I ne'er had ventured e'en to hope for
this ;

Had not the glow I felt at His award,
Assured me all was not extinct within :

His whom all honour, whose renown
springs up

Like sunlight which will visit all the
world,

So that e'en they who sneered at him
at first,

Come out to it, as some dark spider
crawls

From his foul nets which some lit torch
invades,

Yet spinning still new films for his
retreat.

Thou didst smile, poet, but can we
forgive ?

Sun-treader, life and light be thine for
ever !

Thou art gone from us ; years go by
and spring

Gladdens and the young earth is
beautiful

Yet thy songs come not, other bards
arise,

But none like thee : they stand, thy
majesties,

Like mighty works which tell some
spirit there

Hath sat regardless of neglect and
seorn,

Till, its long task completed, it hath
risen

And left us, never to return, and all
Rush in to peer and praise when all in
vain.

The air seems bright with thy past
presence yet,
But thou art still for me as thou hast
been

When I have stood with thee as on a
throne

With all thy dim creations gathered
round

Like mountains, and I felt of mould
like them,

And 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 wast as a star to
men!

As one should worship long a sacred
spring

Scarce worth a moth's flitting, which
long grasses cross,

And one small tree embowers droop-
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 foun-
tain-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 [world]

Wast thou to me, and art thou to the

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 see red
o'erhanging 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 though I feel how low I am to
him,

"Yet I aim not even to catch a tone
Of all the harmonies which he called

up;

"So, one gleam still remains, although
the last."

Remember me who praise thee e'en
with tears,

For never more shall I walk calm with
thee;

Thy sweet imaginings are as an air,
A melody some wondrous singer sings,

Which, though it haunt men oft in the
still eve,

They dream not to essay ; yet it no less

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 own life—for one little word

Of this sweet friend who lives in loving me,

Lives strangely on my thoughts and looks and words, [thing

As fathoms down some nameless ocean Its silent course of quietness and joy.

O dearest, if indeed I tell the past, Mayst 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 men steal to their mountain watch.

I must not think, lest this new impulse die

In which I trust ; I have no confidence : So, I will sing on fast as fancies come ; Rudely, the verse being as the mood it paints.

I strip my mind bare, whose first elements

I shall unveil—not as they struggled forth

In infancy, nor as they now exist, That I am grown above them and can rule—

But in that middle stage when they were full

Yet ere I had disposed them to my will ; And then I shall show how these elements

Produced my present state, and what it is.

I am made up of an intensest life, Of a most clear idea of consciousness

Of self, distinct from all its qualities, From all affections, passions, feelings,

powers ;

And thus far it exists, if tracked in all : But linked, in me, to self-supremacy,

Existing as a centre to all things, Most potent to create and rule and call

Upon all things to minister to it ; And to a principle of restlessness

Which would be all, have, see, know, taste, feel, 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 desire

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, though my mind

Forgets not, not a shred of life forgets, Yet I can take a secret pride in calling

The dark past up to quell it regally.

A mind like this must dissipate itself. But I have always had one lode-star ;

now,

As I look back, I see that I have wasted

Or progressed as I looked towards that
star—

A need, a trust, a yearning after God :
A feeling I have analysed but late,
But it existed, and was reconciled
With a neglect of all I deemed his laws,
Which yet, when seen in others, I
abhorred.

I felt as one beloved, and so shut in
From fear : and thence I date my trust
in signs

And omens, for I saw God everywhere ;
And I can only lay it to the fruit
Of a sad after-time that I could doubt
Even his being—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 resolve.

And I can love nothing—and this dull
truth

Has come the last : but sense supplies
a love

Encircling me and mingling with my
life.

These make myself : for I have sought
in vain

To trace how they were formed by cir-
cumstance,

For I still find them turning my wild
youth

Where they alone displayed themselves,
converting

All objects to their use : now see their
course.

They came to me in my first dawn of
life

Which passed alone with wisest ancient
books

All halo-girt with fancies of my own ;
And I myself went with the tale—a god
Wandering after beauty, or a giant
Stanling 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 , powers folded
up—

A sense that though those shadowy
times were past

Their spirit dwelt in me, and I shou'd
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 de-
lights,

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
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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.

And my choice fell
Not so much on a system as a man—

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 hange 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 beau-
tiful
" 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.
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 looked again to see how all went on.

My powers were greater : as some
temple seemed

My soul, where nought is changed and
incense rolls

Around the altar, only God is gone
And some dark spirit sitteth in his seat.
So, I passed through the temple and to
me

Knelt troops of shadows, and they
cried " Hail, king !

" We serve thee now and thou shalt
serve no more !

" Call on us, prove us, let us worship
thee ! "

And I said " Are ye strong ? Let
fancy bear me

" Far from the past ! " And I was
borne away,

As Arab birds float sleeping in the wind,
O'er deserts, towers and forests, I being
calm ;

And I said " I have nursed up energies,
" They will prey on me." And a band
knelt low

And cried " Lord, we are here and we
will make

" A way for thee in thine appointed
life !

" O 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 so lifted
 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
 hope went, [morn
 For I would wear myself out, like that
 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 work-
 ing 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,
 " Comes darkened, seldom, hastening
 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 hope, 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
 myself
 " 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,
 " Fair eyes 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 soul'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 should 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 to them, whom
 trustingly

" We sent before into time's yawning
gulf
" To face whate'er might lurk in dark-
ness 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 low-
ness
" 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 blest blood,
" Withering unseen that they might
flourish still."

Pauline, my sweet friend, thou dost not
forget

How this mood swayed me when thou
first wast 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
Treading the purple calmly to his death,
While round him, like the clouds of eve,
all dusk,

The giant shades of fate, silently flit-
ting,

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 pro-
gress 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 ex-
plain,

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 unknown.

My selfishness is satiated not,
It wears me like a flame; my hunger
for

All pleasure, howsoever 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 wild country where the eye can
see

No end to the far hills and dales be-
strewn

With shining towers and dwellings: I
grow mad

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And

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 quenching 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 sufficed 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 hideously:

I can forget myself in friendship, fame,
Of liberty, or love of mighty souls;

But I begin to know what thing hate is—
To sicken and to quiver and grow white—

And I myself have furnished its first prey
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 beautiful

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's lost and nought remains!

There's some vile juggle with my
reason here ;

I feel I but explain to my own loss
These impulses ; they live no less the
same.

Liberty ! what though I despair ? my
blood

Rose not at a slave's name proudlier
than now,

And sympathy, obscured by sophistries !
Why have not I sought refuge in my-
self,

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, though sad change has come
there too ;

No more I leave myself to follow them—
Unconsciously I measure me by them—

Let me forget it : and I cherish most
My love of England—how her name, a
word

Of hers in a strange tongue makes my
heart beat !

Pauline, I could do any thing—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 sink-
ing 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 the 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 through 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 through 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
 roots
 And grass of the hill-top level with
 the air—
 Blue sunny air, where a great cloud
 floats laden
 With light, like a dead whale that white
 birds pick,
 Floating away in the sun in some north
 sea.
 Air, air, fresh life-blood, thin and
 searching air,
 The clear, dear breath of God that
 loveth us,
 Where small birds reel and winds take
 their delight!
 Water is beautiful, but not like air:
 See, where the solid azure waters lie
 Made as of thickened air, and down
 below,
 The fern-ranks like a forest spread
 themselves
 As though each pore could feel the
 element;
 Where the quick glancing serpent winds
 his way,
 Float with me there, Pauline!—but not
 like air.
 Down the hill! Stop—a clump of
 trees, 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:

Hedge-rows 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 I can trace is, rest, be-
neath
Some better essence than itself, in
weakness;

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 courrait 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 tournure d'esprit tout particulière de mon ami, rendent les changemens 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 Shakespeare, de Raphaële, de Beethoven, 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 acquiescer 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'attendre, et dont chacun une fois obtenu devait former une espèce de plateau d'où 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 saisis pas parfaitement, lui est peut-être aussi inintelligible qu'à moi.

PAULINE.

This is “myself,” not what I think
should be:
And what is that I hunger for but
God?
My God, my God, let me for once look
on thee
As though nought else existed, we alone!
And as creation crumbles, my soul's
spark
Expands till I can say,—Even from
myself
I need thee and I feel thee and I love
thee:
I do not plead my rapture in thy works
For love of thee, nor that I feel as
one
Who cannot die: but there is that in
me
Which turns to thee, which loves or
which should love.
Why have I girt myself with this hell-
dress?
Why have I laboured to put out my life?
Is it not in my nature to adore,
And e'en for all my reason do I not
Feel him, and thank him, and pray to
him—now?
Can I forego the trust that he loves me?
Do I not feel a love which only ONE. . .
O thou pale form, so dimly seen, deep-
eyed!
I have adored 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 though my wandering dreams have
seen all shapes
Of strange delight, oft have I stood by
thee—
Have I been keeping lonely watch with
thee
In the damp night by weeping Olivet,
Or leaning on thy bosom, proudly less,
Or dying with thee on the lonely cross,
Or witnessing thy bursting from the
tomb!

A mortal, sin's familiar friend, doth
here
Avow that he will give all earth's re-
ward,
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 through 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 though I
sink,
No less I feel that thou hast brought me
bliss
And that I still may hope to win it
back.
Thou knowest, 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 saidst a perfect bard
was one
Who shadowed out the stages of all life,
And so thou badst 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
through
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 be-
lieve
Aught better could so look to thee ;
nor seek
Again the world of good thoughts left
for me !
There were bright troops of undis-
covered 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 that was a dim
crowd

Of visions, each a part of the dim whole :
 And one star of 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, be 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 pre-
 scribed 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 farther than thy sweet com-
 mands,
 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

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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 though it
fade,

And though here 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
No less I make an end in perfect joy.

E'en in my brightest time, a lurking
fear

Possessed me : I well knew my weak
resolves,

I felt the witchery that makes mind
[sleep

Over its treasure, as one half afraid
To make his riches definite : but now

These feelings shall not utterly be lost,
I shall not know again that nameless
care

Lest, leaving all undone in youth, some
new

And undreamed end reveal itself too
For this song shall remain to tell for
ever

That when I lost all hope of such a
[change,

Suddenly beauty rose on me again.

No less I make an end in perfect joy,
For I, having thus again been visited,
Shall doubt not many another bliss
awaits,

And, though this weak soul sink and
darkness 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
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 hands of friends
He lives indeed, so, I would lean on
thee !

Thou must be ever with me, most in
When such shall come, but chiefly when
I die,

For I seem, dying, as one going in the
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
Or touch of fear. Love me and wish
me well !

RICHMOND, October 22, 1832.

SONNET

EYES, calm beside thee, (Lady, couldst
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 lightest
brow

Wore worship like an aureole, " O'er
them all

" My beauty," thou wilt murmur,
" did prevail

" Save that one only : "—Lady, couldst
thou know !

PARACELSUS

INSCRIBED TO
AMÉDÉE DE RIPERT-MONCLAR

BY HIS AFFECTIONATE FRIEND

R. B.

London, March 15, 1835.

PERSONS

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

I.—PARACELSUS ASPIRES

SCENE, Würzburg: a garden in the
environs. 1512.

FESTUS, PARACELSUS, MICHAL.

Par. Come close to me, dear friends;
still closer; thus!

Close to the heart which, though long
time roll by

Ere it again beat quicker, pressed to
yours,

As now it beats—perchance a long,
long time—

At least henceforth your memories
shall make

Quiet and fragrant as befits their home.
Nor shall my memory want a home in
yours—

Alas, that it requires too well such free
Forgiving love as shall embalm it there!

For if you would remember me aright,
As I was born to be, you must forget

All fitful strange and moody 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 our frailty.
Mich. Aureole!

Par. Drop by drop! she is weeping
like a child!

Not so! I am content—more than
content;

Nay, autumn wins you best by this its
mute

Appeal to sympathy for its decay:
Look up, sweet Michal, nor esteem the
less

Your stained and drooping vines their
grapes bow down,

Nor blame those creaking trees bent
with their fruit,

That apple-tree with a rare after-birth
Of peeping blooms sprinkled its wealth
among!

Then for the winds—what wind that
ever raved

Shall vex that ash which overlooks you
both,

So proud it wears its berries ? Ah, at length,
 The old smile meet for her, the lady of this
 Sequestered nest !—this kingdom, limited
 Alone by one old populous green wall
 Tenanted by the ever-busy flies,
 Grey crickets and shy lizards and quick spiders, [moss—
 Each family of the silver-threaded
 Which, look through near, this way, and it appears
 A stubble-field or a cane-brake, a marsh
 Of bulrush whitening in the sun : laugh now !
 Fancy the crickets, each one in his house,
 Looking out, wondering at the world—or best,
 Yon painted snail with his gay shell of dew,
 Travelling to see the glossy balls high up
 Hung by the caterpillar like gold lamps—
Mich. In truth we have lived carelessly and well.
Par. And shall, my perfect pair !—each, trust me, born
 For the other ; nay, your very hair, when mixed,
 Is of one hue. For where save in this nook
 Shall you two walk, when I am far away,
 And wish me prosperous fortune ? Stay : that plant [softly,
 Shall never wave its tangles lightly and
 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 wandering eyes awhile !
 You are ours to-night at least ; and while you spoke
 Of Michal and her tears, I thought that none
 Could willing leave what he so seemed to love :
 But that last look destroys my dream—
 —that look

As if, where'er you gazed, there stood a star !
 How far was 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
 Encroaching trouble may have reached them too,
 Nor have recourse to fancy's busy aid
 And fashion even a wish in their behalf,
 Beyond what they possess already here ;
 But, unobstructed, may at once forget
 Itself in them, assured how well they fare.
 Besides, 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 eve.

Fest. True : and the eve is deepening, and we sit
 As little anxious to begin our talk
 As though to-morrow I could hint of it
 As we paced arm-in-arm the cheerful town
 At sun-dawn ; or could whisper it by fits
 (Trithemius busied with his class the while)
 In that dim chamber where the noon-streaks peer
 Half-frightened by the awful tomes around ;
 Or in some grassy lane unbosom all
 From even-blush to midnight : but, to-morrow !
 Have I full leave to tell my inmost mind ?
 We have been brothers, and henceforth the world
 Will rise between us :—all my freest mind ?
 'Tis the last night, dear Aureole !
Par. Oh, say on !
 Devise some test of love, some arduous feat
 To be performed for you : say on ! If night
 Be spent the while, the better ! Recall how oft
 My wondrous plans and dreams and hopes and fears
 Have—never wearied you, oh no !—as I
 Recall, and never vividly as now.
 Your true affection, born when Einsiedeln
 And its green hills were all the world to us ;
 And still increasing to this night which ends
 My further stay at 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 projects 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 dazzling dust

Shed from the ore-beds native to his clime.
 Just so, the value of repose and love,
 I meant should tempt you, better far
 I
 You mean to comprehend ; and yet desist
 No whit from projects where repose nor love
 Have part
Par. Once more ? Alas ! As I foretold.
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 pursuit,
 Abandon the sole ends for which I live,
 Reject God's great commission, and so die !
 You bid me listen for your true love's sake :
 Yet how has grown that love ? Even in a long
 And patient cherishing of the selfsame spirit
 It now would quell ; as though a mother hoped
 To stay the lusty manhood of the child
 Once weak upon her knees. I was not born
 Informed and fearless from the first, but shrank
 From aught which marked me out apart from men :
 I would have lived their life, and died their death,
 Lost in their ranks, eluding destiny :
 But you first guided me through doubt and fear,
 Taught me to know mankind and know myself ;
 And now that I am strong and full of hope,
 That, from my soul, I can reject all aims
 Save those your earnest words made plain to me,
 Now that I touch the brink of my design,
 When I would have a triumph in their eyes,
 A glad cheer in their voices—Michal weeps,

And Festus ponders gravely!

Fest. When you deign
To hear my purpose . . .

Par. Hear it? I can say
Beforehand all this evening's confer-
ence!

'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
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 an-
swer 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 soul 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 presumptu-
ous 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 ven-
ture 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—'t was mine to have you
in my view

As you had your own soul and those
intentions

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 ; 't was significant and
strange, [length

In one matched to his soul's content at
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 thrive-

less quest.

That careless bearing, free from all
pretence

Even of contempt for what it ceased to
seek—

Smiling humility, praising much, yet
waiving

What it professed to praise—though
not so well

Maintained but that rare outbreaks,
fierce and brief,

Revealed the hidden scorn, as quickly
curbed.

That ostentatious show of past defeat,
That ready acquiescence in contempt,

I deemed no other than the letting go
His shivered sword, of one about to

spring
Upon his foe's throat ; but it was not

thus :

Not that way looked your brooding
purpose then.

For after-signs disclosed, what you
confirmed,

That you prepared to task to the utter-
most

Your strength, in furtherance of a cer-
tain 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 the sages.

Fest. Such the aim, then,
God sets before you ; and 't is doubtless
need

That he appoint no less the way of
praise

Than the desire to praise ; for, though
I hold

With you, the setting forth such praise
to be

The natural end and service of a man,
And hold such praise is best attained
when man

Attains the general welfare of his kind—
Yet this, the end, is not the instru-
ment.

Presume not to serve God apart from
such

Appointed channel as he wills shall
gather

Imperfect tributes, for that sole obedi-
ence

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

Conduive to success, make destiny
Dispense with man's endeavour. Now,

dare you search
Your inmost heart, and candidly avow

Whether you have not rather wild
desire

For this distinction than security
Of its existence ? whether you discern

The path to the fulfilment of your
purpose

Clear as that purpose—and again, that
purpose

Clear as your yearning to be singled
out

For its pursuer. Dare you answer
this ?

Par. [after a pause.] No, I have

nought to fear ! Who will may
know

The secret'st workings of my soul.
What though

It be so ?—if indeed the strong desire
Eclipse the aim in me ?—if splendour
break

Upon the outset of my path alone,
And duskest shade succeed ? What
fairer seal

Shall I require to my authentic mission
Then 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 beat-
ing

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

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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 re-
 ceive
 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 fast retreat,
 Some one of Learning's many palaces,
 After approved example?—seeking
 there
 Calm converse with the great dead,
 soul to soul,
 Who laid up treasure with the like
 intent
 —So lift yourself into 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 new-
 hearted force,

As at old games the runner snatched
 the torch
 From runner still: this way success
 might be.
 But you have coupled with your enter-
 prise,
 An arbitrary self-repugnant scheme
 Of seeking it in strange and untried
 paths.
 What books are in the desert? Writes
 the sea
 The secret of her yearning in vast
 caves
 Where yours will fall the first of human
 feet?
 His 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 barren-
 ness
 By God's decree, which who shall dare
 impugn?
 Now—ruins where she paused but
 would not stay,
 Old ravaged cities that, renouncing her,
 She called an endless curse on, so it
 came:
 Or worst of all, now—men you visit,
 men,
 Ignoblest troops who never heard her
 voice
 Or hate it, men without one gift from
 Rome
 Or Athens,—these shall Aureole's
 teachers be!
 Rejecting past example, practice, 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!
 Whatever you may protest, knowledge
 is not
 Paramount in your love; or for her
 sake
 You would collect all help from every
 source—
 Rival, assistant, friend, foe, all would
 merge
 In the broad class of those who showed
 her haunts,
 And those who showed them not.
Par. What shall I say?

Festus, from childhood I have been
 possessed
 By a fire—by a true fire, or faint or
 fierce,
 As from without some master, so it
 seemed,
 Repressed or urged its current: this
 but ill
 Expresses what 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 more of the breath so
 light
 Upon my eyelids, and the fingers light
 Among my hair. Youth is confused;
 yet never
 So dull was I but, when that spirit
 passed,
 I turned to him, scarce consciously, as
 turns
 A water-snake when fairies cross his
 sleep.
 And having this within me and about
 me
 While Einsiedeln, its mountains, lakes
 and woods [mine
 Confined me—what oppressive joy was
 When life grew plain, and I first viewed
 the thronged,
 The everlasting concourse of mankind!
 Believe that ere I joined them, ere I
 knew
 The purpose of the pageant, or the
 place
 Consigned me in its ranks—while, just
 awake,
 Wonder was freshest and delight most
 pure—
 'Twas then that least supportable
 appeared
 A station with the brightest of the
 crowd,

A portion with the proudest of them all.
 And from the tumult in my breast, this
 only
 Could I collect, that I must thence-
 forth 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 won-
 drous 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, [praise,
 I would withdraw from their officious
 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 I
 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 : 't was as brief
 as foud,
 For as I gazed again upon the show,
 I soon distinguished here and there a
 shape
 Palm-wreathed and radiant, forehead
 and full eye.
 Well pleased was I their state should
 thus at once
 Interpret my own thoughts :—" Be-
 hold 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 [shape
 A mighty power was brooding, taking
 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 coun-
 tenance,
 " No veil between ; and can thy falter-
 ing hands,
 " Unguided by the brain the sight
 absorbs,

" Pursue their task as earnest blinkers
 do
 " Whom radiance ne'er distracted ?
 Live their life
 " If thou wouldst share their fortune,
 choose their eyes
 " Unfed by splendour. Let each task
 present
 " Its petty good to thee. Waste not
 thy gifts
 " In profitless waiting for the gods'
 descent,
 " But have some idol of thine own to
 dress
 " With their array. Know, not for
 knowing's sake,
 " But to become a star to men for ever ;
 " Know, for the gain it gets, the praise
 it brings,
 " The wonder it inspires, the love it
 breeds :
 " Look one step onward, and secure
 that step !"
 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 :
 " 'T is hard for flesh to tread therein,
 im'ued
 " 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 an-
 swered not,
 Knowing him. As he spoke, I was
 endued
 With comprehension and a steadfast
 will ;

And when he ceased, my brow was
sealed his own.
If there took place no special change
in me,
How comes it all things wore a different
hue
Thenceforward?—pregnant with vast
consequence,
Teeming with grand result, loaded with
fate?
So that when, quailing at the mighty
range
Of secret truths which yearn for birth, I
haste
To contemplate undazzled some one
truth,
Its bearings and effects alone—at once
What was a speck expands into a star,
Asking a life to pass exploring thus,
Till I near craze. 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 fireballs, sleet or stifling
snow,
In some time, his good time, I shall
arrive:
He guides me and the bird. In his
good time!
Mich. Vex him no further, Festus;
it is so!
Fest. Just thus you help me ever.
This would hold
Were it the trackless air, and not a
path
Inviting you, distinct with footprints
yet
Of many a mighty marcher gone that
way.
You may have purer views than theirs,
perhaps,
But they were famous in their day—
the proofs
Remain. At least accept the light
they lend.
Par. Their light! the sum of all is
briefly this;
They laboured and grew famous, and
the fruits
Are best seen in a dark and groaning
earth
Given over to a blind and endless strife
With evils, what of all their fore abates?

No; I reject and spurn them utterly
And all they teach. Shall I sit still
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 re-
main, [seems
Dim memories, as now, when 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 helps
which men

Who overpass their kind, as you would
do,

Have humbly sought; I dare not
thoroughly probe

This matter, lest I learn too much. Let
be

That popular praise would little
instigate

Your effort, 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, [raise

I would encircle me with love, and
A rampart of my fellows; it should
seem

Impossible for me to fail, so watched
By gentle friends who made my cause
their own.

They should ward off fate's envy—the
great gift,

Extravagant when claimed by me alone,
Being so a gift to them as well as me.

If danger daunted me or ease seduced,
How calmly their sad eyes should gaze
reproach!

Mich. O Aureole, can I sing when
all alone,

Without first calling, in my fancy, both
To listen by my side—even I! And
you?

Do you not feel this? Say that you
feel this!

Par. I feel 't is pleasant that my
aims, at length

Allowed their weight, should be sup-
posed 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 . . .

No matter! I deny myself but little
In waiving all assistance save its own.

Would there were some real sacrifice to
make!

Your friends the sages threw their joys
away,

While I must be content with keeping
mine.

Fest. But do not cut yourself from
human weal!

You cannot thrive—a man that dares
affect

To spend his life in service to his kind
For no reward of theirs, unbound to

them

By any tie; nor do so, Aureole! No—
There are strange punishments for

such. Give up
(Although no visible good flow thence)

some part

Of the glory to another; hiding thus,
Even from yourself, that all is for your-
self.

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 't is 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 't were a dispensa-
tion

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 affec-
tions 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 lustrous brow, though in another
it scowls

An eating brand, a shame I dare not
judge you.

The rules of right and wrong thus set
aside,

There's no alternative—I own you one
Of higher order, under other laws

Than bind us ; therefore, curb not one
bold glance !

'Tis best aspire. Once mingled with
us all . . .

Mich. Stay with us, Aureole ! cast
those hopes away,

And stay with us ! An angel warns
me, too,

Man should be humble ; you are very
proud :

And God, dethroned, has doleful plagues
for such !

—Warns me to have in dread no quick
repulse,

No slow defeat, but a complete success :
You will find all you seek, and perish
so !

Par. [after a pause.] Are these the
barren firstfruits of my quest ?

Is love like this the natural lot of all ?
How many years of pain might one
such hour

O'erbalance ? Dearest Michal, dearest !
Festus,

What shall I say, if not that I desire
To justify your love ; and will, dear
friends,

In swerving nothing from my first
resolves.

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—
It 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, [rise

Truth is within ourselves ; it takes no
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
 cape
 Of cloud grown out of the invisible air.
 Hence, may not truth be lodged alike
 in all,
 The lowest as the highest? some slight
 fi m
 The interposing bar which binds a soul
 And makes the idiot, just as makes the
 sage
 Some film removed, the happy outlet
 whence
 Truth issues proudly? See this soul
 of ours!
 How it strives weakly in the child, is
 loosed
 In manhood, clogged by sickness, back
 compelled
 By age and waste, set free at last by
 death:
 Why is it, flesh enthrals it or enthrones?
 What is this flesh we have to penetrate?
 Oh, not alone when life flows still, do
 truth
 And power emerge, but also when
 strange chance
 Ruffles its current; in unused con-
 juncture,
 When sickness breaks the body—hun-
 ger, watching,
 Excess or languor—oftenest death's
 approach,
 Peril, deep joy or woe. One man shall
 crawl
 Through life surrounded with all stir-
 ring things,
 Unmoved; and he goes mad: and
 from the wreck
 Of what he was, by his wild talk alone,
 You first collect how great a spirit he
 hid.
 Therefore, set free the soul alike in all,
 Discovering the true laws by which the
 flesh
 Accloys the spirit! We may not be
 doomed

To cope with seraphs, but at least the
 rest
 Shall cope with us. Make no more
 giants, God,
 But elevate the race at once! We ask
 To put forth just our strength, our
 human strength,
 All starting fairly, all equipped alike,
 Gifted alike, all eagle-eyed, true-
 hearted—
 See if we cannot beat thine angels yet!
 Such is my task. I go to gather this
 The sacred knowledge, here and there
 dispersed
 About the world, long lost or never
 found.
 And why should I be sad or 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
 themselves [bore,
 To find the nature of the spirit they
 And, taught betimes that all their gor-
 geous dreams
 Were only born to vanish in this life,
 Refused to fit them to its narrow
 sphere,
 But chose to figure forth another world
 And other frames meet for their vast
 desires,—
 And all a dream! Thus was life
 scorned; but life
 Shall yet be crowned: twine amaranth!
 I am priest!
 And all for yielding with a lively spirit
 A poor existence, parting with a youth
 Like those who squander every energy
 Convertible to good, on painted toys,
 Breath-bubbles, gilded dust! And
 though I spurn
 All adventitious aims, from empty
 praise
 To love's award, yet whoso deems such
 helps
 Important, and concerns himself for me,
 May know even these will follow with
 the rest—
 As in the steady rolling Mayne, asleep
 Yonder, is mixed its mass of schistous
 ore.

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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 ATTAINS

SCENE, *Constantinople; the House of a
Greek conjurer. 1521.*

PARACELSUS.

Over the waters in the vaporous West
The sun goes down as in a sphere of
gold

Behind the arm of the city, which 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 yon
cloud

Should voyage unwrecked o'er many a
mountain-top

And break upon a molehill. I have
dared

Come to a pause with knowledge;
scan for once

The heights already reached, without
regard

To the extent above; fairly compute
All I have clearly gained; for once
excluding

A brilliant future to supply and perfect
All half-gains and conjectures and crude

hopes:

And all because a fortune-teller wills
His credulous seekers should inscribe

thus much,
Their previous life's attainment, in his

roll,
Before his promised secret, as he vaunts,

Make up the sum: and here, amid the
scrawled

Uncouth recordings of the dupes of this
Old arch-genethliac, 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 to-
gether

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."

PARACLETICS

"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,
 'T is done. I must desist and take my
 chance.

I cannot keep on the stretch; 't is 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 de-
 sire!"

Was it the light wind sang it o'er the
 sea?

An end, a rest! strange how the notion,
 once

Encountered, gathers strength by
 moments! Rest!

Where has it kept so long? this throb-
 bing 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

signed, 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-
 court so far

That he descries at length the shrine
 of shrines,

Must let no sneering of the demons'
 eyes,

Whom he could pass unquailing, fasten
 Upon him, fairly past their power; no,
 no—

He must not stagger, faint, fall down
 at last,

Having a charm to baffle them; be-
 hold,

He bares his front: a mortal ventures
 thus

Serene amid the echoes, beams and
 glooms!

If he be priest henceforth, if he wake
 up

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The god of the place to ban and blast
him there,
Both well ! What 's failure or success
to me ?

I have subdued my life to the one purpose

Whereto I ordained it ; there alone I
spy,

No doubt, that way I may be satisfied.
Yes, well have I subdued my life !
beyond

The obligation of my strictest vow,
The contemplation of my wildest bond,
Which gave my nature freely up, in
truth,

But in its actual state, consenting fully
All passionate impulses its soil was
formed

To rear, should wither ; but foreseeing
not

The tract, doomed to perpetual barren-
ness,

Would seem one day, remembered as it
was,

Beside the parched sand-waste which
now it is,

Already strewn with faint blooms,
viewless then.

I ne'er engaged to root up loves so frail
I felt them not ; yet now, 't is 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

Choked by vile lusts, unnoticed in their
birth,

But let grow up and wind around a will
Till action was destroyed. ✓No, I have
gone

Purging my path successively of aught
Wearing the distant likeness of such
lusts.

I have made life consist of one idea :
Ere that was master, up till that was
born,

I bear a memory of a pleasant life
Whose small events I treasure ; till one
morn

I ran o'er the seven little grassy fields,
Startling the flocks of nameless birds,
to tell [joy,

Poor Festus, leaping all the while for
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 del'ght :
A wondrous natural robe in which she
went. [me

For some one truth would dimly beacon
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,
 toc !
 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 my-
 self
 My aims remained supreme and pure
 as ever !
 Even now, why not desire, for man-
 kind's sake,
 That if I fail, some fault may be the
 cause,
 That, though I sink, another may suc-
 ceed ?
 O God, the despicable heart of us !
 Shut out this hideous mockery from
 my heart !

'T was politic in you, Aureole, to reject

Single rewards, and ask them in the
 lump ;
 At all events, once launched, to hold
 straight on :
 For now 't is 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 't is much, surely 't is 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 ; 't is 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
 Bestyled my work,—hear me ! I covet not
 An influx of new power, an angel's soul :
 It were no marvel then—but I have reached
 Thus far, a man ; let me conclude, a man !
 Give but one hour of my first energy,
 Of that invincible faith, but only one !
 That I may cover with an eagle-glance
 The truths I have, and spy some certain way
 To mould them, and completing them, possess !
 Yet God is good : I started sure of that,
 And why dispute it now ? I'll not believe
 But some undoubted warning long ere this
 Had reached me : a fire-labarum was not deemed

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

[A voice from within.] ^

I hear a voice, perchance I heard
 Long ago, but all too low,
 So that scarce a care it stirred
 If the voice were real or no :
 I heard it in my youth when first
 The waters of my life outburst :
 But, now their stream ebbs faint, I hear
 That voice, still low but fatal-clear—
 As if all poets, God ever meant
 Should save the world, and therefore lent
 Great gifts to, but who, proud, refused
 To do his work, or lightly used
 Those gifts, or failed through weak endeavour,
 So, mourn cast off by him for ever,—
 As if these leaned in airy ring
 To take me ; this the song they sing.
 "Lost lost ! yet come,
 With our wan troop make thy home.
 Come, come ! for we
 Will not breathe, so much as breathe
 Reproach to thee,
 Knowing what thou sink'st beneath.
 So sank we in those old years,
 We who bid thee, come ! thou last
 Who, living yet, hast life o'erpast,

And altogether we, thy peers,
Will pardon 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

Shall next thy post of life inherit—
How guard him from thy speedy
ruin?

Tell us of thy sad undoing
Here, where we sit, ever pursuing
Our weary task, ever renewing
Sharp sorrow, far from God who
gave

Our powers, and man they could not
save!"

APRILE enters.

Ha, ha! our king that wouldst be, here
at last?

Art thou the poet who shall save the
world?

Thy hand to mine! Stay, fix thine eyes
on mine!

Thou wouldst be king? Still fix thine
eyes on mine!

Par. Ha, ha! why crouchest not?
Am I not king?

So torture is not wholly unavailing!
Have my fierce spasms compelled thee
from thy lair?

Art thou the sage I only seemed to be,

Myself of after-time, my very self
With sight a little clearer, strength
more firm,

Who robes him in my robe and grasps
my crown

For just a fault, a weakness, a neglect?
I scarcely trusted God with the surmise
That such might come, and thou didst
hear the while!

Apr. Thine eyes are lustreless to
mine; my hair

Is soft, nay silken soft: to talk with
thee

Flushes my cheek, and thou art ashy-
pale.

Truly, thou hast laboured, hast with-
stood her lips,

The siren's! Yes, 't is like thou hast
attained!

Tell me, dear master, wherefore now
thou comest?

I thought thy solemn songs would have
their meed [earth

In after-time; that I should hear the
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-strings, as some
crystal-shaft

Reveals by some chance blaze its
parent fount

After long time: so thou reveal'st my
soul.

All will flash forth at last, with thee to hear!

Par. (His secret! I shall get his secret—fool!)

I am he that aspired to know: and thou?

Apr. I would LOVE infinitely, and be loved!

Par. Poor slave! I am thy king indeed.

Apr. Thou deem'st That—born a spirit, dowered even as thou,

Born for thy fate—because I could not curb

My yearnings to possess at once the full enjoyment, but neglected all the means Of realizing even the frailest joy,

Gathering no fragments to appease my want,

Yet nursing up that want till thus I die—

Thou deem'st I cannot trace thy safe, sure march

O'er perils that o'erwhelm me, triumphing,

Neglecting nought below for aught above,

Despising nothing and ensuring all— Nor that I could (my time to come again)

Lead thus my spirit securely as thine own.

Listen, and thou shalt see I know thee well.

I would love infinitely . . . Ah, lost! lost!

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, 't is 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 these clear smiling eyes of saddest blue

Nearly set free, so far they rise above The painful fruitless striving of the brow

And enforced knowledge of the lips, firm-set

In slow despondency's eternal sigh! Has he, too, missed life's end, and learned the cause?)

I charge thee, by thy fealty, be calm! Tell me what thou wouldst be, and what I am.

Apr. I would love infinitely, and be loved.

First: I would carve in stone, or cast in brass,

The forms of earth. No ancient hunter - lifted

Up to the gods by his renown, no nymph Supposed the sweet soul of a woodland tree

Or sapphirine spirit of a twilight star, Should be too hard for me; no shepherd-king

Regal for his white locks; no youth who stands

Silent and very calm amid the throng, His right hand ever hid beneath his robe

Until the tyrant pass; no lawgiver, No swan-soft woman rubbed with lucid oils

Given by a god for love of her—too hard!

Every passion sprung from man, conceived by man,

Would I express and clothe it in its right form,

Or blend with others struggling in one form,

Or show repressed by an ungainly form. Oh, if you marvelled at some mighty spirit

With a fit frame to execute its will— Even unconsciously to work its will—

You should be moved no less beside some strong,

Rare spirit, fettered to a stubborn body,

Endeavouring to subdue it and inform it With its own splendour! All this I would do:

And I would say, this done, "His sprites created,

"God grants to each a sphere to be its world,

"Appointed with the various objects needed

"To satisfy its own peculiar want;

"So, I create a world for these my shapes

" Fit to sustain their beauty and their strength ! "
 And, at the word, I would contrive and paint
 Woods, valleys, rocks and plains,
 dells, sands and wastes,
 Lakes which, when morn breaks on
 their quivering bel,
 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
 ho'd
 The offspring of my brain. Nor these
 alone :
 Bronze labyrinth, palace, pyramid and
 crypt,
 Baths, galleries, courts, temples and
 terraces,
 Marts, theitres 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 [listen !
 Would do as thou, a second time : nay,
 Knowing ourselves, our world, our task
 so great,
 Our time so brief, 't is 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 ? 'T were little
 praise
 Did full resources wait on our goodwill
 At every turn. Let all be as it is.
 Some say the earth is even so contrived
 That tree and flower, a vesture gay,
 conceal
 A bare and skeleton framework. Had
 we means
 Answering to our mind ! But now I
 seem
 Wrecked on a savage isle : how rear
 thereon
 My palace ? Branching palms the
 props shall be,

Fruit glossy mingling ; gems are for the East ;

Who heeds them ? I can pass them.
Serpents' scales,

And painted birds' down, furs and fishes' skins

Must help me ; and a little here and there

Is all I can aspire to : still my art
Shall show its birth was in a gentler
clime.

"Hail 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 descry the land
Whence I departed, whither I return,
I would dispart the waves, and stand once more

At home, and load my bark, and hasten back,

And fling my gains to them, worthless or true—

"Friends," I would say, "I went far, far for them,

"Past the high rocks the haunt of doves, the mounds

"Of red earth from whose sides strange trees grow out,

"Past 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 beautiful 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

Forever in the thoughts I thus explored,
As a discoverer's memory is attached

To all he finds ; they should be mine henceforth,

Imbued with me, though free to all before :

For clay, once cast into my soul's rich mine,

Should come up crusted o'er with gems. Nor this

Would need a meaner spirit, than the first ; [clothed

Nay, 't would be but the selfsame spirit',

In humbler guise, but still the selfsame spirit :

As one spring wind unbinds the mountain snow

And comforts violets in their hermitage.
But, master, poet, who hast done all this,

How didst thou 'scape the ruin whelming me ?

Didst thou, when nerving thee to this attempt,

Ne'er range thy mind's extent, as some wide hall,

Dazzled by shapes that filled its length with light,

Shapes clustered there to rule thee, 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 thou
 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 pas-
 sionate love,
 To glance once more farewell? and did
 their eyes
 Fasten thee, brighter and more bright,
 until
 Thou couldst but stagger back unto
 their feet,
 And laugh that man's applause or
 welfare ever
 Could tempt thee to forsake them?
 Or when years
 Had passed and still their love pos-
 sessed thee wholly,
 When from without some murmur
 startled thee
 Or 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 know-
 ledge.
 Still thou hast beauty and I, power.
 We wake:
 What penance canst devise for both
 of us?
Apr. I hear thee faintly. The thick
 darkness! Even
 Thine eyes are hid. 'Tis as I knew: I
 speak,
 And now I die. But I have seen thy
 face!
 O poet, think of me, and sing of me!
 But to have seen thee and to die so
 soon!
Par. Die not, Aprile! We must
 never part.
 Are we not halves of one dissevered
 world,
 Whom this strange chance unites once
 more? Part? never!
 Till thou the lover, know; and I, the
 knower,
 Love—until both are saved. Aprile,
 hear!

We will accept our gains, and use them
—now!

God, he will die upon my breast!
Aprile!

Apr. To speak but once, and die!
yet by his side.

Hush! hush!

Ha! go you ever girt about
With phantoms, powers? I have
created such,

But these seem real as I.

Par. Whom can you see
Through the accursed darkness?

Apr. Stay; I know,
I know them: who should know them
well as I?

White brows, lit up with glory; poets
all!

Par. Let him but live, and I have
my reward!

Apr. Yes; I see now. God is the
perfect poet,

Who in his person acts his own crea-
tions.

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! 't is not
too late.

I have a quiet home for us, and friend
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!

'T is 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!

'T is 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 for-
get

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 dis-
penser,

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 re-
strained

As best I could the promptings of my
spirit

Which secretly advanced you, from the
first,

To the pre-eminent rank which, since,
your own

Adventurous ardour, nobly triumphing,
Has won for you.

Par. Yes, yes. And Michal's face
Still wears that quiet and peculiar light

Like the dim circlet floating round a
pearl?

Fest. Just so.

Par. And yet her calm sweet
countenance,

Though saintly, was not sad; for she
would sing

Alone. Does she still sing alone, bird-
like,

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, unseen,

Sat conning some rare scroll from
Tritheim's shelves,
Much wondering notes so simple could
divert

My mind from study. Those were
happy days.

Respect all such as sing when all alone !

Fest. Scarcely alone : her children,
you may guess,
Are wild beside her.

Par. Ah, those children quite
Unsettled 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 't is a change, and I detest all
change,

And most a change in aught I loved
long since.

So, Michal—you have said she thinks
of me ?

Fest. O very proud will Michal be of
you !

Imagine how we sat, long winter-
nights,

Scheming and wondering, shaping your
presumed

Adventure, or devising its reward ;
Shutting out fear with all the strength
of hope.

For it was strange how, even when
most secure

In our domestic peace, a certain dim
And flitting shade could sadden all ; it
seemed

A restlessness of heart, a silent yearn-
ing,

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 re-
member,

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 !
'T were 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 plea-
sure, 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 ! 't is 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 so oft the follies of this
world :

And I am death's familiar, as you know.
I helped a man to die, some few weeks

since,
Warped even from his go-cart to one
end—

The living on princes' smiles, reflected
from

A mighty herd of favourites. No mean
trick

He left untried, and truly well-nigh
wormed

All traces of God's finger out of him :
Then died, grown old. And just an

hour before,
Having lain long with blank and soul-
less 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 ;

[take
And all that kings could ever give or
Would not be precious as those blooms
to him.

Just so, allowing I am passing sage,
It seems to me much worthier argu-
ment

Why pansies,¹ 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 ?

Other than you had wasted thought
on me

Had you been wise, and rightly valued
bliss.

But there's no taming nor repressing
hearts :

God knows I need such !—So, you
heard me speak ?

Fest. Speak ? when ?

Par. When but this morning at
my class ?

There was noise and crowd enough I
saw you not.

Surely you know I am engaged to fill
The chair here ?—that 't is 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 !

¹ Citrinula (flammula) ! erba Paracelso multum
familiaris.—DORS.

What can I learn about your powers ? I have preserved. She told me she
 but they believed
 Know, care for nought beyond your I should succeed (meaning, that in the
 actual state, search
 Your actual value ; yet they worship I then engaged in, I should meet suc-
 you, cess)
 Those various natures whom you sway And yet be wretched : now, she augured
 as one ! false.
 But ere I go, be sure I shall attend . . . Fest. Thank heaven ! but you spoke
 Par. Stop, o' God's name : the strangely . could I venture
 thing 's by no means yet To think bare apprehension lest your
 Past remedy ! Shall I read this morn- friend,
 ing's labour Dazzled by your resplendent course,
 —At least in substance ? Nought so might find
 worth the gaining Henceforth less sweetness in his own,
 As an apt scholar ! Thus then, with could move
 all due Such earnest mood in you ? Fear not,
 Precision and emphasis—you, beside, dear friend,
 are clearly That I shall leave you inwardly
 Guiltless of understanding more, a whit, repining
 The subject than your stool—allowed Your lot was not my own !
 to be Par. And this for ever !
 A notable advantage. For ever ! gull who may, they will be
 Fest. Sureiy, Aureole, gulled !
 You laugh at me ! They will not look nor think ; 't is no-
 Par. I laugh ? Ha, ha ! thank thing new
 heaven, In them : but surely he is not of them !
 I charge you, if 't be so ! for I forget My Festus, do you know, I reckoned,
 Much, and what laughter should be you—
 like. No less, Though all beside were sand-blind—
 However, I forego that luxury you, my friend,
 Since it alarms the friend who brings it Would look at me, once close, with
 back. piercing eye
 True, laughter like my own must echo Untroubled by the false glare that
 strangely confoonds
 To thinking men ; a smile were better A weaker vision ; would remain serene,
 far ; Though singular amid a gaping throng.
 So, make me smile ! If the exulting I feared you, or I had come, sure, long
 look ere this,
 You wore but now be smiling, 't is so To Einsiedeln. Well, error has no end,
 long And Rhasis is a sage, and Basil boasts
 Since I have smiled ! Alas, such smiles A tribe of wits, and I am wise and blest
 are born Past all dispute ! 'T is vain to fret at
 it.
 Alone of hearts like yours, or herds- I have vowed long ago my worshippers
 men's souls Shall owe to their own deep sagacity
 Of ancient time, whose eyes, calm as All further information, good or bad.
 their flocks, [heaven, Small risk indeed my reputation runs,
 Saw in the stars mere garnishry of Unless perchance the glance now
 And in the earth a stage for altars only. searching me
 Never change, Festus : I say, never Be fixed much longer ; for it seems to
 change ! spoil
 Fest. My God, if he be wretched after Dimly the characters a simpler man
 all ! Might read distinct enough. Old
 Par. When last we parted, Festus, eastern books
 you declared, Say, the fallen prince of morning some
 —Or Michal, yes, her soft lips whispered short space

Remained unchanged in semblance ; I have not been successful, and yet am
 nay, his brow Most miserable ; 't is said at last ; nor
 Was hued with triumph : every spirit you
 then Give credit, lest you force me to con-
 Praising, *his* heart on flame the while : cede
 —a tale ! That common sense yet lives upon the
 Well, Festus, what discover you, I world !
 pray ? *Fest.* You surely do not mean to
Fest. Some foul deed sullies then a banter me ?
 life which else *Par.* You know, or—if you have
 Were raised supreme ? been wise enough
Par. Good : I do well, most To cleanse your memory of such matters
 well ! —knew,
 Why strive to make men hear, feel, fret As far as words of mine could make it
 themselves clear,
 With what 't is past their power to That 't was my purpose to find joy or
 comprehend ? grief
 I should not strive now : only, having Solely in the fulfilment of my plan
 nursed Or plot or whatsoe'er it was ; rejoicing
 The faint surmise that one yet walked Alone as it proceeded prosperously,
 the earth, Sorrowing then only when mischance
 One, at least, not the utter fool of show, retarded
 Not absolutely formed to be the dupe Its progress. That was in those
 Of shallow plausibilities alone ; Würzburg days !
 One who, in youth found wise enough Not to prolong a theme I thoroughly
 choose hat
 The ripeness his riper years approve, I have pursued this plan with all my
 Was yet so anxious for another's sake, strength ;
 That, ere his friend could rush upon a And having failed therein most signally,
 mad Cannot object to ruin utter and drear
 And ruinous course, the converse of As all-excelling would have been the
 his own, prize
 His gentle spirit essayed, prejudged for [him Had fortune favoured me. I scarce
 The perilous path, foresaw its destiny, have right
 And warned the weak one in such To vex your frank good spirit late so
 tender words, glad
 Such accents—his whole heart in every In my supposed prosperity, I know,
 tone— And, were I lucky in a glut of friends,
 That oft their memory comforted that Would well agree to let your error live,
 friend Nay, strengthen it with fables of suc-
 When it by right should have increased cess.
 despair : But mine is no condition to refuse
 —Having believed, I say, that this one The transient solace of so rare a god-
 man send,
 Could never lose the light thus from My solitary luxury, my one friend :
 the first Accordingly I venture to put off
 His portion—how should I refuse to The arisome test of falsehood galling
 grieve me,
 At even my gain if it disturb our old Secure when he is by. I lay me bare,
 Relation, if it make me out more wise ? Prone at his mercy—but he is my
 Therefore, once more reminding him friend !
 how well Not that he needs retain his aspect
 He prophesied, I note the single flaw grave ;
 That spoils his prophet's title. In plain That answers not my purpose ; for 't is
 words, like,
 You were deceived, and thus were you Some sunny morning—Basil being
 deceived— drained

Of its wise population, every corner
Of the amphitheatre crammed with
learned clerks,
Here Ecolampadius, looking worlds of
wit,

Here Castellanus, as profound as he,
Munsterus here, Frobenius there, all
squeezed

And staring,—that the zany of the
show,

Even Paracelsus, shall put off before
them

His trappings with a grace but seldom
judged

Expedient in such cases:—the grim
smile

That will go round! Is it not there-
fore best

To venture a rehearsal like the present
In a small way? Where are the signs
I seek,

The first-fruits and fair sample of the
scorn

Due to all quacks? Why, this will
never do!

Fest. These are foul vapours,
Aureole; nought beside!
The effect of watching, study, weariness.

Were there a spark of truth in the con-
fusion

Of these wild words, you would not
outrage thus

Your youth's companion. I shall
ne'er regard

These wanderings, bred of faintness
and much study.

'T is not thus you would trust a trouble
to me,

To Michal's friend.

Par. I have said it, dearest
Festus!

For the manner, 't is ungracious pro-
bably; [one day,

You may have it told in broken sobs,
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! 'T is 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,—be-
hold,

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 stateli-
ness?

When men in racking pain may pur-
chase 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
freed

Our Luther's burning tongue the
fettered soul?

When . . .

Par. When and where, the devil,
did you get

This notable news?

Fest. Even from the common
voice;

From those whose envy, daring not
dispute

The wonders it decries, attributes them
To magic and such folly.

Par. Folly? Why not
To magic, pray? You find a comfort
doubtless

In holding, God ne'er troubles him
about

Us or our doings: once we were
 judged worth
 The devil's tempting . . . I offend:
 forgive me,
 And rest content. Your prophecy on
 the whole
 Was fair enough as prophesyings go;
 At fault a little in detail, but quite
 Precise enough in the main; and
 hercupon
 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 't were best to
 change a theme
 I am a sad fool to have stumbled on.
 I say confusedly what comes upper-
 most;
 But there are times when patience
 proves at fault,
 As now: this morning's strange en-
 counter—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 unfaltering, 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 with-
 draw.
 You sought not fame nor gain nor even
 love,
 No end distinct from knowledge,—I
 repeat
 Your very words: once satisfied that
 knowledge
 Is a mere dream, you would announce
 as much,
 Yourself the first. But how is the
 event?
 You are defeated—and I find you here!
Par. As though "here" did not
 signify defeat!
 I spoke not of my little labours here
 But of the break-down of my general
 aims:
 For you, aware of their extent and
 scope,

To look on these sage lecturings, approved
 By beardless boys, and bearded dotards worse,
 As a fit consummation of such aims,
 Is worthy notice. A professorship
 At Basil! Since you see so much in it,
 And think my life was reasonably drained
 Of life's delights to render me a match
 For duties arduous as such post demands,—
 Be it far from me to deny my power
 To fill the petty circle lotted out
 Of infinite space, or justify the host
 Of honours thence accruing. So, take notice,
 This jewel dangling from my neck preserves
 The features of a prince, my skill restored
 To plague his people some few years to come:
 And all through a pure whim. He had eased the earth
 For me, but that the droll despair which seized
 The vermin of his household, tickled me.
 I came to see. Here, drivelled the physician,
 Whose most infallible nostrum was at fault;
 There quaked the astrologer, whose horoscope
 Had promised him interminable years;
 Here a monk fumbled at the sick man's mouth
 With some undoubted relic—a sudary
 Of the Virgin; while another piebald knave
 Of the same brotherhood (he loved them ever)
 Was actively preparing 'neath his nose
 Such a suffumigation as, once fired,
 Had stunk the patient dead ere he could groan.
 I cursed the doctor and upset the brother,
 Brushed past the conjurer, vowed that the first gust
 Of stench from the ingredients just alight
 Would raise a cross-grained devil in my sword,
 Not easily laid: and ere an hour the prince

Slept as he never slept since prince he was.
 A day—and I was posting for my life,
 Placarded through the town as one whose spite
 Had near availed to stop the blessed effects
 Of the doctor's nostrum which, well seconded
 By the sudary, and most by the costly smoke—
 Not leaving out the strenuous prayers sent up
 Hard by in the abbey—raised the prince to life;
 To the great reputation of the seer
 Who, confident, expected all along
 The glad event—the doctor's recompense—
 Much largess from his highness to the monks—
 And the vast solace of his loving people,
 Whose general satisfaction to increase,
 The prince was pleased no longer to defer
 The burning of some dozen heretics
 Remanded till God's mercy should be shown
 Touching his sickness: last of all were joined
 Ample directions to all loyal folk
 To swell the complement by seizing me
 Who—doubtless some rank sorcerer—endeavoured
 To thwart these pious offices, obstruct
 The prince's cure, and frustrate heaven by help
 Of certain devils dwelling in his sword.
 By luck, the prince in his first fit of thanks
 Had forced this bauble on me as an earnest
 Of further favours. This one case may serve
 To give sufficient taste of many such,
 So, let them pass. Those shelves support a pile
 Of patents, licences, diplomas, titles
 From Germany, France, Spain, and Italy;
 They authorize some honour; ne'ertheless,
 I set more store by this Erasmus sent;
 He trusts me; our Frobenius is his friend,
 And him "I raised" (nay, read it)
 "from the dead."

I weary
 To show
 all
 That, w
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 A crowd
 And th
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 The utm
 For 'tis
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 To treat
 war
 Of one l
 Just as
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 Devoure
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 B.P.

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 't is but right the world should be
prepared

To treat with favour e'en fantastic
wants

Of one like me, used up in serving her.
Just as the mortal, whom the gods in
part

Devoured, received in place of his lost
limb

Some virtue or other—cured disease, I
think;

You mind the fables we have read to-
gether.

Fest. You do not think I compre-
hend 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; [sorrow]

That I have thrown my life away; that
On that account is idle, and further

effort

To mend and patch what's marred
beyond repairing.

As useless: and all this was taught
your friend

By the convincing good old-fashioned
method

Of force—by sheer compulsion. Is
that plain?

Fest. Dear Aureole, can it be my
fears were just?

God wills not . . .

Par. Now, 't is 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 charac-
tered

On the heaven's vault. 'T is hardly
wise to moot

Such topics: doubts are many and
faith is weak.

I know as much of any will of God
As knows some dumb and tortured

brute what Man,

His stern lord, wills from the perplex-
ing 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, [prefer
Like an obedient drudge. Though I
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, undreamed
of

Or spurned before; such now supply
the place

Of my dead aims: as in the autumn
woods

Where tall trees used to flourish, from
their roots

Springs up a fungous brood sickly and
pale,

Chill mushrooms coloured like a corpse's
cheek.

Fest. If I interpret well your words,
I own

It troubles me but that little 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 't were
rosy strewn.

'T is 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 become
a seal

To the sincerity of all my deeds.

To be consistent I should die at once;
I calculated on no after-life;

Yet (how erept 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 warn-
ing—

You will not understand—but 't was 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 be-
hold,

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: the
fore here

You find me, doing most good or least
harm.

And if folks wonder much and profit
little

'T is 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
appraise us

We sin; God's intimations rather fail
In clearness than in energy: 't were
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
That he

Par.

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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
perceives

That unless miracles (as seem my
works)

Bewrought in their behalf, their chance
is slight

To puzzle the devil; next, the numer-
ous 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, re-
mains

A scantling, a poor dozen at the best,
Worthy to look for sympathy and

service,

And likely to draw profit from my
pains.

Fest. 'Tis no encouraging picture:
still these few

Redeem their fellows. Once the germ
implant'd,

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 uncount habits, my impatient
spirit,

Which hinders of reception and result
My doctrine: much to say; small skill
to speak!

These old aims suffered not a looking-
off

Though for an instant; therefore,
only when

I thus renounced them and resolved
to reap

Some present fruit—to teach mankind
some truth

So dearly purchased—only then I
found

Such teaching was an art requiring
cares

And qualities peculiar to itself;
That to possess was one thing—to dis-
play

Another. With renown first in my
thoughts,

Or popular praise, I had soon dis-
covered it:

One grows but little apt to learn these
things.

Fest. If it be so, which nowise I be-
lieve,

There needs no waiting fuller dispensa-
tion

To leave a labour of so little use.

Why not throw up the irksome charge
at once?

Par. A task, a task!
But wherefore hide the whole

Extent of degradation, once engaged
In the confessing vein? Despite of all

My fine talk of obedience and repug-
nance,

Docility and what not, 't is yet to learn
If when the task shall really be per-
formed,

My inclination free to choose once more,
I shall do aught but slightly modify

The nature of the hated task I quit.

In plain words, I am spoiled; my life
still tends

As first it tended; I am broken and
trained

To my old habits: they are part of me.
I know, and none so well, my darling
ends

Are proved impossible: no less, no less,
Even now what humours me, fond fool,

as when

Their faint ghosts sit with me and flatter
me

And send me back content to my dull round ?
 How can I change this soul?—this apparatus
 Constructed solely for their purposes,
 So well adapted to their every want,
 To search out and discover, prove and perfect ;
 This intricate machine whose most minute
 And meanest motions have their charm to me
 Though to none else—an aptitude I seize,
 An object I perceive, a use, a meaning,
 A property, a fitness, I explain
 And I alone :—how can I change my soul ?
 And this wronged body, worthless save when tasked
 Under that soul's dominion—used to care
 For its bright master's cares and quite subdued
 Its proper craving;—not to ail nor pine
 So he but prosper—whither drag this poor
 Tried patient body ? God ! how I essayed
 To live like that mad poet, for a while,
 To love alone ; and how I felt too warped
 And twisted and deformed ! What should I do,
 Even tho' released from drudgery, but return
 Faint, as you see, and halting, blind and sore,
 To my old life and die as I began !
 I cannot feed on beauty for the sake
 Of beauty only, nor can drink in balm
 From lovely objects for their loveliness ;
 My nature cannot lose her first imprint ;
 I still must hoard and heap and class all truths
 With one ulterior purpose : I must know !
 Would God translate me to his throne, believe
 That I should only listen to his word
 To further my own aim ! For other men,
 Beauty is prodigally strewn around,
 And I were happy could I quench as they
 This mad and thriveless longing, and content me

With beauty for itself alone : alas,
 I have addressed a frock of heavy mail
 Yet may not join the troop of sacred knights ;
 And now the forest-creatures fly from me,
 The grass-banks cool, the sunbeams warm no more.
 Best follow, dreaming that ere night arrive,
 I shall o'ertake the company and ride
 Glittering as they !
Fest. I think I apprehend
 What you would say : if you, in truth, design
 To enter once more on the life thus left,
 Seek not to hide that all this consciousness
 Of failure is assumed !
Par. My friend, my friend,
 I 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, [eye,
 press soft
 The hot brow, look upon the languid
 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 ?
 Tho' is the crowning operation claimed
 By the arch-demonstrator—heaven the hall,
 And earth the audience. Let Aprile and you
 Secure good places : 't will be worth the while.
Fest. Are you mad, Aureole ? What can I have said
 To call for this ? I judged from your own words.
Par. Oh, doubtless ! A sick wretch describes the ape
 That mocks him from the bed-foot, and all gravely
 You thither turn at once : or he recounts
 The perilous journey he has late performed,

And you are puzzled much how that
could be !

You find me here, half stupid and half
mad ;

It makes no part of my delight to search
Into these matters, much less undergo
Another's scrutiny ; but so it chances
That I am led to trust my state to you :
And the event is, you combine, contrast
And ponder on my foolish words as
though

They thoroughly conveyed all hidden
here—

Here, loath some with despair and hate
and rage !

Is there no fear, no shrinking and no
shame ?

Will you guess nothing ? will you spare
me nothing ?

Must I go deeper ? Ay or no ?

Fest. Dear friend . . .

Par. True : I am brutal—'t is a part
of it ;

The plague's sign—you are not a lazar-
haunter,

How should you know ? Well then,
you think it strange

I should profess to have failed utterly,
And yet propose an ultimate return
To courses void of hope : and this, be-
cause [how

You know not what temptation is, nor
'T is like to ply men in the sickliest part.
You are to understand that we who
make

Sport for the gods, are hunted to the
end :

There is not one sharp volley shot at us,
Which 'scaped with life, though hurt,
we slacken pace

And gather by the wayside herbs and
roots

To staunch our wounds, secure from
further harm :

We are assailed to life's extremest
verge.

It will be well indeed if I return,
A harmless busy fool, to my old ways !
I would forget hints of another fate,
Significant enough, which silent hours
Have lately scared me with.

Fest. Another ! and what ?

Par. After all, Festus, you say well :
I am

A man yet : I need never humble me.
I would have been—something, I know
not what ;

But though I cannot soar, I do not
crawl.

There are worse portions than this one
of mine.

You say well !

Fest. Ah !

Par. And deeper degradation !
If the mean stimulants of vulgar praise,
If vanity should become the chosen
food

Of a sunk mind, should stifle even the
wish

To find its early aspirations true,
Should teach it to breathe falsehood
like life-breath—

An atmosphere of craft and trick and
lies ;

Should make it proud to emulate, sur-
pass [woke

Base natures in the practices which
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 't is
There 's little cheer in all this dismal
work.

But was it my desire to set abroad
Such memories and forebodings ? I
foresaw

Where they would drive. 'T were
better we discuss

News from Lucerne or Zurich ; ask and
tell

Of Egypt's flaring sky or Spain's cork-
groves.

Fest. I have thought : trust me,
this mood will pass away !

I know you and the lofty spirit you
bear,

And easily ravel out a clue to all.
These are the trials meet for such as
you,

Nor must you hope exemption : to be
mortal

Is to be plied with trials manifold.
Look round ! The obstacles which
kept the rest

From your ambition, have been
spurned by you ;

Their fears, their doubts, the chains
that bind them all,

Were flax before your resolute soul,
which nought

Avails to awe save these delusions bred
From its own strength, its selfsame
strength disguised,
Mocking itself. Be brave, dear Aureole!

Since
The rabbit has his shade to frighten
him,

The fawn a rustling bough, mortals
their cares,

And higher natures yet would slight
and laugh

At these entangling fantasies, as you
At trammels of a weaker intellect,—
Measure your mind's height by the
shade it casts!

I know you.

Par. And I know you, dearest
Festus! [how

And how you love unworthily; and
All admiration renders blind.

Fest. You hold
That admiration blinds?

Par. Ay and alas!
Fest. Nought blinds you less than
admiration, friend!

Whether it be that all love renders wise
In its degree; from love which blends
with love—

Heart answering heart—to love which
spends itself

In silent mad idolatry of some
Pre-eminent mortal, some great soul of
souls,

Which ne'er will know how well it is
adored.

I say, such love is never blind; but
rather

Alive to every the minutest spot
Which mars its object, and which hate
(supposed

So vigilant and searching) dreams not
of.

Love broods on such: what then?

When first perceived,
Is there no sweet strife to forget, to
change,

To overflush those blemishes with all
The glow of general goodness they dis-
turb?

—To make those very defects an end-
less 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, 't will be from such
as love,

Their zeal will gather most to serve
their cause;

And least from those who hate, who
most essay

By contumely and scorn to blot the
light

Which forces entrance even to their
hearts:

For thence will our defender tear the
veil

And show within each heart, as in a
shrine,

The giant image of perfection, grown
In hate's despite, whose calumnies were
spawned

In the untroubled presence of its eyes.
True admiration blinds not; nor am I

So blind. *I call your sin exceptional;*
It springs from one whose life has

passed the bounds
Prescribed to life. Compound that

fault with God!

I speak of men; to common men like
me

The weakness you reveal endears you
more,

Like the far traces of decay in suns.
I bid you have good cheer!

Par. *Præclare! Optime!*
Think of a quiet mountain-cloistered
priest

Instructing Paracelsus! yet 't is so.
Come, I will show you where my merit

lies.

'T is in the advance of individual minds
That the slow crowd should ground
their expectation

Eventually to follow; as the sea
Waits ages in its bed 'till some one

wave
Out of the multitudinous mass, extends

The empire of the whole, some feet
perhaps,

Over the strip of sand which could
confine

Its fellows so long time: thenceforth
the rest,

Even to
And so
be
If all m
Suffice
cu
A wide
do
For, w
kn
And a
I am n
When
my
And w
These l
ow
May h
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Even to the meanest, hurry in at once,
And so much is clear gained. I shall
be glad

If all my labours, failing of aught else
Suffice to make such inroad and procure

A wider range for thought: nay, they
do this;

For, whatsoe'er my notions of true
knowledge

And a legitimate success, may be,
I am not blind to my undoubted rank
When classed with others: I precede
my age:

And whoso wills is very free to mount
These labours as a platform whence his
own

May have a prosperous outset. But,
alas!

My followers—they are noisy as you
heard;

But, for intelligence, the best of them
So clumsily wield the weapons I supply
And they extol, that I begin to doubt
Whether their own rude clubs and
pebble-stones

Would not do better service than my
arms

Thus vilely swayed—if error will not
fall

Sooner before the old awkward batter-
ings

Than my more subtle warfare, not half
learned.

Fest. I would supply that art, then,
or withhold

New arms until you teach their
mystery.

Par. Content you, 't is 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 resound-
ing step!

A proper sight to scare the crows
away!

Fest. Pity you choose not, then,
some other method

Of coming at your point. The mar-
vellous art

At length established in the world bids
fair

To remedy all hindrances like these:
Trust to Frobenius' press the precious
lore

Obscured by uncouth manner, or unfit
For raw beginners; let his types
secure

A deathless monument to after-time;
Meanwhile wait confidently and enjoy
The ultimate effect: sooner or later
You shall be all-revealed.

Par. The old dull question
In a new form; no more. Thus: I
possess

Two sorts of knowledge; one,—vast,
shadowy,

Hints of the unbounded aim I once
pursued:

The other consists of many secrets,
caught

While bent on nobler prize,—perhaps a
few

Prime principles which may conduct to
much:

These last I offer to my followers here.
Now, bid me chronicle the first of these.
My ancient study, and in effect you bid
Revert to the wild courses just abjured:
I must go find them scattered through
the world.

Then, for the principles, they are so
simple

(Being chiefly of the overturning sort),
That one time is as proper to propound
them

As any other—to-morrow at my class.
Or half a century hence embalmed in
print.

For if mankind intend to learn at all,
They must begin by giving faith to
them

And acting on them; and I do not see
But that my lectures serve indifferent
well:

No doubt these dogmas fall not to the
earth,

For all their novelty and rugged setting.
I think my class will not forget the day
I let them know the gods of Israel,
Aëtius, Oribasius, Galen, Rhasis,
Serapion, Avicenna, Averroës,
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 (Ecolampadius. 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. 'T was
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 Wittemburg—(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

Awile ; 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 rest 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. 'T is 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 be-
fore

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 Suabia have possessed, whom
Münzer leads,

And whom the duke, the landgrave
and the elector

Will calm in blood ! Well, well ; 't is
not my world !

Fest. Hark !

Par. 'T is the melancholy wind
astir [grey :

Within the trees ; the embers too are
Morn must be near.

Fest. Best ope the casement :
see,

The night, late strewn with clouds and
flying stars,

Is blank and motionless : how peaceful
sleep

The tree-tops altogether : Like an asp,
The wind slips whispering from bough
to bough.

Par. Ay ; you would gaze on a wind-
shaken tree

By the hour, nor count time lost.

Fest. So you shall gaze :
Those happy times will come again.

Par. Gone, gone,
Those pleasant times ! Does not the
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
soever,

To some fine life to come ? Man
must be fed
With angels' food, forsooth ; and some
few traces

Of a diviner nature which look out
Through his corporeal baseness, war-
rant 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 con-
stitute

The rock, their barren bed, one dia-
mond.

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 char-
acter,

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

Diluted ; grey and clear without the
stars ;

The shrubs bestir and rouse them-
selves, as if

Some snake, that weighed them down
all night, let go

His hold ; and from the East, fuller and
fuller

Day, like a mighty river, flowing in ;
But clouded, wintry, desolate and cold.

Yet see how that broad prickly star-
shaped plant,

Half-down in the crevice, spreads its
woolly leaves [dew.

All thick and glistening with diamond

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 right to these sad themes.

Fest. One favour,
And I have done. I leave you, deeply
moved ;

Unwilling to have fared so well, the
while

My friend has changed so sorely. If
this mood

Shall pass away, if light once more arise
Where all is darkness now, if you see fit
To hope and trust again, and strive
again,

You will remember—not our love
alone—

But that my faith in God's desire that
man

Should trust on his support, (as I must
think

You trusted) is obscured and dim
through you ;

For you are thus, and this is no reward.
Will you not call me to your side, dear
Aurcole ?

IV.—PARACELSUS ASPIRES

SCENE, Colmar, in Alsatia ; an Inn.

1528.

PARACELSUS, FESTUS.

Par. [To JOHANNES OPORINUS, his
secretary.] *Sic itur ad astra !* Dear
Von Visenburg

Is scandalized, and poor Torinus
paralysed,

And every honest soul that Basil holds
Aghast ; and yet we live, as one may
say,

Just as though Liechtenfels had never
set

So true a value on his sorry carcass,
And learned Pütter had not frowned us
dumb.

We live ; and shall as surely start to-
morrow

For Nuremberg, as we drink speedy
scathe

To Basil in this mantling wine, suffused
A delicate blush, no fainter tinge is
born

I' the shut heart of a bud. Pledge me,
good John—

"Basil; a hot plague ravage it, and
Pütter
"Oppose the plague!" Even so?
Do you too share
Their panic, the reptiles? Ha, ha;
faint through these,
Desist for these! They manage
matters so
At Basil, 't is like: but others may find
means
To bring the stoutest braggart of the
tribe
Once more to crouch in silence—means
to breed
A stupid wonder in each fool again,
Now big with admiration at the skill
Which stript a vain pretender of his
plumes;
And, that done,—means to brand each
slavish brow
So deeply, surely, ineffaceably,
That henceforth flattery shall not
pucker it
Out of the furrow; there that stamp
shall stay
To show the next they fawn on, what
they are,
This Basil with its magnates,—fill my
cup,—
Whom I curse soul and limb. And
now dispatch,
Dispatch, my trusty John; and what
remains [trip
To do, whate'er arrangements for our
Are yet to be completed, see you hasten
This night; we'll weather the storm at
least: to-morrow
For Nuremberg! Now leave us;
this grave clerk
Has divers weighty matters for my ear;
[OPORINUS goes out.
And spare my lungs. At last, my
gallant Festus,
I am rid of this arch-knave that dogs
my heels
As a gaunt crow a gasping sheep; at
last
May give a loose to my delight. How
kind,
How very kind, my first best only
friend!
Why, this looks like fidelity. Embrace
me!
Not a hair silvered yet? Right! you
shall live
Till I am worth your love; you shall be
proud,

And I—but let time show. Did you
not wonder?
I sent to you because our compact
weighed
Upon my conscience—(you recall the
night
At Basil, which the gods confound!)
—because
Once more I aspire. I call you to my
side;
You come. You thought my message
strange?
Fest. So strange
That I must hope, indeed, your mes-
senger
Has mingled his own fancies with the
words
Purporting to be yours.
Par. He said no more,
'T is probable, than the precious folks I
leave [day,
Said fiftyfold more roughly. Well-a-
'T is 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 con-
tempt,
Could yet deceive their topping wits.
You heard
Bare truth; and at my bidding you
come here
To speed me on my enterprise, as once
Your lavish wishes sped me, my own
friend!
Fest. What is your purpose, Aureole?
Par. Oh, for purpose,
There is no lack of precedents in a case
Like mine; at least, if not precisely
mine,
The case of men cast off by those they
sought
To benefit.
Fest. They really cast you off?
I only heard a vague tale of some priest,
Cured by your skill, who wrangled at
your claim,
Knowing his life's worth best; and
how the judge
The matter was referred to, saw no
cause
To interfere, nor you to hide your full
Contempt of him; nor he, again, to
smother
His wrath thereat, which raised so
fierce a flame

That Ba
you
Par.
sha
The las
pre
I knew
How so
too
For gen
mis
Of bette
and
And ev
am
The pre
pie
To play
Fantast
I got h
kee
Our foo
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Poor d
per
Till the
me
I had a
rig
But the
tha
A trust
Of sym
beg
To teach
im
"The s
sea
"Of tr
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Forthw
gu
Filed o
sac
Redoub
The re
tan
Only to
This to
lov
To hea
And ha
bla
Passed
se
Spied e
ve

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 as long as I was pleased

To play off the mere antics of my art,
Fantastic gambols leading to no end,
I got huge praise: but one can ne'er keep down

Our foolish nature's weakness. There they flocked,

Poor devils, jostling, swearing and perspiring,

Till the walls rang again; and all for me!

I had a kindness for them, which was right;

But then I stopped not till I tacked to that

A trust in them and a respect—a sort
Of sympathy for them; I must needs begin

To teach them, not amaze them, "to impart

"The spirit which should instigate the search

"Of truth," just what you bade me! I spoke out.

Forthwith a mighty squadron, in disgust,

Filed off—"the sifted chaff of the sack," I said,

Redoubling my endeavours to secure
The rest. When lo! one man had tarried so long

Only to ascertain if I supported
This tenet of his, or that; another loved

To hear impartially before he judged,
And having heard, now judged; this bland disciple

Passed for my dupe, but all along, it seems,

Spied error where his neighbours marvelled most;

That fiery doctor who had hailed me friend,

Did it because my by-paths, once proved wrong

And beacons properly, would commend again

The good old ways our sires jogged safely o'er,

Though not their squeamish sons; the other worthy

Discovered divers verses of St. John,
Which, read successively, refreshed the soul,

But, muttered backwards, cured the gout, the stone,

The colic and what not. *Quid multa?*
The end

Was a clear class-room, and a quiet leer
From grave folk, and a sour reproachful glance

From these in chief who, cap in hand, installed

The new professor scarce a year before;
And a vast flourish about patient merit
Obscured awhile by flashy tricks, but sure

Sooner or later to emerge in splendour—
Of which the example was some luckless wight

Whom my arrival had discomfited,
But now, it seems, the general voice recalled

To fill my chair and so efface the stain
Basil had long incurred. I sought no better,

Only a quiet dismissal from my post,
And from my heart I wish them better suited

And better served. Good-night to Basil, then!

But fast as I proposed to rid the tribe
Of my obnoxious back, I could not spare them

The pleasure of a parting kick.

Fest. You smile:
Despise them as they merit!

Par. If I smile,
'Tis with as very contempt as ever turned

Flesh into stone. This courteous recompense,

This grateful . . . Festus, were your nature fit

To be defiled, your eyes the eyes to ache
At gangrene-blotches, eating poison-blains,

The ulcerous barks scurf of leprosy

Which finds—a man, and leaves—a
hideous thing
That cannot but be mended by hell fire,
—I would lay bare to you the human
heart
Which God cursed long ago, and devils
make since
Their pet nest and their never-tiring
home,
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
't is hate !
Yet men have doubted if the best and
bravest [alone.
Of spirits can nourish him with hate
I had not the monopoly of fools,
It seems, at Basil.
Fest. But your plans, your plans !
I have yet to learn your purpose,
Aureole !
Par. Whether to sink beneath such
ponderous shame,
To shrink up like a crushed snail,
undergo
In silence and desist from further toil
And so subside into a monument
Of one their censure blasted ? or to bow
Cheerfully as submissively, to lower
My old pretensions even as Basil
dictates,
To drop into the rank her wits assign
me
And live as they prescribe, and make
that use
Of my poor knowledge which their rules
allow,
Proud to be patted now and then, and
careful
To practise the true posture for re-
ceiving
The amplest benefit from their hoofs'
appliance
When they shall condescend to tutor
me ?
Then, one may feel resentment like a
flame
Within, and deck false systems in
truth's garb,
And tangle and entwine mankind with
error,

And give them darkness for a dower
and falsehood
For a possession, ages : or one may
mope
Into a shade through thinking, or else
drowse
Into a dreamless sleep and so die off.
But I,—now Festus shall divine !—
but I
Am merely setting out once more,
embracing
My earliest aims again ! What thinks
he now ?
Fest. Your aims ? the aims ?—to
Know ? and where is found
The early trust . . .
Par. Nay, not so fast ; I say,
The aims—not the old means. You
know they made me
A laughing-stock ; I was a fool ; you
know
The when and the how : hardly those
means again !
Not but they had their beauty ; who
should know [dreams
Their passing beauty, if not I ? Still,
They were, so let them vanish, yet in
beauty,
If that may be. Stay : thus they pass
in song !
[He sings.
Heap cassia, sandal-buds and stripes
Of labdanum, and aloe-balls,
Smeared with dull nard an Indian
wipes
From out her hair : such balsam
falls
Down sea-side mountain pedestals,
From tree-tops where tired winds are
fain,
Spent with the vast and howling
main,
To treasure half their island-gain.
And strew faint sweetness from some
old
Egyptian's fine worm-eaten shroud
Which breaks to dust when once
unrolled ;
Or shredded perfume, like a cloud
From closet long to quiet vowed,
With moth and dropping arras
hung,
Mouldering her lute and books
among,
As when a queen, long dead, was
young.

Mine, e
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My lov
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Thensc
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Or why
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That fi
No litt
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Snack
Halt
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Did ya
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Par
List
But
Th
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So
Wi
I h

Mine, every word ! And on such pile
shall die

My lovely fancies, with fair perished
things,

Themselves fair and forgotten ; yes,
forgotten,

Or why abjure them ? So, I made this
rhyme

That fitting dignity might be preserved ;
No little proud was I ; though the list
of drugs

Snacks of my old vocation, and the
Halts like the best of Luther's psalms.

Fest. Bu Aureole,
Talk not thus wildly and madly. I
am here—

Did you know all ! I have travelled
far, indeed,

To learn your wishes. Be yourself
again !

For in this mood I recognize you less
Than in the horrible despondency

I witnessed last. You may account
this, joy ;

But rather let me gaze on that despair
Than hear these incoherent words and
see

This flushed cheek and intensely-
sparkling eye.

Par. Why, man, I was light-hearted
in my prime,

I am light-hearted now ; what would
you have ?

Aprile was a poet, I make songs—
T is the very augury of success I want !

Why should I not be joyous now as
then ?

Fest. Joyous ! and how ? and what
remains for joy ?

You have declared the ends (which I
am sick

Of naming) are impracticable.

Par. Ay,
Pursued as I pursued them—the arch-
foe !

Listen : my plan will please you not,
't is like,

But you are little versed in the world's
ways.

This is my plan—(first of making 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 sha'l
not bau'k me

Of the meanest earthliest sensualet
delight

That may be snatched ; for every joy
is gain,

And gain is gain, however small. My
soul

Can die then, nor be taunted—" what
was gained ? "

Nor, on the other hand, should pleasure
follow

As though I had not spurned her
hitherto,

Shall she o'ercloud my spirit's rapt
communion

With the tumultuous past, the teeming
future,

Glorious with visions of a full success.
Fest. Success !

Par. And wherefore not ? Why
not prefer

Results obtained in my best state of
being,

To those derived alone from seasons
dark

As the thoughts they bred ? When I
was best, my youth

Unwasted, seemed success not surest
too ?

It is the nature of darkness to obscure.
I am a wanderer : I remember well

One journey, how I feared the track
was missed,

So long the city I desired to reach
Lay hid ; when suddenly its spires afar

Flashed through the circling clouds ;
you may conceive

My transport. Soon the vapours
closed again,

But I had seen the city, and one such
glance

No darkness could obscure : nor shall
the present—

A few dull hours, a passing shame or
two,

Destroy the vivid memories of the past.
I will fight the battle out ; a little spent

Perhaps, but still an able combatant.
You look at my grey hair and furrowed
brow ?

But I can turn even weakness to account :

Of many tricks I know, 't is not the least

To push the ruins of my frame, whereon
The fire of vigour trembles scarce alive,
into a heap, and send the flame aloft.
What should I do with age? So,
sickness lends

An aid; it being, I fear, the source of all

We boast of: mind is nothing but disease,

And natural health is ignorance.

Fest. I see
But one good symptom in this notable scheme.

I feared your sudden journey had in view

To wreak immediate vengeance on your foes;

'T is not so: I am glad.

Par. And if I please
To spit on them, to trample them, what then?

'T is 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 I teach them their own game with
their own arms—

Why, be it so and let them take their chance!

I am above them like a god, there's no
Hiding the fact: what idle scruples,
then,

Were those that ever bade me soften it,
Communicate it gently to the world,
Instead of proving my supremacy,
Taking my natural station o'er their head,

Then owning all the glory was a man's!
—And in my elevation man's would be.
But live and learn, though life's short,
learning, hard!

And therefore, though the wreck of my
past self,

I fear, dear 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 illustrate

(*Fiat experientia corpore vili*)

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 swaggering; you

Can see the root of the matter!—how I strive

To put a good face on the overthrow
I have experienced, and to bury and hide

My degradation in its length and breadth;

How the mean motives I would make you think

Just mingle as is due with nobler aims,
The appetites I modestly allow

May influence me as being mortal still—
Do goad me, drive me on, and fast supplant

My youth's desires. You are no stupid dupe:

You find me out! Yes, 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 degradation;

These low thoughts are no inmates of
your mind,

Or wherefore this disorder? You
are vexed

As much by the intrusion of base views,
Familiar to your adversaries, as they
Were troubled should your qualities
alight

Amid their murky souls: not otherwise,

A stray wolf which the winter forces
down

From our bleak hills, suffices to affright
A village in the vales—while foresters

Sleep calm, though all night long the famished 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 stimulants,
 Will ne'er content you. . . .
Par. Hush! I once despised them. But that soon passes. We are high at first
 In our demand, nor will abate a jot Of toil's strict value; but time passes o'er,
 And humbler spirits accept what we refuse:
 In short, when some such comfort is doled out
 As these delights, we cannot long retain Bitter contempt which urges us at first
 To hurl it back, but hug it to our breast And thankfully retire. This life of mine
 Must be lived out and a grave thoroughly earned:
 I am just fit for that and nought beside. I told you once, I cannot now enjoy,
 Unless I deem my knowledge gains through joy;
 Nor can I know, but straight warm tears reveal
 My need of linking also joy to knowledge:
 So, on I drive, enjoying all I can, And knowing all I can. I speak, of course,
 Confusedly; this will better explain—feel here!
 Quick beating, is it not?—a fire of the heart
 To work off some way, this as well as any.
 So, Festus sees me fairly launched; his calm
 Compassionate look might have disturbed me once,
 But now, far from rejecting, I invite
 What bids me press the closer, lay myself
 Open before him, and be soothed with pity;

I hope, if he command hope, and believe
 As he directs me—satiating myself
 With his enduring love. And Festus quits me
 To give place to some credulous disciple
 Who holds that God is wise, but Paracelsus
 Has his peculiar merits: I suck in
 That homage, chuckle o'er that admiration,
 And then dismiss the fool; for night is come.
 And I betake myself to study again,
 Till patient searchings after hidden lore
 Half wring some bright truth from its prison; my frame
 Trembles, my forehead's veins swell out, my hair
 Tingles for triumph. Slow and sure the morn
 Shall break on my pent room and dwindling lamp
 And furnace dead, and scattered earthen and ores;
 When, with a failing heart and throbbing brow,
 I must review my captured truth, sum up
 Its value, trace what ends to what begins,
 Its present power with its eventual bearings,
 Latent affinities, the views it opens,
 And its full length in perfecting my scheme.
 I view it sternly circumscribed, cast down
 From the high place my fond hopes yielded it,
 Proved worthless—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
Michal . . .

Why do you start? I say, she listen-
ing here,

(For yonder—Würzburg through the
orchard-bough!)

Motions as though such ardent words
should find

No echo in a maiden's quiet soul,
But her pure bosom heaves, her eyes
fill fast

With tears, her sweet lips tremble all
the while!

Ha, ha!

Fest. It seems, then, you expect to
reap

No unreal joy from this your present
course,

But rather . . .

Par. Death! To die! I owe
that much

To what, at least, I was. I should be
sad

To live contented after such a fall,
To thrive and fatten after such reverse!
The whole plan is a makeshift, but will
last

My time.

Fest. And you have never mused
and said,

"I had a noble purpose, and the
strength

"To compass it; but I have stopped
half-way,

"And wrongly given the 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 [past

"With mighty effort to redeem the

"And, gathering up the treasures thus
cast down,

"To hold a steadfast course till I arrive

"At their fit destination and my own?

You have never pondered thus?

Par. Have I, you ask?
Often at midnight, when most fancies
come,

Would some such airy project visit me:
But ever at the end . . . or will you
hear

The same thing in a tale, a parable?
You and I, wandering over the world
wide,

Chance to set foot upon a desert coast.
Just as we cry, "No human voice be-
fore

"Broke the inveterate silence of these
rocks!"

—Their querulous echo startles us; we
turn:

What ravaged structure still looks
o'er the sea?

Some characters remain, too! While
we read,

The sharp salt wind, impatient for the
last

Of even this record, wistfully comes
and goes,

Or sings what we recover, mocking it.
This is the record; and my voice, the
wind's.

[*He sings.*

Over the sea our galleys went,
With cleaving prows in order brave,
To a speeding wind and a bounding
wave,

A gallant armament:
Each bark built out of a forest-tree,
Left leafy and rough as first it
grew,

And veiled all over the gaping sides,
Within and without, with black bull-
hides,

Seethed in fat and suppld 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 rows
Kept out the flakes of the dancing
brine,

And an awning drooped the mast be-
low,

In fold on fold of the purple fine,
That neither noontide nor starshine
Nor moonlight cold which maketh
mad,

Might pierce the regal tenement.
When the sun dawned, oh, gay and
glad

We set the sail and plied the oar;
But when the night-wind blew like
breath,

For joy of one day's voyage more,
We sang together on the wide sea,
Like men at peace on a peaceful
shore;

Each sail was loosed to the wind so free,
 Each helm made sure by the twilight star,
 And in a sleep as calm as death,
 We, the voyagers from afar,
 Lay stretched along, each weary crew

In a circle round its wondrous tent
 Whence gleamed soft light and curled rich scent,

And with light and perfume, music too :

So the stars wheeled round, and the darkness past,

And at morn we started beside the mast,

And still each ship was sailing fast.

Now, one morn, land appeared—a speck

Dim trembling betwixt sea and sky :

"Avoid it," cried our pilot, "check

"The shout, restrain the eager eye!"

But the heaving sea was black behind

For many a night and many a day,

And land, though but a rock, drew 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 pæan glorious.

A hundred shapes of lucid stone !

All day we built its shrine for each,

A shrine of rock for every one,

Nor paused till in the westering sun

We sat together on the beach

To sing because our task was done.

When lo ! what shouts and merry songs !

What laughter all the distance stirs !

A loaded raft with happy throngs

Of gentle islanders !

"Our isles are just at hand," they cried,

"Like cloudlets faint in even sleeping ;

"Our temple-gates are opened wide,

"Our olive-groves thick shade are keeping

"For these majestic forms"—they cried.

Oh, then we awoke with sudden start
 From our deep dream, and knew,
 too late,

How bare the rock, how desolate,
 Which had received our precious freight :

Yet we called out—"Depart !

"Our gifts, once given, must here abide.

"Our work is done ; we have no heart

"To mar our work,"—we cried.

Fest. In truth ?

Par. Nay, wait : all this in tracings faint

On rugged stones strewn here and there,
 but piled

In order once : then follows—mark
 what follows !

"The sad rhyme of the men who
 proudly clung

"To their first fault, and withered in
 their pride."

Fest. Come back then, Aureole ; as
 you fear God, come !

This is foul sin ; come back ! Re-
 nounce the past,

Forswear the future ; look for joy no
 more

But wait death's summons amid holy
 sights,

And trust me for the event—peace, if
 not joy.

Return with me to Einsiedeln, dear
 Aureole !

Par. No way, no way ! it would not
 turn to good.

A spotless child sleeps on the flowering
 moss—

'T is well for him ; but when a sinful
 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 ; 't is 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 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. 'T is 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 then 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, 't is vain to talk of forwarding

God's glory otherwise ; this is alone

The sphere of its increase, as far as men Increase it ; why, then, look beyond

this sphere ? We are his glory ; and if we be glorious, Is not the thing achieved ?

Fest. Shall one like me Judge hearts like yours ? Though

years have changed you much, And you have left your first love, and retain

Its empty shade to veil your crooked
ways,

Yet I still hold that you have honoured
God.

And who shall call your course without
reward ?

For, wherefore this repining at defeat
Had triumph ne'er inured you to high
hopes ?

I urge you to forsake the life you curse,
And what success attends me ?—
simply talk

Of passion, weakness and remorse ; in
short,

Anything but the naked truth—you
choose

This so-despised career, and cheaply
hold

My happiness, or rather other men's.
Once more, return !

Par. And quickly. 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, each petty subterfuge,
My rhymes and all this frothy shower
of words,

My glozing self-deceit, my outward
crust

Of lies which wrap, as tetter, morphew,
furfair

Wrap the sound flesh ?—so, see you
flatter not ! least

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 call

Sin, what is no sin—weakness, what
is strength.

But I have only these, such as they are,
To guide me ; and I blame you where
they bid,

Only so long as blaming promises
To win peace for your soul : the more,
that sorrow

Has fallen on me of late, and they have
helped me

So that I faint not under my distress.
But wherefore should I scruple to avow

In spite of all, as brother judging
brother,

Your fate 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—

[men
As I would have God deal with fragile
In the end—I say that you will triumph
yet !

Par. Have you felt sorrow, Festus ?
—'t is because

You live me. Sorrow, and sweet
Michal yours !

Well thought on : never let her know
this last

Dull winding-up of all : these mis-
creants 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. 'T is 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 com-
fort

Even you. I have no julep, as men think,
To cheat the grave; but a far better secret.
Know, then, you did not ill to trust your love
To the cold earth: I have thought much of it:
For I believe we do not wholly die.

Fest. Aureole!

Par. Nay, do not laugh; there is a reason
For what I say: I think the soul can never
Taste death. I am, just now, as you may see,
Very unfit to put so strange a thought
In an intelligible dress of words;
But take it as my trust, she is not dead.

Fest. But not on this account alone?
you surely,
—Aureole, you have believed this all along?

Par. And Michal sleeps among the roots and dews,
While I am moved at Basil, and full of schemes
For Nuremberg, and hoping and despairing,
As though it mattered how the farce plays out,
So it be quickly played. Away, away!
Have your will, rabble! while we fight the prize,
Troop you in safety to the snug back-seats
And leave a clear arena for the brave
About to perish for your sport!—Behold!

V.—PARACELSUS ATTAINS

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

FESTUS, PARACELSUS.

Fest. No change! The weary night is well-nigh spent,
The lamp burns low, and through the casement-bars
Grey morning glimmers feebly: yet no change!
Another night, and still no sigh has stirred
That fallen discoloured mouth, no pang relit
Those fixed eyes, quenched by the decaying body,

Like torch-flame choked in dust. While all beside
Was breaking, to the last they held out bright,
As a stronghold where life intrenched itself;
But they are dead now—very blind and dead:
He will drowse into death without a groan.

My Aureole—my forgotten, ruined Aureole!
The days are gone, are gone! How grand thou wast!
And now not one of those who struck thee down—
Poor glorious spirit—concerns him even to stay
And satisfy himself his little hand
Could turn God's image to a livid thing.
Another night, and yet no change!
'T is much
That I should sit by him, and bathe his brow,
And chafe his hands; 't is much: but he will sure [to me
Know me, and look on me, and speak
Once more—but only once! His hollow cheek
Looked all night long as though a creeping laugh
At his own state were just about to break
From the dying man: my brain swam, my throat swelled,
And yet I could not turn away. In truth,
They told me how, when first brought here, he seemed
Resolved to 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 prize—

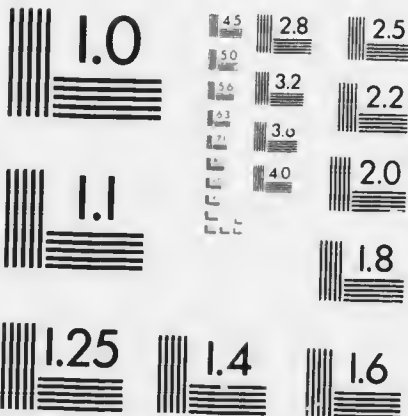
Her best achievement, her sublime
 amends
 For countless generations fleeting fast
 And followed by no trace;—the
 creature-god
 She instances when angels would dis-
 pute
 The title of her brood to rank with
 them.
 Angels, this is our angel! Those
 bright forms
 We clothe with purple, crown and call
 to thrones,
 Are human, but not his; those are but
 men
 Whom other men press round and kneel
 before;
 Those palaces are dwelt in by mankind;
 Higher provision is for him you seek
 Amid our pomps and glories: see it
 here!
 Behold earth's paragon! Now, raise
 thee, clay!
 God! Thou art love! I build my
 faith on that!
 Even as I watch beside thy tortured
 child
 Unconscious whose hot tears fall fast
 by him,
 So doth thy right hand guide us through
 the world
 Wherein we stumble. God! what shall
 we say?
 How has he sinned? How else should
 he have done?
 Surely he sought thy praise—thy praise,
 for all
 He might be busied by the task so much
 As half forget awhile its proper end.
 Dost thou well, Lord? Thou canst
 not but prefer
 That I should range myself upon his
 side—
 How could he stop at every step to set
 Thy glory forth? Hadst thou but
 granted him
 Success, thy honour would have
 crowned success,
 A halo round a star. Or, say he erred,—
 Save him, dear God; it will be like
 thee: bathe him
 In light and life! Thou 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 wakens! Aureole, I am here!
 't is 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 vehe-
 mence
 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 re-
 cognize me!
 I am Erasmus: I am here to pray
 That Paracelsus use his skill for me.
 The schools of Paris and of Padua send
 These questions for your learning to
 resolve.
 We are your students, noble master:
 leave



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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
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 !
'T is an old tale : Jove strikes the
Titans down

Not when they set about their moun-
tain-piling

But when another rock would crown
the work.

And Phaeton—doubtless his first radi-
ant plunge

Astonished mortals, though the gods
were calm,

And Jove prepared his thunder : all
old tales !

Fest. And what are these to you ?

Par. Ay, fiends must laugh
So cruelly, so well ; most like I never
Could tread a single pleasure underfoot,
But they were grinning by my side,
were chuckling

To see me toil and drop away by flakes !
Hell-spawn ! I am glad, most glad,
that thus I fail !

Your cunning has o'ershot its aim. One
year,

One month, perhaps, and I had served
your turn !

You should have curbed your spite
awhile. But now,

Who will believe 't was 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 sink
mankind

In silence and despair, by teaching
them

One of their race had probed the in-
most 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, [ends !

To ruin body and soul to work your
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 cringe low with
feigned respect,

Galen of Pergamos and hell—nay
speak

The tale, old man ! We met there face
to face :

I said the crown should fall from thee.
Once more

We meet as in that ghastly vestibule :
Look to my brow ! Have I redeemed
my pledge ?

Fest. Peace, peace ; ah, see !

Par. Oh, emptiness of fame !

Oh Persic Zoroaster, lord of stars !
—Who said these old renowns, dead
long ago,

Could make me overlook the living
world

To gaze through gloom at where they
stood, indeed,

But stand no longer ? What a warm
light life

After the shade ! In truth, my deli-
cate witch,

My serpent-queen, you did but well to
hide

The juggles I had else detected. Fire

May well run harmless o'er a breast
like yours !

The cave was not so darkened by the
smoke

But that your white limbs dazzled me :
oil, 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 mum-
meries,

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 ; [gone !

And she is gone ; sweet human love is
'T is 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.

'T is 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!
'T is but a dream—no more!
I have you still; the sun comes out
again;
Let us be happy: all will yet go well!
Let us confer: is it not like, Aprile,
That spite of trouble, this ordeal passed,
The value of my labours ascertained,
Just as some stream foams long among
the rocks
But after glideth glassy to the sea,
So, full content shall henceforth be my
lot?
What think you, poet? Louder!
Your clear voice
Vibrates too like a harp-string. Do
you ask
How 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 unespied; that they live
on,
Nor taste the quiet of a constant joy,
For ache and care and doubt and wear-
iness,
While I am calm; help being vouch-
safed to me,
And hid from them.—'T were best con-
sider that!
You reason well, Aprile; but at least
Let we know this, and die! Is this too
much?
I will learn this, if God so please, and
die!

If thou shalt please, dear God, if thou
shalt please!
We are so weak, we know our motives
least
In their confused beginning. If at first
I sought . . . but wherefore bare my
heart to thee?
I know thy mercy; and already
thoughts
Flock fast about my soul to comfort it,
And intimate I cannot wholly fail,
For love and praise would clasp me
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
Which fed my youth! Only one hour
of that
With thee to help—O what should bar
me then!
Lost, lost! Thus things are ordered
here! God's creatures,
And yet he takes no pride in us!
—none, none!
Truly there needs another life to come!
If this be all—(I must tell Festus that)
And other life await us not—for one,
I say 't is 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 de-
mand
Its best assistance, it will crumble fast:
A sad thought, a sad fate! How very
full
Of wormwood 't is, 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 [dim,
Beside your desolate fane: the arches
The crumbling columns grand against
the moon,
Could I but rear them up once more—
but that
May never be, so leave them! Trust
me, friends,
Why should you linger here when I have
built
A far resplendent temple, all your own?
Trust me, they are but ruins! See,
Aprile,
Men will not heed! Yet were I not
prepared
With better refuge for them, tongue of
mine
Should ne'er reveal how blank their
dwelling is:
I would sit down in silence with the rest.

Ha, what? you spit at me, you grin and
shriek
Contempt into my ear—my ear which
drank
God's accents once? you curse me?
Why men, men,
I am not formed for it! Those hideous
eyes
Will be before me sleeping, waking,
praying,
They will not let me even die. Spare,
spare me,
Sinning or no, forget that, only spare
me
The horrible scorn! You thought I
could support it,
But now you see what silly fragile
creature
Cowers thus. I am not good nor bad
enough,
Not Christ nor Cain, yet even Cain was
saved

From hate like this. Let me but
totter back!

Perhaps I shall elude those jeers which
creep

Into my very brain, and shut these
scorched

Eyelids and keep those mocking faces
out.

Listen, Aprile! I am very calm:
Be not deceived, there is no passion
here

Where the blood leaps like an im-
prisoned thing:

I am calm: I will exterminate the race!
Enough of that: 't is said and it shall
be.

And now be merry: safe and sound
am I

Who broke through their best ranks
to get at you.

And such a havoc, such a rout, Aprile!
Fest. Have you no thought, no
memory for me,

Aureole? I am so wretched—my pure
Michal!

Is gone, and you alone are left me now,
And even you forget me. Take my
hand—

Lean on me thus. Do you not know
me, Aureole?

Par. Festus, my own friend, you are
come at last?

As you say, 't is an awful enterprise;
But you believe I shall go through with
it:

'T is 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 re-
demption dawns.

Fest. Not that blest time—not our
youth's time, dear God!

Par. Ha—stay! true, I forget—all
is done since,

And he is come to judge me. How he
speaks,

How calm, how well! yes, it is true, all
true;

All quackery; all deceit; myself can
laugh

The first at it, if you desire : but still
You know the obstacles which taught
me tricks

So foreign to my nature—envy and
hate,

Blind opposition, brutal prejudice,
Bald ignorance—what wonder if I sunk
To humour men the way they most
approved ?

My cheats were never palmed on such
as you,

Dear Festus ! I will kneel if you re-
quire 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 not ;

May tread upon my own and know it
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 sit upon thy name for
ever.

Sun ! all the heaven is glad for thee :
what care

If lower mountains light their snowy
phares

At thine efulgence, 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 con-
vulsive throes

With which thy deeds were born, would
scorn as well

The winding-sheet of subterranean fire
Which, pent and writhing, sends no less

at last
Huge islands up amid the simmering
sea.

Behold thy might in me ! thou hast
infused

Thy soul in mine ; and I am grand as
thou,

Seeing I comprehend thee—I so simple,
Thou so august ! I recognize thee first ;

I saw thee rise, I watched thee early
and late,

And though no glance reveal thou dost
accept

My homage—thus no less I proffer it,
And bid thee enter gloriously thy rest.

Par. Festus !
Fest. I am for noble Aureole, God !

I am upon his side, come weal or woe.
His portion shall be mine. He has
done well.

I would have sinned, had I been strong
enough,

As he has sinned. Reward him or I
waive

Reward ! If thou canst find no place
for him,

He shall be king elsewhere, and I will
be

His slave for ever. There are two of us,
Par. Dear Festus !

Fest. Here, dear Aureole ! ever by
you !

Par. Nay, speak on, or I dream again.
Speak on !

Some story, anything—only your voice,
I shall dream else. Speak on ! ay,

leaning so !
Fest. Thus the Mayne glideth
Where my Love abideth.

Sleep's no softer : it proceeds

On through lawns, on through
meads,
On and on, whate'er befall,
Meandering and musical,
Though the niggard pasturage
Bears not on its shaven ledge
Aught but weeds and waving
grasses
To view the river as it passes,
Save here and there a scanty patch
Of primroses too faint to catch
A weary bee.

Par. More, more; say on!

Fest. And scarce it pushes
Its gentle way through strangling
rushes,
Where the glossy kingfisher
Flutters when noon-heats are near,
Glad the shelving banks to shun,
Red and steaming in the sun,
Where the shrew-mouse with pale
throat
Burrows, and the speckled stoat;
Where the quick sandpipers flit
In and out the marl and grit
That seems to breed them, brown
as they:

Nought disturbs its quiet way,
Save some lazy stork that springs,
Trailing it with legs and wings,
Whom the shy fox from the hill
Rouses, creep he ne'er so still.

Par. My heart! they loose my heart,
those simple words;

Its darkness passes, which nought else
could touch:

Like some dark snake that force may
not expel,
Which glideth out to music sweet and
low.

What were you doing when your voice
broke through

A chaos of ugly images? You, indeed!
Are you alone here?

Fest. All alone: you know me?
This cell?

Par. An unexceptionable vault:
'Good brick and stone: the bats kept
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 this occasion, lost, will ne'er return.
You are here to be instructed. I will
tell

God's message; but I have so much to
say,

I fear to leave half out. All is con-
fused

No doubt; but doubtless you will learn
in time.

He would not else have brought you
here: no doubt

I shall see clearer soon.

Fest. Tell me but this—
You are not in despair?

Par. I? and for what?

Fest. Alas, alas! he knows not, as I
feared!

Par. What is it you would ask me
with that earnest

Dear searching face?

Fest. How feel you, Aureole?

Par. Well:

Well. 'Tis a strange thing: I am
dying, Festus,

And now that fast the storm of life
subsides,

I first perceive how great the whirl has
been.

I was calm then, who am so dizzy now—
Calm in the thick of the tempest, but
no less

A partner of its motion and mixed up
With its career. The hurricane is
spent,

And the good boat speeds through the
brightening weather;

But is it earth or sea that heaves below?
The gulf rolls like a meadow-swell, o'er-
strewn

With ravaged boughs and remnants of
the shore;

And now some islet, loosened from the
land,

Swims past with all its trees, sailing to
ocean;

And now the air is full of uptorn canes,
Light strippings from the fan-trees,
tamarisks

Unrooted, with their birds still clinging
to them,

All high in the wind. Even so my
varied life

Drifts by me; I am young, old, happy,
sad,

Hoping, desponding, acting, taking rest,
And all at once: that is, those past
conditions

Float back at once on me. If I select
Some special epoch from the crowd, 't is
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 [yet,

Of boundless life—the doors unopened
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. 'T is 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? 'T is 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 up-
turned 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? [speaks,

Then, the fore-finger pointing as he
Like one who traces in an open book

The matter he declares; 't is many a
year

Since I remarked it last; and this in
him,

But now a ghastly wreck!)

And can it be,
Dear Aureole, you have then found out
at last

That worldly things are utter vanity?
That man is made for weakness, and
should wait

In patient ignorance till God
appoint. . .

Par. Ha, the purpose, the true pur-
pose: that is it!

How could I fail to apprehend! You
here, [all,

I thus! But no more trifling: I see
I know all: my last mission shall be
done

If strength suffice. No trifling! Stay;
this posture

Hardly befits one thus about to speak:
I will arise.

Fest. Nay, Aureole, are you wild?
You cannot leave your couch.

Par. No help; no help;
Not even your hand. So! there, I
stand once more!

Speak from a couch? I never lectured
thus.

My gown—the scarlet lined with fur;
now put

The chain about my neck; my signet-
ring

Is still upon my hand, I think—even
so;

Last, my good sword; ah, trusty
Azoth, leapest

Beneath thy master's grasp for the last
time?

This couch shall be my throne: I bid
these walls

Be consecrate, this wretched cell be-
come

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. 'T is no delusion which uplifts
him thus !

Then you are pardoned, Aurcole, all
your sin ?

Par. Ay, pardoned : yet why par-
doned ?

Fest. 'T is 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. 'T is 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. 'T is fruitless for
mankind

To fret themselves with what concerns
them not ;

They are no use that way : they should
lie down—

Content as God has made them, nor go
mad

In thriveless cares to better what is ill.

Par. No, no ; mistake me not ; let
me not work

More harm than I have worked ! . This
is my ease :

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—

., Paracelsus : it was mine by right.
Doubtless a searching and impetuous
soul

Might learn from its own motions that
some task

Like this awaited it about the world ;
Might seek somewhere in this blank life
of ours

For fit delights to stay its longings vast ;
And, grappling Nature, so prevail on
her

To fill the creature full she dared thus
frame

Hungry for joy ; and, bravely tyrann-
ous, [more,

Grow in demand, still craving more and
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
wring

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 and flashing splendour, set
 my heart
 Trembling so much as warned me I
 stood there
 On sufferance—not to idly gaze, but
 cast
 Light on a darkling race; save for that
 doubt,
 I stood at first where all aspire at last
 To stand: the secret of the world was
 mine.
 I knew, I felt, (perception unexpressed,
 Uncomprehended by our narrow
 thought,
 But somehow felt and known in every
 shift
 And change in the spirit,—nay, in every
 pore
 Of the body, even,)—what God is,
 what we are,
 What life is—how God tastes an infinite
 joy
 In infinite ways—one everlasting bliss,
 From whom all being emanates, all
 power
 Proceeds; in whom is life for evermore,
 Yet whom existence in its lowest form
 Includes; where dwells enjoyment
 there is he:
 With still a flying point of bliss remote,
 A happiness in store afar, a sphere
 Of distant glory in full view; thus
 climbs
 Pleasure its heights for ever and for
 ever.
 The centre-fire heaves underneath the
 earth,
 And the earth changes like a human
 face;
 The molten ore bursts up among the
 rocks,
 Winds into the stone's heart, out-
 branches bright
 In hidden mines, spots barren river-
 beds,
 Crumbles into fine sand where sun-
 beams 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 volcanoes come up, cyclops-
 like,
 Staring together with their eyes on
 flame—
 God tastes a pleasure in their uncouth
 pride.
 Then all is still; earth is a wintry clod:
 But spring-wind, like a dancing
 psaltress, passes
 Over its breast to waken it, rare ver-
 dure
 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 swoln with blooms
 Like chrysalids impatient for the air,
 The shining dorr are busy, beetles run
 Along the furrows, ants make their
 ado;
 Above, birds fly in merry flocks, the
 lark
 Soars up and up, shivering for very joy;
 Afar the ocean sleeps; white fishing-
 gulls
 Flit where the strand is purple with its
 tribe
 Of nested limpets; savage creatures ^{[seek}
 Their loves in wood and plain—and
 God renews
 His ancient rapture. Thus he dwells
 in all,
 From life's minute beginnings, up at
 last
 To man—the consummation of this
 scheme
 Of being, the completion of this sphere
 Of life: whose attributes had here and
 there
 Been scattered o'er the visible world
 before,
 Asking to be combined, dim fragments
 meant
 To be united in some wondrous whole,
 Imperfect qualities throughout creation
 Suggesting some one creature yet to
 make,
 Some point where all those scattered
 rays should meet
 Convergent in the faculties of man.
 Power—neither put forth blindly, nor
 controlled

Calmly by perfect knowledge ; to be used
 At risk, inspired or checked by hope and fear :
 Knowledge—not intuition, but the slow
 Uncertain fruit of an enhancing toil,
 Strengthened by love : love—not serenely pure,
 But strong from weakness, like a chance-sown plant
 Which, cast on stubborn soil, puts forth changed buds
 And softer stains, unknown in happier climes ;
 Love which endures and doubts and is oppressed
 And cherished, suffering much and much sustained,
 And blind, oft-failing, yet believing love,
 A half-enlightened, often-chequered trust :—
 Hints and previsions of which faculties, Are strewn confusedly everywhere about
 The inferior natures, and all lead up higher,
 All shape out dimly the superior race,
 The heir of hopes too fair to turn out false,
 And man appears at last. So far the seal
 Is put on life ; one stage of being complete,
 One scheme wound up : and from the grand result
 A supplementary reflux of light, Illustrates all the inferior grades, explains,
 Each back step in the circle. Not alone
 For their possessor dawn those qualities, But the new glory mixes with the heaven
 And earth ; man, once descried, imprints for ever—
 His presence on all lifeless things : the winds
 Are henceforth voices, wailing or a shout,
 A querulous mutter or a quick gay laugh,
 Never a senseless gust now man is born. The herded pines commune and have deep thoughts,
 A secret they assemble to discuss

When the sun drops behind their trunks which glare
 Like grates of hell : the peerless cup aloft
 Of the lake-lily is an urn, some nymph Swims bearing high above her head : no bird
 Whistles unseen, but through the gaps above
 That let light in upon the gloomy woods,
 A shape peeps from the breezy forest-top,
 Arch with small puckered mouth and mocking eye,
 The morn has enterprise, deep quiet droops
 With evening, triumph takes the sunset hour,
 Voluptuous transport ripens with the corn
 Beneath a warm moon like a happy face :
 —And 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 is not Man as yet.
 Nor shall I deem his object served, his end
 Attained, his genuine strength put fairly forth,
 While only here and there a star dispels
 The darkness, here and there a towering mind
 O'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 ? Oh long ago
 The brow was twitched, the tremulous lids astir,
 The peaceful mouth disturbed ; half-uttered speech
 Ruffled the lip, and then the teeth were set,

The breath drawn sharp, the strong
 right-hand clenched stronger,
 As it would pluck a lion by the jaw ;
 The glorious creature laughed out even
 in sleep !
 But when full roused, each giant-limb
 awake,
 Each sinew strung, the great heart
 pulsing fast,
 He shall start up and stand on his own
 earth, [begin,
 Then shall his long triumphant march
 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 man-
 kind,
 And, man produced, all has its end
 thus far :
 But in completed man begins anew
 A tendency to God. Prognostics told
 Man's near approach ; so in man's self
 arise
 August anticipations, symbols, types
 Of a dim splendour ever on before
 In that eternal circle life pursues.
 For men begin to pass their nature's
 bound,
 And find new hopes and cares which
 fast supplant
 Their proper joys and griefs ; they grow
 too great
 For narrow creeds of right and wrong,
 which fade
 Before the unmeasured thirst for good :
 while peace
 Rises within them ever more and more.
 Such men are even now upon the earth,
 Serene amid the half-formed creatures
 round
 Who should be saved by them and
 joined with them.
 Such was my task, and I was born to
 it—
 Free, as I said but now, from much that
 chains
 Spirits, high-dowered but limited and
 vexed
 By a divided and delusive aim,
 A shadow mocking a reality
 Whose truth avails not wholly to 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 ex-
 pense, withdrawn
 From labouring in his behalf ; a
 strength
 Denied that might avail him. I cared
 not
 Lest his success ran counter to success
 Elsewhere : for God is glorified in man,
 And to man's glory vowed I soul and
 limb.
 Yet, constituted thus, and thus
 endowed,
 I failed : I gazed on power till I grew
 blind.
 Power ; I could not take my eyes from
 that :
 That only, I thought, should be 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, ugliness and tears,
 The record of disgraces best forgotten,
 A sullen page in human chronicles
 Fit to erase. I saw no cause why man
 Should not stand all-sufficient even
 now,
 Or why his annals should be forced to
 tell
 That once the tide of light, about to
 break
 Upon the world, was sealed within its
 spring :
 I would have had one day, one mo-
 ment'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 when, 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 [least,
The primal aggregate, seemed, even the
Itself a match for my 'concentred
strength—
What wonder if I saw no way to shun
Despair ? The power I sought for
man, seemed God's.
In this conjuncture, as I prayed to die,
A strange adventure made me know,
one sin
I 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 pre-
ceding
Power, and with much power, always
much more love ;
Love still too straitened in his 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
proffered praise—
When, with awakened eyes, they took
revenge
For past credulity in casting shame
On my real knowledge, and I hated
them—
It was not strange I saw no good in man,
To overbalance all the wear and waste
Of faculties, displayed in vain, but born
To prosper in some better sphere : and
why ?
In my own heart love had not been
made wise
To trace love's faint beginnings in 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
fallacies,
Their prejudice and fears and cares and
doubts ;
All with a touch of nobleness, despite
Their error, upward tending all though
weak,
Like plants in mines which never saw
the sun,
But dream of him, and guess where he
may be,
And do their best to climb and get to
him.
All this I knew not, and I failed. Let
men
Regard me, and the poet dead long ago
Who loved too rashly ; and shape forth
a third
And better-tempered spirit, warned by
both :
As from the over-radiant star too mad
To drink the life-springs, beamless
thence itself—
And the dark orb which borders the
abyss,
Ingulfed in icy night,—might have its
course
A temperate and equidistant world.
Meanwhile, I have done well, though
not all well.
As yet men cannot do without con-
tempt ;

'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: [stoop
But after, they will know me. If I
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!

NOTE

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

"PARACELSUS (Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus 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, pretends.* It appears that his elementary education was much neglected, and that he spent part of his youth in pursuing the life common to the travelling *literati* of the age; that is to say, in wandering from country to country, predicting the future by astrology and cheiromancy, evoking apparitions, and practis-

ing the different operations of magic and alchemy, in which he had been initiated wheth' by his father or by various ecclesiastics, among the number of whom he particularizes the Abbot Trithemius,⁽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 (Ecolampadius),⁽⁴⁾

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

to fill a chair of physic and surgery at the University of Basil. There Paracelsus began by burning publicly in the amphitheatre the works of Avicenna and Galen, assuring his auditors that the 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, Vienna,* and whomsoever the Rhine and Danube nourish; you who inhabit the isles of the sea; you, likewise, Dalmatians, Athenians; thou, Arab; thou, Greek; thou, Jew; all shall follow me, and the monarchy shall be mine.'†

"But at Basil it was speedily perceived that the new Professor was no better than an egregious quack. Scarcely a year elapsed before his lectures had fairly driven away an audience incapable of comprehending their emphatic jargon. That which above all contributed to sully his reputation was the debauched life he led. According to the testimony of Oporinus, who lived two years in his intimacy, Paracelsus scarcely ever ascended the lecture-desk unless half drunk, and only dictated to his secretaries when in a state of intoxication: if summoned to attend the sick, he rarely proceeded thither without previously drenching himself with wine. He was accustomed to retire to bed without changing his clothes; sometimes he spent the night in pot-houses with peasants, and in the morning knew no longer what he was about; and, nevertheless, up to the age of twenty-five his only drink had been water.⁽⁵⁾

"At length, fearful of being punished for a serious outrage on a magistrate,⁽⁶⁾

he fled from Basil towards the end of the year 1527, and took refuge in Alsatia, whither he caused Oporinus to follow with his chemical apparatus.

"He then entered once more upon the career of ambulatory theosophist.† 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 Latinized Eremitus, whence Paracelsus is sometimes called, as in the correspondence of Erasmus, Eremita: Bombast, his proper name, probably acquired, from the characteristic phraseology of his lectures, that unlucky signification which it has ever since retained.

(2) Then Bishop of Spanheim, and residing at Würzburg in Franconia; a town situated in a grassy fertile country, whence its name, Herbitopolis. 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: "Quum nuper tecum, R. P. in cœnobio tuo apud Herbitopolim aliquamdiu conversatus, multa de chymicis, multa de magicis, multa de cabalisticis, cæterisque quæ adhuc in occulto delitescunt, arcanis scientiis atque artibus una contulissenus," etc.

‡ "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."

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

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

(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 supposebat, ut cum viris naturæ scrutatoribus, chymicis præsertim, ore tenus conferret, et quæ diuturnis laboribus nocturnæque vigiliis invennerant 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." (Meleh. 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 insana-biles percurandum; ut eum 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 fœminam aspiciat: quanto minus nobilissimarum artium amore laboris acceus libet tædij pigebit?" etc. ('Defensiones Septem adversus æmulos suos.' 1573. Def. 4ta. 'De peregrinationibus et exilio.')

(4) The reader may remember that it was in connection with Œcolampadius, 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 Œcolampadii et Huldricii 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 Œcolampadius 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 Œcolampadius, like a mighty and fierce giant; who, as his master had gone beyond the Church, went beyond his master (or else it had been impossible he

could have been reputed the better scholar), who denied the real presence: him, this worthy champion (the Bishop) sets upon, and with five books (like so many smooth stones taken out of the river that doth always run with living water) slays the Philistine; which five books were written in the year of our Lord 1526, at which time he had governed the See of Rochester 20 years." (Life of Bishop Fisher. 1655.) Now, there is no doubt of the Protestantism of Paracelsus, Erasmus, Agrippa, etc., but the none conformity of Paracelsus was always scandalous. L. Crasso ('Elogi 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 hæreticos" (lib. 1. cap. 3). "Omnino tamen multa theologia in ejusdem scriptis plane atheismum olent, ac durissime sonant in auribus vere Christiani." (D. Gabrielis Clauderi Schediasma de Tinet. Univ. Norimb. 1736.) I shall only add one more authority:—"Oporinus dicit se (Paracelsum) aliquando Lutherum et Papam, non minus quam nunc Galenum et Hippocratem redacturum in ordinem minabatur, neque enim eorum qui hæcenus in scripturam sacram scripissent, sive veteres, sive recentiores, quenquam scripturæ nucleum recte eruisse, sed circa corticem et quasi membranam tantum hæere." (Th. Erasmus, 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, aliqui amfissimi, 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 Tæti seculo ad nostrum usque non interrupto filo devolutum, sinecitatî forte Germanæ coævum, et nescio an aliquo consanguinitatis vineulo junctum." (Bitiskius.) The other charges were chiefly trumped up by Oporinus: "Domi, quod Oporinus amanensis ejus sape narravit, nunquam nisi potus ad explicanda sua accessit, atque in medio conelavi ad columnam τετραφωμένος adsisitens, 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 apellatum medicinam fuisse præstantissimam aut lapidem Philosophicum putant." (Meleh.

Adam.) This famous sword was no laughing-matter in those days, and it is now a material feature in the popular idea of Paracelsus. I recollect a couple of allusions to it in our own literature, at the moment.

Ne had been known the Danish Gonswart,
Or Paracelsus with his long sword.

'Volpone,' Act ii. Scene 2.

Bumbastus kept a devil's bird
Shut in the pummel of his sword,
That taught him all the cunning pranks
Of past and future mountebanks.

'Hudibras,' Part ii. Cent. 3.

This Azoth was simply "*laudanum suum*." But in his time he was commonly believed to possess the double tincture—the power of curing diseases and transmuting metals. Oporinus often witnessed, as he declares, both these effects, as did also Francisus, 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 pro-citus a medentibus illius urbis, et vanilo-quus deceptorque proclamatus, qui, ut laboranti famæ subveniat, viros quosdam autoritatis summæ in Republica illa adit, et infamiæ amoliendæ, artique suæ asserendæ, specimen ejus pollicetur editurum, nullo stipendio vel accepto pretio, horum faciles præbentium aures jussu elephantiacos aliquot, a communione hominum cæterorum segregatos, et in valetudinarium detrusos, alieno arbitrio eligunt, quos virtute singulari remedium suorum Theophras-tus a fœlia Græcorum lepra mundat, pristinaque sanitati restituit; conservat illustre harum curationum urbs in archivis suis testimonium." (Bitiskius).* It is to be remarked that Oporinus afterwards repented of his treachery: "Sed respicit tandem, et quem vivum convitiis insectatus fuerat defunctum veneratione prose-quutus, infames famæ præceptoris morsus in remorsus conscientiæ conversi poenitentia, hui nimis tarda, vulnera claudere examini quæ spiranti inflixerant." For these "bites" of Oporinus, see Disputat.

* The premature death of Paracelsus casts no manner of doubt on the fact of his having possessed the *Lixir Vitæ*: the alchemists have abundant reasons to adduce, from which I select the following, as explanatory of a property of the Tincture not calculated on by its votaries:—"Objectionem illam, quod Paracelsus non fuerit longævus, nonnulli quoque solvunt per rationes physicas: 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 Claudi Sebeldiasma.)

Erasti, and Andræ Jocisci 'Oratio de vit. 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 Vegerus.†

Whatever the moderns may think of these marvellous attributes, the title of Paracelsus to be considered the father of modern chemistry, is indisputable. Gerardus Vossius, 'De Philos. et Philos. sectis,' thus prefaces the ninth section of cap. 9, 'De Chymia'—"Nobilem hanc medicinæ partem, diu sepultam avorum ætate quasi ab orco 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. I was, as I have said, unwilling to publish his works, but in effect did publish a vast number. Valentius (in Præfat. in Paramyr.) declares "quod ad librorum Paracelsi copiam attinet, audio, a Germanis prope trecentos recenseri." "O fœcunditas ingenii!" adds he, appositely. Many of these were, however, spurious; and Fred. Bitiskius gives his good edition (3 vols. fol. Gen. 1658) "rejectis suppositis solo ipsius nomine superbientibus quorum ingens circumfertur numerus." The rest were "charissimum et pretiosissimum authoris pignus, extorsum potius ab illo quam obtentum." "Jam minime eo volente atque jubente hæc ipsius scripta in lucem prodire videntur; quippe quæ muro inclusa ipso absente servi cujusdam indicio, furto 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 Philosophiæ, Bas. 1571;'

† For a good defence of Paracelsus I refer the reader to Olaus Borrichius' treatise—"Hermetis etc. Sapiëntia 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.

Mic. Toxetis, 'Onomastica. Arg. 1574 ;' Dornei, 'Diet. Parae. Franc. 1584 ;' and 'Pi Philos. Compendium eum 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.

STRAFFORD :

A TRAGEDY

DEDICATED, IN ALL AFFECTIONATE ADMIRATION,

TO

WILLIAM C. MACREADY

London, April 23, 1837.

PERSONS

CHARLES I.
Earl of HOLLAND.
Lord SAVILE.
Sir HENRY VANE.
WENTWORTH, Viscount WENTWORTH,
Earl of STRAFFORD.
JOHN PYM.
JOHN HAMPDEN.
The younger VANE.

DENZIL HOLLIS.
BENJAMIN RUDYARD.
NATHANIEL FIENNES.
Earl of LOUDON.
MAXWELL, Usher of the Black Rod.
BALFOUR, Constable of the Tower.
A Puritan.
QUEEN HENRIETTA.
LUCY PERCY, the Countess of Carlisle

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

ACT I

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

Vane. I say, if he be here—

Rud. (And he is here!)—

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!

Anne. 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 !

Fien. Here's Rudyard not ashamed
to wag a tongue

Stiff 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.

Vane. Now, by Heaven
They may be cool who can, silent who
will—

Some have a gift that way ! Went-
worth is here,

Here, and the King's safe closeted with
him

Ere this. And when I think on all
that's past

Since that man left us, how his single
arm

Rolled the advancing good of England
back

And set the woeful past up in its place,
Exalting Dagon where the Ark should
be,—

How that man has made firm the fickle
King

(Hampden, I will speak out !)—in aught
he feared

To venture on before ; taught tyranny
Her dismal trade, the use of all her tools,

To ply the scourge yet screw the gag so
close

That strangled agony bleeds mute to
death—

How he turns Ireland to a private stage
For training infant villainies, 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.

Vane. Oh, Hampden, then and now !
The year he left us,

The People in full Parliament could
wrest

The Bill of Rights from the reluctant
King ;

And now, he'll find in an obscure small
room

A stealthy gathering of great-hearted
men

That take up England's cause : Eng-
land is here !

Hamp. And who despairs of Eng-
land ?

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
Laud

May yet be longed-for back again. I
say,

I do despair.

Vane. And, Rudyard, I'll say
this—

Which all true men say after me, not
loud

But solemnly and as you'd say a
prayer !

This King, who treads our England
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." Wit-
ness, you !

So Wentworth heartened Charles, so
England fell.

But inasmuch as life is hard to take
From England . . .

Many Voices. Go on, Vane! 'T is
well said, Vane!

Vane.—Who has not so forgotten
Runnymede!—

Voices. 'T is 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 pati-
ence, Loudon! 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 Eng-
land 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—'t is nothing new.

Vane. And what's new, then,
In calling for his life? Why, Pym
himself—

You must have heard—ere Wentworth
dropped our cause

He would see Pym first; there were
many more

Strong on the people's side and friends
of his,

Eliot that's dead, Rudyard and
Hampden here,

But for these Wentworth cared not;
only, Pym

He would see—Pym and he were
sworn, 't is said,

To live and die together; so, they met
At Greenwich. Wentworth, you are

sure, was long,
Specious enough, the devil's argument

Lost nothing on his lips; he'd have
Pym own

A patriot could not play a purer part
Than follow in his track; they two

combined
Might put 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 crude surmises in his
mouth?

Away with this! Will you have Pym
or Vane?

Voices. Wait Pym's arrival! Pym
shall speak.

Hamp. Meanwhile
Let Loudon read the Parliament's

report
From Edinburgh: our last hope, as

Vane says,
Is in the stand it makes. Loudon!

Vane. No, no!
Silent I can be: not indifferent!

Hamp. Then each keep silence, pray-
ing 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 Loudon ? your Scots Parliament . . .
Lou. Holds firm :
We were about to read reports.
Pym. The King
Has just dissolved your Parliament.
Lou. and other Scots. Great God !
An oath-breaker ! Stand by us, England, then !
Pym. The King's too sanguine ;
doubtless Wentworth's here ;
But still some little form might be kept up.
Hamp. Now speak, Vane ! Rudyard, you had much to say !
Hol. The rumour's false, then . . .
Pym. Ay, the Court gives out
His own concerns have brought him back : I know
'T is the King calls him : Wentworth supersedes
The tribe of Cotingtons 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, chronicling a nation's great despair,
Tells they were long rebellious, and their lord
Indulgent, till, all kind expedients tried,
He drew the sword on them and reigned in peace.
Laud's laying his religion on the Scots
Was the last gentle entry : the new page
Shall run, the King thinks, " Wentworth thrust it down
" At the sword's point."
A Puritan. I'll do your bidding,
Pym.
England's and God's—one blow !
Pym. A goodly thing—

We all say, friends, it is a goodly thing
To right that England. Heaven grows dark above :
Let's snatch one moment ere the thunder fall,
To say how well the English spirit comes out
Beneath it ! All have done their best, indeed,
From lion Eliot, that grand Englishman,
To the least here : and who, the least one here,
When she is saved (for her redemption dawns
Dimly, most dimly, but it dawns—it dawns)
Who'd give at any price his hope away
Of being named along with the Great Men ?
We would not—no, we would not give that up !
Hamp. And one name shall be dearer than all names.
When 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
 Va e 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 sha'll 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 Aeldama.

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 't is a dream, no
 more,

That Wentworth chose their side, and
 brought the King

To love it as though Laud had loved it
 first,

And the Queen after;—that he led
 their cause

Calm to success, and kept it spotless
 through,

So that our very eyes could look upon
 The travail of our souls and close con-
 tent

That violence, which something mars
 even rights

Which sanction 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
 succeed

In drawing out our formidablest foe,
 Let bickering and disunion take their
 place?

Or count his presence as our conquest's
 proof,

And keep the old arms at their steady play?

Proceed to England's work! Fiennes, read the list!

Fiennes. Ship-money is refused or fiercely paid

In every county, save the northern parts

Where Wentworth's influence . . .

Vane. I, in England's name, Declare her work, this way, at end!

Till now, Up to this moment, peaceful strife was best.

We English had free leave to think; till now,

We had a shadow of a Parliament In Scotland. But all's changed: they change the first,

They try brute-force for law, they, first of all . . .

Voices. Good! Talk enough! The old true hearts with Vane!

Vane. Till we crush Wentworth for her, there's no act

Serves England!

Voices. Vane for England!

Pym. Pym should be Something to England. I seek Wentworth, friends.

SCENE II.—Whitehall.

Lady CARLISLE and WENTWORTH.

Went. And the King?

Lady Car. Wentworth, lean on me! Sit then!

I'll tell you all; this horrible fatigue Will kill you.

Went. No; or—Lucy, just your arm;

I'll not sit till I've cleared this up with him:

After that, rest. The King?

Lady Car. Confides in you.

Went. Why? or, why now?—They have kind throats, the knaves!

Shout for me—they!

Lady Car. You come so strangely soon:

Yet we took measures to keep off the crowd—

Did they shout for you?

Went. Wherefore should they not? Does the King take such measures for himself?

Beside, there's such a dearth of malcontents,

You say!

Lady Car. I said but few dared carp at you.

Went. At me? at us, I hope! The King and I!

He's surely not disposed to let me bear The fame away from him of these late deeds

In Ireland? I am yet his instrument

Be it for well or ill? He trusts me, too!

Lady Car. The King, dear Wentworth, purposes, I said,

To grant you, in the face of all the Court . . .

Went. All the Court! Evermore the Court about us!

Savile and Holland, Hamilton and Vane

About us,—then the King will grant me—what?

That he for once put these aside and say—

"Tell me your whole mind, Wentworth!"

Lady Car. You professed You would be calm.

Went. Lucy, and I am calm! How else shall I do all I come to do,

Broken, as you may see, body and mind,

How shall I serve the King? Time wastes meanwhile,

You have not told me half. His footstep! No.

Quick, then, before I meet him,—I am calm—

Why does the King distrust me?

Lady Car. He does not Distrust you.

Went. Lucy, you can help me; you [word!

Have even seemed to care for me: one Is it the Queen?

Lady Car. No, not the Queen: the party

That poisons the Queen's ear, Savile and Holland.

Went. I know, I know: old Vane, too, he's one too?

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 snre 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 [vex
 In power, to vex me—not that they do
 Only it might vex some to hear that
 service
 Decried, the sole support that's left the
 King!
Lady Car. So the Archbishop says.
Went. Ah? well, perhaps
 The only hand held up in my defence
 May be old Laud's! These Hollands
 then, these Saviles
 Nibble? They nibble?—that 's the
 very word!
Lady Car. Your profit in the Cus-
 toms, Bristol says,
 Exceeds the due proportion: while the
 tax . . .
Went. Enough! 't is 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 concern-
 ing 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 con-
 sulting 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 't is a secret) to my
 grave.
Lady Car. For life or death I am
 your own, dear friend! [*Goes out.*
Went. Heartless! but all are heart-
 less 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 re-
paired !

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 ?)

'T is 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 ac-
quaintance' 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. [here,

Forgive me : Savile, old Vane, Holland

Eschew plain-speaking : 't is a trick I
keep.

Went. How, when, where, Savile,
Vane and Holland speak,

Painly 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 Eirdom you expected, still ex-
pect,
And may. Your letters were the
movingest !
Console yourself : I've borne him
prayers just now
From Scotland not to be oppressed by
Laud,
Words moving in their way : he'll pay,
be sure,
As much attention as to those you sent.
Went. False, sir ! Who showed
them you ? Suppose it so,
The King did very well . . . nay, I was
glad
When it was shown me : I refused, the
first !
John Pym, you were my friend—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, Went-
worth, you [you
Who never mean to ruin England—
Who shake off, with God's help, an
obscene dream
In this Ezekiel chamber, where it crept
Upon you first, and wake, yourself,
your true
And proper self, our Leader, England's
Chief,
And Hampden's friend !
This is the proudest day !
Come, Wentworth ! Do not even see
the King !
The rough old room will seem itself
again !
We'll both go in together : you've not
seen
Hampden so long : come : and there's
Fiennes : you'll have
To know young Vane. This is the
proudest day !

(*The KING enters.* *WENTWORTH*
lets fall PYM's hand.
Cha. Arrived, my lord ?—This gen-
tleman, 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, 't is
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 't is 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 say you: only I. Sir, what must be?

Cha. Since Laud 's assured (the minutes are within)

—Loath as I am to spill my subjects' blood . . .

Went. That is, he'll have a war: what 's done is done!

Cha. They have intrigued with France; that 's clear to Laud.

Went. Has Laud suggested any way to meet

The war's expense?

Cha. He'd not decide so far Until you joined us.

Went. Most considerate! He's certain they intrigue with France, these Scots?

The People would be with us.

Cha. Pym should know.

Went. The People for us—were the People for us!

Sir, a great thought comes to reward your trust:

Summon a Parliament! in Ireland first, Then, here.

Cha. In truth?

Went. That saves us! that puts off

The war, gives time to right their grievances—

To talk with Pym. I know the Faction, 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 over 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? Put you will not so utterly abhor

A parliament? I'd serve you any way.

Cha. You said just now this was the only way.

Went. Sir, I will serve you!

Cha. Strafford, spare yourself— You are so sick, they tell me,

Went. 'Tis my soul That 's well and prospers now.

This Parliament— We'll summon it, the English one—I'll

care

For everything. You shall not need them much.

Cha. If they prove restive . . .

Went. I shall be with you.

Cha. Ere they assemble?

Went. I will come, or else Deposit this infirm humanity

I' the dust. My whole heart stays with you, my King!

[As WENTWORTH goes out, the QUEEN enters.

Cha. That man must love me.

Queen. 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 Parlia-
ment.

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
subsidies!

A stinging one! but, brother, where's
your word

For Strafford's other nest-egg, the
Scots war?

The Puritan. His fruit shall be a
fiery flying serpent.

Fien. Shall be? It chips the shell,
man; peeps abroad.

Twelve subsidies!—Why, how now,
Vane?

Rud. Peace, Fiennes!

Fien. Ah?—But he was not more a
dupe than I,

Or you, or any here, the day that Pym
Returned with the good news. Look
up, friend Vane!

We all believed that Strafford meant
us well

In summoning the Parliament.

HAMPDEN enters.

Vane. Now, Hampden,
Clear me! I would have leave to sleep
again:

I'd look the People in the face again:
Clear me from having, from the first,
hoped, dreamed

Better of Strafford!

Hamp. You may grow one day
A steadfast light to England, Henry
Vane!

Rud. Meantime, by flashes I make
shift to see

Strafford revived our Parliaments;
before,

War was but talked of; there's an
army, now:

Still, we've a Parliament! Poor Ire-
land bears

Another wrench (she dies the hardest
death)—

Why, speak of it in Parliament ! and lo,
 'T is 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 fur-
 nish

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 our-
 selves

A quiet, slow, but most effectual course
 Of buying over, sapping, leavening

The lump till all is leaven. Glanville's
 gone.

I'll put a case ; had not the Court de-
 clared

B.P.

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
 sin ;

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 ships money's disposed of long ago
 By England : any vote that's broad

enough :

And then let Strafford, for the love of it,
 Support his Parliament !

Vane. And vote as well
No war to be with Scotland! Hear
you, Pym?
We'll vote, no war! No part nor lot in
it
For England!
Many Voices. Vote, no war! Stop
the new levies!
No Bishops' war! At once! When
next we meet!
Pym. Much more when next we
meet! Friends, which of you
Since first the course of Strafford was
in doubt, [me?
Has fallen the most away in soul from
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: Straf-
ford can have, indeed,
No choice.
Pym. Friends, follow me! He's
with the King.
Come, Hampden, and come, Rudyard,
and come, Vane!
This is no sullen day for England, sirs!
Strafford shall tell you!
Voices. To Whitehall then!
Come!

SCENE II.—Whitehall.

CHARLES and STRAFFORD.

Cha. Strafford!
Straf. Is it a dream? my papers,
here—
Thus, as I left them, all the plans you
found
So happy—(look! the track you pressed
my hand
For pointing out)—and in this very
room,
Over these very plans, you tell me, sir,
With the same face, too—tell me just
one thing
That ruins them! How's this? What
may this mean?
Sir, who has done this?
Cha. Strafford, who but I?
You bade me put the rest away:
indeed
You are alone.
Straf. Alone, and like to be!
No fear, when some unworthy scheme
grows ripe,
Of those, who hatched it, leaving me to
loose
The mischief on the world! Laud
hatches war,
Falls to his prayers, and leaves the rest
to me,
And I'm alone.
Cha. At least, you knew as much
When first you undertook the war.
Straf. My liege,
Was this the way? I said, since Laud
would lap
A little blood, 't were 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
'T was a brave plan! My army is all
raised,
I am prepared to join it . . .
Cha. Hear me, Strafford!
Straf. . . . When, for some little
thing, my whole design

Is set aside—(where is the wretched paper?)

I am to lead—(ay, here it is)—to lead The English army: why? Northumberland

That I appointed, chooses to be sick—Is frightened: and, meanwhile, who answers for

The Irish Parliament? or army, either? Is this my plan?

Cha. So disrespectful, sir?

Straf. My liege, do not believe it! I am yours,

Yours ever: 't is too late to think about:

To the death, yours. Elsewhere, this untoward step

Shall pass for mine; the world shall think it mine. [here,

But, here! But, here! I am so seldom 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, 't is 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. 'T was old Vane's ill-judged vehemence.

Straf. Old Vane?

Cha. He told them, just about to vote the half,

That nothing short of all twelve subsidies

Would serve our turn, or be accepted.

Straf. Vane!

Vane! Who, sir, promised me that very Vane . . .

O God, to have it gone, quite gone from me,

The one last hope—I that despair, my hope—

That I should reach his heart one day, and cure

All bitterness one day, be proud again And young again, care for the sunshine too,

And never think of Eliot any more.

God, and to toil for this, go far for this,
Get nearer, and still nearer, reach this
heart

And find Vane there!

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

Northumberland is sick:

Well, then, I take the army: Wilnot
leads

The horse, and he, with Conway, must
secure

The passes of the Tyne: Ormond
supplies

My place in Ireland. Here, we'll try
the City:

If they refuse a loan—debase the coin
And seize the bullion! 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, wicked-
est . . .

Do you know, sir, I think, within my
heart,

That you would say I did advise the
war;

And if, through your own weakness,
or what 's worse,

These Scots, with God to help them,
drive me back,

You will not step between the raging
People

And me, to say . . .

I knew it! from the first
I knew it! Never was so cold a heart!
Remember that I said it—that I never
Believed you for a moment!

—And, you loved me?

You thought your perfidy profoundly
hid

Because I could not share the whisper-
ings

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 . . .

Ay, call to . . . Shall I call for you?
The Scots

Goaded to madness? Or the English
—Pym—

Shall I call Pym, your subject? Oh,
you think

I'll leave them in the dark about it all?
They shall not know you? Hampden,

Pym shall not?

PYM, HAMPDEN, VANE, etc., enter.

[Dropping on his knee.] Thus favoured
with your gracious countenance

What shall a rebel League avail against
Your servant, utterly and ever yours?

So, gentlemen, the King's not even left
The privilege of bidding ad 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 eyes
are fixed

Upon you, sir!

Your pleasure, gentlemen?

Hamp. The King dissolved us—'t is
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
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 under-
stand ?

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 dis-
appears, they turn as by one im-
pulse 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 shall achieve the
feat !

What share have I in it ? Do I affect
To see no dismal sign above your head
When God suspends his ruinous thun-
der there ?

Strafford is doomed. Touch him no
one of you !

[Pym, Hampden, etc., go out.]

Straf. Pym, we shall meet again !

Lady CARLISLE enters.

You here, child ?

Lady Car.

I know it all : hush, Strafford !

Straf.

Ah ? you know ?

Well. I shall make a sorry soldier,
Lucy !

All knights begin their enterprise, we
read,

Under the best of auspices ; 't is morn,
The Lady girds his sword upon the
Youth

(He's always very young)—the trum-
pets sound,

Cups pledge him, and, why, the King
blesses him—

You need not turn a page of the ro-
mance

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
undermine

Your camp in Scotland, too. Whence
creeps the wind ?

Have you no eyes except for Pym ?
Look here !

A breed of silken creatures lurk and
thrive

In your contempt. You'll vanquish
Pym ? Old Vane

Can vanquish you. And Vane you
think to fly ?

Rush on the Scots ! Do nobly !
Vane's slight sneer

Shall test success, adjust the praise,
suggest

The faint result : Vane's sneer shall
reach you there.

—You do not listen !

Straf.

Oh,—I give that up !
There's fate in it : I give all here quite
up.

Care not what old Vane does or Holland
does

Against me ! 'T is 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, 't is not
 so long ago,
 —There ; and the whisper, Lucy, " Be
 my friend
 " Of friends ! "—My King ! I would
 have . . .
Lady Car. . . . Died for him ?
Straf. Sworn him true, Lucy : I can
 die for him.
Lady Car. But go not, Strafford !
 But you must renounce
 This project on the Scots ! Die,
 wherefore die ?
 Charles never loved you.
Straf. And he never will.
 He's not of those who care the more for
 men
 That they're unfortunate.
Lady Car. Then wherefore die
 For such a master ?
Straf. You that told me first
 How good he was—when I must leave
 true friends
 To find a truer friend !—that drew me
 here
 From Ireland,—“ I had but to show
 myself
 “ And Charles would spurn Vane,
 Savile and the rest ”—
 You, child, to ask me this ?
Lady Car. (If he have set
 His heart abidingly on Charles !)
 Then, friend,
 I shall not see you any more.
Straf. Yes, Lucy.
 There's one man here I have to meet.
Lady Car. (The King ?
 What way to save him from the King ?
 My soul—
 That lent from its own store the
 charmed disguise

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 't is to bear
 my friend,
 One image stamped within you, turn
 ing blank
 The else imperial brilliance of your
 mind,—
 A weakness, but most precious,—like a
 flaw
 I' the diamond, which should shape
 forth some sweet face
 Yet to create, and meanwhile treasured
 there
 Lest nature lose her gracious thought
 for ever !
Straf. When could it be ? No !
 Yet . . . was it the day
 We waited in the anteroom, till
 Holland
 Should leave the presence-chamber ?
Lady 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 !
 'T is past.
 I shall not serve him worse for that
 one brief
 And passionate hope, silent for ever
 now !)
 And you are really bound for Scotland
 then ?
 I wish you well : you must be very
 sure
 Of the King's faith, for Pym and all his
 crew
 Will not be idle—setting Vane aside !
Straf. If Pym is busy,—you may
 write of Pym.
Lady Car. What need, since there's
 your King to take your part ?
 He may endure Vane's counsel ; but
 for Pym—
 Think you he'll suffer Pym to . . .
Straf. Child, your hair
 Is glossier than the Queen's !
Lady Car. Is that to ask
 A curl of me ?
Straf. Scotland—the weary way !

Lady Car. Stay, let me fasten it.

—A rival's, Strafford?

Straf. [showing the George.] He hung it there: twine yours around it, child!

Lady Car. No—no—another time—I trifle so!

And there's a masque on foot. Farewell. The Court

Is dull; do something to enliven us In Scotland: we expect it at your hands.

Straf. I shall not fail in Scotland.

Lady Car. Prosper—if You'll think of me sometimes!

Straf. How think of him And not of you? of you, the lingering streak

(A golden one) in my good fortune's eve.

Lady Car. Strafford . . . Well, when the eve has its last streak The night has its first star.

[She goes out.]

Straf. That voice of hers— You'd think she had a heart sometimes! His voice

Is soft too. Only God can save him now.

Be Thou about his bed, about his path! His path! Where's England's path?

Diverging wide, And not to join again the track my foot Must follow—whither? All that forlorn way

Among the tombs! Far—far—till . . . What, they do

Then join again, these paths? For, huge in the dusk,

There's—Pym to face! Why then, I have a foe

To close with, and a fight to fight at last

Worthy my soul! What, do they beard the King,

And shall the King want Strafford at his need?

Am I not here? Not in the market-place,

Pressed on by the rough artisans, so proud

To catch a glance from Wentworth! They lie down

Hungry yet smile "Why, it must end some day:

"Is he not watching for our sake?" Not there!

But in Whitehall, the whited sepulchre,

The . . .

Curse nothing to-night! Only one name

They'll curse in all those streets to-night. Whose fault?

Did I make kings? set up, the first, a man

To represent the multitude, receive All love in right of them—supplant them so,

Until you love the man and not the king—

The man with the mild voice and mournful eyes

Which send me forth.

—To breast the bloody sea That sweeps before me: with one star for guide.

Night has its first, supreme, forsaken star.

ACT III

SCENE I.—*Opposite Westminster Hall.*

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

Sir. H. Vane. The Commons thrust you out?

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 detained me, sir!

Well now, before they thrust you out, —go on,—

Their Speaker—did the fellow Lenthal say

All we set down for him?

Hol. Not a word missed. Ere he began, we entered, Savile, I

And Bristol and some more, with hope to breed

A wholesome awe in the new Parliament.

But such a gang of graceless ruffians, Vane,

As glared at us!

Vane. So many? *Savile.* Not a bench Without its complement of burly knaves;

Your hopeful son among them : Hampden leant
Upon his shoulder—think of that !

Vane. I'd think
On 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. 'T is a strange thing now !
I've a vague memory of a sort of sound,
A voice, a kind of vast unnatural voice—
Pym, sir, was speaking ! Savile, help
me out :

What was it all ?

Sav. Something about " a
matter "—

No,— " work for England." "

Hol. " England's great revenge "
He talked of.

Sav. How should I get used to
Pym

More than yourselves ?

Hol. However that be,
'T was something with which we had
nought to do,
For we were " strangers " and 't was
" 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, [we.

Locked the doors after us, and here are
Vane. Eliot's old method . . .

Sav. Prithee, Vane, a truce
To Eliot and his times, and the great
Duke,

And how to manage Parliaments !
'T was you

Advised the Queen to summon this :
why, Strafford

(To do him justice) would not hear of it.
Vane. Say rather, you have done
the best of turns

To Strafford : he's at York, we all know
why.

I would you had not set the Scots on
Strafford

Till Strafford put down Pym for us, my
lord !

Sav. Was it I altered Strafford's
plans ? did I . . .

A Messenger enters.

Mes. The Queen, my lords—she
sends me : follow me

At once ; 't is 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 : under-
stand, I loathe

Strafford as much as any—but his use !
To keep off Pym, to screen a friend or
two,

I would we had reserved him yet awhile.

SCENE II.—Whitehall.

The QUEEN and Lady CARLISLE.

Queen. It cannot be.

Lady Car. It is so.

Queen. Why, the House
Have hardly met.

Lady Car. They met for that.

Queen. No, no !
Meet to impeach Lord Strafford ? 'T is
a jest.

Lady Car. A bitter one.

Queen. Consider ! 'T is the House
We summoned so reluctantly, which
nothing
But the disastrous issue of the war
Persuaded us to summon. They'll
wreak all

Their spite on us, no doubt ; but the
old way

Is to begin by talk of grievances :

They have their grievances to busy
them.

Lady Car. Pym has begun his speech.

Queen. Where's Vane ?—That is,

Pym will impeach Lord Strafford if he leaves

His Presidency; he's at York, we know, Since the Scots beat him: why should he leave York?

Lady Car. Because the King sent for him.

Queen. Ah—but if

The King did send for him, he let him know

We had been forced to call a Parliament—

A step which Strafford, now I come to think,

Was vehement against.

Lady Car. The policy Escaped him, of first striking Parliaments

To earth, then setting them upon their feet

And giving them a sword: but this is idle.

Did the King send for Strafford? He will come.

Queen. And what am I to do?

Lady Car. What do? Fail, madam!

Be ruined for his sake! what matters how,

So it but stand on record that you made

An effort, only one?

Queen. The King away At Theobald's!

Lady Car. Send for him at once: he must

Dissolve the House.

Queen. Wait till Vane finds the truth

Of the report: then . .

Lady Car. —It will matter little

What the King does. Strafford that lends his arm

And breaks his heart for you!

Sir H. Vane enters.

Vane. The Commons, madam, Are sitting with closed doors. A huge debate,

No lack of noise; but nothing, I should guess,

Concerning Strafford: Pym has certainly

Not spoken yet.

Queen. [To Lady CARLISLE]. You hear?

Lady Car. I do not hear

That the King's sent for!

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 Strafford?

Queen. Strafford?

Hol. If they content themselves with Strafford! Laud

Is talked of, Cottington and Windesbank 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 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 ?

Sav. When something like a charge
is made, the King

Will best know how to save him : and
't is clear,

While Strafford suffers nothing by the
matter,

The King may reap advantage : this
in question,

No dining you with ship-money com-
plaints !

Queen. [*To Lady CARLISLE.*] If we
dissolve them, who will pay the
army ?

Protect us from the insolent Scots ?

Lady Car. In truth,
I know not, madam. Strafford's fate
concerns

Me little : you desired to learn what
course

Would save him : I obey you.

Vane. Notice, too,
There can't be fairer ground for taking
full

Revenge—(Strafford's revengeful)—
than he'll have

Against his old friend Pym.

Queen. Why, he shall claim
Vengeance on 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 discom-
fiture

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 dis-
pense

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 !
Lady Car. 'T is 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 ?
Sav. An urgent matter ?

Straf. None that touch you,
Lord Savile ! Say, it were some
treacherous

Sly pitiful intriguing with the Scots—
You would go free, at least ! (They
ha'f divine

My purpose !) Madam, shall I see the
King ?

The service I would render, much con-
cerns

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 our-
selves

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 want-
ing 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

Connive at Pym's procedure! Could
they but

Have once apprised the King! But
there's no time

For falsehood, now.) Strafford, the
whole is known.

Straf. Known and approved.

Lady Car. Hardly discounten-
anced.

Straf. And the King—say, the King
consents as well?

Lady Car. The King's not yet in-
formed, 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 lowness?)

Straf. I knew
They would be glad of it,—all over
once,

I knew they would be glad: but he'd
contrive,

The Queen and he, to mar, by helping
it,

An angel's making.

Lady Car. (Is he mad?) Dear
Strafford,

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 wrecks together, raised all heaven
and earth,

And would have fought the Scots: the
King at once

Made truce with them. Then, Lucy,
then, dear child,

God put it in my mind to love, serve,
d'e

For Charles, but never to obey him
more!

While he endured their insolence at
R pon

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 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 coffers are but lean.

And you, child, too,
Shall have your task; deliver this to
Laud.

Laud will not be the slowest in my
praise:

"Thorough" he'll cry!—Foolish, to
be so glad!

This life is gay and glowing, after all:
'T is worth while, Lucy, having foes like
mine

Just for the bliss of crushing them.
To-day

Is worth the living for.

Lady C r. 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, 't is of slight im-
port [the soul

How long the ravaged frame subjects
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—'t is 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—over 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!

Al! have I spared
Strafford a pang, and shall I seek re-
ward

Beyond that memory? Surely too,
some way

He is the better for my love. No, no—
He would not look so joyous—I'll be-
lieve

His very eye would never sparkle thus,
Had I not prayed for him this long,
long while.

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

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

A Group of Presbyterians.—I. 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.—I. Mark these
worthies, now!

2. A goodly gathering! "Where
the carcass is

"There shall the eagles"—what's the
rest?

3. For eagles

Say crows.

A Presbyterian. Stand back, sirs!

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

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

One of Strafford's Followers. Truly?
Behold how privileged we be

That serve "King Pym!" There's
Some one at Whitehall

Who skulks obscure; but Pym
struts . . .

The Presbyterian.

A Follower of Strafford. Higher,
We look to see him. [To his Com-
panions.] 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, Max-
well, what great thing!

Speak out! [To a Presbyterian.]

Friend, I've a kindness for you!

Friend,
I've seen you with St. John: O stock-
ishness!

Wear such a ruff, and never call to
mind

St. John's head in a charger? How,
the plague,

Not laugh?

Another. Say, Maxwell, what great
thing!

Another. Nay, wait:

The jest will be to wait.

First. And who's to bear
These demure hypocrites? You'd
swear they came . . .

Came . . . just as we come!

[A Puritan enters hastily and with-
out 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 . . . Go!

Was it a word, only a word that held
The outrageous blood back on my heart
—which beats!

Which beats! Some one word—
"Traitor," did he say,

Bending that eye, brimful of bitter fire,
Upon me?

Max. In the Commons' name,
their servant
Demands Lord Strafford's sword.

Straf. What did you say?

Max. The Commons bid me ask your
lordship's sword.

Straf. Let us go forth: follow me,
gentlemen!

Draw your swords too: cut any down
that bar us.

On the King's service! Maxwell, clear
the way!

*[The PRESBYTERIANS prepare to
dispute his passage.]*

Straf. I stay: the King himself
shall see me here.

Your tablets, fellow!

[To MAINWARING.] Give that to the
King!

Yes, Maxwell, for the next half-hour,
let be!

Nay, you shall take my sword!

[MAXWELL advances to take it.]

Or, no—not that!

Their blood, perhaps, may wipe out all
thus far,

All up to that—not that! Why,
friend, you see,

When the King lays your head beneath
my foot

It will not pay for that. Go, all of you!

Max. I dare, my lord, to disobey:
none s'tir!

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 have not time to tell you
why.

You then, my Bryan! Mainwaring,
you then!

Is it because I spoke so hastily

At Allerton? The King had vexed me.

[To the Presbyterians.] You!

—Not even you? If I live over this,
The King is sure to have your heads,
you know!

But what if I can't live this minute
through?

Pym, who is there with his pursuing
smile!

[Louder cries of "STRAFFORD."]

The King! 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 pre-
pared
A Parliament—I see! And at White-
hall!

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
STRAFFORD 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 op-
pose them now.

It seems their will the trial should pro-
ceed,—

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
Privilege,

(Floods come, winds beat, and see—
the treacherous sand!)

Doubtless, if the mere putting forth
an arm

Could save him, you'd save Strafford.

Cha. And they mean

Consummate calmly this great 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
himself—

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
toops.

To force this kingdom to obedience:
Vane—

Your servant, not our friend, has proved
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
contrived

Or no, that all the violence should seem
His work, the gentle ways—your own,
—his part,

To counteract the King's kind im-
pulses—

While . . . but you know what he
could say! And then

He might produce,—mark, sir!—a
certain charge

To set the King's express command
aside,

If need were, and be blameless. He
might add . . .

Cha. Enough!

Hol. —Who bade him break the
Parliament,

Find some pretext for setting up sword-
law!

Queen. Retire!

Cha. Once more, whatever Vane
dared to,

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—'t is
mine,
The scheme is mine, remember! Say,
I cursed
Vane's folly in your hearing! If the
Earl [lie
Does rise to do us shame, the fault shall
With you, Carlisle!
Lady Car. Nay, fear not me!
but still
That's a bright moment, sir, you
throw away.
Tear down the veil and save him!
Queen. Go, Carlisle!
Lady Car. (I shall see Strafford—
speak to him: my heart
Must never beat so, then! And if I
tell
The truth? What's gained by false-
hood? 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 CAR-
LISLE.] 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 some-
thing premature?
Strafford defends himself to-day—re-
serves
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 precede you!
Lady Car. At your pleasure.
Cha. Say—
Say, Vane is hardly ever at Whitehall!
I shall be there, remember!
Lady Car. Doubt me not.
Cha. On our return, Carlisle, we wait
you here!

B.P.

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—
'T is 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 West-
minster Hall.*
Many groups of Spectators of the Trial.
Officers of the Court, etc.
1st Spec. More crowd than ever!
Not know Hampden, man?
That's he, by Pym, Pym that is speak-
ing now.
No, truly, if you look so high you'll see
Little enough of either!
2nd Spec. Stay: Pym's arm
Points like a prophet's rod.
3rd Spec. Ay, ay, we've heard
Some pretty speaking: yet the Earl
escapes.
4th Spec. I fear it: just a foolish
word or two
About his children—and we see, for-
sooth,
Not England's foe in Strafford, but the
man
Who, sick, half-blind . . .
2nd Spec. What's that Pym's
saying now
Which makes the curtains flutter?
look! A hand
Clutches them. Ah! The King's
hand!
5th Spec. I had thought
Pym was not near so tall. What said
he, friend?
2nd Spec. "Nor is this way a novel
way of blood,"
And the Earl turns as if to . . . look!
look!
Many Spectators. There!
What ails him? no—he rallies, see—
goes on
And Strafford smiles. Strange!
An Officer. Haselrig!
Many Spectators. Friend? Friend?

The Officer. Lost, utterly lost: just when we looked for Pym
To make a stand against the ill effects
Of the Earl's speech! Is Haselrig
without?

Pym's message is to him.

3rd Spec. Now, said I true?
Will the Earl leave them yet at fault
or no?

1st Spec. Never believe it, man!
These notes of Vane's
Ruin the Earl.

5th Spec. A brave end: not a whit
Less firm, less Pym all over. Then,
the trial
Is closed. No—Strafford means to
speak again?

An Officer. Stand back, there!

5th Spec. Why, the Earl is coming
hither!

Before the court breaks up! His
brother, look,—

You'd say he'd deprecated some fierce
act

In Strafford's mind just now.

An Officer. Stand back, I say!

2nd Spec. Who's the veiled woman
that he talks with?

Many Spectators. Hush—

The Earl! the Earl!

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

Hol. So near the end! Be
patient—

Return!

Straf. [*To his Secretaries.*] Here—
anywhere—or, 't is freshest here!

To spend one's April here, the blossom-
month:

Set it down here!

[*They arrange a table, papers, etc.*

So, Pym can quail, can cower
Because I glance at him, yet more's
to do?

What's to be answered, Slingsby?
Let us end!

[*To Lady CARLISLE.*] Child, I refuse
his offer; whatsoe'er

It be! Too late! Tell me no word of
him!

'Tis something, Hollis, I assure you
that—

To stand, sick as you are, some eighteen
days

Fighting for life and fame against a
pack

Of very curs, that lie through thick and
thin,

Eat flesh and bread by wholesale, and
can't say

"Stratford" if it would take my life!
Lady Car. Be moved!

Glance at the paper!

Straf. Already at my heels!
Pym's faulting bloodhounds scent the
track again.

Peace, child! Now, Slingsby!

[*Messengers from LANE, and other
of STRAFFORD'S Counsel within
the Hall are coming and going
during the Scene.*

Straf. [*setting himself to write and
dictate.*] I shall beat you, Hollis!

Do you know that? In spite of St.
John's tricks,

In spite of Pym—your Pym who shrank
from me!

Eliot would have contrived it other-
wise.

[*To a Messenger.*] In truth? This slip,
tell Lane, contains as much

As I can call to mind about the matter.
Eliot would have disdained . . .

[*Calling after the Messenger.*] And
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 pro-
posed

To call that traitor to account! Such
tricks,

Trust me, shall not be played a second
time,

Not even against Laud, with his grey
hair—

Your good work, Hollis! Peace! To
make amends,

You, Lucy, shall be here when I im-
peach

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,—

[*try*]
I grapple with their law! I'm here to
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! Fol-
low 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 indis-
tinct,

Obscure—there's nothing to forgive in
it

'Tis so forgotten! From this day be-
gins

A new life, founded on a new belief
In Charles.

Hol. In Charles? Rather, believe
in Pym!

And here he comes in proof! Appeal
to Pym!

Say how unfair . . .

Straf. To Pym? I would
say nothing!

I would not look upon Pym's face again.

Lady Car. Stay, let me have to think
I pressed your hand!

[*STRAFFORD and his friends go out.*]

Enter HAMPDEN and VANE.

Vane. O Hampden, save the great
misguided man!

Plead Strafford's cause with Pym! I
have remarked

He moved no muscle when we all de-
claimed

Against him: you had but to breathe
—he turned

Those kind calm eyes upon you.

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

Rud.

Horrible!

Till now all hearts were with you: I
withdraw

For one. Too horrible! But we
mistake

Your purpose, Pym: you cannot snatch
away

The last spar from the drowning man.

Fien.

He talks

With St. John of it—see, how quietly!

[*To other PRESBYTERIANS.*] You'll
join us? Strafford may deserve
the worst:

But this new course is monstrous.
Vane, take heart!

This Bill of his Attainder shall not
have

One true man's hand to it.

Vane.

Consider, Pym!

Confront your Bill, your own Bill:
what is it?

You cannot catch the Earl on any
charge,—

No man will say the law has hold of
him

On any charge; and therefore you
resolve

To take the general sense on his desert,
As though no law existed, and we met
To found one. You refer to Parlia-
ment

To speak its thought upon the abortive
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.

Vane. Pity me!
Indeed you make me think I was your
friend!

I who have murdered Strafford, how
remove

That memory from me?

Pym. I absolve you, *Vane*.
Take you no care for aught that you
have done!

Vane. John Hampden, not this Bill!
Reject this Bill!

He staggers through the ordeal: let
him go, [for us!

Strew no fresh fire before him! Plead
When Strafford spoke, your eyes were
thick with tears!

Hamp. England speaks louder: who
are we, to play

The generous pardoner at her expense,
Magnanimously waive advantages,

And, if he conquer us, applaud his skill?
Vane. He was your friend.

Pym. I have heard that before.
Fien. And England trusts you.

Hamp. Shame be his, who turns
The opportunity of serving her
She trusts him with, to his own mean
account—

Who would look nobly frank at her
expense!

Fien. I never thought it could have
come to this.

Pym. But I have made myself
familiar, *Fiennes*,

With this one thought—have walked,
and sat, and slept,

This thought before me. I have done
such things,

Being the chosen man that should
destroy

The traitor. You have taken up this
thought

To play with, for a gentle stimulant,
To give a dignity to idler life

By the dim prospect of emprise to come,
But ever with the softening, sure belief,

That all would end some strange way
right at last.

Fien. Had we made out some
weightier charge!

Pym. You say
That these are petty charges: can we
come

To the real charge at all? There he is
safe

In tyranny's stronghold. Apostasy
Is not a crime, treachery not a crime:

The cheek burns, the blood tingles,
when you speak

The words, but where's the power to
take revenge

Upon them? We must make occasion
serve,—

The oversight shall pay for the main sin
That mocks us.

Rud. But this unexampled course,
This Bill! [away

Pym. By this, we roll the clouds
Of precedent and custom, and at once

Bid the great beacon-light God sets in
all,

The conscience of each bosom, shine
upon

The guilt of Strafford: each man lay
his hand

Upon his breast, and judge!
Vane. I only see

Strafford, nor pass his corpse for all
beyond!

Rud. and others. Forgive him! He
would join us, now he finds

What the King counts reward! The
pardon, too,

Should be your own. Yourself should
bear to Strafford

The pardon of the Commons.
Pym. Meet him? Strafford?

Have we to meet once more, then?
Be it so!

And yet—the prophecy seemed half
fulfilled

When, at the Trial, as he gazed, my
youth,

Our friendship, divers thoughts came
back at once
And left me, for a time . . . 'Tis very
sad !

To-morrow we discuss the points of law
With Lane—to-morrow ?

Vane. Not before to-morrow—
So, time enough ! I knew you would
relent !

Pym. The next day, Haselrig, you
introduce
The Bill of his Attainder. Pray for me !

SCENE III.—*Whitehall.*

The KING.

Cha. My loyal servant ! To defend
himself
Thus irresistibly,—withholding aught
That seemed to implicate us !

We have done
Less gallantly by Strafford. Well, 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. 'T was 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 mis-
sion is to save,
This time.

Cha. To break thus on me !
Unannounced !

Pym. It is of Strafford I would speak.

Cha. No more
Of Strafford ! I have heard too much
from you.

Pym. I spoke, sir, for the People ;
will you hear

A word upon my own account ?

Cha. Of Strafford ?
(So turns the tide already ? Have we
tamed

The insolent brawler ?—Strafford's
eloquence

Is swift in its effect.) Lord Strafford,
sir,

Has spoken for himself.

Pym. Sufficiently.
I would apprise you of the novel course

The People take : the Trial fails.

Cha. Yes, yes :
We are aware, sir : for your part in it
Means shall be found to thank you.

Pym. Pray you, read
This schedule ! I would learn from
your own mouth

—(It is a matter much concerning me)—
Whether, if two Estates of us concede
The death of Strafford, on the grounds
set forth

Within that parchment, you, sir, can
resolve

To grant your own consent to it. 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

Wed 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, 't is 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 England well,

And her King well ?

Cha. I thank you, sir, who leave That King his servant. Thanks, sir !

Pym. Let me speak !
—Who may not speak again ; whose spirit yearns

For a cool night after this weary day :
—Who would not have my soul turn sicker yet

In a new task, more fatal, more august, More full of England's utter weal or woe.

I thought, sir, could I find myself with you,

After this trial, alone, as man to man— I might say something, warn you, pray

you, save—
Mark me, King Charles, save—you !

But God must do it. Yet I warn you, sir—

(With Strafford's faded eyes yet full on me)

As you would have no deeper question moved

—"How long the Many must endure the One,"

Assure me, sir, if England give assent To Strafford's death, you will not interfere !

Or—

Cha. God forsakes me. I am in a net [say !

And cannot move. Let all be as you

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 ;

'T is only I am left. Heaven will make strong

The hand now as the heart. Then let both die !

ACT V

SCENE I.—*Whitehall.*

HOLLIE, 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 rescue Strafford

And outwit Pym ! I cannot tell you . . . lady,

The block pursues me, and the hideous show.

To-day . . . is it to-day ? And all the while

He's sure of the King's pardon. Think, I have

To tell this man he is to die. The King
May rend his hair, for me! I'll not
see Strafford!

Lady Car. Only, if I succeed, 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 with-
drew

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 re-
ward 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
't is vain!

Lady Car. Love? no—too late now!
Let him love the King!

'T is 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—Eng-
land 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 !

'T is not worth while : who heeds a
foolish song ?

Wil. Why, not the King.

Straf. Well : it has been the fate
Of better ; and yet,—wherefore not
feel sure

That time, who in the twilight comes to
mend

All the fantastic day's caprice, consign
To the low ground once more the
ignoble Term,

And raise the Genius on his orb again,—
That time will do me right ?

Anne. (Shall we sing, William ?
He does not look thus when we sing.)

Straf. For Ireland,
Something is done : too little, but
enough

To show what might have been.

Wil. (I have no heart
To sing now ! Anne, how very sad he
looks !

Oh, I so hate the King for all he says !)

Straf. Forsook them ! What, the
common songs will run

That I forsook the People ? Nothing
more ?

Ay, fame, the busy scribe, will pause,
no doubt,

Turning a deaf ear to her thousand
slaves

Noisy to be enrolled,—will register
The curious glosses, subtle notices,
Ingenious clearings-up one fain would
see

Beside that plain inscription of The
Name—

The Patriot Pym, or the Apostate
Strafford !

[*The Children resume their song
timidly, but break off.*

Enter HOLLIS and an Attendant.

Straf. No,—Hollis ? in good time !
—Who is he ?

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 [now—

My newsman. Or, a better project
What if—when all's consummated, and
the Saints

Reign, and the Senate's work goes
swimmingly,—

What if I venture up, some day, un-
seen,

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!
Hol. A mask at Theobald's?
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 bear
 His message, Strafford: pray you, let me speak!
Straf. Go, William! Anne, try o'er your song again!
[The Children retire.]
 They shall be loyal, friend, at all events.
 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! *[once]* Give at
 His order of release! I've heard, as well
 Of certain poor manœuvres 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. Why, he'd not have me steal away?
 With an old doublet and a steeple hat
 Like Prynne's? Be smuggled into France, perhaps?
 Hollis, 'tis for my children! 'Twas for them
 I first consented to stand 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: Strafford, you must die!
Straf. Sir, if your errand is to set me free
 This heartless jest mars much. Ha!
 Tears in truth?
 We'll end this! See this paper, warm—
 —feel—warm
 With lying next my heart! Whose hand is there?
 Whose promise? Read, and lend for God to hear!
 "Strafford shall take no hurt"—read it, I say!

"In person, honour, nor estate!"
Hol. The King . . .

Straf. I could unking him by a breath! You sit

Where London sat, who came to prophesy

The certain end, and offer me Pym's grace

If I'd renounce the King: and I stood firm

On the King's faith. The King who lives . . .

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, Strafford, at your foot!

It was wrong 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 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 affairs,

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 blood,

Beside!

Bal. Your Majesty may hear them now:

The walls can hardly keep their murmurs out:

Please you retire!

Cha. Take all the troops, Balfour!

Bal. There are some hundred thousand of the crowd.

Cha. Come with me, Strafford! You'll not fear, at least!

Straf. Balfour, say nothing to the world of this!

I charge you, as a dying man, forget You gazed upon this agony of one . . .

Of one . . . or if . . . why you may say, Balfour,

The King was sorry: 't is 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 to 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,
halfour,

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.

Follow me, Strafford, and be saved!
The King?

[*To the KING.*] Well—as you ordered,
they are ranged without,

The convoy . . . [*seeing the KING's state.*]

[*To STRAFFORD.*] You know all, then!

Why, I thought
It looked best that the King should
save you, Charles

Alone; 'tis a shame that you should
owe me aught.

Or no, not shame! Strafford you'll
not feel shame

At being saved by me?

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! [*voice!*]

See how she trembles, waiting for your
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 Van! I could escape, then?

Lady Car. Haste!

Advance the torches, Bryan!

Straf. I will die.

They call me proud: but England I 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 a'l about

This place, with his most uncomplain-
ing 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 draw not back from the last service.

Lady Car. Strafford!

Straf. And, after all, what is
disgrace to me?

Let us come, child! That it should
end this way

Lead then! but I feel strangely: it was
not

To end this way.

Lady Car. Lean—lean on me!

Straf. My King!

Oh, had he trusted me—his friend of
friends!

Lady Car. I can support him, Hollis!

Straf. Not this way!

This gate—I dreamed of it, this very
gate.

Lady Car. It opens on the river: our
good boat

Is moored below, our friends are there.

Straf. The same:

Only with something ominous and
dark,

Fatal, inevitable.

Lady Car. Strafford! Strafford!

Straf. Not by this gate ! I feel what will be there !
I dreamed of it, I tell you : touch it not !

Lady Car. To save the King,—
Strafford, to save the King !

[*As STRAFFORD opens the door, Pym is discovered with HAMPDEN, VANE, etc. STRAFFORD falls back : Pym follows slowly and confronts him.*]

Pym. Have I done well ? Speak, England ! Whose sole sake I still have laboured for, with disregard To my own heart,—for whom my youth was made
Barren, my manhood waste, to offer up Her sacrifice—this friend, this Wentworth here—
Who walked in youth with me, loved me, it may be,
And whom, for his forsaking England's cause,
I hunted by all means (trusting that she Would sanctify all means) even to the block
Which waits for him. And saying this, I feel
No bitterer pang than first I felt, the hour
I swore that Wentworth might leave us, but I
Would never leave him : I do leave him now.
I render up my charge (be witness, God !)
To England who imposed it. I have done
Her bidding—poorly, wrongly,—it may be,
With ill effects—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 't is 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 Laud

May dream his dream out, of a perfect Church,

In some blind corner. And there's no one left.

I trust the King now wholly to you, Pym !

And yet, I know not : I shall not be there :

Friends fail—if he have any. And he's weak,

And loves the Queen, and . . . Oh, my fate is nothing—

Nothing ! But not that awful head—not that !

Pym. If England shall declare such will to me . . .

Straf. Pym, you help England ! I, that am to die,

What I must see ! 't is 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, be-
come through you
A green and putrefying charnel, left
Our children . . . some of us have
children, Pym—
Some who, without that, still must ever
wear
A darkened brow, an over-serious look,
And never properly be young! No
word?
What if I curse you? Send a strong
curse forth
Clothed from my heart, lapped round
with horror till
She's fit with her white face to walk the
world
Scaring kind natures from your cause
and you—
Then to sit down with you at the
board-head,
The gathering for prayer . . O speak,
but speak!
. . Creep up and quietly follow each
one home,

You, you, you, be a nestling care for
each
To sleep with,—hardly moaning in his
dreams,
She gnaws so quietly,—till, lo he starts,
Gets off with half a heart eaten away!
Oh shall you 'scape with less if she's
my child? [Him?
You will not say a word—to me—to
Pym. If England shall declare such
will to me . . .
Straf. No, not for England now, not
for Heaven now,—
See, Pym, for my sake, mine who kneel
to you!
There, I will thank you for the death,
my friend!
This is the meeting: let me love you
well!
Pym. England,—I am thine own!
Dost thou exact
That service? I obey thee to the end.
Straf. O God, I shall die first—I
shall die first!

SORDELLO

1840

TO J. MILSAND, OF DIJON

Dear Friend,—Let the next poem be introduced by your name, therefore remembered
along with one of the deepest of my affections, and so repay all trouble it ever cost me.
I wrote it twenty-five years ago for only a few, counting even in these on somewhat
more care about its subject than they really had. My own faults of expression were
many; but with care for a man or book such would be surmounted, and without it
what avails the faultlessness of either? I blame nobody, least of all myself, who
did my best then and since; for I lately gave time and pains to turn my work into
what the many might,—instead of what the few must,—like: but after all, I imagined
another thing at first, and therefore leave as I find it. The historical decoration was
purposely of no more importance than a background requires; and my stress lay on
the incidents in the development of a soul: little else is worth study. I, at least,
always thought so—you, with many known and unknown to me, think so—others
may one day think so; and whether my attempt remain for them or not, I trust,
though away and past it, to continue ever yours,
London, June 9, 1863. R. B.

BOOK THE FIRST

Who will, may hear Sordello's story
told:
His story? Who believes me shall
behold
The man, pursue his fortunes to the
end,

Like me: for as the friendless-people's
friend
Spied from his hill-top once, despite the
din
And dust of multitudes, Pentapoli
Named o' the Naked Arm, I sing out
Sordello, compassed murkily 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 mo-
ment 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 ves-
ture'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; 't is 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

Appears

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 scul 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 grid-
ing 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. 'T is 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 carel 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
Stool, 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
Taurella 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
" Miith for the devil when he under-
takes
" 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 prefer-
ment fall
" On our beloved " . . .
" Duke o' the Rood, why not ? "
Shouted an Estian, " grudge ye such a
lot ?
" The hill-cat boasts some cunning of
her own,
" Some stealthy trick to better beasts
unknown,
" That quick with prey enough her
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 fly but forced the earth his couch
to make
" Far inland, till his friend the tempest
wake,
" Waits he the Kaiser's coming ; and as
yet
" That fast friend sleeps, and he too
sleeps : but let
" Only the billow freshen, and he snuffs
" The aroused hurricane ere it enroughs
" The sea it means to cross because of
him.
" Sinketh the breeze ? His hope-sick
eye grows dim ;
" Creep closer on the creature ! Every
day
" Strengthens the Pontiff ; Ecelin,
they say,
" Dozes now at Oliero, with dry lips
" Telling upon his perished finger-tips
" How many ancestors are to depos :

" 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 Bocchimpane 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 in-
 tent,'
 " 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 be-
 fore,
 " 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 be-
 neath
 " I' 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 Taur-
 ello calls
 " A parley: 'let the Count wind up
 the war!'
 " Richard, light-hearted as a plunging
 star,
 " Agrees to enter for the kindest ends
 " Ferrara, flanked with fifty chosen
 friends,
 " No horse-boy more, for fear your
 timid sort
 " Should fly Ferrara at the bare report.
 " Quietly through the town they rode,
 jog-jog;
 " 'Ten, twenty, thirty,—curse the
 catalogue
 " 'Of burnt Guelf houses! Strange,
 Taurello shows
 " 'Not the least sign of life'—whereat
 arose
 " A general growl: 'How? With his
 victors by?
 " 'I and my Veronese? My troops
 and I?
 " 'Receive us, was your word?' So
 jogged they on,
 " Nor laughed their host too openly:
 once gone
 " Into the trap!—"

Six hundred years ago!
 Such the time's aspect and peculiar woe
 (Yourselves may spell it yet in chroni-
 cles,
 Albeit the worm, our busy brother,
 drills
 His sprawling path through letters
 anciently
 Made fine and large to suit some
 abbot's eye)
 When the new Hohenstauffen dropped
 the mask,
 Flung John of Brienne's favour from
 his casque,
 Forswore crusading, had no mind to
 leave
 Saint Peter's proxy leisure to retrieve
 Losses to Otho and to Barbaross,
 Or make the Alps less easy to recross;
 And, thus confirming Pope Honorius'
 fear,
 Was excommunicate that very year.
 " The triple-bearded Teuton come to
 life!"
 Groaned the Great League; and, arm-
 ing for the strife,
 Wide Lombardy, on tiptoe to begin,
 Took up, as it was Guelf or Ghibellin,

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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 dif-
fused

For that ! Sunlight, 'neath which, a
scum at first,

The million fibres of our chokeweed
nurst

Dispread themselves, mantling the
troubled main,

And, shattered by those rocks, took
hold again,

So kindly blazed it—that same blaze
to brood

O'er every cluster of the multitude
Still hazarding new clasps, ties, fila-
ments,

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 be-
gun

" 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 Suabian's
fief !

No laughter when his son, " the Lom-
bard Chief " [bent

Forsooth, as Barbarossa's path was
To Italy along the Vale of Trent,

Welcomed him at Roncaglia ! Sad-
ness 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 besseems

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 vaunt

Of Otho, " my own Este shall supplant
" Your Este, " come to pass. The sire
led in

A son as cruel ; and this Ecelin
Had sons, in turn, and daughters sly
and tall

And curling and compliant ; but for all
Romano (so they styled him) throve,
that neck

Of his so pinched and white, that hungry cheek

Proved 't was some fiend, not him, the man's-flesh went

To feed: whereas Romano's instrument,

Famous Taurello Salinguerra, sole I' the world, a tree whose boughs were slipt the bole

Successively, why should not he shed blood

To further a design? Men understood Living was pleasant to him as he wore His careless surcoat, glanced some mis-sive o'er,

Propped on his truncheon in the public way,

While his lord lifted writhen hands to pray,

Lost at Oliero's convent.

Our Azzo, our Guelf-Lion! ^{Hill-cats, face} Why disgrace

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 brotherhood,

Striving to coax from his decrepit brains

The reason Father Porphyry took pains To blot those ten lines out which used to stand

First on their charter drawn by Hildebrand.

The same night wears. Verona's rule of yore

Was vested in a certain Twenty-four; And while within his palace these debate

Concerning Richard and Ferrara's fate, Glide we by clapping doors, with sudden glare

Of cressets vented on the dark, nor care

For aught that 's seen or heard until we shut

The smother in, the lights, all noises but The carroch's booming: safe at last! Why strange

Such a recess should lurk behind a range

Of banquet-rooms? Your finger—thus—you push

A spring, and the wall opens, would you rush

Upon the banqueters, select your prey, Waiting (the slaughter-weapons in the way

Strewing this very bench) with sharpened ear

A preconcerted signal to appear; Or if you simply crouch with beating heart,

Bearing in some voluptuous pageant To startle them. Nor mutes nor masquers now;

Nor any . . . does that one man sleep whose brow

The dying lamp-flame sinks and rises o'er?

What woman stood beside him? not the more

Is he unfastened from the earnest eyes Because that arras fell between! Her wise

And lulling words are yet about the room,

Her presence wholly poured upon the gloom

Down even to her vesture's creeping stir.

And so reclines he, saturate with her, Until an outcry from the square beneath

Pierces the charm: he springs up, glad to breathe,

Above the cunning element, and shakes The stupor off as (look you) morning breaks

On the gay dress, and, near concealed by it,

The lean frame like a half-burnt taper, lit

Erst at some marriage-feast, then laid away

Till the Armenian bridegroom's dying day,

In his wool wedding-robe.

For he—for he, Gate-vein of this hearts' blood of Lombardy,

(If I sh
Sordel
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(If I should falter now)—for he is thine!
 Sordello, thy forerunner, Florentine!
 A herald-star I know thou didst absorb
 Relentless into the consummate orb
 That scared it from its right to roll
 along
 A sempiternal path with dance and song
 Fulfilling its allotted period,
 Serenest of the progeny of God—
 Who yet resigns it not! His darling
 stoops
 With no quenched lights, desponds with
 no blank troops
 Of disenfranchised brilliances, for, blent
 Utterly with thee, its shy element
 Like thine upburneth prosperous and
 clear,
 Still, what if I approach the august
 sphere
 Named now with only one name, dis-
 entwine
 That under-current soft and argentine
 From its fierce mate in the majestic
 mass
 Leavened as the sea whose fire was mixt
 with glass
 In John's transcendent vision,—launch
 O. ce more
 That lustre? Dante, pacer of the
 shore
 Where glutt'd 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
 't is morass
 In winter up to Mantua walls. There
 was,
 Some thirty years before this evening's
 coil,
 One spot reclaimed from the surround-
 ing spoil,
 Goito; just a castle built amid

A few low mountains; firs and larches
 hid
 Their main defiles, and rings of vine-
 yard 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 pil-
 lars 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, now. A vault,
 see; thick
 Black shade about the ceiling, though
 fine slits
 Across the buttress suffer light by fits
 Upon a marvel in the midst. Nay,
 stoop—
 A dullish grey-streaked cumbrous font,
 a group
 Round it,—each side of it, where'er one
 sees,—
 Upholds it; shrinking Caryatides
 Of just-tinged marble like Eve's liliated
 flesh
 Beneath her maker's finger when the
 fresh
 First pulse of life shot brightening the
 snow.

The font's edge burthens every shoulder, so
 They muse upon the ground, eyelids half closed;
 Some, with meek arms behind their backs disposed,
 Some, crossed above their bosoms, some, to veil
 Their eyes, some, propping chin and cheek so pale,
 Some, hanging slack an utter helpless length
 Dead as a buried vestal whose whole strength
 Goes when the grate above shuts heavily. [see,
 So dwell these noiseless girls, patient to
 Like priestesses because of sin impure
 Penanced for ever, who resigned endure,
 Having that once drunk sweetness to the dregs.
 And every eve, Sordello's visit begs
 Pardon for them: constant as eve he came
 To sit beside each in her turn, the same
 As one of them, a certain space: and awe
 Made a great indistinctness till he saw
 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? 'T is the tale I mean
 To tell you.
 In this castle may be seen,
 On the hill tops, or underneath the vines,
 Or eastward by the mound of firs and pines
 That shuts out Mantua, still in loneliness,

A slender boy in a loose page's dress,
 Sordello: do but look on him awhile
 Watching ('t is autumn) with an earnest smile
 The noisy flock of thievish birds at work
 Among the yellowing vineyards; see him lurk
 ('T is winter with its sullenest of storms)
 Beside that arras-length of broidered forms,
 On tiptoe, lifting in both hands a light
 Which makes yon warrior's visage flutter bright
 —Eccelo, dismal father of the brood,
 And Ecclin, 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! Yourself 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 [frames
 Of men, and framed for pleasure, as she
 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 in-
 vest
 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 em-
 ploy
 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— [rod;
 And the scaled eyeball owns the mystic
 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 eternal
 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 sub-
 mit
 Nor ask, as passionate he kneels to it,
 Whence grew the idol's empery. So
 runs
 A legend; light had birth ere moons
 and suns,
 Flowing through space a river and
 alone,
 Till chaos burst and blank the spheres
 were strown
 Hither and thither, foundering and
 blind:
 When into each of them rushed light—
 to find
 Itself no place, foiled of its radiant
 chance.
 Let such forego their just inheritance!
 For there 's a class that eagerly looks,
 too,
 On beauty, but, unlike the gentler crew,
 Proclaims each new revelation born a
 twin
 With a distinctest consciousness with-
 in
 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 exer-
 cise
 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 with-
 held,
 "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 com-
 bination stamp
 "With individuality—uncrampt
 "By living its faint elemental life,
 "Dost soar to heaven's complex es-
 sence, rife
 "With grandsieurs, 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
" Emprize—the world's occasion
worthless since

" Not absolutely fitted to evince
" Its mastery ! " Or if yet worse be-
fall,

And a desire possess it to put all
That nature forth, forcing our strait-
ened sphere

Contain it,—to display completely here
The mastery another life should learn,
Thrusting in time eternity's concern,—
So that Sordello . . .

Fool, who spied the mark
Of leprosy upon him, violet-dark
Already as he loiters ? Born just now,
With the new century, beside the glow
And efflorescence out of barbarism ;
Witness a Greek or two from the abysm
That stray through Florence-town with
studious air,

Calming the chisel of that Pisan pair :
If Nicolo should carve a Christus yet !
While at Siena is Guidone set,
Forehead on hand ; a painful birth
must be

Matured ere Saint Eufemia's sacristy
Or transept gather fruits of one great
gaze

At the moon : look you ! The same
orange haze,—

The same blue stripe round that—and,
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 pitious, you may see, but much be-
tween

Pleasant enough. Meantime, some pyx
to screen

The full-grown pest, some lid to shut
upon

The goblin ! So they found at Baby-
lon,

(Colleagues, mad Lucius and sage An-
tonine)

Sacking the city, by Apollo's shrine,
In rummaging among the rarities,
A certain coffer ; he who made the
prize

Opened it greedily ; and out there
curled

Just such another plague, for half the
world

Was stung. Crawl in then, hag, and
couch asquat,

Keeping that blotchy bosom thick in
spot

Until your time is ripe ! The coffer-lid
Is fastened, and the coffer safely hid
Under the Loxian's choicest gifts of
gold.

Who will may hear Sordello's story
told,

And how he never could remember
when

He dwelt not at Goito. Calmly, then,
About this secret lodge of Adelaide's
Glided his youth away ; beyond the
glades

On the fir-forest border, and the rim
Of the low range of mountain, was for
him

No other world : but this appeared his
own

To wander through at pleasure and
alone.

The castle too seemed empty ; far and
wide

Might he disport ; only the northern
side

Lay under a mysterious interdict—

Slight, just enough remembered to re-
strict

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 engrossed
 Sordello in his drowsy Paradise ;
 The day's adventures for the day suffice—
 Its constant tribute of perceptions strange,
 With sleep and stir in healthy interchange,
 Suffice, and leave him for the next at ease
 Like the great palmer-worm that strips the trees,
 Eats the life out of every luscious plant,
 And, when September finds them sere or scant,
 Puts forth two wondrous winglets, alters quite,
 And hies him after unforeseen delight.
 So fed Sordello, not a shard 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 fling
 In gay profusion forth : a ficklest king,
 Confessed those minions !—eager to dispense
 So much from his own stock of thought and sense
 As might enable each to stand alone
 And serve him for a fellow ; with his own,
 Joining the qualities that just before
 Had graced some older favourite.
 Thus they wore
 A fluctuating halo, yesterday
 Set flicker and to-morrow fished 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 hoarfrost,
 Gave to familiar things a face grotesque ;
 Only, preserving through the mad burlesque
 A grave regard. Conceive ! the orpine patch
 Blossoming earliest on the log-house-thatch
 The day those archers wound along the vines—
 Related to the Chief that left their lines
 To climb with clinking step the northern stair
 Up to the solitary chambers where
 Sordello never came. Thus thrall reached thrall ;
 He o'er-festooning every interval,
 As the adventurous spider, making light
 Of distance, shoots her threads from depth to height,
 From barbican to battlement : so flung
 Fantasies forth and in their centre swung
 Our architect,—the breezy morning fresh [mesh
 Above, and merry,—all his waving
 Laughing with lucid dew-drops rain-bow-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 balked 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

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That makes for you, friend Naddo !
 Eat fern-seed
 And peer beside us and report indeed
 If (your word) "genius" dawned with
 throes and stings
 And the whole fiery catalogue, while
 springs
 Summers and winters quietly came and
 went.
 Time put at length that period to
 content,
 By right the world should have im-
 posed : hereft
 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 nature with his
 own :
 Amid his wild-wood sights he lived
 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 rat-
 tling crane
 Lay bare. That's gone : yet why re-
 nounce, 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 : re-
 call
 The poppy's gifts, it flaunts you, after
 all,
 A poppy :—why distrust the evidence
 Of each soon satisfied and healthy
 sense ?
 The new-born judgment answered,
 "little boots
 "Beholding other creatures' attributes
 "And having none !" or, say that it
 sufficed,
 "Yet, could one but possess, oneself,"
 (enticed
 Judgment) "some special office !"
 Nought beside
 Serves you ? "Well then, be some-
 how 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 lurk-
 ing doubt,
 "Mere sympathy sufficient, trouble
 spared ?
 "That, 'asting 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 en-
 dure
 A crowd to see its face, that cannot
 know
 How hot the pulses throb its heart be-
 low.
 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 (bent double o'er a scroll,
 One maiden at her knees, that eve, his
 soul
 Shook as he stumbled through the
 arras'd glooms
 On them, for, 'mid quaint robes and
 weird perfumes,
 Started the meagre Tuscan up,—her
 eyes
 The maiden's, also, bluer with surprise)
 —But the entire out-world : whatever,
 scraps
 And snatches, song and story, dreams
 perhaps,

Conceited the world's offices, and he
 Had hitherto transferred to flower or
 tree,
 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 suzerain,
 Ere he could choose, surrounded him;
 a stuff
 To work his pleasure on; there, sure
 enough:
 But as for gazing, what shall fix that
 gaze?
 Are they to simply testify the ways
 He who convoked them sends his soul
 along
 With the cloud's thunder or a dove's
 brood-song?
 —While they live each his life, boast
 each his own
 Peculiar dower of bliss, stand each
 alone
 In some one point where something
 dearest loved
 Is easiest gained—far worthier to be
 proved
 Than aught he envies in the forest-
 wights!
 No simple and self-evident delights,
 But mixed desires of unimagined range,
 Contrasts or combinations, new and
 strange,
 Irksome perhaps, yet plainly recog-
 nised [prized
 By this, the sudden company—loves
 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, 't is 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
 expand the dumb
 Part-sigh, part-smile with which Sor-
 dello, late
 No foolish woodland-sights could sati-
 ate,
 Betakes himself to study hungrily
 Just what the puppets his crude fan-
 tasy
 Supposes notablest, popes, kings,
 priests, knights,
 May please to promulgate for appetites;
 Accepting all their artificial joys
 Not as he views them, but as he em-
 ploys
 Each shape to estimate the other's
 stock
 Of attributes, that on a marshalled
 flock
 Of authorized enjoyments he may
 spend [blend
 Himself, be men, now, as he used to
 With tree and flower—nay more en-
 tirely, else
 'T were mockery: for instance, "how
 excels
 "My life that chieftain's?" (who ap-
 prised the youth
 Ecelin, here, becomes this month, in
 truth,
 Imperial Vicar?) "Turns he in his
 tent
 "Remissly? Be it so—my head is
 bent
 "Deliciously amid my girls to sleep.
 "What if he stalks the Trentine-pass?
 Yon steep
 "I climbed an hour ago with little toil:
 "We are alike there. But can I, too,
 foil
 "The Guelf's paid stabber, carelessly
 afford
 "Saint Mark's a spectacle, the sleight
 o' the sword
 "Baffling the treason in a moment?"
 Here
 No rescue! Poppy he is none, but
 peer
 To Ecelin, assuredly: his hand,
 Fashioned no otherwise, should wield a
 brand

With Ecelin's success—try, now! He soon
 Was satisfied, returned as to the moon
 From earth; left each abortive boy's-attempt
 For feats, from failure happily exempt.
 In fancy at his beck. "One day I will
 Accomplish it! Are they not older still
 "—Not grown up men and women?
 'T is beside
 "Only a dream; and though I must abide
 "With dreams now, I may find a thorough vent
 "For all myself, acquire an instrument
 "For acting what these people act; my soul
 "Hunting a body out may gain its whole
 "Desire some day!" How else express chagrin
 And resignation, show the hope steal in
 With which he let sink from an aching wrist
 The rough-hewn ash-bow? Straight, a gold shaft hissed
 Into the Syrian air, struck Malek down
 Superbly! "Crosses to the breach! God's Town
 "Is gained him back!" Why bend rough ash-bows more?
 Thus lives he: if not careless as before,
 Comforted: for one may anticipate,
 Rehearse the future, be prepared when fate
 Shall have prepared in turn real men whose names
 Startle, real places of enormous fames,
 Este abroad and Ecelin at home
 To worship him,—Mantua, Verona, Rome
 To witness it. Who grudges time so spent?
 Rather test qualities to heart's content—
 Summon them, thrice selecte I, 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 tell 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 reduced
 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 [dwells,
 So rarely the serene cloud where he
 Whose looks enjoin, whose lightest words are spells
 On the obdurate! That right arm indeed
 Has thunder for its slave; but where's the need
 Of thunder if the stricken multitude
 Hears, arrested in its angriest mood,
 While songs go up exulting, then dispread,
 Dispart, disperse, lingering overhead
 Like an escape of angels? 'T is 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-foes.
 "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 the
 thr
 Beneath
 tort
 Striving
 blis
 Instead
 He had
 Apollo?
 bid
 Me rag
 hid
 The you
 and
 Contribu
 He climb
 close
 'Mid clatt
 Over wh
 slipp
 Elate with
 dipp
 He foot,
 unwe
 Though r
 rock
 Ages ago
 indens fo
 Flattered i
 fly,
 Born of t
 die.
 Emerging
 Mighty des
 Tuft on tu
 trees,
 There gend
 at ease
 And, proud
 wood
 Tried old s
 A sudden o
 o'er)
 So dead and
 more
 Must pass;
 dispatc
 Each clump
 detach
 A shrub, o
 stems!
 Yet could n
 gems
 He saw thro
 would h
 White summ
 and spr

And these a gracious hand advanced to
thrones
Beneath him. Wherefore twist and
torture this,
Striving to name afresh the antique
bliss,
Instead of saying, neither less nor more,
He had discovered, as our world before,
Apollo? That shall be the name; nor
bid
Me rag by rag expose how patchwork
hid
The youth—what thefts of every clime
and day
Contributed to purfle the array
He climbed with (June at deep) some
close ravine
Mid clatter of its million pebbles sheen,
Over which, singing soft, the rannel
slipped
Elate with rains: into whose streamlet
dipped
He foot, yet trod, you thought, with
unwet sock—
Though really on the stubs of living
rock
Ages ago it crenneled; vines for roof,
indens for wall; before him, aye aloof,
Flittered in the cool some azure damsel-
fly,
Born of the simmering quiet, there to
die.
Emerging whence, Apollo still, he spied
Mighty descents of forest; multiplied
Tuft on tuft, here, the frolic myrtle-
trees,
There gendered the grave maple stocks
at ease.
And, proud of its observer, straight the
wood [stood
Tried old surprises on him; black it
A sudden oarrier ('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-
gens
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, 't was Apollo, nature prest
At eve to worship.
Time stole: by degrees
The Pythons perish off; his votaries
Sink to respectful distance; songs
redeem
Their pains, but briefer; their dis-
missals seem
Emphatic; only girls are very slow
To disappear—his Delians! Some
that glow
O' the instant, more with earlier loves
to wrench
Away, reserves to quell, disdains to
quench;
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 be-
guiled
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 [wound
Into a sumptuous swell of gold and
About her like a glory! even the
ground
Was 'light as with spilt sunbeams;
reathe not, breathe
No --poised, see, one leg doubled
underneath,
Its small foot buried in the dimpling
snow,
Rests, but the other, listlessly below,
O'er the couch-side swings feeling for
cool air,
The vein-streaks swollen a richer violet
where
The languid blood lies heavily; yet
calm

On her slight prop, each flat and 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-
appointed age
Approaches. Fate is tardy with the
stage
And crowd she promised. Lean he
grows and pale,
Though restlessly at rest. Hardly
avail
Fancies to soothe him. Time steals,
yet alone
He tarries here ! The earnest smile is
gone.
How long this might continue matters
not ;
—For ever, possibly ; since to the spot
None come : our lingering Taurello
quits
Mantua at last, and light our lady flits
Back to her place 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
Is daily manifest, and Azzo 's dumb
And Richard wavers : let but Fried-
rich come,
Find matter for the minstrelsy's report !
—Lured from the Isle and its young
Kaiser's court
To sing us a Messina morning up,
And, double rillet of a drinking cup,
Sparkle along to ease the land of
drouth,
Northward to Provence that, and thus
far south
The other. What a method to apprise
Neighbours of births, espousals, 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 House is famed
Over the country—as Taurello aimed,

Who introduced, although the rest
adopt,
The novelty. Such games, her ab-
sence stopped,
Begin afresh now Adelaide, recluse
No longer, in the light of day pursues
Her plans at Mantua : whence an acci-
dent
Which, breaking on Sordello's mixed
content,
Opened, like any flash that cures the
blind,
The veritable business of mankind.

BOOK THE SECOND

THE woods were long austere with
snow : at last
Pink leaflets budded on the beech, and
fast
Larches, scattered through pine-tree
solitudes,
Brightened, "as in the slumbrous
heart o' the woods
" Our buried year, a witch, grew young
again
" To placid incantations, and that stain
" About were from her cauldron, green
smoke blent
" With those black pines "—so Eglam-
mor 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 You, at
length—
In your own cherished dress of grace
and strength:
Most like, the very Boniface!
Not so.
It was a showy man advanced; but
though
A glad cry welcomed him, then every
sound
Sank and the crowd disposed them-
selves around,
—"This is not he," Sordello felt;
while, "Place
"For the best Troubadour of Boni-
face!"
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. Sor-
dello'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 as he
pleased,
If the man dared no further? Has he
ceased?
And, lo, the people's frank applause
half done,
Sordello was beside him, had begun
(Spite of indignant twitchings from his
friend
The Trouvere) the true lay with the
true end,
Taking the other's names and time and
place

For his. On flew the song, a giddy
 race,
 After the flying story; word made leap
 Out word, rhyme—rhyme; the lay
 could barely keep
 Pace with the action visibly rushing
 past:
 Both ended. Back fell Naddo more
 aghast
 Than some Egyptian from the harassed
 bull
 That wheeled abrupt and, bellowing,
 fronted full
 His plague, who spied a scarab 'neath
 the tongue,
 And found 't was 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
 Up on 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 't was many a fur-
 long thence,
 At home; the sun shining his ruddy
 wont;
 The customary birds'-chirp; but his
 front
 Was crowned—was crowned! Her
 scented scarf around
 His neck! Whose gorgeous vesture
 heaps the ground?

A prize? He turned, and peeringly
 on him
 Brooded the women-faces, kind and
 dim,
 Ready to talk.—“The Jongleurs in a
 troop
 “Had brought him back, Naddo and
 Squarcialupe
 “And Tagliafer; how strange! a
 childhood spent
 “In taking, well for him, so brave a
 bent!
 “Since Eglamor,” they heard, “was
 dead with spite,
 “And Palma chose him for her min-
 strel.”

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
 sung ill,
 Supply the necessary points, set loose
 As many incidents of little use
 —More imbecile the other, not to see
 Their relative importance clear as he!
 But, for a special pleasure in the act
 Of singing—had he ever turned, in fact,
 From Elys, to sing Elys?—from each
 fit
 Of rapture to contrive a song of it?
 True, this snatch or one other seemed
 to wind
 Into a treasure, helped himself to find
 A beauty in himself; for, see, he
 soared
 By means of that mere snatch, to
 many a hoard
 Of fancies; as some falling cone bears
 soft
 The eye along the fir-tree spire, aloft
 To a dove's nest. Then, how divine
 the cause
 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
 topmost 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 set
 "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 't was
 midday yet:
 You saw each half-shut downcast
 floweret
 Flutter—"a Roman bride, when they'd
 dispart

" Her unbound tresses with the Sabine
 dart,
 " Holding that famous rape in memory
 still,
 " Felt creep into her curls the iron chill,
 " And looked thus," Eglamor would
 say—indeed
 "T is Eglamor, no other, these precede
 Home hither in the woods. "T were
 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 linger-
 ing 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, clois-
tered up
In some rock-chamber with his agate
cup,
His topaz rod, his seed-pearl, in these
few
And their arrangement finds enough to
do
For his best art. Then, how he loved
that art !
The calling marking him a man apart
From men—one not to care, take coun-
sel for
Cold hearts, comfortless faces—(Egla-
mor
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 cast
Conceits upon in plenty as he passed,
That Naddo might suppose him not to
think
Entirely on the coming triumph : wink
At the one weakness ! 'T was 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, bend-
ing 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
cast,
Polished by slow degrees, completed
last
To Eglamor's discomfiture and death.
Such form the chanters now, and,
out of breath,
They lay the beaten man in his abode,

Naddo
Doleful
By night
In joy
Learn
s
When
a
Eglamor
Prima
And,
a
Eglamor
lo
And la
to
The c
br
It was
he
—Cont
fru
A plan
lea
Which
and
Till eve
gal
To clea
thin
As are
brin
Him to
nim
So m
m
'T was
May
Beneath
Sordello ;
stars
That sme
jars
Dug up a
shed
The ripe
And robe
Lay on t
wide
The count
hind
—The cas
fined
Him with
of old

Naddo reciting that same luckless ode,
 Doleful to hear. Sordello could ex-
 plore
 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,
 Primæval 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 on the bard's
 breast, and said
 It was a crown, now, fit for poet's
 head?)
 —Continue. Nor the prayer quite
 fruitless fell.
 A plant they have, yielding a three-
 leaved bell
 Which whitens at the heart ere noon,
 and ails
 Till evening; evening gives it to her
 gales
 To clear away with such forgotten
 things
 As are an eyesore to the morn: this
 brings
 Him to their mind, and bears his very
 name.
 So much for Eglamor. My own
 month came;
 'T was 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 Baiæ, 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 be-
 hind
 —The castle and its covert, which con-
 fined
 Him with his hopes and fears; so fain
 of old

R.P.

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
 dressed
 Down to its meanest incident, remained
 A mystery: alas, they soon explained
 Away Apollo! and the tale amounts
 To this: when at Vicenza both her
 counts
 Banished the Vivaresi kith and kin,
 Those Maltraversi hung on Ecelin,
 Reviled him as he followed; he for
 spite
 Must fire their quarter, though that
 self-same night
 Among the flames young Ecelin was
 born
 Of Adelaide, there too, and barely torn
 From the roused popuice hard on the
 rear,
 By a poor archer when his chieftain's
 fear
 Grew high; into the thick Elcorte
 leapt,
 Saved her, and died; no creature left
 except
 His child to thank. And when the full
 escape
 Was known—how men impaled from
 chine to nape
 Unlucky Prata, all to pieces spurned
 Bishop Pistore's concubines, and
 burned
 Taurello's entire household, flesh and
 fell,
 Missing the sweeter prey—such courage
 well
 Might claim reward. The orphan,
 ever since,
 Sordello, had been nurtured by his
 prince
 Within a blind retreat where Adelaide—
 (For, once this notable discovery made,

L

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—loth 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
 Forever, and in place of one a slave
 To longings, wild indeed, but longings
 save
 In dreams as wild, suppressed—one
 daring not
 Assume the mastery such dreams allot,
 Until a magical equipment, strength,
 Grace, wisdom, decked him too,—he
 chose at length,
 Content with unproved wits and failing
 frame,
 In virtue of his simple will, to claim
 That mastery, no less—to do his best
 With means so limited, and let the rest
 Go by,—the seal was set: never again
 Sordello could in his own sight remain
 One of the many, one with hopes and
 cares
 And interests nowise disjunct 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 di-
 vorce
 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. "Fortun-
 ate!
 "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, n.y soul!—who, by self-
 consciousness,
 "The last drop of all beauty dost ex-
 press—
 "The grace of seeing grace, a quintes-
 sence
 "For thee: but for the world, that can
 dispense
 "Wonder on men who, themselves,
 wonder—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, wis-
 dom,—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 perfec-
 tion, vex
 "With no strange forms created to
 perplex,
 "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
 Marking 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 atti-
 tudes;
 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-re-
 nowned
 Goito manufacture. Then he found
 (Casting about to satisfy the crowd)
 That happy vehicle, so late allowed,
 A sore annoyance; 't was 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 overleaping means for ends—take
 both
 For granted or take neither! I am loth
 To say the rhymes at last were Eglam-
 or's;
 But Naddo, chuckling, bade competi-
 tors
 Go pine; "the master certes meant
 to waste
 "No effort, cautiously had probed the
 taste
 "He'd please anon: true bard, in short,
 disturb
 "His title if they could; nor spur nor
 curb,
 "Fancy nor reason, wanting in him;
 whence
 "The staple of his verses, common
 sense:
 "He built on man's broad nature—
 gift of gifts,
 "That power to build! The world
 contented shifts
 "With counterfeits enough, a dreary
 sort
 "Of warriors, statesmen, ere it can ex-
 tort
 "Its poet-soul—that 's, after all, a
 freak
 "(The having eyes to see and tongue
 to speak)
 "With our herd's stupid sterling hap-
 piness
 "So plainly incompatible that—yes—

"Yes—should a son of his improve the
 breed
 "And turn out poet, he were cursed
 indeed!"
 "Well, there's Goito and its woods
 anon,
 "If the worst happen; best go stoutly
 on
 "Now!" thought Sordello.
 Ay, and goes on yet!
 You pother with your glossaries to get
 A notion of the Troubadour's intent
 In rondel, tenzon, virlai or sirvent—
 Much as you study arras how to twirl
 His angelot, plaything of page and girl
 Once; but you surely reach, at last,—
 or, no!
 Never quite reach what struck the
 people so,
 As from the welter of their time he drew
 Its elements successively to view,
 Followed all actions backward on their
 course,
 And catching up, unmingled at the
 source,
 Such a strength, such a weakness,
 added then
 A touch or two, and turned them into
 men.
 Virtue took form, nor vice refused a
 shape;
 Here heaven opened, there was hell
 agape,
 As Saint this simpered past in sanctity,
 Sinner the other flared portentous by
 A greedy people. Then why stop, sur-
 prised
 At his success? The scheme was
 realized
 Too suddenly in one respect: a crowd
 Praising, eyes quick to see, and lips as
 loud
 To speak, delicious homage to receive,
 The woman's breath to feel upon his
 sleeve,
 Who said, "But Anafest—why asks
 he less
 "Than Lucio, in your verses? how
 confess,
 "It seemed too much but yestereve!"
 —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. Court'd thus at unawares,
In spite of his pretensions and his

cares,
He caught himself shamefully hanker-

ing
After the obvious petty joys that spring
From true life, fain relinquish pedestal

And condescend with pleasures—one
and all

To be renounced, no doubt; for, thus
to chain

Himself to single joys and so refrain
From tasting their quintessence, frus-

trates, 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

'T was 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 coned. 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 workman-

ship.
"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 ex-
pressed

"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,

far worse!"
A few adhering rivets loosed, upsprings

The angel, sparkles off his mail, and
 rings
 Whirled from each delicatest limb it
 warps,
 As might Apollo from the sudden
 corpse
 Of Hyacinth have cast his luckless
 quoits.
 He set to celebrating the exploits
 Of Montfort o'er the Mountaineers.
 Then came
 The world's revenge: their pleasure,
 now his aim
 Merely,—what was it? "Not to play
 the fool
 "So much as learn our lesson in your
 school!"
 Replied the world. He found that,
 every time
 He gained applause by any ballad-
 rhyme,
 His auditory recognized no jot
 As he intended, and, mistaking not
 Him for his meanest hero, ne'er was
 dunce
 Sufficient to believe him—all, at once.
 His will . . . conceive it caring for
 his will!
 —Mantuan, the main of them, admir-
 ing 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 [care
 The Mantuan, after all, that he should
 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,
 Sublined 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 ac-
 quit
 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 saun-
 tered forth in dream,
 Dressed any how, nor waited mystic
 frames,
 Immeasurable gifts, astounding claims,
 But just his sorry self—who yet might
 be
 Sorrier for aught he in reality
 Achieved, so pinioned 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—
 So hampered him the Man-part, thrust
 to judge
 Between the bard and the bard's audi-
 ence, grudge
 A minute's toil that missed its due
 reward!
 But the complete Sordello, Man and
 Bard,
 John's cloud-girt angel, this foot on
 the land,
 That on the sea, with, open in his hand,
 A bitter-sweetling of a book—was gone.
 Then, if internal struggles to be one
 That frittered him incessantly piece-
 meal,
 Referred, ne'er so obliquely, to the real
 Mantuans! intruding ever with some
 call
 To action while he pondered, once for
 all,
 Which looked the easier effort—to pur-
 sue
 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 [bad,
 'Tis settled Palma's minstrel, good or
 Submits to this and that established
 rule?
 Let Vidal change, or any other fool,
 His murrey-coloured robe for filamot,
 And crop his hair; too skin-deep, is it
 not,
 Such vigour? Then, a sorrow to the
 heart,
 His talk! Whatever topics they
 might start
 Had to be groped for in his conscious-
 ness
 Straight, and as straight delivered them
 by guess.
 Only obliged to ask himself, "What
 was,"
 A speedy answer followed; but, alas,
 One of God's large ones, tardy to 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 Man-
 tuan flock
 Regaled him with, each talker from his
 stock
 Of sorted-o'er opinions, every stage,
 Juicy in youth or desiccate with age,
 Fruits like the fig-tree's, rathe-ripe,
 rotten-rich,
 Sweet-sour, all tastes to take: a prac-
 tice which
 He too had not impossibly attained,
 Once either of those fancy-flights re-
 strained;
 (For, at conjecture how might word
 appear
 To others, playing there what hap-
 pened here,
 And occupie'd abroad by what he
 spurned
 At home, 't was slipped, the occasion
 he returned
 To seize :) he'd strike that lyre adroit-
 ly—speech,
 Would but a twenty-cubit plectre
 reach; [ment,
 A clever hand, consummate instru-
 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 dis-
 gust
 And more: why move his soul, since
 move it must
 At minute's notice or as good it failed
 To move at all? The end was, he
 retailed
 Some ready-made opinion, put to use
 This quip, that maxim, ventured repro-
 duce
 Gestures and tones—at any folly
 caught
 Serving to finish with, nor too much
 sought

If false or true 't was spoken; praise
 and blame
 Of what he said grew pretty well the
 same
 —Meantime awards to meantime acts :
 his sou;
 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 Bocafoli's stark-naked
 psalms, [with,
 To Plara's sonnets spoilt by toying
 "As knops that stud some almsg to
 the pith
 "Pricked for gum, wry thence, and
 crinkled worse
 "Than pursed eyelids of a river-horse
 "Sunning himself o' the slime when
 whirrs the breeze"—
Gad-fly, that is. He might compete
 with these!
 But—but—
 "Observe a pompon-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,
 enhance
 "The subjects' rarity, work problems
 out
 "Therewith: 'now, you're a bard, a
 bard past doubt,
 "And no philosopher; why introduce
 "Crotchets like these? fine, surely, but
 no use [strike,
 "In poetry—which still must be, to
 "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 your-
 self 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 staunchly; shame ensued:
 Behold the monarch of mankind succumb
 To the last fool who turned him round his thumb,
 As Naddo styled it! 'Twas not worth oppose
 The matter of a moment, gainsay those
 He aimed at getting rid of; better think
 Their thoughts and speak their speech, secure to slink
 Back expeditiously to his safe place,
 And chew the cud—what he and what his race [this
 Were really, each of them. Yet even
 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 grim
 List—slur it over! How? If dreams were tried,
 His will swayed sickly from side to side,
 Not merely neutralized his waking act
 But tended e'en in fancy to distract
 The intermediate will, the choice of means.

He lost the art of dreaming: Mantuan scenes
 Supplied a baron, say, he sang before,
 Handsomely reckless, full to running o'er
 Of gallantries; "abjure the soul, content
 "With body, therefore!" Scarcely had he bent
 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 Ecelin 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 ('t is time explain)
 Because a sudden sickness set it free
 From Adelaide. Missing the mother-bee,
 Her mountain-hive Romano swarmed; at once
 A rustle-forth of daughters and of sons
 Blackened the valley. "I am sick too, old,
 "Half crazed I think; what good 's the Kaiser's gold
 "To such an one? God help me! for I catch [watch—
 "My children's gree-ly sparkling eyes at
 "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 thun-
 der-clap
 Out of Vesuvius' throat, like this mis-
 hap
 Startled him. "That accursed Vicen-
 za! 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 I e'er craved in-
 crease
 "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, congeal-
 ed off,
 Had done a long day's service, so,
 might doff
 The green and yellow, and recover
 breath
 At Mantua, whither,—since Retrude's
 death,
 (The girlish slip of a Sicilian bride
 From Otho's house, he carried to reside
 At Mantua till the Ferrarese should pile
 A structure worthy her imperial style,
 The gardens raise, the statues there
 enshrine,
 She never lived to see)—although his
 line
 Was ancient in her archives and she
 took
 A pride in him, that city, nor forsook
 Her child when he forsook himself and
 spent
 A prowess on Romano surely meant
 For his own growth—whither he ne'er
 resorts
 If wholly satisfied (to trust reports)
 With Ecelin. So, forward in a trice
 Were shows to greet him. "Take a
 friend's advice,"
 Quoth Naddo to Sordello, "nor be rash
 "Because your rivals (nothing can
 abash
 "Some folks) demur that we pro-
 nounced you best
 "To sound the great man's welcome;
 't is a test,
 "Remember! Strojavacca looks as-
 quint,
 "The rough fat sloven; and there's
 plenty hint
 "Your pinions have received of late a
 shock—
 "Outsoar 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
 that front?
 Just how he was more awkward than
 his wont
 The night before, when Naddo, who had
 seen
 Taurello on his progress, praised the
 mien
 For dignity no crosses could affect—
 Such was a joy, and might not he
 detect
 A satisfaction if established joys
 Were proved imposture? Poetry an-
 noys
 Its utmost: wherefore fret? Verses
 may come
 Or keep away! And thus he wan-
 dered, dumb
 Till evening, when he paused, thor-
 oughly 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,
 Saw blackthorn clumps, leafless and
 grovelling vines
 Also came out, made gradually up
 The picture ; 't was 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. 'T was Apollo now they
 lapped,
 Those moon-lins, not a pettish min-
 strel 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 min-
 aret,—
 When rooted up, the sunny day she
 died,
 And flung into the common court be-
 side
 Its parent tree. Come home, Sor-
 dello ! Soon
 Was he low muttering, beneath the
 moon,
 Of sorrow saved, of quiet evermore,—
 Since from the purpose, he maintained
 before,
 Only resulted wailing and hot tears.
 Ah, the slim castle dwindled of late
 years,
 But more mysterious ; gone to ruin—
 trails
 Of vine through very 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 't is like, one after one, you
 hear
 In the blind darkness water drop. The
 nests
 And nooks retain their long ranged ves-
 ture-chests
 Empty and smelling of the iris root
 The Tuscan grated o'er them to recruit
 Her wasted wits. Palma was gone
 that day,
 Said the remaining women. Last, he
 lay
 Beside the Carian group reserved and
 still.
 The Body, the Machine for Acting
 Will,
 Had been at the commencement
 proved unfit ;
 That for Demonstrating, Reflecting it,
 Mankind—no fitter : was the Will It-
 self
 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 ! " Wherefore ? "
 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 once more Goito gets, once
more,
Sordello to itself! A dream is o'er,
And the suspended life begins anew;
Quiet those throbbing temples, then,
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 blos-
somed 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,
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 re-
tain [main
"The law of my own nature—to re-
"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 be-
friend!
"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 em-
ploy,
A presage shuddered through the wel-
kin; harsh
The earth's remonstrance followed.
'T was the marsh
Gone of a sudden. Mincio, in its place,
Laughed, a broad water, in next morn-
ing's face,
And, where the mists broke up im-
mense and white
I' the steady wind, burned like a spilth
of light
Out of the crashing of a myriad stars.

And here was nature, bound by the
same bars
Of fate with him!
"No! youth once gone is gone:
"Deeds let escape are never to be done.
"Leaf-fall and grass-spring for the
year; for us—
"Oh forfeit I unalterably thus
"My chance? nor two lives wait me,
this to spend
"Learning save that? Nature has
time, may mend
"Mistake, she knows occasion will
recur;
"Landslip or seabreach, how affects it
her
"With her magnificent resources?—I
"Must perish once and perish utterly.
"Not any strollings now at even-close
"Down the field-path, Sordello! by
thorn-rows
"Alive with lamp-flies, swimming spots
of fire
"And dew, outlining the black cypress'
spire
"She waits you at, Elys, who heard
you first
"Woo her, the snow-mornth through,
but ere she durst
"Answer 't was April. Linden-flower-
time-long
"Her eyes were on the ground; 't is
July, strong
"Now; and becau hite dust-clouds
overwhelm [elm
"The woodside, here or by the village
"That holds the moon, she meets you,
somewhat pale,
"But letting you lift up her coarse flax
veil
"And whisper (the damp little hand in
yours)
"Of love, heart's love, your heart's
love that endures
"Till death. Tush! No mad mixing
with the rout
"Of haggard ribalds wandering about
"The hot torchlit wine-scented island-
house
"Where Friedrich holds his wickedest
carouse,
"Parading,—to the gay Palermitans,
"Soft Messinese, dusk Saracenic clans
"Nuocera holds,—those tall grave
dazzling Norse,
"High-cheeked, lank-haired, toothed
whiter than the morse,

- " Queen of the caves of jet stalactites
 " He sent his barks to fetch through icy seas,
 " The blind night seas without a saving star,
 " And here in snowy birdskin robes they are,
 " Sordello!—here, mollitious alcoves gilt,
 " Superb as Byzant domes that devils built!
 " —Ah, Byzant, there again! no chance to go
 " Ever like august pleasant Dandoio,
 " 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,
 " 'T were fittest he transport to Venice' Square—
 " Flattered and promised life to touch them there
 " Soon, by those fervid sons of senators!
 " No more lifes, deaths, loves, hatreds, peaces, wars! [be,
 " Ah, fragments of a whole ordained to
 " Points in the life I waited! what are ye
 " But roundels of a ladder which appeared
 " Awhile the very platform it was reared
 " To lift me on?—that happiness I find
 " Proofs of my faith in, even in the blind
 " Instinct which bade forego you all unless
 " Ye led me past yourselves. Ay, happiness
 " Awaited me; the way life should be used
 " Was to acquire, and deeds like you conducted
 " To teach it by a self-revelment, deemed
 " The very use, so long! Whatever seemed
 " Progress to that, was pleasure—ought that stayed
 " My reaching it—no pleasure. I have laid
 " The ladder down; I climb not; still, aloft
 " The platform stretches! Blissed strong and soft,
 " I dared not entertain, elude me; yet
 " Never of what they promised could I get
 " A glimpse till now! The common sort, the crowd,
 " Exist, perceive; with Being are endowed,
 " However slight, distinct from what they See,
 " However bounded; Happiness must be,
 " To feed the first by gleanings from the last,
 " Attain its qualities, and slow or fast
 " Become what they behold; such peace-in-strife
 " By transmutation, is the Use of Life,
 " The Alien turning Native to the soul
 " Or body—which instructs me; I am whole
 " There and demand a Palma; had the world
 " Been from my soul to a like distance hurled,
 " 'T were Happiness to make it one with me:
 " Whereas I must, ere I begin to Be,
 " Include a world, in flesh, I comprehend
 " In spirit now; and this done, what's to blend
 " With? Nought is Alien in the world—my Will
 " Owns all already; yet can turn it still
 " Less Native, since my Means to correspond
 " With Will are so unworthy, 't was 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 embraced

"Closer! Why fled I Mantua, then?
—complained

"So much my Will was fettered, yet
remained

"Content within a tether half the range
"I could assign it?—able to exchange

"My ignorance (I felt) for knowledge,
and [stand—

"Idle because I could thus under-
"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 ac-
quist,

"Each object suffered stifle in the mist
"Which hazard, use and blindness

could impose
"In their relation to myself."

He rose.

The level wind carried above the firs
Clouds, the irrevocable travellers,
Onward.

"Pushed thus into a drowsy copse,
"Arms twine about my neck, each eye-

lid drops
"Under a humid finger; while there

fleets,
"Outside the screen, a pageant time

repeats
"Never again! To be deposed, im-

mured
"Clandestinely—still petted, still as-

sured
"To govern were fatiguing work—the

Sight
"Fleeting meanwhile! 'T is noon-

tide: wreak ere night
"Somehow my will upon it, rather!

Slake
"This thirst somehow, the poorest im-

press take
"That serves! A blasted bud dis-

plays you, torn,
"Faint rudiments of the full flower un-

born;
"But who divines what glory coats

o'erclasp

"Of the bulb dormant in the mummy's
grasp

"Taurello sent?"
"Taurello?" Palma sent

"Your Trouvere," (Naddo interposing
leant

Over the lost bard's shoulder)—"and,
believe,

"You cannot more reluctantly receive
"Than I pronounce her message: we

depart
"Together. What avail a poet's heart

"Verona's pomps and gauds? five
blades of grass

"Suffice him. News? Why, where
your marish was,

"On its mud-banks smoke 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 Patron-
ess,

"Has played Taurello an astounding
trick,

"Parts between Ecelin and Alberic
"His wealth and goes into a convent:

both
"Wed Guefs: the Count and Palma

plighted troth [want
"A week since at Verona: and they

"You doubtless to contrive the mar-
riage-chant

"Ere Richard storins Ferrara." Then
was told

The tale from the beginning—how,
made bold

By Salinguerra's absence, Guefs 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 poetic vest
"These doings, at Verona? Your

response

" To Palma ! Wherefore jest ? ' De-
part 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 cicala ! "

One more day.

One eve—appears Verona ! Many a
group.

(You mind) instructed of the osprey's
swoop

On lynx and ounce, was gathering—
Christendom [from

Sure to receive, whate'er the end was,
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

Old warfare with the Pontiff, disengage
His barons from the burghers, and re-
store

The rule of Chailemagne, 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 laughters : now
would rush

Word upon word to meet a sudden
flush,

A look left off, a shifting lips' surmise—
But for the most part their two his-
tories

Ran best thro' the locked fingers and
linked arms.

And so the night flew on with its
alarms

Till in burst one of Palma's retinue ;
" Now, lady ! " gasped he. Then arose
the two

And leaned into Verona's air, dead-
still.

A balcony lay black beneath until
Out, 'mid a gush of torchfire, grey-
haired men

Came on it and harangued the people :
then

Sea-like that people surging to and fro
Shouted, " Hale forth the carroch—

trumpets, ho,
" A flourish ! Run it in the ancient
grooves !

" Back from the bell ! Hammer—
that whom behoves

" May hear the League is up ! Peal—
learn who list,

" Verona means not be the first break
tryst

" To-morrow with the League ! "
Enough. Now turn—

Over the eastern cypresses : discern !
Is any beacon set a-glimmer ?

The air with shouts that overpowered
the clang

Of the incessant carroch, even :
" Haste—

" The Candle 's at the gateway ! ere it
waste, [march

" Each soldier stand beside it, armed to
" 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 neutra-
lized

The blood of Ecelin. Nor be surprised
If, while Sordello fain had captive led

Nature, in dream was Palma subjected
To some out-soul, which dawned not
though she pined

Delaying till its advent, heart and
mind,

Their

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Their life. "How dare 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 inscrut-
 able
 "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 [distinct
 "Take pride in me, at unawares
 "With this or that endowment,—how,
 repressed
 "At once, such jetting power shrunk to
 the rest!
 "Was I to have a chance touch spoil
 me, leave
 "My spirit thence unfitted to receive
 "The consummating spell?—that
 spell so near
 "Moreover! 'Waits he not the wak-
 ing year?
 "His almond-blossoms must be
 honey-ripe
 "By this; to welcome him, fresh
 runnels stripe
 "The thawed ravines; because of
 him, the wind
 "Walks like a herald. I shall surely
 find
 "Him now!
 "And chief, that earnest April morn
 "Of Richard's Love-court, was it time,
 so worn
 "And white my cheek, so idly my
 blood beat,
 "Sitting that morn beside the Lady's
 feet
 "And saying as she prompted; till
 outburst
 "One face from all the faces—not then
 first
 "I knew it; where in maple chamber
 glooms,
 "Crowned with what sanguine-heart
 pomegranate blooms
 "Advanced it ever? Men's acknow-
 ledgment
 "Sanctioned my own: 't was taken,
 Palma's bent,—
 "Sordello, accepted.
 "And the Tuscan dumb
 "Sat scheming, scheming. Ecelin
 would come
 "Gaunt, scared, 'Cesano baffles me,'
 he'd say:
 "'Better I fought it out, my father's
 way!
 "'Strangle Ferrara in its drowning
 flats,
 "'And you and your Taurello yonder
 —what's
 "'Romano's business there?' An
 hour's concern
 "To cure the froward Chief!—induced
 return
 "Much heartened from those over-
 meaning eyes, [prise
 "Wound up to persevere,—his enter-
 "Marked out anew, its exigent of wit
 "Apportioned,—she at liberty to sit
 "And scheme against the next emer-
 gence, I—
 "To covet her Taurello-sprite, made fly
 "Or fold the wing—to con your horo-
 scope
 "For leave command those steely
 shafts shoot ope,
 "Or straight assuage their blinding
 eagerness
 "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,
 "Tread o'er the ruins of the Chief, sup-
 plant
 "His sons beside, still, vainest were the
 vaunt:
 "There, Salinguerra would obstruct me
 sheer,

" And the insuperable Tuscan, here,
 " Stay me! But one wild eve that
 Lady died
 " In her lone chamber: only I beside:
 " Taurello far at Naples, and my sire
 " At Padua, Ecelin away in ire
 " With Alberic. She held me thus—a
 clutch
 " To make our spirits as our bodies
 touch—
 " And so began flinging the past up,
 heaps
 " Of uncouth treasure from their sun-
 less 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, 't is 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) 't is 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 fol-
 lowers 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, be-
 cause his wife
 " 'And child were saved there, to be-
 stow his life
 " 'On God, his gettings on the Church.'
 " Exiled
 " Within Goito, still one dream be-
 guiled
 " My days and nights; 't was found,
 the orb I sought
 " To serve, those glimpses came of
 Fomalhaut,
 " 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 't was, 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

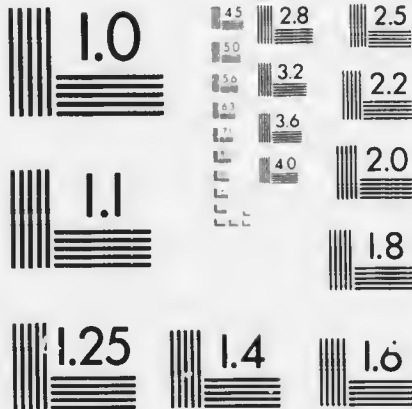
"Stable, a Lombard House now—why
start back
"Into the very outset of its track?
"This patching principle which late
allied
"Our House with other Houses—what
beside
"Concerned the apparition, the first
Knight
"Who followed Conrad hither in such
plight
"His utmost wealth was summed in
his one steed?
"For 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 cincture of
warm air,—
"That binds the Trevisan,—as its
spice-belt
"(Crusaders say) the tract where Jesus
dwelt,—
"Furtive he pierced, and Este was to
face—
"Despaired Saponian strength of Lom-
bard grace?
"Tried he at making surer aught made
sure,
"Maturing what already was mature?
"No; his heart prompted Ecelo,
'Confront
"Este, inspect yourself. What's
nature? Wont.
"Discard three-parts your nature,
and adopt
"The rest as an advantage! Old
strength propped
"The man who first grew Podesità
among
"The Vicentines, no less than, while
there sprung
"His palace up in Padua like a threat,
"Their noblest spied a grace, unnoticed
yet
"In Conrad's crew. Thus far the ob-
ject 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
left,
"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-pro-
ject for
"Giving her Trentine to the Emperor
"With passage here from Germany,
—shall you
"Take it,—my slender plodding
talent, too!
"—Urged me Taurello with his half-
smile.
"He
"As Patron of the scattered family
"Conveyed me to his Mantua, kept in
bruit
"Azzo's alliances and Richard's suit
"Until, the Kaiser excommunicate,
"Nothing remains,' Taurello said,
'but wait
"Some rash procedure: Palma was
the link,
"As Agnes' child, between us, and
they shrink
"From losing Palma: judge if we
advance,
"Your father's method, your inheri-
tance!
"That day I was betrothed to Boniface
"At Padua by Taurello's self, took
place



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"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 con-
 firm,—
 "Richard, whose patience had out-
 stayed 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
 subserve,
 "'Nor Ecelin impose.' Lest this un-
 nerve [grip
 "Taurello at this juncture, slack his
 "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, mak-
 ing 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 mis-
 conceived
 "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 Lom-
 bardy,
 Soul of this body—to wield this aggre-
 gate
 Of souls and bodies, and so conquer fate
 Though he should live—a centre of dis-
 gust
 Even—apart, core of the outward
 crust
 He vivifies, assimilates. For thus
 I bring Sordello to the rapturous
 Exclaim at the crowd's cry, because
 one round
 Of life was quite accomplished; and
 he found [might,
 Not only that a soul, whate'er its
 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 in-
 tact

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, disspread,

Dispart, disperse, lingering over head
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 [soon

Laugh out, thick-foliaged next, a-shiver
With coloured buds, then glowing like
the moon

One mild flame,—last a pause, a
burst, and all

Her ivory limbs are smothered by a fall,
Bloom-flinders and fruit-sparkles and
leaf-dust,

Ending the weird work prosecuted just
For her amusement ; he decrepit,
stark,

Dozes ; her uncontrolled delight may
mark

Apart—

Yet not so, surely never so !
Only, as good my soul were suffered go
O'er the lagune : forth fare thee, put
aside—

Entrance thy synod, as a god may glide
Out of the world he fills, and leave it
mute

For myriad ages as we men compute,
Returning into it without a break
O' the consciousness ! They sleep, and
I awake

O'er the lagune, being at Venice.

In just such songs as Eglamor (say)
wrote

With heart and soul and strength, for
he believed

Himself achieving all to be achieved
By singer—in such songs you find alone
Completeness, judge the song and
singer one,

And either purpose answered, his in it
Or its in him : while from true works
(to wit

Sordello's dream-performances that
will

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 epis-
ode

In the bard's life : which evidence you
owed

To some slight weariness, some looking-
off

Or start-away. The childish skit or
scoff

In "Charlemagne," (his poem, dreamed
divine

In every point except one silly line
About the restiff daughters)—what
may lurk

In that ? " My life commenced before
this work,"

(So I interpret the significance
Of the bard's start aside and look ask-
ance)

" 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
compress

" ' The future gains, his life's true
business,

" ' Into the better lay which—that one
flout,

" ' Howe'er inopportune it be, lets
out—

"Engrosses him already, though professed
 "To meditate with us eternal rest,
 "And partnership in all his life has
 found?"
 "It is but a sailor's promise, weather-bound:
 "Strike sail, slip cable, here the bark be
 moored
 "For once, the awning stretched, the
 poles assured!
 "Noontide above; except the wave's
 crisp dash,
 "Or buzz of colibri, or tortoise' splash,
 "The margin's silent: out with every
 spoil
 "Made in our tracking, coil by mighty
 coil,
 "This serpent of a river to his head
 "I' the midst! Admire each treasure,
 as we spread
 "The bank, to help us tell our history
 "Aright: give ear, endeavour to
 descry
 "The groves of giant rushes, how they
 grew
 "Like demons' endlong tresses we
 sailed through,
 "What mountains yawned, forests to
 give us vent
 "Opened, each doleful side, yet on we
 went
 "Till . . . may that beetle (shake
 your cap) attest
 "The springing of a land-wind from the
 West!"
 —Wherefore? Ah yes, you frolic it
 to-day!
 To-morrow, and, the pageant moved
 away
 Down to the poorest tent-pole, we and
 you
 Part company: no other may pursue
 Eastward your voyage, be informed
 what fate
 Intends, if triumph or decline await
 The tempter of the everlasting steppe.
 I muse this on a ruined palace-step
 At Venice: why should I break off,
 nor sit
 Longer upon my step, exhaust the fit
 England gave birth to? Who's adorable
 Enough reclaim a — no Sordello's
 Will
 Alack!—be queen to me? That
 Bassanese
 Busied among her smoking fruit-boats?
 These
 Perhaps from our delicious Asolo
 Who twinkle, pigeons o'er the portico
 Not prettier, bind June lilies into
 sheaves
 To deck the bridge-side chapel, dropping
 leaves
 Soiled by their own loose gold-meal?
 Ah, beneath
 The cool arch stoops she, brownest-
 cheek! Her wreath
 Endures a month—a half month—if I
 make
 A queen of her, continue for her sake
 Sordello's story? Nay, that Paduan
 girl
 Splashes with barer legs where a live
 whirl [weed
 In the dear black Giudecca proves sea-
 Drifting has sucked down three, four,
 all indeed
 Save one pale-red striped, pale-blue
 turbaned post
 For gondolas.
 You sad dishevelled ghost
 That pluck at me and point, are you
 advised
 I breathe? Let stay those girls (e'en
 her disguised
 —Jewels 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 content
 With seeing just a score pre-eminent
 Through shreds of it, acknowledged,
 happy wights,

Engrossing what should furnish all, by rights!
 For, these in evidence, you clearer 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 dizen'd out as chiefs and hards.
 But in this magic weather one discards
 Much old requirement. Venice seems a type
 Of Life,—'twixt blue and blue extends, a stripe,
 As Life, the somewhat, hangs 'twixt nought and nought:
 'T is Venice, and 't is Life—as good you sought
 To spare me the Piazza's slippery stone
 Or keep me to the unchoked canals alone,
 As hinder Life the evil with the good
 Which make up Living, rightly understood.
 Only, do finish something! Peasants, queens,
 Take them, made happy by whatever means,
 Parade them for the common credit, vouch
 That a luckless residue, we send to crouch
 In corners out of sight, was just as framed
 For happiness, its portion might have claimed
 As well, and so, obtaining joy, had stalked
 Fastuous as any!—such my project, 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—
 Slow a bonnet, unloop mantle, careless go
 Alone (that's saddest, but it must be so)
 Through Venice, sing now and now glance aside,
 Aught desultory or undignified,—
 Then, ravishingest lady, will you pass
 Or not each formidable group, the mass
 Before the Basilic (that feast gone by,
 God's great day of the Corpus Domini)
 And, wistfully foregoing proper men,
 Come timid up to me for alms? And then
 The luxury to hesitate, feign do
 Some unexampled grace!—when, whom but you
 Dare I bestow your own upon? And hear
 Further before you say, it is to sneer
 I call you ravishing; for I regret
 Little that she, whose early foot was set
 Forth as she'd plant it on a pedestal,
 Now, in 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 rein-
 state
 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, they,
 "All men think all men stupider than
 "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 madri-
 gal
 "O' the mugwort that conceals a dew-
 drop safe!"
 What, dullard? we and you in smo-
 thery chafe,
 Babes, baldheads, stumbled thus far
 into Zin
 The Horrid, getting neither out nor in,
 A hungry sun above us, sands that
 bung
 Our throats,—each dromedary lolls a
 tongue,
 Each camel churns a sick and frothy
 chap,
 And you, 'twixt tales of Potiphar's
 mishap,
 And sonnets on the earliest ass that
 spoke, [choke
 —Remark, you wonder any one needs
 With founts about! Potsherd him,
 Gibeonites!
 While awkwardly enough your Moses
 smites
 The rock, though he forego his Pro-
 mised Land
 Thereby, have Satan claim his carcass,
 and
 Figure as Metaphysic Poet . . . ah,
 Mark ye the dim first oozings? Meri-
 bah!
 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 in-
 tent
 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 't
 is done.
 But this of ours yet in probation, dusk
 A kernel of strange wheelwork through
 its husk

Grows into shape by quarters and by halves ;

Remark this tooth's spring, wonder what that valve's

Fall bodes, presume each faculty's device,

Make out each other more or less precise—

The scope of the whole engine 's to be proved ;

We die : which means to say, the whole 's removed,

Dismounted wheel by wheel, this complex gin,—

To be set up anew elsewhere, begin

A task indeed, but with a clearer clime Than the murk lodgment of our building-time.

And then, I grant you, it behoves forget

How 't is done—all that must amuse us yet

So long : and, while you turn upon your heel,

Pray that I be not busy slitting steel Or shredding brass, camped on some virgin shore

Under a cluster of fresh stars, before I name a tithe o' the wheels I trust to do !

So occupied, then, are we : hitherto, At present, and a weary while to come, The office of ourselves,—nor blind nor dumb,

And seeing somewhat of man's state,—has been,

For the worst of us, to say they so have seen ;

For the better, what it was they saw : the best

Impart the gift of seeing to the rest :

"So that I glance," says such an one, "around,

"And there 's no face but I can read profound

"Disclosures in ; this stands for hope, that—fear,

"And for a speech, a deed in proof, look here !

"Stoop, else the strings of blossom, where the nuts

"O'erarch, will blind thee ! Said I not ? She shut

"Both eyes this time, so close the hazels meet !

"Thus, prisoned in the Piombi, I repeat

"Events one rove occasioned, o'er and o'er,

"Putting 'twixt me and madness evermore

"Thy sweet shape, Zanze ! There fore 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, 't was 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 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:
 "T is of the mood itself I speak, what
 tinge
 "Determines it, else colourless,—or
 mirth,
 "Or melancholy, as from heaven or
 earth."
 "'Ay, that's the variation's gist!'
 Indeed?
 "Thus far advanced in safety then,
 proceed! [bold
 "And having seen too what I saw, be
 "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 dis-
 pense
 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,—en-
 gage
 With, do not gaze at,—carry on, a
 stage,
 The work o' the world, not merely
 make report
 The work existed ere their day! In
 short,
 When at some future no-time a brave
 band
 Sees, using what it sees, then shake my
 hand
 In heaven, my brother! Meanwhile
 where's the hurt
 Of keeping the Makers-sec on the alert,
 At whose defection mortals stare aghast
 As though heaven's bounteous win-
 dows were slammed fast
 Incontinent? Whereas all you, be-
 neath,
 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 marche!
 A sacrifice for Jove with pomp to suit,
 What chance have I? The demigol
 was mute
 Till, at the altar, where time out of
 mind
 Such guests became oblations, chaplets
 twined
 His forehead long enough, and he be-
 gan
 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 chap-
 let rend—
 That's your kind suffrage, yours, my
 patron-friend,
 Whose great verse blares unintermit-
 tent on
 Like your own trumpeter at Mara-
 thon,—
 You who, Plataeas and Salamis being
 scant,
 Put up with Ætna for a stimulant—
 And did well, I acknowledged, as he
 loomed
 Over the midland sea last month, pre-
 sumed
 Long, lay demolished in the blazing
 West
 At eve, while towards him tilting
 cloudlets pressed
 Like Persian ships at Salamis. Friend,
 wear
 A crest proud as desert while I declare
 Had I a flawless ruby fit to wring
 Tears of its colour from that painted
 king
 Who lost it, I would, for that smile
 which went
 To my heart, fling it in the sea, content,
 Wearing your verse in place, an amulet
 Sovereign against all passion, wear and
 fret!
 My English•Eyebright, if you are not
 glad
 That, as I stopped my task awhile, the
 sad
 Dishevelled form, wherein I put 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 missel
thrush!
So, to our business, now—the fate of
such
As find our common nature—overmuch
Despised because restricted and unfit
To bear the burthen they impose on it—
Cling when they would discard it;
craving strength
To leap from the allotted world, at
length
They do leap,—flounder on without a
term,
Each a god's germ, doomed to remain a
germ
In unexpanded infancy, unless . . .
But that's the story—dull enough,
confess!
There might be fitter subjects to allure;
Still, neither misconceive my portrait—
ure
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 't was,
they shut
'Twixt boards and sawed asunder)
Polycarp,
Soft Charicle, next year no wheel could
warp
To swear by Cæsar's fortune, with the
rest
Were ranged; thro' whom the grey
disciple pressed,
Busily blessing right and left, just
stopped

To pat one infant's curls, the hangman
cropped
Soon after, reached the portal. On its
hinge
The door turns and he enters: what
quick twinge
Ruins the smiling mouth, those wide
eyes fix
Whereon, why like some spectral
candlestick's
Branch the disciple's arms? Dead
swooned he, woke
Anon. heaved sigh, made shift to gasp,
heart-broke,
"Get thee behind me, Satan! Have I
toiled
"To no more purpose? Is the gospel
foiled
"Here too, and o'er my son's, my
Xanthus' hearth,
"Portrayed with sooty garb and fea-
tures swarth—
"Ah Xanthus, am I to thy roof be-
guiled
"To see the—the—the Devil domi-
ciled?"
Whereto sobbed Xanthus, "Father,
't is yourself
"Installed, a limning which our utmost
pelf
"Went to procure against to-morrow's
loss;
"And that's no twy-prong, but a
pastoral cross,
"You're painted with!"
His puckered brows unfold—
And you shall hear Sordello's story
told.

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 Salin-
guerra seethe

"In hell for ever, Christ, and let myself
"Be there to laugh at him!"—

moaned some young Guelf
Stumbling upon a shrivelled hand
nailed fast

To the charred lintel of the doorway,
last

His father stood within to bid him
speed.

The thoroughfares were overrun with
—Docks, quitchgrass, loathly mallows
no man plants.

The stranger, none of its inhabitants
Crept out of doors to taste fresh air
again,

And ask the purpose of a splendid train
Admitted on a morning; every town
Of the East League was come by envoy
down

To treat for Richard's ransom: here
you saw

The Vicentine, here snowy oxen draw
The Paduan carroch, its vermilion cross
On its white field. A-tiptoe o'er the
fosse

Looked Legate Montelungo wistfully
After the flock of steeples he might spy
In Este's time, gone (doubts he) long
ago

To mend the ramparts: sure the lag-
gards know

The Pope's as good as here! They
paced the streets

More soberly. At last, "Taurello
greet's

"The League," announced a pursuiv-
ant,— "will match

"Its courtesy, and labours to dispatch
"At earliest Tito, Friedrich's Pretor,
sent

"On pressing matters from his post at
Trent,

"With Mainard Count of Tyrol,—
simply waits

"Their going to receive the delegates,"
"Tito!" Our delegates exchanged a
glance,

And, keeping the main way, admired
askance

The lazy engines of outlandish birth,
Couched like a king each on its bank of
earth—

Arbalist, manganel and catapult;
While stationed by, as waiting a result,
Lean silent gangs of mercenaries ceased
Working to watch the strangers.

"This, at least,
"Were better spared; he scarce pre-
sumes gainsay

"The League's decision! Get our
friend away

"And profit for the future: how else
teach

"Fools 't is not safe to stray within
claw's reach

"Ere Salinguerra's final gasp be blown?
"Those mere convulsive scratches find
the bone.

"Who bade him bloody the spent
osprey's nare?"

The carrochs halted in the public
square.

Pennons of every blazon once a-flaunt,
Men prattled, freelier that the crested
gaunt

White ostrich with a horse-shoe in her
beak

"Was missing, and whoever chose
might speak

"Ecelin" boldly out: so,— "Ecelin
"Needed his wife to swallow half the
sin

"And sickens by himself: the devil's
whelp,

"He styles his son, dwindles away, no
help

"From conserves, your fine triple-
curded froth

"Of virgin's blood, your Venice viper-
broth—

"Eh? Jubilate!"—"Peace! no lit-
tle 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."—
 "Ominous
 "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 tular
 "Of Padua, rather; veins embrace upon
 "His hand like Brenta and Bacchi-glion."
 What now?—"The founts! God's bread, touch not a plank!
 "A crawling hell of carrion—every tank
 "Choke full!—found out just now to Cino's cost—
 "The same who gave Taurello up for lost,
 "And, making no account of fortune's freaks,
 "Refused to budge from Padua then, but sneaks
 "Back now with Concorezzi—'faith! they drag
 "Their carroch to San Vitale, plant the flag
 "On his own palace, so adroitly razed
 "He knew it not; a sort of Guelf folk gazed
 "And laughed apart; Cino disliked their air—
 "Must pluck up spirit, show he does not care—
 "Seats himself on the tank's edge—will begin
 "To hum, *za, za, Cavalier Ecelin*—
 "A silence; he gets warmer, clinks to chime,
 "Now both feet plough the ground, deeper each time,
 "At last, *za, za* and up with a fierce kick
 "Comes his own mother's face caught by the thick
 "Grey hair about his spur!"

Which means, they lift
 The covering, Salinguerra made a shift
 To stretch upon the truth; as well avoid
 Further disclosures; leave them thus employed.
 Our dropping Autumn morning clears apace,
 And poor Ferrara puts a softened face
 On her misfortunes. Let us scale this tall
 Huge foursquare line of red brick garden-wall
 Bastioned within by trees of every sort
 On three sides, slender, spreading, long and short;
 Each grew as it contrived, the poplar ramped,
 The fig-tree reared itself,—but stark and cramped,
 Made fools of, like tamed lions: whence, on the edge,
 Running 'twixt trunk and trunk to smooth one ledge
 Of shade, were shrubs inserted, warp and woof,
 Which smothered up that variance. Scale the roof
 Of solid tops, and o'er the slope you slide
 Down to a grassy space level and wide,
 Here and there dotted with a tree, but trees
 Of rarer leaf, each foreigner at ease,
 Set by itself: and in the centre spreads,
 Borne upon three uneasy leopards' heads,
 A laver, broad and shallow, one bright spirt
 Of water bubbles in. The walls begirt
 With trees leave off on either hand; pursue
 Your path along a wondrous avenue
 Those walls 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 countryside!

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, [mien
Creatures of brighter mould and braver
Than any yet, the choicest of the Isle
No doubt. Here, left a sullen breath-
ing-while,
Up-gathered on himself the Fighter
stood
For his last fight, and, wiping treacher-
ous blood
Out of the eyelids just held open beneath
Those shading fingers in their iron
sheath,
Steadied his strengths amid the buzz
and stir
Of the dusk hideous amphitheatre
At the announcement of his over-match
To wind the day's diversion up, 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 Boni-
face.
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 in-
tent
Concerned him therefore: and, the
more he pried,
The less became Sordello satisfied
With his own figure at the moment.
Sought
He respite from his task? Descried he
aught
Novel in the anticipated sight
Of all these livers upon all delight?
This phalanx, as of myriad points com-
bined,
Whereby he still had imaged the man-
kind
His youth was passed in dreams of
rivalling, [thing
His age—in plans to prove at least such
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 Taurello's triple line
Of trees a single and prodigious pine.
Real pines rose here and there; but,
close among,
Thrust into and mixed up with pines, a
throng

Of shrubs, he saw,—a nameless common sort
 O'erpast in dreams, left out of the report
 And hurried into corners, or at best
 Admitted to be fancied like the rest.
 Reckon that morning's proper chiefs—
 how few!
 And yet the people grew, the people grew,
 Grew ever, as if the many there indeed,
 More left behind and most who should
 succeed,—
 Simply in virtue of their mouths and eyes,
 Petty enjoyments and huge miseries,—
 Mingled with, and made veritably great
 Those chiefs: he overlooked not 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 (like Egla-
 mor)
 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,
 'T is commonly some tarnished gay
 brocade
 Fit for a feast-night's flourish and no more:
 Nor otherwise poor Misery from her store
 Of looks is fain upgather, keep unfurled
 For common wear as she goes through
 the world,
 The faint remainder of some worn-out smile
 Meant for a feast-night's service
 merely. While
 Crowd upon crowd rose on Sordello
 thus,—
 (Crowds no way interfering to discuss,
 Much less dispute, life's joys with one
 employed
 in envying them,—or, if they aught enjoyed,
 Where lingered something indefinable
 In every look and tone, the mirth as
 well

As woe, that fixed at once his estimate
 Of the result, their good or bad estate)—
 Old memories returned with new effect:
 And the new body, ere he could suspect,
 Cohered, mankind and he were really
 fused,
 The new self seemed impatient to be
 used
 By him, but utterly another way
 Than that anticipated: strange to say,
 They were too much below him, more in
 thrall
 Than he, the adjunct than the principal.
 What bootied scattered units?—here a
 mind
 And there, which might repay his own
 to find,
 And stamp, and use?—a few, how'er
 august [dust?
 If all the rest were grovelling in the
 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 satisfied,—
 And, after that, think of rare qualities
 Of his own soul demanding exercise.
 It followed naturally, through no claim
 On their part, which made virtue of the
 aim
 At serving them, on his,—that, past
 retrieve,
 He felt now in their toils, theirs—nor
 could leave
 Wonder how, in the eagerness to rule,
 Impress his will on mankind, he (the
 fool!)
 Had never even entertained the thought
 That this his last arrangement might
 be fraught
 With incidental good to them as well,
 And that mankind's delight would help
 to swell
 His own. So, if he sighed, as formerly
 Because the merry time of life must
 fleet,
 'T was deeper now,—for could the
 crowds repeat

Their poor experiences? His hand
 that shook
 Was twice to be deplored. "The Le-
 gate, 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 [jar
 The meaning now of Palma; why the
 Else, the ado, the trouble wide and far
 Of Guelfs and Ghibellins, the Lom-
 bard's hope
 And Rome's despair?—'twixt Em-
 peror 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, dressed
 As the dislodging angel of that pest,
 Then—yet that pest bedropped, flat
 head, full fold,
 With coruscating dower of dyes, "Be-
 hold
 "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 here upon Count Mainard strut-
 ted past
 Out of San Pietro; never seemed the
 last
 Of archers, slingers: and our friend be-
 gan
 To recollect strange modes of serving
 man
 Arbalist, catapult, brake, mangel,
 And more. "This way of theirs may,
 —who can tell?
 "Need perfecting," said he: "let all
 be solved
 "At once! Taurello 't is, the task
 devolved
 "On late—count 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
 choice [voice
 Of her two daughters, the infantile
 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,

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 Sordello
 And Sal
 Of these
 yet.
 B.P.

They kindled great fires while the
 Leaguers' mass
 Began at every carroch—he must pass
 Between the kneeling people. Presently
 The carroch of Verona caught his eye
 With purple trappings; silently he bent
 Over its 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 Ecelin.
 "Here, minstrel, drive bad thoughts
 away! Sing! Take
 "My glove for guerdon!" And for
 that man's sake
 He turned: "A song of Eglamor's!"
 —scarce named,
 When, "Our Sordello's rather!"—all
 exclaimed;
 "Is not Sordello famousest for
 rhyme?"
 He had been happy to deny, this time,—
 Profess as heretofore the aching head
 And failing heart—suspect that in his
 stead
 Some true Apollo had the charge of
 them,
 Was champion to reward or to condemn,
 So his intolerable risk might shift
 Or share itself; but Naldo's preeious
 gift
 Of gifts, he owned, be certain! At the
 close— [rose
 "I made that," said he to a youth who
 As if to hear: 't was 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.

'T was 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-blackened
 With ochre on the naked wall; nor
 lacked
 Romano's green and yellow either side;
 But the new token Tito brought had
 tried
 The Legate's patience—nay, if Palma
 knew
 What Salinguerra almost meant to do
 Until the sight of her restored his lip
 A certain half-smile, three months'
 chieftainship
 Had banished! Afterward, the Leg-
 ate found
 No change in him, nor asked what
 badge he wound
 And unbound 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 't was 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 inner-
 most— [how struck
 So much was plain enough, but some-
 Him not before. And now with this
 strange luck
 Of Tito's news, rewarding his address
 So well, what thought he of?—how the
 success
 With Friedrich's rescript there, would
 either hush
 Old Ecelin's scruples, bring the manly
 flush
 To his young son's white cheek, or, last,
 exempt
 Himself from telling what there was to
 tempt?
 No: that this minstrel was Romano's
 last

Servant—himself the first! Could he
contrast
The whole!—that minstrel's thirty
years just spent
In doing nought, their notablest event
This morning's journey hither, as I
told—
Who yet was lean, outworn and really
old,
A stammering awkward man that
scarce dared raise
His eye before the magisterial gaze—
And Salinguerra with his fears and
hopes
Of sixty years, his Emperors and Popes,
Cares and contrivances, yet, you would
say,
'T was a youth nonchalantly looked
away
Through the embrasure northward o'er
the sick
Expostulating trees—so agile, quick
And graceful turned the head on the
broad chest
Encased in pliant steel, his constant
vest,
Whence split the sun off in a spray of
fire
Across the room; and, loosened of its
tire
Of steel, that head let breathe the
comely brown
Large massive locks discoloured as if a
crown
Encircled them, so frayed the basnet
where
A sharp white line divided clean the
hair;
Glossy above, glossy below, it swept
Curling and fine about a brow thus
kept
Calm, laid coat upon coat, marble and
sound:
This was the mystic mark the Tuscan
found,
Mused of, turned over books about.
Square-faced,
No lion more; two vivid eyes, en-
chased
In hollows filled with many a shade and
streak
Settling from the bold nose and bearded
check.
Nor might the half-smile reach them
that deformed
A lip supremely perfect else—un-
warmed,

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, com-
pressed
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 baldric; while,—another thing
that marred
Alike emprise, achievement and re-
ward,—
Ecclin'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, 't would
yield
A product very like the city's shield,
Half black and white, or Ghibellin and
Guelf,
As after Salinguerra styled himself
And Este who, till Marchesalla died,
(Last of the Adelardi)—never tried
His fortune there: with Marchesalla's
child
Would pass,—could Blacks and Whites
be reconciled,
And young Taurello wed Linguetta,—
wealth
And sway to a sole grasp. Each treats
by stealth

Already : when the Guelfs, the Raven-
nese

Arrive, assault the Pietro quarter, seize
Linguetta, and are gone ! Men's first
dismay

Abated somewhat, hurries down, to lay
The atter indignation, Boniface,
This Richard's father. "Learn the
full disgrace

"Averted, ere you blame us Guelfs,
who rate

"Your Salinguerra, your sole poten-
tate

"That might have been, 'mongst
Este's valvassors—

"Ay, Azzo's—who, not privy to, ab-
hors

"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 [grass

Rare sport, one morning, over the green
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," whis-
pers 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 understood the other. So it fell,
One Spring, when Azzo, thoroughly at
ease,

Had near forgotten by what precise
degrees

He crept at first to such a downy seat,
The Count trudged over in a special
heat

To bid him of God's love dislodge from
each

Of Salinguerra's palaces,—a breach
Might yawn else, not so readily to shut,
For who was just arrived at Mantua but
The youngster, sword on thigh and tuft
on chin,

With tokens for Celano, Ecelin,
Pistore, and the like ! Next news,—
no whit

Do any of Ferrara's domes befit
His wife of Heinrich's very blood : a
band

Of foreigners assemble, understand
Garden-constructing, level and sur-
round,

Build up and bury in. A last news
crowned [birth,

The consternation : since his infant's
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, At
there

With Boniface beforehand, as aware
Of plots in progress, gave alarm, ex-
pelled

Both plotters : but the Guelfs in tri-
umph 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 con-
stantly

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 reconciled

To losing individual life, which shrunk
As the other prospered—mortised in his
trunk;

Like a dwarf palm which wanton Arabs
foil

Of bearing its own proper wine and oil,
By grafting into it the stranger-vine,
Which sucks its heart out, sly and serpentine,

Till forth one vine-palm feathers to the
root,

And red drops moisten the insipid fruit.
Once Adelaide set on,—the subtle mate
Of the weak soldier, urged to emulate
The Church's valiant women deed for
deed,

And paragon her namesake, win the
meed [bore

Of the great Matilda,—soon they over-
The rest of Lombardy,—not as before
By an instinctive truculence, but
patched

The Kaiser's strategy until it matched
The Pontiff's, sought old ends by novel
means.

"Only, why is it Salinguerra screens
"Himself behind Romano?—him we
bade

"Enjoy our shine i' the front, not seek
the shade!"

—Asked Heinrich, somewhat of the
tardiest

To comprehend. Nor Philip acquiesced
At once in the arrangement; reasoned,
plied

His friend with offers of another bride,
A statelier function—fruitlessly: 'twas
plain

Taurello through some weakness must
remain

Obscure. And Otho, free to judge of
both,

—Ecelin the unready, harsh and loth,
And this more plausible and facile wight
With every point a-sparkle—chose the
right,

Admiring how his predecessors harped
On the wrong man: "thus," quoth he,
"wits are warped"

"By outsides!" Carelessly, mean-
while, his life

Suffered its many turns of peace and
strife

In many lands—you hardly could sur-
prise

The man; who shamed Sordello (recog-
nize!)

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
to flaws

In contracts with him; while, since
Arab lore

Holds the stars' secret—take one
trouble more

And master it! 'T is 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 quoits
Pitched home, applauding Ecelin's
exploits.

For elegance, he strung the angelot,
Made rhymes thereto; for prowess,

clove he not
Tiso, last siege, from crest to crupper?

Why
Detail you thus a varied mastery

But to show how Taurello, on the
watch

For men, to read their hearts and there-
by catch

Their capabilities and purposes,
Displayed himself so far as displayed
these:

While our Sordello only cared to know
About men as a means whereby he'd
show

Himself, and men had much or little
worth

According as they kept in or drew forth
That self; the other's choicest instru-
ments
Surnised him shallow.

Meantime, malcontents
Dropped off, town after town grew
wiser. "How

"Change the world's face?" asked
people; "as 't is now

"It has been, will be ever: very fine
"Subjecting things profane to things
divine,

"In talk! This contumacy will
fatigue

"The vigilance of Este and the League!
"The Ghibellins gain on us!"—as it
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 't were. 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, bar of fresh in-
crease

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." 'T was Adelaide's remain-
ing staunch

Prevented his destruction root and
branch

Forthwith; but when she died, doom
feli, for gay

He made alliances, gave lands away
To whom it pleased accept them, and
withdrew

For ever from the world. Taurello, who
Was summoned to the convent, then
refused

A word at the wicket, patience thus
abused,

Promptly threw off alike his imbecile
Ally's yoke, and his own frank, foolish
smile.

Soon a few movements of the happier
sort

Changed matters, put himself in men's
report

As heretofore; he had to fight, beside,
And that became him ever. So, in
pride

And flushing of this kind of second
youth,

He dealt a good-will blow. Este in
truth

Lay prone—and men remembered,
somewhat late,

A laughing old outrageous stifled hate
He bore to Este—how it would out-
break

At times spite of disguise, like an earth-
quake

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 em-
balmed,

Bricked up, the moody Pharaoh, and
survive

All intermediate crumbings, and arrive
At earth's catastrophe—'t was 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 pre-
dicted. He

'T was, leaned in the embrasure ab-
sently,

Amused with his own efforts, now, to
trace

With his steel-sheathed forefinger Friedrich's face

I' the dust: but as the trees waved sere, h's smile

Deepened, and words expressed its thought erewhile.

"Ay, fairly housed at last, my old compeer?

"That we should stick together, all the year

"I kept Vicenza!—How old Boniface,

"Old Azzo caught us in its marketplace,

"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 Sa'nguerra grudge

"Paying arrears of tribute due long since—

"Bacchus! My man could promise then, nor wince,

"The bones-and-muscles! Sound of wind and limb,

"Spoke he the set excuse I framed for him: [mute,

"And now he sits me, slaving and

"Intent on chafing each starved purple foot

"Benumbed past aching with the altar slab—

"Will no vein throb there when some monk shall blab

"Spitefully to the circle of bald scalps,

"Friedrich's affirmed to be our side the Alps'

"—Eh, brother Lactance, brother Anaclet

"Sworn to abjure the world, its fume and fret,

"God's own now? Drop the dormitory bar,

"Enfold the scanty grey serge scapular

"Twice o'er the cowl to muffle memories out!

"So! But the midnight whisper turns a shout,

"Eyes wink, mouths open, pulses circulate

"In the stone walls: the past, the world you hate

"Is with you, ambush, open field—or see

"The surging flame—we fire Vicenza—glee!

"Follow, let Pilio and Bernardo chafe!

"Bring up the Mantuans—through San Biagio—safe!

"Ah, the mad people waken? Ah, they writhe

"And reach us? If 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 haled

"The Adelaide he dared scarce view unveiled

"This morn, naked across the fire: how crown

"The archer that exhausted lays you down

"Your infant, smiling at the flame, and dies?

"While one, while mine . . . Bacchus! I think there lies

"More than one corpse there" (and he paced the room)

"—Another cinder somewhere; 't was my doom

"Beside, my doom! If Adelaide is dead,

"I live the same, this Azzo lives instead

"Of that to me, and we pull, any how,

"Este into a heap: the matter's now

"At the true juncture slipping us so oft.

"Ay, Heinrich died and Otho, please you, doffed

- " His crown at such a juncture ! Still,
if 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 re-
coiler leaves
- " His name for me to fight with, no one
grieves : [lock
- " But he must interfere, forsooth, un-
- " His cloister to become my stumbling-
block
- " Just as of old ! Ay, ay, there 't is
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, doubt-
less, twine with me
- " At once : our cloistered friend's
capacity
- " Was of a sort ! I had to share my-
self
- " In fifty portions, like an o'ertasked
elf
- " That 's forced illume in fifty points
the vast
- " Rare vapour he 's environed by. At
last
- " My strengths, though sorely frittered,
e'en converge
- " And crown . . . no, Bacchus, they
have yet to urge
- " The man be crowned !
- " That aloe, an he durst,
- " Would climb ! Just such a bloated
sprawler first
- " I noted in Messina's castle-court
- " The day I came, when Heinrich asked
in sport
- " If I would pledge my faith to win him
back
- " His right in Lombardy : 'for, once
bid pack
- " 'Marauders,' he continued, 'in my
stead
- " 'You rule, Taurello !' and upon this
head
- " Laid the silk glove of Constance—I
see her
- " Too, mantled head to foot in miniver,
" Retrude following !
- " " I am absolved
From further toil : the empery de-
volved
- " On me, 't was Tito's word : I have
to lay
- " For once my plan, pursue my plan my
way,
- " Prompt nobody, and render an ac-
count
- " 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, Boni-
face
- " Compose a right-arm Hohenstauf-
fen's race
- " Must break ere govern Lombardy. I
point
- " How easy 't were to twist, once out of
joint,
- " The socket from the bone :—my Az-
zo's stare
- " Meanwhile ! for I, this idle strap to
wear, [end
- " Shall—fret myself abundantly, what
- " 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—'t were worth while frus-
trate 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 wear-
iness
- " Gently lifted aside, laid upon shore ?
- " My life must be lived out in foam and
roar,

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"No question. Fifty years the province held
 "Taurello; troubles raised, and troubles quelled,
 "He in the midst—who leaves this quaint stone place,
 "These trees a year or two, then not a trace
 "Of him! How obtain hold, fetter men's tongues
 "Like this poor minstrel with the foolish songs—
 "To which, despite our bustle, he is linked?
 "—Flowers one may 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, Ecelin appears
 "To thwart me, for his son's besotted youth
 "Gives promise of the proper tiger-tooth:
 "They feel it at Vicenza! Fate, fate, fate,
 "My fine Taurello! Go you, promulgate
 "Friedrich's decree, and here's shall aggrandise
 "Young Ecelin—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
 "Ecelin? now, I think, and years ago!
 "What's changed—the weakness? did not I compound
 "For that, and undertake to keep him sound

"Despite it? Here's Taurello hankering

"After a boy's preferment—this plaything

"To carry, Bacchus!" And he laughed.

Remark

Why schemes wherein cold-blooded men embark

Prosper, when your enthusiastic sort fail: while these last are ever stopping short—

(So much they should—so little they can do!)

The careless tribe see nothing to pursue if they desist; meantime their scheme succeeds.

Thoughts were caprices in the course of deeds

Methodic with Taurello; so, he turned, Enough amused by fancies fairly earned Of Este's horror-struck submitted neck, And Richard, the cowed braggart, at his beck,—

To his own petty but immediate doubt If he could pacify the League without Conceding Richard; just to this was brought

That interval of vain discursive thought!

As, shall I say, some Ethiop, past pursuit

Of all enslavers, dips a shackled foot Burnt to the blood, into the drowsy black

Enormous watercourse which guides him back

To his own tribe again, where he is king;

And laughs because he guesses, numbering

The yellower poison-wattles on the pouch

Of the first lizard wrested from its couch

Under the slime (whose skin, the while, he strips

To cure his nostril with, and festered lips,

And eyeballs bloodshot through the desert blast)

That he has reached its boundary, at last

May breathe;—thinks o'er enchantments of the South

Sovereign to plague his enemies, their mouth,

Eyes, nails and hair ; but, these enchantments tried

In fancy, puts them soberly aside
For truth, projects a cool return with friends,

The likelihood of winning mere amends
Ere long ; thinks that, takes comfort silently,

Then, from the river's brink, his wrongs and he,

Hugging revenge close to their hearts, are soon

Off-striding for the Mountains of the Moon.

Midnight : the watcher nodded on his spear,

Since clouds dispersing left a passage clear,

For any meagre and discoloured moon
To venture forth ; and such was peering soon

Above the harassed city—her close lanes

Closer, not half so tapering her fanes,
As though she shrank 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. " 'T is your Cause :

" What makes a Ghibellin ? There should be laws—

' (Remember how my youth escaped ! I trust

" To you for manhood, Palma ; tell me just

" As any child)—there must be laws at work

" Explaining this. Assure me, good may lurk

" Under the bad,—my multitude has part

" In your designs, their welfare is at heart

" With Salinguerra, to their interest

" Refer the deeds he dwelt on,—so divest

" Our conference of much that scared me. Why

" Affect that heartless tone to Tito ? I

" Esteemed myself, yes, in my inmost mind

" This morn, a recreant to my race—mankind

" O'erlooked till now : why boast my spirit's force,

" —Such force denied its object ? why divorce

" These, then admire my spirit's flight the same

" As though it bore up, helped some half-orbed flame

" Else quenched in the dead void, to living space ?

" That orb cast off to chaos and disgrace,

" Why count so much my unincumbered dance,

" Making a feat's facilities enhance

" Its marvel ? But I front Taurello, one [done.

" Of happier fate, and all I should have

" 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; whose shall
 enlist
 "With either, ranks with man's in-
 veterate foes.
 "So there is one less quarrel to com-
 pose:
 "The Gueff, the Ghibellin may be to
 curse—
 "I have done nothing, but both sides
 do worse
 "Than nothing. Nay, to me, for-
 gotten, reft
 "Of insight, lapped by trees and
 flowers, was left
 "The notion of a service—ha? What
 lured
 "Me here, what mighty aim was I as-
 sured
 "Must move Taurello? What if there
 remained
 "A cause, intact, distinct from these,
 ordained
 "For me, its true discoverer?"
 Some one pressed
 Before them here, a watcher, to suggest
 The subject for a ballad: "They must
 know
 "The tale of the dead worthy, long ago
 "Consil of Rome—that's long ago for
 us,
 "Minstrels and bowmen, idly squab-
 bling thus
 "In the world's corner—but too late,
 no doubt,
 "For the brave time he sought to bring
 about.
 "—Not know Crescentius Nomenta-
 nus?" Then
 He cast about for terms to tell him,
 when
 Sordello disavowed it, how they used
 Whenever their Superior introduced
 A novice to the Brotherhood—"for I
 "Was just a brown-sleeve brother,
 merrily
 "Appointed too," quoth he, "till
 Innocent
 "Bade me relinquish, to my small con-
 tent,
 "My wife or my brown sleeves")—
 some brother spoke
 Ere nocturns of Crescentius, to revoke
 The edict issued, after his demise,

Which blotted fame alike and effigies,
 All out except a floating power, a name
 Including, tending to produce the same
 Great act. Rome, dead, forgotten,
 lived at least
 Within that brain, though to a vulgar
 priest
 And a vile stranger,—two not worth a
 slave
 Of Rome's, Pope John, King Otho,—
 fortune gave
 The rule there: so, Crescentius, haply
 dressed
 In white, called Roman Consul for a
 jest,
 Taking the people at their word, forth
 stepped
 As upon Brutus' heel, nor ever kept
 Rome waiting,—stood erect, and from
 his brain
 Gave Rome out on its ancient place
 again,
 Ay, bade proceed with Brutus' Rome,
 Kings styled
 Themselves mere citizens of, and, 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. Creseentius in
 the stress
 Of adverse fortune bent. "They cru-
 cified
 "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,

Guelf Rome or Ghibellin Rome.

Let Rome advance !

Rome, as she struck Sordello's ignorance—

How could he doubt one moment ? Rome's the Cause !

Rome of the Pandects, all the world's new laws—

Of the Capitol, of Castle Angelo ; New structures, that inordinately glow, Subdued, brought back to harmony, made ripe

By many a relic of the archetype Extant for wonder ; every upstart church

That hoped to leave old temples in the lurch,

Corrected by the Theatre forlorn

That,—as a mundane shell, its world late born,—

Lay and o'ershadowed it. These hints combined,

Rome typifies the scheme to put mankind

Once more in full possession of their rights.

" Let us have Rome again ! On me it lights

" To build up Rome—on me, the first and last :

" For such a future was endured the past ! "

And thus, in the grey twilight, forth he sprung

To give his thought consistency among The very People—let their facts avail

Finish the dream grown from the archer's tale.

BOOK THE FIFTH

Is it the same Sordello in the dusk ?

As at the dawn ?—merely a perished husk

Now, that arose a power fit to build Up Rome again ? The proud conception chilled

So soon ? Ay, watch that latest dream of thine

—A Rome indebted to no Palatine—

Drop arch by arch, Sordello ! Art possessed

Of thy wish now, rewarded for thy quest

To-day among Ferrara's squalid sons ? Are this and this and this the shining

ones

Meet for the Shining City ? Sooth to say,

Your favoured tenantry pursue their way

After a fashion ! This companion slips

On the smooth causey, t' other blinkard trips

At his mooned sandal. " Leave to lead the brawls

" Here i' the atria ? " No, friend ! He that sprawls

On aught but a stibadium . . . what his dues

Who puts the lustral vase to such an use ?

Oh, huddle up the day's disasters ! March,

Ye runagates, and drop thou, arch by arch,

Rome !

Yet before they quite disband—a whim—

Study mere shelter, now, for him, and him,

Nay, even the worst,—just house them ! Any cave

Suffices : throw out earth ! A loophole ? Brave !

They ask to feel the sunshine, see the grass

Grow, hear the larks sing ? Dead art thou, alas,

And I am dead ! But here's our son excels

At hurdle-weaving any Scythian, fells Oak and devises rafters, dreams and shapes

His dream into a door-post, just escapes The mystery of hinges. Lie we both

Perdue another age. The goodly growth

Of brick and stone ! Our building-pelt was rough,

But that descendant's garb suits well
 enough
 A portico-contriver. Speed the years—
 What's time to us? At last, a city
 rears
 Itself! nay, enter—what's the grave to
 us?
 Lo, our forlorn acquaintance carry
 thus
 The head! Successively sewer, forum,
 cirque—
 Last age, an aqueduct was counted
 work,
 But now they tire the artificer upon
 Blank alabaster, black obsidion,
 —Careful, Jove's face be duly fulgur-
 ant,
 And mother Venus' kiss-creased nip-
 ples pant
 Back into pristine pulpiness, ere fixed
 Above the baths. What difference
 betwixt
 This Rome and ours—resemblance
 what, between
 That scurvy dumb-show and this
 pageant sheen—
 These Romans and our rabble? Use
 thy wit!
 The work marched: step by step,—a
 workman fit
 Took each, nor too fit,—to one task,
 one time,—
 No leaping o'er the petty to the prime,
 When just the substituting osier lithe
 For brittle bulrush, sound wood for
 soft withe,
 To further loam-and-roughcast-work a
 stage,—
 Exacts an architect, exacts an age:
 No tables of the Mauritanian tree
 For men whose maple-log 's their lux-
 ury!
 That way was Rome built. "Better"
 (say you) "merge
 "At once all workmen in the demiurge,
 "All epochs in a lifetime, every task
 "In one!" So should the sudden
 city bask
 I' the day—while those we'd feast
 there, want the knack
 Of keeping fresh-chalked gowns from
 speck and brack,
 Distinguish not rare peacock from vile
 swan,
 Nor Mareotic juice from Cæcuban.
 "Enough of Rome! 'T was happy to
 conceive

"Rome on a sudden, nor shall fate be-
 reave
 "Me of that credit: for the rest, her
 spite
 "Is an old story—serves my folly right
 "By adding yet another to the dull
 "List of abortions—things proved
 beautiful
 "Could they be done, Sordello cannot
 do."
 He sat upon the terrace plucked and
 threw
 The powdery aloe-cusps away, saw
 shift
 Rome's walls, and drop arch after arch,
 and drift
 Mist-like afar those pillars of all stripe,
 Mounds of all majesty. "Thou archie-
 type,
 "Last of my dreams and loveliest,
 depart!"
 And then a low voice wound into his
 heart:
 "Sordello!" (low as some old Pytho-
 ness
 Conceding to a Lydian King's distress
 The cause of his long error—one mis-
 take
 Of her past oracle) "Sordello, wake!
 "God has conceded two sights to a
 man—
 "One, of men's whole work, time's
 completed plan,
 "The other, of the minute's work,
 man's first
 "Step to the plan's completeness:
 what 's dispersed
 "Save hope of that supreme step which,
 descried
 "Earliest, was meant still to remain
 untried
 "Only to give you heart to take your
 own
 "Step, and there stay—leaving the rest
 alone?
 "Where is the vanity? Why count
 as one
 "The first step, with the last step?
 What is gone
 "Except Rome's æry magnificence,
 "That last step you'd take first?—an
 evidence
 "You were God: be man now! Let
 those glances fall!
 "The basis, the beginning step of all,
 "Which proves you just a man—is that
 gone too?

- "Pity to 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 lulled Isle,
 "Woven into the echoes left erewhile
 "By Nina, one soft web of song: no more
 "Turning his name, then, flower-like o'er and o'er!
 "An elder poet in the younger's place;
 "Nina's the strength, but Alcamo's the grace:
 "Each neutralizes each then! Search your fill; [still
 "You get no whole and perfect Poet—
 "New Ninas, Alcamos, till time's midnight
 "Shrouds all—or better say, the shutting light
 "Of a forgotten yesterday. Dissect
 "Every ideal workman—to reject
 "In favour of your fearful ignorance
 "The thousand phantasms eager to advance,
 "And point you but to those within your reach)—
 "Were you the first who brought—in modern speech)
 "The Multitude to be materialized?
 "That loose eternal unrest—who devised
 "An apparition i' the midst? The rout
 "Was checked, a breathless ring was formed about
 "That sudden flower: get round at any risk
 "The gold-rough pointel, silver-blazing disk
 "O' the lily! Swords across it! Reign thy reign
 "And serve thy frolic service, Charlemagne!
- "—The very child of over-joyousness,
 "Unfeeling thence, strong therefore: Strength by stress
 "Of Strength comes of that forehead confident,
 "Those widened eyes expecting heart's content,
 "A calm as out of just-quelled noise; nor swerves
 "For doubt, the ample cheek in gracious curves
 "Abutting on the upthrust nether lip:
 "He wills, how should he doubt then? Ages slip:
 "Was it Sordello pried into the work
 "So far accomplished, and discovered lurk
 "A company amid the other clans,
 "Only distinct in priests for castellans
 "And popes for suzerains (their rule confessed
 "Its rule, their interest its interest,
 "Living for sake of living—there an end,—
 "Wrapt in itself, no energy to spend
 "In making adversaries or allies,—
 "Dived you into its capabilities
 "And dared create, out of that sect, a soul [whole,
 "Should turn a multitude, already
 "Into its body? Speak plainer! Is't so sure
 "God's church lives by a King's investiture?
 "Look to last step! A staggering—a shock—
 "What's mere sand is demolished, while the rock
 "Endures: a column of black fiery dust
 "Blots heaven—that help was prematurely thrust
 "Aside, perchance!—but 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, Hildebrand
 "Of the huge brain-mask welded ply o'er ply
 "As in a forge; it buries either eye
 "White and extinct, that stupid brow; teeth clenched,
 "The neck tight-corded, too, the chin deep-trenched,

- " As if a cloud enveloped him while
 fought
 " Under its shade, grim prizers,
 thought with thought
 " At dead-lock, agonizing he, until
 " The victor thought leap radiant up,
 and Will,
 " The slave with folded arms and droop-
 ing 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 [tears
 " Have men to wear away in smiles and
 " Between the two that nearly seemed
 to touch,
 " Observe you! quit one workman and
 you clutch
 " Another, letting both their trains go
 by—
 " The actors-out of either's policy,
 " Heinrich, on this hand, Otho, Bar-
 baross,
 " 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 Vimmereato, 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 St. 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 plen-
 teous way
 " O' the plant—produced by joy and
 sorrow, whence
 " Unfeeling and yet feeling, strongest
 thence?
 " Knowledge by stress of merely
 Knowledge? No—
 " E'en were Sordello ready to forego
 " His life for this, 'twere overleaping
 work
 " Some one has first to do, howe'er it
 irk,
 " Nor stay 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 pil-
 lars blench
 " Merely, start back again—perchance
 have been
 " Taken for buttresses: crash every
 screen,
 " Hammer the tenons better, and en-
 gage
 " 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 di-
vulge
"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 be-
hind:
"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
descrie
"Mankind as half yourself,—then,
fancy's trade
"Ends once and always: how may half
evade
"The other half? men are found half
of you.
"Out of a thousand helps, just one or
two
"Can be accomplished presently: but
flinch
- "From these (as from the faulch'on,
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 Rich-
ard, how
" 'Pol't-foot,' sang they, 'was in a pit-
fall now,'
"Cheering each other from the engine-
mounts,—
"That crippled sprawling idiot who
recounts
"How, lopped of limbs, he lay, stupid
as stone,
"Till the pains crept from out him one
by one.
"And wriggles round the archers on
his head
"To earn a morsel of their chestnut
bread,—
"And Cino, always in the self-same place
"Weeping; beside that other wretch's
case,
"Eyepits to ear, one gangrene since he
plied [hide
"The engine in his coat of raw sheep's
"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
"Marfisa, the fool never saw before.
"Sickened for flowers this wearisomest
siege:
"And Tiso's wife—men liked their
pretty liege,

"Cared for her least of whims once,—
 Berta, wed
 "A twelvemonth gone, and, now poor
 Tiso's dead,
 "Delivering herself of his first child
 "On that chance heap of wet filth,
 reconciled
 "To fifty gazers!"—(Here a wind be-
 low
 Made moody music augural of woe
 From the pine barrier—"What if, now
 the scene
 "Draws to a close, yourself have really
 been
 "—You, plucking purples in Goito's
 moss
 "Like edges of a trabea (not to cross
 "Your consul-humour) or dry aloe-
 shafts
 "For fasces, at Ferrara—he, fate
 wafts,
 "This very age, her whole inheritance
 "Of opportunities? Yet you advance
 "Upon the last! Since talking is your
 trade,
 "There's Salinguerra left you to per-
 suade:
 "Fail! then"—
 "No—no—which latest chance
 secure!"
 Leaped up and cried Sordello: "this
 made sure,
 "The past were yet redeemable; its
 work
 "Was—help the Guelfs, whom I, how-
 e'er it irk,
 "Thus help!" He shook the foolish
 aloe-haulm [calm
 Out of his doublet, paused, proceeded
 To the appointed presence. The large
 head
 Turned on its socket; "And your
 spokesman," said
 The large voice, "is Elcorte's happy
 sprout?
 "Few such"—(so finishing a speech
 no doubt
 Addressed to Palma, silent at his side)
 "—My sober councils have diversified.
 "Elcorte's son! good: forward as
 you may,
 "Our lady's minstrel with so much to
 say!"
 The hesitating sunset floated back,
 Rosily traversed in the wonted track
 The chamber, from the lattice o'er the
 girth

Of pines, to the huge eagle blacked in
 earth
 Opposite,—outlined sudden, spur to
 crest,
 That solid Salinguerra, and caressed
 Palma's contour; 't was day looped
 back night's pall;
 Sordello had a chance left spite of all.
 And much he made of the convincing
 speech
 Meant to compensate for the past and
 reach
 Through his youth's daybreak of
 unprofit, quite
 To his noon's labour, so proceed till
 night
 Leisurely! The great argument to
 bind
 Taurello with the Guelf Cause, body
 and mind,
 —Came the consummate rhetoric to
 that?
 Yet most Sordello's argument dropped
 flat
 Through his accustomed fault of
 breaking yoke,
 Disjoining him who felt from him who
 spoke.
 Was 't not a touching incident—so
 prompt
 A rendering the world its just accompt,
 Once proved its debtor? Who'd sup-
 pose, before
 This proof, that he, Goito's god of yore,
 At duty's instance could demean him-
 self
 So memorably, dwindle to a Guelf?
 Be sure, in such delicious flattery
 steeped,
 His inmost self at the out-portion
 peeped,
 Thus occupied; then stole a glance at
 those
 Appealed to, curious if her colour rose
 Or his lip moved, while he discreetly
 urged
 The need of Lombardy becoming
 purged
 At soonest of her barons; the poor
 part
 Abandoned thus, missing the blood at
 heart
 And spirit in brain, unseasonably off
 Elsewhere! But, though his speech
 was worthy scoff,
 Good-humoured Salinguerra, famed for
 tact

And tongue, who, careless of his phrase,
 ne'er lacked
 The right phrase, and harangued Hon-
 orius dumb
 At his accession,—looked as all fell
 plumb
 To purpose and himself found interest
 In every point his new instructor
 pressed
 —Left playing with the rescript's
 white wax seal
 To scrutinize Sordello head and heel.
 He means to yield assent sure? No,
 alas!
 All he replied was, "What, it comes to
 pass
 "That pocsy, sooner than politics,
 "Makes fade young hair?" To think
 such speech could fix
 Taurello!
 Then a flash of bitter truth:
 So fantasies could break and fritter
 youth
 That he had long ago lost earnestness,
 Lost will to work, lost power to even
 express
 The need of working! Earth was
 turned a grave:
 No more occasions now, though he
 should crave
 Just one, in right of superhuman toil,
 To do what was undone, repair such
 spoil,
 Alter the past—nothing would give the
 chance!
 Not that he was to die; he saw ask-
 ance
 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
 corslet back
 To hear the better, smilingly resumed
 His task; beneath, the carroch's
 warning boomed;
 He must decide with Tito; courteously
 He turned then, even seeming to agree
 With his admonisher—"Assist the
 Pope,
 "Extend Guelf domination, fill the
 scope
 "Of the Church, thus based on All, by
 All, for All—
 "Change Secular to Evangelical"—
 Echoing his very sentence: all seemed
 lost,
 When suddenly he looked up, laugh-
 ingly almost,
 To Palma: "This opinion of your
 friend's—
 "For instance, would it answer Pal-
 ma's ends?
 "Best, were it not, turn Guelf, submit
 our Strength"—
 (Here he drew out his baldric to its
 length)
 —"To the Pope's Knowledge—let our
 captive slip,
 "Wide to the walls throw ope our gates,
 equip
 "Azzo with . . . what I hold here?
 Who'll subscribe
 "To a trite censure of the minstrel
 tribe
 "Henceforward? or pronounce, as
 Heinrich used,
 "'Spear-heads for battle, burr-heads
 for the joust!"
 "—When Constance, for his couplets,
 would promote
 "Alcarno, from a parti-coloured coat,
 "To holding her lord's stirrup in the
 wars.
 "Not that I see where couplet-making
 jars
 "With common sense: at Mantua I
 had borne
 "This chanted, better than their most
 forlorn
 "Of bull-baits,—that's indisputable!"
 Brave i
 Whom vanity nigh slew, contempt
 shall save!
 All's at an end: a Troubadour suppose
 Mankind will class him with their
 friends or foes?

A puny uncouth ailing vassal think
The world and him bound in some
special link ?

Abrupt the visionary tether burst.
What were rewarded here, or what
amerced

If a poor drudge, solicitous to dream
Deservingly, got tangled by his theme
So far as to conceit the knack or gift
Or whatsoe'er it be, of verse, might lift
The globe, a lever like the hand and
head

Of—"Men of Action," as the Jongleurs
said,

—"The Great Men," in the people's
dialect ?

And not a moment did this scorn
affect [once,
Sordello : scorn the poet ? They, for
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.
'T is 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 let-
tuce leaves

Together in his stomach rattle loose ;
You find them perfect next day to pro-
duce :

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 their sake must not be ignobly
fought,

All these, for once, approved of him,
he thought,

Suspended their own vengeance, chose
await

The issue of this strife to reinstate
Them in the right of taking it—in fact
He must be proved king ere they could
exact

Vengeance for such king's defalcation.
Last,

A reason why the plot flowed so fast
Was in his quite forgetting for a time
Himself in his amazement that the
rhyme

Disguised the royalty so much : he
there—

And Salinguerra yet all unaware
Who was the lord, who liegeman !

"Thus I lay
"On thine my spirit and compel obey
"His lord,—my liegeman,—impotent
to build

"Another Rome, but hardly so un-
skilled

"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 crowd he claims ! That I
must cede [meed—

"Shamed now, my right to my especial
"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 van-
 tage-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 Ty-
 phon all
 For Hercules to trample—good report
 From Salinguerra only to extort?
 "So was I" (closed he his inculcat-
 ing,
 A poet must be earth's essential king)
 "So was I, royal-so, and if I fail,
 "'T is not the royalty, ye witness
 quail,
 "But one deposed who, caring not
 exert
 "Its proper essence, trifled malapert
 "With accidents instead—good things
 assigned
 "As heralds of a better thing behind—
 "And, worthy through display of
 these, put forth
 "Never the inmost all-surpassing
 worth
 "That constitutes him king precisely
 since
 "As yet no other spirit may evince
 "Its like: the power he took most
 pride to test,
 "Whereby all forms of life had been
 professed
 "At pleasure, forms already on the
 earth,
 "Was but a means to power beyond,
 whose birth
 "Should, in its novelty, be king-
 ship'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, nor the proto-
 plast
 "Of nature: what would come of be-
 ing free,
 "By action to exhibit tree for tree,
 "Bird, beast, for beast and bird, or
 prove earth bore
 "One veritable man or woman more?
 "Means to an end, such proofs are:
 what the end?
 "Let essence, whatsoe'er it be, extend—
 "Never contract. Already you in-
 clude
 "The multitude; then let the multi-
 tude
 "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 dis-
 player, still
 "More potent than the last, of human
 will,
 "And some new king depose the old.
 Of such
 "Am I—whom pride of this elates too
 much?
 "Safe, rather say, 'mid troops of peers
 again;
 "I, with my words, hailed brother of
 the train
 "Deeds once sufficed: for, let the
 world roll back,
 "Who fails, through deeds howe'er
 diverse, re-track
 "My purpose still, my task? A teem-
 ing crust—
 "Air, flame, earth, wave at conflict!
 Then, needs must
 "Emerge some Calm embodied, these
 refer

- " The brawl to ;—yellow-bearded Ju-
 piter ?
 " No ! Saturn ; some existence like a
 pact
 " And protest against Chaos, some first
 fact
 " I' the faint of time. My deep of life,
 I know,
 " Is unavailing e'en to poorly show " ...
 (For here the Chief immeasurably
 yawned)
 . . . " Deeds in their due gradation
 till Song dawned—
 " The fullest effluence of the finest
 mind,
 " All in degree, no way diverse in kind
 " From minds about it, minds which,
 more or less
 " Lofty or low, move seeking to impress
 " Themselves on somewhat ; but one
 mind has climbed
 " Step after step, by just ascent sub-
 limed.
 " Thought is the soul of act, and, stage
 by stage,
 " Soul is from body still to disengage
 " As tending to a freedom which rejects
 " Such help and incorporeally affects
 " The world, producing deeds but not
 by deeds,
 " Swaying, in others, frames itself ex-
 ceeds,
 " Assigning them the simpler tasks it
 used
 " To patiently perform till Song pro-
 duced
 " Acts, by thoughts only, for the mind :
 divest
 " Mind of e'en Thought, and, lo, God's
 unexpressed
 " Will draws above us ! All then is to
 win
 " Save that. How much for me, then ?
 where begin
 " My work ? About me, faces ! and
 they flock, [look
 " The earnest faces. What shall I un-
 " By song ? behold me prompt, what-
 e'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 promin-
 ent, 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
 enwomb
 " Some wretched Friedrich with his
 red-hot tomb ;
 " Some dubious spirit, Lombard Agil-
 nolph
 " With the black chastening river I
 enguiph !
 " Some unapproached Matilda I en-
 shrine
 " With languors of the planet of de-
 cline—
 " These, fail to recognize, to arbitrate
 " Between henceforth, to rightly estim-
 ate
 " Thus marshalled in the masque !
 Myself, 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 hither-
 to
 " Will I unstation, good and bad, con-
 duct
 " Each nature to its farthest, or ob-
 struct
 " 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 un-
 fold,
 " Or obstacles to crush them, disen-
 gage
 " Their forms, love, hate, hope, fear,
 peace make, war wage,
 " In presence of you all ! Myself,
 implied
 " Superior now, as, by the platform's
 side,
 " I bade them do and suffer,—would
 last content
 " The world . . . no—that's too far !
 I circumvent
 " A few, my masque contented, and to
 these
 " Offer unveil the last of mysteries—

- " Man's inmost life shall have yet freer play :
- " Once more I cast external things away,
- " And natures composite, so decompose
- " 'Thit " . . . Why, he writes *Sordello* !
- " How I rose,
- " And how have you advanced ! since evermore
- " Yourselves effect what I was fain before
- " Effect, what I supplied yourselves suggest,
- " What I leave bare yourselves can now invest.
- " How we attain to talk as brothers talk,
- " In half-words, call things by half-names, no balk
- " From discontinuing old aids. To-day
- " Takes in account the work of Yesterday :
- " Has not the world a Past now, its adept
- " Consults ere he dispense with or accept
- " New aids ? a single touch more may enhance,
- " A touch less turn to insignificance
- " Those structures' symmetry the past has strewed
- " The world with, once so bare. Leave the mere rude
- " Explicit details ! 't is but brother's speech
- " We need, speech where an accent's change gives each
- " The other's soul—no speech to understand
- " By former audience : need was then to expand,
- " Expatiate—hardly were we brothers ! true—
- " Nor I lament my small remove from you,
- " Nor reconstruct what stands already. Ends
- " Accomplished turn to means : my art intends
- " New structure from the ancient : as they changed
- " The spoils of every clime at Venice, ranged
- " The horned and snouted Libyan god, upright
- " As in his desert, by some simple bright
- " Clay cinerary pitcher—Thebes as Rome,
- " Athens as Byzant rifled, till their Dome
- " From earth's reputed consummations razed
- " A seal, the all-transmuting Triad blazed
- " Above. Ah, whose that fortune ? Ne'ertheless
- " E'en he must stoop contented to express
- " No tithe of what's to say—the vehicle
- " Never sufficient : but his work is still
- " For faces like the faces that select
- " The single service I am bound effect,—
- " That b'd me cast aside such fancies, bow
- " Taurello to the Guelf cause, disallow
- " The Kaiser's coming—which with heart, soul, strength,
- " I labour for, this eve, who feel at length
- " My past career's outrageous vanity,
- " And would, as its amends, die, even die
- " Now I first estimate the boon of life,
- " If death might win compliance—sure, this strife
- " Is right for once—the People my support."
- My poor Sordello ! what may we extort
- By this, I wonder ? Palma's lighted eyes
- Turned to Taurello who, long past surprise,
- Began, " You love him—what you'd say at large
- " Let me say briefly. First, your father's charge
- " To me, his friend, peruse : I guessed indeed
- " You were no stranger to the course decreed.
- " He bids me leave his children to the saints :
- " As for a certain project, he acquaints
- " The Pope with that, and offers him the best
- " Of your possessions to permit the rest
- " Go peaceably—to Ecelin, a stripe
- " Of soil the cursed Vicentines will gripe,

"—To Alberic, a patch the Trevisan
 "Clutches already; extricate, who
 can,
 "Treville, Villarazzi, Puissolo,
 "Cartiglione, Loria!—all go,
 "And with them go my hopes. 'T is
 lost, then!

"Lost

"This eve, our crisis, and some pains it
 cost
 "Procuring; thirty years—as good I'd
 spent
 "Like our admonisher! But each his
 bent
 "Pursues: no question one might live
 absurd
 "Oneself this while, by deed as he by
 word,
 "Persisting to obtrude an influence
 where
 "'T is made account of, much as . . .
 nay, you fare
 "With twice the fortune, youngster!—
 I submit,
 "Happy to parallel my waste of wit
 "With the renowned Sordello's: you
 decide
 "A course for me. Romano may
 abide
 "Romano,—Bacchus! After all, what
 dearth
 "Of Ecelins and Alberics on earth?
 "Say there's a prize in prospect, must
 disgrace
 "Betide competitors, unless they style
 "Themselves Romano? Were it
 worth my while
 "To try my own luck! But an ob-
 scure place
 "Suits me—there wants a youth to
 bustle, stalk
 "And attitudinize—some fight, more
 talk,
 "Most flaunting badges—how, I might
 make clear [here
 "Since Friedrich's very purposes lie
 "—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 garni-
 ture,

"She should . . . or might one bear
 it for her? Stay—

"I have not been so flattered many a
 day

"As by your pale friend—Bacchus!
 The least help

"Would lick the hind's fawn to a lion's
 whelp—

"His neck is broad enough—a ready
 tongue

"Beside—too writhled—but, the main
 thing, young—

"I could . . . why, look ye!"

And the badge was thrown
 Across Sordello's neck: "This badge
 alone

"Makes you Romano's Head—becomes
 superb

"On your bare neck, which would, on
 mine, disturb

"The pauldron," said Taurello. A
 mad act,

Nor 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 de-
 clare—

(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 Rom-
 ano's Head!

"One cannot slacken pace so near the
 goal,

"Suffer my Azzo to escape heart-
 whole

"This time! For you there 's Palma
 to espouse—

"For me, one crowning trouble ere I
 house

"Like my compeer."

On which ensued a strange
 And solemn visitation; there came
 change

- O'er every one of them; each looked
on each:
- Up in the midst a truth grew, without
speech.
- And when the giddiness sank and the
haze
- Subsided, they were sitting, no amaze,
Sordello with the baldric on, his sire
- Silent, though his proportions seemed
aspire
- Momently; and, interpreting the thrill
Night at its ebb, 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 toppling city through—San Bia-
gio rocks!
- "And wounded lies in her delicious
locks
- "Retrude, the frail mother, on her
face,
- "None of her wasted, just in one em-
brace
- "Covering her child: when, as they
lifted her, [mightier
- "Cleaving the tumult, mighty,
- "And mightiest Taurello's cry out-
broke,
- "Leapt like a tongue of fire that cleaves
the smoke,
- "Midmost to cheer his Mantuans on-
ward—drown
- "His colleague Ecelin's clamour, up
and down
- "The disarray: failed Adelaide see
then
- "Who was the natural chief, the man
of men?
- "Outstripping time, her infant there
burst swathe,
- "Stood up with eyes haggard beyond
the scathe
- "From wandering after his heritage
- "Lost once and lost for aye—and why
that rage,
- "That deprecating glance? A new
shape leant
- "On a familiar shape—gloatingly bent
- "O'er his discomfiture; 'mid wreaths
it wore,
- "Still one outflamed the rest—her
child's before
- "'T was Salinguerra'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 "
- (Not even here Taurello moved)" though
pain
- "Was fled; and what assured them
most 't was fled,
- "All pain, was, if they raised the pale
hushed head
- "'T would turn this way and that,
waver awhile,
- "And only settle into its old smile—
- "(Graceful as the disquieted water-
flag
- "Steadying itself, remarked they, in
the quag
- "On either side their path)—when
suffered look
- "Down on her child. They marched:
no sign once shook
- "The company's close litter of crossed
spears
- "Till, as they reached Goito, a few
tears
- "Slipped in the sunset from her long
black lash, [rash;
- "And she was gone. So far the action
- "No crime. They laid Retrude in the
font,
- "Taurello's very gift, her child was
wont
- "To sit beneath—constant as eve he
came
- "To sit by its attendant girls the same
- "As one of them. For Palma, she
would blend
- "With this magnific spirit to the end,
"That ruled her first; but scarcely
had she dared
- "To disobey the Adelaide who scared
- "Her into vowing never to disclose
- "A secret to her husband, which so
froze
- "His blood at half-recital, she con-
trived

"To hide from him Taurello's infant
lived,
"Lest, by revealing that, himself
should mar
"Romano's fortunes. And, a crime
so far,
"Palma received that action: she was
told
"Of Salinguerra's nature, of his cold
"Calm acquiescence in his lot! But
free
"To impart the secret to Romano, she
"Engaged to repossess Sordello of
"His heritage, and hers, and that way
doff
"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 't was as if he
mocked

The minstrel, "who had not to move,"
he said,

"Nor stir—should fate defraud him of
a shred

"Of his son's infancy? much less of
his youth!"

(Laughingly all this)—"which to aid,
in truth, [grown

"Himself, reserved on purpose, had not
"Old, not too old—'t was best they
kept alone

"Till now, and never idly met till
now;"

—Then, in the same breath, told Sor-
dello how

All intimations of this eve's event
Were lies, for Friedrich must advance

to Trent,
Thence to Verona, then to Rome, there
stop,

Tumble the Church down, institute a-
top

The Alps a Prefecture of Lombardy:
—"That's now!—no prophesying what
may be

"Anon, with a new monarch of the
clime,

"Native of Gesi, passing his youth's
prime

"At Naples. Tito bids my choice
decide

"On whom . . ."

"Embrace him, madman!" Palma
cried,

Who through the laugh saw sweat-
drops burst apace,
And his lips blanching: he did not
embrace

Sordello, but he laid Sordello's hand
On his own eyes, mouth, forehead.

Understand,
This while Sordello was becoming
flushed

Out of his whiteness; thoughts rushed,
fancies rushed;

He pressed his hand upon his head and
signed

Both should forbear him. "Nay, the
best 's behind!"

Taurello laughed—not quite with the
same laugh:

"The truth is, thus we scatter, ay,
like chaff

"These Gueffs, a despicable monk re-
coils

"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 cun-
ning has preserved

"Sanminiato—that's a central place
"Secures us Florence, boy,—in Pisa's
case, [ours,

"By land as she by sea; with Pisa
"And Florence, and Pistoia, one de-
vours

"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;
 "Sona'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: 't was
 plain
 He hardly rendered right to his own
 brain—
 Like a brave hound, men educate to
 pride
 Himself on speed or scent nor aught
 beside,
 As though he could not, gift by gift,
 match men!
 Palma had listened patiently: but
 when
 't was time expostulate, attempt with-
 draw
 Taurello from his child, she, without
 awe
 Took off his iron arms from, one by
 one,
 Sordello's shrinking shoulders, and,
 that done,
 Made him avert his visage and relieve
 Sordello (you might see his corslet
 heave
 The while) who, loose, rose—tried to
 speak, then sank:
 They left him in the chamber. All was
 blank.
 And even reeling down the narrow
 stair
 Taurello kept up, as though unaware
 Palma was by to guide him, the old
 device
 —Something of Milan—"how we mus-
 ter 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 stopped the truncheon; only to
 commence
 One of Sordello's poems, a pretence
 For speaking, some poor rhyme of
 "Elys' hair
 "And head that 's sharp and perfect
 like a pear,
 "So smooth and close are laid the few
 fine locks
 "Stained like pale honey oozed from
 topmost rocks
 "Sun-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 [made
 Ended, he drew her on his mailed knees,
 Her face a framework with his hands, a
 shade,
 A crown, an aureole: there must she
 remain
 (Her little mouth compressed with smil-
 ing 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

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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!"

"T was a dim long narrow place at best:

Midway a sole grate showed the fiery West,

As shows its corpse the world's end some split tomb—

A gloom, a rift of fire, another gloom, Faced Palma—but at length Taurello set

Her free; the grating held one ragged jet

Of fierce gold fire: he lifted her within The hollow underneath—how else begin

Fate's second marvellous cycle, else renew

The ages than with Palma plain in view?

Then paced the passage, hands clenched, head erect,

Pursuing his discourse; a grand unchecked

Monotony made out from his quick talk And the recurring noises of his walk;

—Somewhat too much like the o'er-charged assent

Of two resolved friends in one danger blent, [heart;

Who hearten each the other against 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, ginglylingly near,

Nearer, passed close in the broad light, his ear

Crimson, eyeballs suffused, temples full-fraught,

Just a snatch of the rapid speech you caught,

And on he strode into the opposite dark,

Till presently the harsh heel's turn, a spark

I' the stone, and whirl of some boss embossed throng

That crashed against the angle aye so long

After the last, punctual to an amount Of mailed great paces you could not but count,—

Prepared you for the pacing back again, And by the snatches you might ascertain

That, Friedrich's Prefecture surmounted, left

By this alone in Italy, they cleft Asunder, crushed together, at command

Of none, were free to break up Hildebrand,

Rebuild, he and Sordello, Charlemagne—

But garnished, Strength with Knowledge, "if we deign

"Accept that compromise and stoop to give

"Rome law, the Cæsar's Representative."

Enough, that the illimitable flood Of triumphs after triumphs, understood

In its faint reflux (you shall hear) sufficed

Young Ecelin for appanage, enticed Him on till, these long quiet in their graves,

He found 't was looked for that a whole life's braves

Should somehow be made good; so, weak and worn,

Must stagger up at Milan, one grey morn

Of the to-come, and fight his latest fight.

But, Salinguerra's prophecy at height— He voluble with a raised arm and stiff,

A blaring voice, a blazing eye, as if He had our very Italy to keep

Or cast away, or gather in a heap To garrison the better—ay, his word

Was, "run the eunumber into a gourd, "Drive Trent upon Apulia"—at their pitch

Who spied the continents and islands which

Grew mulberry leaves and sickles, in the map—

(Strange that thrice 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, suc-
cess,
Concerned not Palma, passion's votar-
ess)
Triumph at height, and thus Sordello
crowned—
Above the passage suddenly a sound
Stops speech, stops walk: back shrinks
Taurello, bids
With large involuntary asking lids,
Palma interpret. " 'T is his own foot-
stamp—
"Your hand! His summons! Nay,
this idle dämp
"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?—pura-
lent,
"I'd say, but when was Providence
put out?
"He carries somehow handily about
"His spite nor fouls himself!" Goito's
vinea
Stand like a cheat detected—stark
rough lines,
The moon breaks through, a grey mean
scale against
The vault where, this eve's Maiden,
thou remain'st
Like some fresh martyr, eyes fixed—
who can tell?
As Heaven, now all 's at end, did
not so well,
Spite of the faith and victory, to leave
its virgin quite to death in the lone
eve.
While the persisting hermit-see . . .
ha! wait
No longer: these in compass, forward
fate!

BOOK THE SIXTH

THE thought of Eglamor 's least like a
thought,
And yet a false one, was, "Man shrinks
to nought
"If matched with symbols of immen-
sity; [sky
"Must quail, forsooth, before a quiet
"Or sea, too little for their quietude:"
And, truly, somewhat in Sordello's
mood
Confirmed its speciousness, while eve
slow sank [bank
Down the near terrace to the farther
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 [slip
Who lets some first and eager purpose
In a new fancy's birth; the speech
keeps on
Though elsewhere its informing soul be
gone)
—Aroused him, surely offered succour.
Fate [tate
Paused with this eve; ere she precipi-
tated 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 [feet,
Heaven, rose again, and, naked at his
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

Shield 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 [fore

Within, submitted to some moon, be-
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-sus-
tained, afar,—

And meanwhile nurse the dream of be-
ing blest

By winning it to notice and invest
Their souls with alien glory, some one
day

Whene'er the nucleus, gathering shape
always,

Round to the perfect circle—soon or
late,

According as themselves are formed to
wait ;

Whether mere human beauty will suf-
fice

—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 [food

Through all existence, still above the
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 ! Pliant
earth

And plastic flame—what balks the
mage his birth

—Jacinth in balls or lodestone by the
block ?

Flinders enrich the strand, veins swell
the rock ;

Nought more ! Ask creatures ? Life's
i' the tempest, thought

Clothes the keen hill-top, mid-day
 woods are fraught
 With fervours: human forms are well
 enough!
 But we had hoped, encouraged by the
 stuff
 Profuse at nature's pleasure, men be-
 yond
 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 ade-
 quate
 And he stand forth ordained (a prouder
 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 unbodyed 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,
 Then if, from the sound Whole, a sickly
 Part
 Subtracted were transformed, decked
 out with art,
 Then palmed on him as alien woe—the
 Guef
 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 many a
 giant's beard
 "Ere long, our champion, be the lance
 upreared,

"The buckler wielded handsomely as
 now!
 "But view your escort, bear in mind
 your vow,
 "Count the pale tracts of sand to pass
 ere that,
 "And, if you hope we struggle through
 the flat,
 "Put lance and buckler by! Next
 half-month lacks
 "Mere sturdy exercise of mace and axe
 "To cleave this dismal brake of
 prickly-pear
 "Which bristling holds Cydippe by the
 hair,
 "Lames barefoot Agathon: thus
 felled, we'll try
 "The picturesque achievements by
 and by—
 "Next life!"
 Ay, rally, mock, O People, urge
 Your claims!—for thus he ventured,
 to the verge,
 Push a vain mummery which perchance
 distrust
 Of his fast-slipping resolution thrust
 Likewise: accordingly the Crowd—
 (as yet
 He had unconsciously contrived forget
 I' the whole, to dwell o' the points . . .
 one might assuage
 The signal horrors easier than engage
 With a dim vulgar vast unobvious grief
 Not to be fancied off, nor gained relief
 In brilliant fits, cured by a happy
 quirk,
 But by dim vulgar vast unobvious
 work
 To correspond . . .) this Crowd then,
 forth they stood.
 "And now content thy stronger vision,
 brood
 "On thy bare want; uncovered, turf
 by turf,
 "Study the corpse-face thro' the taint-
 worms' scurf!"
 Down sank the People's Then; 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
 Become aware it had surprised a truth
 'T were service to impart—can truth
 be seized,

Settled forthwith, and, of the captive
eased,
Its captor find fresh prey, since this auit
So happily, no gesture luring it,
The earnest of a flock to follow? Vain,
Most vain! a life to spend ere this he
chain,
To the poor crowd's complacence; ere
the crowd
Pronounce it captured, he descries a
cloud
Its kin of twice the plume; which he,
in turn,
If he shall live as many lives, may learn
How to secure: not else. Then Man-
tua 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 car-
rion bloom;
Some insane rose that burnt heart out
in sweets,
A spendthrift in the spring, no summer
greet; ;
Some Dularete, drunk with truths and
wine,
Grown 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 dis-
spread
So rarely, that 't is 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,

"I' the end, no doubt; but meantime?
Plain you spy

"Its ultimate effect, but many flaws

"Of vision blur each intervening
cause.

"Were the day's fraction clear as the
life's sum

"Of service, Now as filled as the To-
come

"With evidence of good—nor too
minute

"A share to vie with evil! No dis-
pute,

"T were fittest maintain the Guelfs
in rule:

"That makes your life's work: but
you have to school

"Your day's work on these natures cir-
cumstanced

"Thus variously, which yet, as each
advanced

"Or might impede the Guelf rule, must
be moved

"Now, for the Then's sake,—hating
what you loved,

"Loving old hatreds! Nor if one man
bore

"Brand upon temples while his fellow
wore

"The aureole, would it task you to
decide:

"But, portioned duly out, the future
vied

"Never with the unparcelled present!
Smite

"Or spare so much on warrant all so
slight?

"The present's complete sympathies
to break,

"Aversions bear with, for a future's
sake

"So feeble? Tito ruined through one
speck,

"The Legate saved by his sole lightish
fleck?

"This were work, true, but work per-
formed at cost

"Of other work; aught gained here,
elsewhere lost.

"For a new segment spoil an orb half-
oone?

- " Rise with the People one step, and
 sink—one ?
- " We e it but one step, less than the
 whole face
- " Of things, your novel duty bids
 erase !
- " Harms to abolish ! What, the pro-
 phet saith,
- " The minstrel singeth vainly then ?
 Old faith, [harms,
- " Old courage, only borne because of
- " Were not, from highest to the lowest,
 charms ?
- " Flame may persist ; but is not glare
 as staunch ?
- " Where the salt marshes stagnate,
 crystals branch ;
- " Blood dries to crimson ; Evil's
 beautified
- " In every shape. Thrust Beauty
 then aside
- " And banish Evil ! Wherefore ?
 After all,
- " Is Evil a result less natural
- " Than Good ? For overlook the sea-
 sons' strife
- " With tree and flower,—the hideous
 animal life,
- " (Of which who seeks shall find a grin-
 ning 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
 happiness
- " Could be distinguished in this morn-
 ing's press
- " Of miseries ?—the fool's who passed a
 gibe
- " ' On thee,' jeered he, ' so wedded to
 thy tribe,
- " ' Thou carriest green and yellow
 tokens in
- " ' Thy very face that thou art Ghi-
 bellin !'
- " 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 com-
 mon leave
- " What was peculiar, by such act des-
 troy
- " 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 [posed.
- " Salvation by each hindrance inter-
- " They climb ; life's view is not at once
 disclosed
- " To creatures caught up, on the sum-
 mit left,
- " Heaven plain above them, yet of
 wings bereft :
- " But lower laid, as at the mountain's
 foot.
- " So, range on range, the girdling for-
 ests 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 em-
 brace
- " 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
 "Tempt's 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 re-
 main, though quenched
 "Thy purging-fire; who 's robbed
 then? Had you wrenched
 "An ampler treasure forth!—As 't is,
 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 unit till, some predetermined
 mode,
 "The total be emancipated; 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,
- "W nge your having gained, a
 nth ago,
 "The brakes at balm-shed, asphodels
 in blow,
 "While they were landlocked? Speed
 their Then, but how
 "This badge would suffer you improve
 your Now!"
 His time of action for, against, or
 with
 Our world (I labour to extract the pith
 Of this his problem) grew, that even-
 tide,
 Gigantic with its power of joy, beside
 The world's eternity of impotence
 To profit though at his whole joy's
 expense.
 "Make nothing of my day because so
 brief?
 "Rather make more: instead of joy,
 use grief
 "Before its novelty have time subside!
 "Wait not for the late savour, leave
 untried
 "Virtue, the creaming honey-wine,
 quick squeeze
 "Vice like a biting spirit from the lees
 "Of life! Together let wrath, hatred,
 lust,
 "All tyrannies in every shape, be
 thrust
 "Upon this Now, which time may rea-
 son out
 "As mischiefs, far from benefits, no
 doubt;
 "But long ere then Sordello will have
 slipped
 "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,
 "T is 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 disen-
trance
" The portent, soon to lead a mystic
dance
" Among you ! For, who sits alone in
Rome ?
" Have those great hands indeed hewn
out a home,
" And set me there to live ? Oh life,
life-breath,
" Life-blood,—ere sleep, come travail,
life ere death !
" This life stream on my soul, direct,
oblique,
" But always streaming ! Hindrances ?
They pique :
" Helps ? such . . . but why repeat,
my soul o'ertops
" Each height, then every depth 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 me ? What may serve for
sun, what still
" Wander a moon above me ? What
else wind
" About me like the pleasures left be-
hind,
" And how shall some new flesh that is
not flesh
" Cling to me ? What's new laughter ?
Soothes the fresh
" Sleep like sleep ? Fate's exhaust-
less 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-spark-
ling grail
" At bottom ? Oh, 't were too absurd
to slight
" For the hereafter the to-day's de-
light !
" 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 can-
not choose
" But set aside life, why should I re-
fuse
" The gift ? I take it—I, for one, en-
gage
" Never to falter through my pilgrim-
age—
" 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 as-
sume
" —My foot the courtly gait, my
tongue the trope,
" My mouth the smirk, before the doors
fly ope
" One moment ? What ? with guar-
ders row on row,
" Gay swarms of varletry that come
and go,
" Pages to dice with, waiting-girls un-
lace
" The plackets 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 there ! But do I let
alone
" That black-eyed peasant in the vesti-
bule
" Once and for ever ?—Floor-work ?
No such fool !
" Rather, were heaven to forestal
earth, I'd say
" I, is it, must be blessed ? Then, my
own way
" Bless me ! Give firmer arm and
fleeter 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 hea-
ven : nor, freed
" Of flesh, forsooth, from space to
space proceed
" 'Mid flying synods of worlds ! No :
in heaven's marge
" Show Titan still, recumbent o'er his
targe [game
" Solid with stars—the Centaur at his
" 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, re-
vealed
" 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.
" 'T was well for them ; let me become
aware
- " As they, and I relinquish life, too !
Let
" What masters life disclose itself !
Forget
" Vain ordinances, I have one appeal—
" I feel, am what I feel, know what I
feel ;
" So much is truth to me. What is,
then ? Since
" One object, viewed diversely, may
evince
" Beauty and ugliness—this way at-
tract,
" 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 endued
" With Right still present, still to be
pursued, [rife
" Thro' all the interchange of circles,
" Each with its proper law and mode
of life,
" Each to be dwelt at ease in : where,
to sway
" Absolute with the Kaiser, or obey
" Implicit with his serf of fluttering
heart,
" Or, like a sudden thought of God's,
to start
" Up, Brutus in the presence, then go
shout
" That some should pick the unstrung
jewels out—
" Each, well !"
And, as in moments when the past
Gave partially enfranchisement, he
cast
Himself quite through mere secondary
states
Of his soul's essence, little loves and
hates,
Into the mid deep yearnings overlaid
By these ; as who should pierce hill,
plain, grove, glade,
And on into the very nucleus probe
That first determined there exist a
globe.
As that were easiest, half the globe dis-
solved,
So seemed Sordello's closing-truth
evolved
By his flesh-half's break up ; the sud-
den 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 find

Eternity, as Time—as Matter—Mind,
If Mind, Eternity, should choose assert
Their attributes within a Life: thus girt

With circumstance, next change beholds
them cinct

Quite otherwise—with Good and 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 understood,

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
wreaked in Time

On Matter,—let the Soul's attempt
sublime

Matter beyond the scheme and so prevent

By more or less that deed's accomplishment,

And Sorrow follows: Sorrow how avoid?

Let the employer match the thing employed,

Fit to the finite his infinity,
And thus proceed for ever, in degree
Changed but in kind the same, still limited

To the appointed circumstance and dear

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 wring
A joy thence, she held worth experiencing:

Which, far from half discovered even,—lo,

The minute gone, the body's power let go

Apportioned to that joy's acquirement
Broke

Morning o'er earth, he yearned for all it
woke—

From the volcano's vapour-flag, winds
hoist

Black o'er the spread of sea,—down to
the moist

Dale's silken barley-spikes sullied with
rain,

Swayed earthwards, heavily to rise
again—

The Small, a sphere as perfect as the
Great

To the soul's absoluteness. Meditate
Too long on such a morning's cluster-
chord

And the whole music it was framed
afford,—

The chord's might half discovered,
what should pluck

One string, his finger, was found palsy-
struck.

And then no marvel if the spirit, shown

A saddest sight—the body lost alone
 Through her officious proffered help,
 deprived
 Of this and that enjoyment Fate contrived,—
 Virtue, Good, Beauty, each allowed
 slip hence,—
 Vain-gloriously were fain, for recompense,
 To stem the ruin even yet, protract
 The body's term, supply the power it
 lacked
 From her infinity, compel it learn
 These qualities were only Time's concern,
 And body may, with spirit helping,
 barred—
 Advance the same, vanquished—obtain reward,
 Reap joy where sorrow was intended
 grow,
 Of Wrong make Right, and turn 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 s' reliever 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 Beanteous whither fate has loosed
 its hood
 To follow? Never may some soul see
 All
 —The Great Before and After, and the
 Small
 Now, yet be saved by this the simplest
 lore,
 And take the single course prescribed
 before,
 As the king-bird with ages on his
 plumes
 Travels to die in his ancestral glooms?
 But where descry the Love that shall
 select
 That course? Here is a soul whom, to
 affect,
 Nature has plied with all her means,
 from trees
 And flowers e'en to the Multitude!—
 and these,
 Decides he save or no? One word to
 end!
 Ah my Sordello, I this once befriend
 And speak for you. Of a Power above
 you still
 Which, utterly incomprehensible,
 Is out of rivalry, which thus you can
 Love, tho' unloving all conceived by
 man—
 What need! And of—none the minutest
 duct
 To that out-nature, nought that would
 instruct
 And so let rivalry begin to live—
 But of a Power its representative
 Who, being for authority the same,
 Communication different, should claim
 A course, the first chose and this last
 revealed—
 This Human clear, as that Divine concealed—
 What utter need!
 What has Sordello found?

Or can his spirit go the mighty round,
 End where poor Eglamor began?—So,
 says
 Old fable, the two eagles went two ways
 About the world: where, in the midst,
 they met,
 Though on a shifting waste of sand,
 men set
 Jove's temple. Quick, what has Sor-
 dello found?
 For they approach—approach—that
 foot's rebound . . .
 Palma? No, Salinguerra though in
 mail;
 They mount, have reached the thresh-
 old, dash the veil
 Aside—and you divine who sat there
 dead,
 Under his foot the badge: still, Palma
 said,
 A triumph lingering in the wide eyes,
 Wider than some spent swimmer's if he
 spies
 Help from above in his extreme despair,
 And, head far back on shoulder thrust,
 turns there
 With short, quick, passionate cry: as
 Palma pressed
 In one great kiss, her lips upon his
 breast,
 It beat.
 By this, the hermit-bee has stopped
 His day's toil at Goito: the new-
 cropped
 Dead vine-leaf answers, now 't is 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
 mulct,
 Who cares, Sordello gone? The up-
 shot, 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 th brothers had in-
 curred,
 —Dispatched a message to the Monk,
 he heard [at,
 Patiently first to last, scarce shivered
 Then curled his limbs up on his wolf-
 skin mat
 And ne'er spoke more,—informed the
 Ferrarese
 He but retained their rule so long as
 these
 Lingered in pupilage,—and last, no
 mode
 Apparent else of keeping safe the road
 From Germany direct to Lombardy
 For Friedrich,—none, that is, to guar-
 antee
 The faith and promptitude of who
 should next
 Obtain Sofia's dowry,—sore per-
 plexed—
 (Sofia being youngest of the tribe
 Of daughters, Eccelin 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 Eg-
 na'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
 't was 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 townsfolk rubbed their eyes, could
 but admire
 Which of Sofia's five was meant.
 The chaps
 Of earth's dead hope were tardy to
 collapse,
 Obliterated not the beautiful
 Distinctive features at a crash: but
 dull
 And duller these, next year, as Guefs
 withdrew
 Each to his stronghold. Then (se-
 curely 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 re-
 sult
 In blood and blaze? (So hard to in-
 tercept
 Sordello till his plain withdrawal!)
 Stepped, [the nick
 Then its new lord on Lombardy. I'
 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 Guefs 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 wif. oft
 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 [pute
 Better through age, his parts still in re-
 Subtle—how else?—but hardly so
 astute
 As his contemporaneous friends pro-
 fessed;
 Undoubtedly a brawler: for the rest,
 Known by each neighbour, and al-
 lowed 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 't were, 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
 Was ever to be done,—this thrust the Twain
 Under Taurello's tutelage,—whom, brain
 And heart and hand, he forthwith in one rod
 Indissolubly bound to baffle God
 Who loves the world—and thus allowed the thin
 Grey wizened dwarfish devil Ecelin,
 And massy-muscled big-boned Alberic (Mere man, alas!) to put his problem quick
 To demonstration—prove wherever 's will
 To do, there's plenty to be done, or ill
 Or good. Anointed, then, to 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 raunce and bramble-bush. I take
 God's part and testify that 'mid the brake
 Wild o'er his castle on the pleasant knoll,
 You hear its one tower left, a belfry, toll—
 The earthquake spared it last year, laying flat
 The modern church beneath,—no harm in that!
 Chirrup the contumacious grass-hopper,
 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 fears easily wiped away,
 Fine jealousies soon stifled in the play
 Of irrepressible admiration—not
 Aspiring, all considered, to their lot
 Who ever, just as they prepare ascend
 Spiral on spiral, wish thee well, impend
 Thy frank delight at their exclusive
 track,
 That upturned fervid face and hair put
 back!
 Is there no more to say? He of the
 rhymes—
 Many a tale, of this retreat betimes,
 Was born: Sordello die at once for
 men?
 The Chroniclers of Mantua tired their
 pen
 Telling how *Sordello Prince Visconti*
 saved
 Mantua, and elsewhere notably be-
 haved—
 Who thus, by fortune ordering events,
 Passed with posterity, to all intents,
 For just the god he never could become.
 As Knight, Bard, Gallant, men were
 never dumb
 In praise of him: while what he should
 have been,
 Could be, and was not—the one step
 too mean
 For him to take,—we suffer at this day
 Because of: Ecelin had pushed away
 Its chance ere Dante could arrive and
 take
 That step Sordello spurned, for the
 world's sake:
 He did much—but Sordello's chance
 was gone.
 Thus, had Sordello dared that step
 alone,
 Apollo had been compassed—'t was a
 fit
 He wished should go to him, not he to it
 —As one content to merely be sup-
 posed
 Singing or fighting elsewhere, while he
 dozed
 Really at home—one who was chiefly
 glad
 To have achieved the few real deeds he
 had,
 Because that way assured they were
 not worth
 Doing, so spared from doing them
 henceforth—
 A tree that covets fruitage and yet
 tastes
 Never itself, itself. Had he embraced
 Their cause then, men had plucked
 Hesperian fruit
 And, praising that, just thrown him in
 to boot
 All he was anxious to appear, but
 scarce
 Solicitous to be. A sorry farce
 Such life is, after all! Cannot I say
 He lived for some one better thing?
 this way.—
 Lo, on a heathy brown and nameless
 hill
 By sparkling Asolo, in mist and chill,
 Morning just up, higher and higher
 runs
 A child barefoot and rosy. See! the
 sun's
 On the square castle's inner-court's low
 wall
 Like the chine of some extinct animal
 Half turned to earth and flowers; and
 through the haze
 (Save where some slender patches of
 grey maize
 Are to be overleaped) that boy has
 crossed
 The whole hill-side of dew and powder-
 frost
 Matting the balm and mountain 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 locks
 "Stained like pale honey oozed from
 topmost 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!
 I've snuff [enough!
 Civet, I warrant. Really? Like
 Merely the savour's rareness; any nose
 May ravage with impunity a rose:
 Rattle a musk-pod and 't will ache like
 yours!
 I'd tell you that same pungency en-
 sures
 An after-gust, but that were over
 bold.
 Who would has heard Sordello's story
 told.

PIPPA PASSES

A DRAMA

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

R. B.

London, 1841.

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 spurting and suppressed it lay;
 For not a froth-flake touched the rim
 Of yonder gap in the solid gray
 Of the eastern cloud, an hour away;
 But forth one wavelet, then another,
 curled,

Till the whole sunrise, not to be sup-
 pressed,
 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, [fusest;

And free to let alone what thou re-
 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. [earth

All other men and women that this
 Belongs to, who all days alike possess,
 Make general plenty cure particular
 dearth,

Get more joy one way, if another, less:
 Thou art my single day, God lends to
 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 Happi-
 est Ones—

And let thy morning rain on that superb
 Great haughty Ottima; can rain disturb
 Her Sebald's homage? All the while thy rain
 Beats fiercest on her shrub-house window-pane,
 He will but press the closer, breathe more warm
 Against her cheek; how should she mind the storm?
 And, morning past, if mid-day shed a gloom
 O'er Jules and Phene,—what care bride and groom
 Save for their dear selves? 'T is their marriage-day;
 And while they leave church and go home their way,
 Hand clasping hand, within each breast would be
 Sunbeams and pleasant weather spite of thee.
 Then, for another trial, obscure thy eve
 With mist,—will Luigi and his mother grieve—
 The lady and her child, unmatched, forsooth,
 She in her age, as Luigi in his youth,
 For true content? The cheerful town, warm, close
 And safe, the sooner that thou art morose,
 Receives them. And yet once again, outbreak
 In storm at night on Monsignor, they make
 Such stir about,—whom they expect from Rome
 To visit Asolo, his 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 ewer!
 You that would mock the best pursuer,

Was my basin over-deep?
 One splash of water ruins you asleep,
 And up, up, fleet your brilliant bits
 Wheeling and counterwheeling,
 Reeling, broken beyond healing:
 Now grow together on the ceiling
 That will task your wits.
 Whoever it was quenched fire first,
 hoped to see
 Morsel after morsel flee
 As merrily, as giddily . . .
 Meantime, what lights my sunbeam on,
 Where settles by degrees the radiant cripple?
 Oh, is it surely blown, my martagon?
 New-blown and ruddy as St. Agnes' nipple,
 Plump as the flesh-bunch on some Turk bird's poll!
 Be sure if corals, branching 'neath the ripple
 Of ocean, bud there,—fancies waft unroll
 Such turban-flowers; I say, such lamps disperse
 Thick red flame through that dusk green universe!
 I am queen of thee, floweret!
 And each fleshy blossom
 Preserve I not—(safer
 Than leaves that embower it,
 Or shells that embosom)
 —From weevil and chafer?
 Laugh through my pane then; solicit the bee;
 Gibe him, be sure; and, in midst of thy glee,
 Love thy queen, worship me!
 —Worship whom else? For am I not, this day,
 Whate'er I please? What shall I please to-day?
 My morn, noon, eve and night—how spend my day?
 To-morrow I must be Pippa who winds silk,
 The whole year round, to earn just bread and milk:
 But, this one day, I have leave to go,
 And play out my fancy's fullest games;
 I may fancy all day—and it shall be so—
 That I taste of the pleasures, am called by the names
 Of the Happiest Four in our Asolo!

See! Up the Hill-side yonder, through
the morning,
Some one shall love me, as the world
calls love:
I am no less than Ottima, take warning!
The gardens, and the great stone house
above,
And other house for shrubs, all glass in
front,
Are mine; where Sebald steals, as he is
wont,
To court me, while old Luca yet re-
poses:
And therefore, till the shrub-house
door uncloses,
I . . . what now?—give abundant
cause for prate
About me—Ottima, I mean—of late,
Too bold, too confident she'll still face
down
The spitefullest of talkers in our town.
How we talk in the little town below!
But love, love, love—there's better
love, I know!
This foolish love was only day's first
offer;
I choose my next love to defy the
scoffer:
For do not our Bride and Bridegroom
sally
Out of Possagno church at noon?
Their house looks over Orcana valley:
Why should not I be the bride as soon
As Ottima? For I 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 dimness,
Keep that foot its lady primness,
Let those ancles 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 pre-
vents
My being Luigi? While that mossy
lair
Of lizards through the winter-time, is
stirred
With each to each imparting sweet in-
tents
For this new-year, as brooding bird to
bird—
(For I observe of late, the evening walk
Of Luigi and his mother, always ends
Inside our ruined turret, where they
talk,
Calmer than lovers, yet more kind than
friends)
—Let me be cared about, kept out of
harm, [charm;
And schemed for, safe in love as with a
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 mildly 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 that this, ye call
A "great event," should come to pass,
Than that? Untwine me from the mass*

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

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

I will pass each, and see their happiness,

And envy none—being just as great, no doubt,

Useful to men, and dear to God, as they!

A pretty thing to care about

So mightily, this single holiday!

But let the sun shine! Wherefore repine?

—With thee to lead me, O Day of mine,
Down the grass-path grey with dew,
Under the pine-wood, blind with boughs,

Where the swallow never flew

Nor yet cicada dared carouse—

No, dared carouse!

[*She enters the street.*]

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

Seb. [*sings.*] *Let the watching lids wink!*

Day 's a-blaze with eyes, think!

Deep into the night, drink!

Otti. Night? Such may be your Rhine-land nights perhaps;

But this blood-red beam through the shutter's clink

—We call such light, the morning: let us see!

Mind how you grope your way, though! How these tall

Naked geraniums straggle! Push the lattice

Behind that frame!—Nay, do I bid you?—Sebald,

It shakes the dust down on me! Why, of course

The slide-bolt catches. Well, are you content,

Or must I find you something else to spoil?

Kiss and be friends, my Sebald! Is it full morning?

Oh, don't speak then!

Seb. Ay, thus it used to be!

Ever your house was, I remember, shut Till mid-day; I observed that, as I strolled

On mornings through the vale here; country girls

Were noisy, washing garments in the brook,

Hinds drove the slow white oxen up the hills:

But no, your house was mute, would ope no eye!

And wisely: you were plotting one thing there,

Nature, another outside. I looked up—

Rough white wood shutters, rusty iron bars,

Silent as death, blind in a flood of light.

Oh, I remember!—and the peasants laughed

And said, "The old man sleeps with the young wife."

This house was his, this chair, this window—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!

Seb. Morning?

It seems to me a night with a sun added. Where's dew, where's freshness? That bruised plant, I bruised

In getting through the lattice yesterday,

Droops as it did. See, here's my elbow's mark
In the dust on the sill.

Otti. Oh, shut the lattice, pray!

Seb. Let me lean out! I cannot scent blood here,
Foul as the morn may be.

There, shut the world out! How do you feel now, Ottima? There, curse

The world and all outside! Let us throw off

This mask: how do you bear yourself? Let 's out

With all of it!

Otti. Best never speak of it.

Seb. Best speak again and yet again of it,

Till words cease to be more than words. "His blood,"

For instance—let those two words mean "His blood"

And nothing more. Notice, I'll say them now,

"His blood."

Otti. Assuredly if I repented The deed—

Seb. Repent? Who should repent, or why?

What puts that in your head? Did I once say

That I repented?

Otti. No, I said the deed . . .

Seb. "The deed," and "the event"—just now it was

"Our passion's fruit"—the devil take such cant!

Say, once and always, Luca was a wittol,

I am his cut-throat, you are . . .

Otti. Here is the wine; I brought it when we left the house

above, And glasses too—wine of both sorts. Black? White then?

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

Otti. There trudges on his business from the Duomo

Benet the Capuchin, with his brown hood

And bare feet; always in one place at church,

Close under the stone wall by the south entry.

I used to take him for a brown cold piece

Of the wall's self, as out of it he rose To let me pass—at first, I say, I used: Now, so has that dumb figure fastened on me,

I rather should account the plastered wall

A piece of him, so chilly does it strike. This, Sebald?

Seb. No, the white wine—the white wine!

Well, Ottima, I promised no new year Should rise on us the ancient shameful

way; Nor does it rise: pour on! To your black eyes!

Do you remember last damned New Year's day?

Otti. You brought those foreign prints. We looked at them

Over the wine and fruit. I had to scheme

To get him from the fire. Nothing but saying

His own set wants the proof-mark, roused him up

To hunt them out.

Seb. 'Faith, he is not alive To fondle you before my face.

Otti. Do you Fondle me then! Who means to take

your life For that, my Sebald?

Seb. Hark you, Ottima! One thing to guard against. We'll

not make much One of the other—that is, not make

more Parade of warmth, childish officious coil,

Than yesterday: as if, sweet, I supposed

Proof upon proof were needed now, now first,

To show I love you—yes, still love you —love you

In spite of Luca and what's come to him

—Sure sign we had him ever in our thoughts,

White sneering old reproachful face and all!

We'll even quarrel, love, at times, as if We still could lose each other, were not

tied By this: conceive you?

Otti. Love!

Seb. Not tied so sure!

Because though I was wrought upon,
have struck

His insolence back into him—am I
So surely yours?—therefore forever
yours?

Otti. Love, to be wise, (one counsel
pays another)

Should we have—months ago, when
first we loved,
For instance that May morning we two
stole

Under the green ascent of sycamores—
If we had come upon a thing like that
Suddenly . . .

Seb. "A thing"—there again—"a
thing!"

Otti. Then, Venus' body, had we
come upon

My husband Luca Gaddi's murdered
corpse

Within there, at his couch-foot, covered
close—

Would you have pored upon it? Why
persist

In poring now upon it? For 't is 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!

'T is the hot evening—off! oh, morn-
ing 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. Ottima, 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 return at eve to sup,
When all the morning I was loitering
here—

Bid me dispatch my business and be-
gone.

I would . . .

Otti. See!

Seb. No, I'll finish! Do you think
I fear to speak the bare truth once for
all?

All we have talked of is, at bottom, fine
To suffer; there's a recompense in
guilt;

One must be venturous and fortunate:
What is one young for, else? In age
we'll sigh

O'er the wild reckless wicked days
flown over;

Still, we have lived: the vice was in its
place.

But to have eaten Luca's bread, have
worn

His clothes, have felt his money swell
my purse—

Do lovers in romances sin that way?
Why, I was starving when I used to call

And teach you music, starving while
you plucked me

These flowers to smell!

Otti. My poor lost friend!

Seb. He gave me
Life, nothing less: what if he did re-
proach

My perfidy, and threaten, and do
more—

Had he no right? What was to
wonder at?

He sat by us at table quietly:
Why must you lean across till our
cheeks touched?

Could he do less than make pretence to
strike?

'T is not the crime's sake—I'd commit
ten crimes

Greater, to have this crime wiped out,
undone!

And
O
And
Best
This
This
Falls
May
Grea
Pay
Speak
Such
Give
The
Persi
And w
m
Byson
Who s
Seb.
Back;
m
Lest y
yo
So see
an
Otti.
yo
Made y
Seb.
I use
ho
Till the
spr
To a ye
Otti.
Inflame
tree
Nipped
Seb.
At my w
gras
Over my
Otti.
Seb. T

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 together?

Give up that noon I owned my love for you?

The garden's silence! even the single bee

Persisting in his toil, suddenly stopped:
And where he hid you only could surmise

By some campanula chalice set a-swing:
Who stammered—"Yes, I love you?"

Seb. And I drew back; put far back your face with both my hands

Lest you should grow too full of me—your face

So seemed athirst for my whole soul and body!

Otti. And when I ventured to receive you here,

Made you steal hither in the mornings—

Seb. When I used to look up 'neath the shrub-house here,

Till the red fire on its glazed windows spread

To a yellow haze?

Otti. Ah—my sign was, the sun
Inflamed the sere side of yon chestnut-tree

Nipped by the first frost.

Seb. You would always laugh
At my wet boots: I had to stride thro' grass

Over my ancles.

Otti. Then our crowning night!

Seb. The July night?

Otti. The day of it too, Sebald!
When heaven's pillars seemed o'er-
bowed with heat,

Its black-blue canopy suffered descend
Close on us both, to weigh down each
to each,

And smother up all life except our life.
So lay we till the storm came.

Seb. How it came!

Otti. Buried in woods we lay, you
recollect;

Swift ran the searching tempest over-
head;

And ever and anon some bright white
Burned thro' the pine-tree roof, here
burned and there,

As if God's messenger thro' the close
wood screen

Plunged and replunged his weapon at a
venture,

Feeling for guilty thee and me: then
broke

The thunder like a whole sea over-
head—

Seb. Yes!

Otti.—While I stretched myself upon
you, hands

To hands, my mouth to your hot
mouth, and shook

All my locks loose, and covered you
with them—

You, Sebald, the same you!

Seb. Slower, Ottima!

Otti. And as we lay—

Seb. Less vehemently! Love me!

Forgive me! Take not words, mere
words, to heart!

Your breath is worse than wine.

Breathe slow, speak slow!

Do not lean on me!

Otti. Sebald, as we lay,
Rising and falling only with our pants,
Who said, "Let death come now! 'Tis
right to die!"

"Right to be punished! Nought
completes such bliss

"But woe!" Who said that?

Seb. How did we ever rise?

Was 't that we slept? Why did it
end?

Otti. I felt you
Taper into a point the ruffled ends
Of my loose locks 'twixt both your
humid lips.

My hair is fallen now: knot it again!

Seb. I kiss you now, dear Ottima,
now and now!

This way? Will you forgive me—be
once more

My great queen?

Otti. Bind it thrice about my brow;
Crown me your queen, your spirit's
arbitress,

Magnificent in sin. Say that!

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

Magnificent . . .

[From without is heard the voice of
PIPPA singing—

The year 's at the spring,

And day 's at the morn;

Morning 's at seven;

The 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—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! Ungrate-
ful, perjured cheat!

A coward too: but ingrate 's worse than
all!

Beggar—my slave—a fawning, cring-
ing 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 at-
tempt,

And fascinate by sinning, and show
herself

Superior—guilt from its excess superior
To innocence! That little peasant's
voice

Has righted all again. Though I be
lost,

I know which is the better, never fear,
Of vice or virtue, purity or lust,

Nature or trick! I see what I have
done,

Entirely now! Oh I am proud to feel
Such torments—let the world take
credit thence—

I, having done my deed, pay too its
price!

I hate, hate—curse you! God 's in his
heaven!

Otti. —Me!

Me! no, no, Sebald, not yourself—kill
me!

Mine is the whole crime. Do but kill
me—then

Yourself—then—presently—first hear
me speak!

I always meant to kill myself—wait,
you!

Lean on my breast—not as a breast;
don't love me

The more because you lean on me, my
own

Heart's Sebald! There, there, both deaths presently!

Seb. My brain is drowned now—quite drowned: all I feel is . . . is, at swift-recurring intervals, A hurry-down within me, as of waters Loosened to smother up some ghastly pit:

They—they go—whirls from a black fiery sea!

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

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

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

2nd Stud. All here! Only our poet's away—never having much meant to be present, moonstrike him! The airs of that fellow, that Giovacchino! He was in violent love with himself, and had a fair prospect of thriving in his suit, so unmolested was it,—when suddenly a woman falls in love with him, too; and out of pure jealousy he takes himself off to Trieste, immortal poem and all: whereto is this prophetic epitaph appended already, as Bluphocks assures me,—“*Here a mammoth-poem lies, Fouled to death by butterflies.*” His own fault, the simpleton! Instead of cramp couplets, each like a knife in your entrails, he should write, says Bluphocks, both classically and intelligibly.—*Æsculapius, an Epic. Catalogue of the drugs: Hebe's plaister—One strip Cools your lip. Phæbus' emulsion—One bottle Clears your throat. Mercury's bolus—One box Cures...*

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

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

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

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

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

Gott. His discovery of the truth will be frightful.

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

Gott. See here! “He has been 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 reality.” There you laugh again! I say, you wipe off the very dew of his youth.

1st Stud. Schramm! (Take the pipe

out of his mouth, somebody!) Will Jules lose the bloom of his youth?

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

1st Stud. Put Schramm's pipe into his mouth again! There, you see! Well, this Jules . . . a wretched fribble—oh, I watched his disportings at Possagno, the other day! Canova's gallery—you know: there he marches first resolvedly past great works by the dozen without vouchsafing an eye: all at once he stops full at the *Psiche-fanciulla*—cannot pass that old acquaintance without a nod of encouragement—"In your new place, beauty? Then behave yourself as well here as at Munich—I see you!" Next he posts himself deliberately before the unfinished *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!

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

1st Stud. Why, on that matter he could never be supercilious enough. How should we be other (he said) than the poor devils you see, with those debasing habits we cherish? He was not to wallow in that mire, at least: he would wait, and love only at the proper time, and meanwhile put up with the *Psiche-fanciulla*. Now, I happened to hear of a young Greek—real Greek girl at Malamocco; a true Islander, do you see, with Alciphron's "hair like sea-moss"—Schramm knows!—white and quiet as an apparition, and fourteen years old at farthest—a daughter of Natalia, so she swears—that hag Natalia, who helps us to models at three lire an hour. We selected this girl for the heroine of our jest. So first, Jules received a scented letter—somebody had seen his Tydeus at the academy, and my picture was nothing to it: a profound admirer bade him persevere—would make herself known to him ere long. (Paolina, my little friend of the *Fenice*, transcribes divinely.) And in due time, the mysterious correspondent gave certain hints of her peculiar charms—the pale cheeks, the black hair—whatever, in short, had struck us in our Malamocco model: we retained her name, too—Phene, which is, by interpretation, sea-eagle. Now, think of Jules finding himself distinguished from the herd of us by such a creature! In his very first answer he proposed marrying his monitress: and fancy us over these letters, two, three times a day, to receive and despatch! I concocted the main of it: relations were in the way—secrecy must be observed—in fine, would he wed her on trust, and only speak to her when they were indissolubly united? St—st—Here they come!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Gott. How he gazes on her! Pity—pity!

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

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

Do not die, Phene! I am yours now, you

Are mine now; let fate reach me how she likes,

If you'll not die: so, never die! Sit here—

My work-room's single seat. I over-lean

This length of hair and lustrous front; they turn

Like an entire flower upward: eyes, lips, last

Your chin—no, last your throat turns: 't is their scent

Pulls down my face upon you. Nay, look ever

This one way till I change, grow you—I could

Change into you, beloved!

You by me, And I by you; this is your hand in mine,

And side by side we sit: all's true. Thank God!

I have spoken: speak, you!

O my life to come! My Tydeus must be carved that's there in clay;

Yet how be carved, with you about the room?

Where must I place you? When I think that once

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, their truth—

The live truth, passing and repassing me,

Sitting beside me?

Now speak!

Only first, See, all your letters! Was 't not well contrived?

Their hiding-place is Psyche's robe; she keeps

Your letters next her skin: which drops out foremost?

Ah,—this that swam down like a first moonbeam

Into my world!

Again those eyes complete Their melancholy 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 surprise

And sorrow while she took her station, pausing

O'er what she sees, finds good, and must destroy!

What gaze you at? Those? Books. I told you of;

Let your first word to me rejoice them, too:

This minion, a Coluthus, writ in red Bistre and azure by Bessarion's scribe—

Read this line . . . no, shame—Homer's be the Greek

First breathed me from the lips of my Greek girl!

This Odyssey in coarse black vivid type

With faded yellow blossoms 'twixt page and page,

To mark great places with due gratitude;
*"He said, and on Antinous directed
 "A bitter shaft" . . . 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, unrecognized?
 I thought you would have seen that
 here you sit
 As I imagined you,—Hippolyta,
 Naked upon her bright Numidian
 horse.
 Recall you this then? "Carve in bold
 relief"—
 So you commanded—"carve, against I
 come,
 "A Greek, in Athens, as our fashion
 was,
 "Feasting, bay-filleted and thunder-
 free,
 "Who rises 'neath the lifted myrtle-
 branch.
 "'Praise those who slew Hipparchus!
 'cry the guests,
 "'While o'er thy head the singer's
 myrtle waves
 "'As erst above our champion: stand
 up, all!"
 See, I have laboured to express your
 thought.
 Quite round, a cluster of mere hands
 and arms,
 (Thrust in all senses, all ways, from all
 sides,
 Only consenting at the branch's end
 They strain toward) serves for frame to
 a sole face,
 The 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 inured myself
 To see, throughout all nature, varied
 stuff [art:
 For better nature's birth by means of
 With me, each substance tended to one
 form
 Of beauty—to the human archetype.
 On every side occurred suggestive
 germs
 Of that—the tree, the flower—or take
 the fruit,—
 Some rosy shape, continuing the peach,
 Curved beewise o'er its bough; as rosy
 limbs,
 Depending, nestled in the leaves; and
 just
 From a cleft rose-peach the whole
 Dryad sprang.
 But of the stuffs one can be master of,
 How I divined their capabilities!
 From the soft-rinded smoothening
 facile chalk
 That yields your outline to the air's
 embrace,
 Half-softened by a halo's pearly gloom;
 Down to the crisp imperious steel, so
 sure
 To cut its one confided thought clean
 out
 Of all the world. But marble!—
 'neath my tools
 More pliable than jelly—as it were
 Some clear primordial creature dug
 from depths
 In the earth's heart, where itself breeds
 itself,
 And whence all baser substance may be
 worked;
 Refine it off to air, you may,—con-
 dense it
 Down to the diamond;—is not metal
 there,
 When o'er the sudden speck 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-dilat-
 ing eyes!
 Ah, you will die—I knew that you
 would die!

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

Now the end 's coming; to be sure, it
 must
 Have ended sometime! Tush, why
 need I speak
 Their foolish speech? I cannot bring
 to mind

One half of it, beside; and do not care
 For old Natalia now, nor any of them.
 Oh, you—what are you?—if I do not
 try

To say the words Natalia made me learn,
 To please your friends,—it is to keep
 myself

Where your voice lifted me, by letting
 that

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, suffering
 borne,

Would drop down, low and lower, to
 the earth

Whence all that 's low comes, and there
 touch and stay

—Never to overtake the rest of me,
 All that, unspotted, reaches up to you,
 Drawn by those eyes! What rises is
 myself,

Not me the shame and suffering; but
 they sink,

Are left, I rise above them. Keep me
 so,

Above the world!

But you sink, for your eyes
 Are altering—altered! Stay—"I love
 you, love"

I could prevent it if I understood:
 More of your words to me: was 't in the
 tone

Or the words, your power?

Or stay—I will repeat
 Their speech, if that contents you!

Only change

No more, and I shall find it presently

Far back here, in the brain yourself
 filled up.

Natalia threatened me that harm
 should follow

Unless I spoke their lesson to the end,
 But harm to me, I thought she meant,
 not you.

Your friends,—Natalia said they were
 your friends

And meant you well,—because, I
 doubted it,

Observing (what was very strange to
 see)

On every face, so different in all else,
 The same smile girls like me are used
 to bear,

But never men, men cannot stoop so
 low;

Yet your friends, speaking of you, used
 that smile,

That hateful smirk of boundless self-
 conceit

Which seems to take possession of the
 world

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

But still Natalia said they were your
 friends,

And they assented though they smiled
 the more,

And all came round me,—that thin
 Englishman

With light lank hair seemed leader of
 the rest;

He held a paper—"What we want,"
 said he,

Ending some explanation to his
 friends—

"Is something slow, involved and
 mystical,

"To hold Jules long in doubt, yet take
 his taste

"And lure him on until, at innermost
 "Where he seeks sweetness' soul, he
 may find—this!
 "—As in the apple's core, the noisome
 fly:
 "For insects on the rind are seen at
 once,
 "And brushed aside as soon, but this
 is found
 "Only when on the lips or loathing
 tongue."
 And so he read what I have got by
 heart:
 I'll speak it,—“Do not die, love! I
 am yours” . . .
 No—is not that, or like that, part of
 words
 Yourself began by speaking? Strange
 to lose
 What cost such pains to learn! Is this
 more right?
*I am a painter who cannot paint;
 In my life, a devil rather than saint,
 In my brain, as poor a creature too:
 No end to all I cannot do!
 Yet do one thing at least I can—
 Love a man or hate a man
 Supremely: thus my love began.
 Through the Valley of Love I went,
 In the 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 the hottest nook to dwell;
 But lo, where I flung myself prone,
 couched Love
 Where the shadow threefold fell.
 (The meaning—those black bride's-
 eyes above,
 Not a painter's lip should tell!)*

"And here," said he, "Jules probably
 will ask,
 "You have black eyes, Love,—you
 are, sure enough,
 "My peerless bride,—then do you
 tell! indeed
 "What needs some explanation!
 What means this?"
 —And I am to go on, without a
 word—
*So, I grew wise in Love and Hate,
 From simple that I was of late.*

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

JULES interposes.

Lutwyche! Who else? But all of
 them, no doubt,
 Hated me: they at Venice—presently
 Their turn, however! You I shall not
 meet:
 if I dreamed, saying this would wake
 me.

Keep
 What's here, the gold—we cannot meet
 again,

Consider! and the money was but
meant
For two years' travel, which is over
now,
All chance or hope or care or need of it.
This—and what comes from selling
these, my casts
And books and medals, except . . .
let them go
Together, so the produce keeps you
safe

Out of Natalia's clutches!—If by
chance
(For all's chance here) I should survive
the gang
At Venice, root out all fifteen of them,
We might meet somewhere, since the
world is wide.

[From without is heard the voice 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, bind-
ing her tresses,

"'T is only a page that carols un-
seen,

"Crumbling your hounds their
messes!")

Is she wronged?—To the rescue of her
honour,

My heart

Is she poor?—What costs it to be
styled a donor?

Merely an earth to cleave, a sea to
part,

But that fortune should have thrust all
this upon her!

("Nay, list!"—bade Kate the
Queen;

And still cried the maiden, binding
her tresses,

"'T is only a page that carols un-
seen,

"Fitting your hawks their jesses!")

[PIPPA, passes

JULES resumes.

What name was that the little girl
sang forth?

Kate? The Cornaro, doubtless, who
renounced

The crown of Cyprus to be lady here
At Asolo, where still her memory stays,
And peasants sing how once a certain
page

Pined for the grace of her so far above
His power of doing good to, "Kate the
Queen—

"She never could be wronged, be poor,"
he sighed.

"Need him to help her!"

Yes, a bitter thing

To see our lady above all need of us;
Yet so we look ere we will love; not I,
But the world looks so. If whoever
loves

Must be, in some sort, god or wor-
shipper,

The blessing or the blessed one, queen
or page,

Why should we always choose the
page's part?

Here is a woman with utter need of
me,—

I find myself queen here, it seems!

How strange!

Look at the woman here with the new
soul,

Like my own Psyche,—fresh upon her
lips

Alit, the visionary butterfly,

Waiting my word to enter and make
bright,

Or flutter off and leave all blank as
first.

This body had no soul before, but slept
Or stirred, was beauteous or ungainly,
free

From taint or foul with stain, as out-
ward things

Fastened their image on its passive-
ness:

Now, it will wake, feel, live—or die
again!

Shall to produce form out of unshaped
stuff

Re 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 danber, men will hoot to
death

Without me, from their hooting. Oh,
to hear

God's voice plain as I heard it first, be-
fore

They broke in with their laughter ! I
heard them
Henceforth, not God.

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

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

Scatter all this, my Phene—this mad
dream !

Who, what is Lutwyche, what Natalia's
friends,

What the whole world except our love
—my own,

Own Phene ? But I told you, did I
not,

Ere night we travel for your land—
some isle

With the sea's silence on it ? Stand
aside—

I do but break these paltry models up
To begin Art afresh. Meet Lutwyche,
I—

And save him from my statue meeting
him ?

Some unsuspected isle in the far seas !
Like a god going through his world,
there stands

One mountain for a moment in the
dusk,

Whole brotherhoods of cedars on its
brow :

And you are ever by me while I gaze
—Are in my arms as now—as now—as
now !

Some unsuspected isle in the far seas !
Some unsuspected isle in far-off seas !

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

*Bluphocks.*¹ So, that is your Pippa,
the little girl who passed us singing ?
Well, your Bishop's Intendant's money
shall be honestly earned :—now, don't
make me that sour face because I bring

the Bishop's name into the business ;
we know we can have nothing to do
with such horrors : we know that he is
a saint and all that a bishop should be,
who is a great man beside. *Oh were
but every worm a maggot, Every fly a
grig, Every bough a Christmas faggot,
Every tune a jig !* In fact, I have
abjured all religions ; but the last I
inclined to, was the Armenian : for I
have travelled, do you see, and at Koe-
nigsberg, Prussia Improper (so styled
because there's a sort of bleak hungry
sun there), you might remark over a
venerable house-porch, a certain Chal-
dee inscription ; and brief as it is, a
mere glance at it used absolutely to
change the mood of every bearded pas-
senger. In they turned, one and all ;
the young and lightsome, with no irre-
verent pause, the aged and decrepit,
with a sensible alacrity : 't was the
Grand Rabbi's abode, in short. Struck
with curiosity, I lost no time in learn-
ing Syriac—(these are vowels, you
dogs,—follow my stick's end in the
mud—*Celarent, Davii, Ferio !*) and
one morning presented myself, spelling-
book in hand, a, b, c,—I picked it
out letter by letter, and what was the
purport of this miraculous posy ?
Some cherished legend of the past,
you'll say—"*How Moses hocus-po-
cussed Egypt's land with fly and locust,*"
—or, "*How to Jonah sounded harsh-
ish, Get thee 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—Isaach, Re-cci-ver,
Pur-cha-ser and Ex-chan-ger of—Stolen
Goods !*" So, talk to me of the reli-
gion 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, Hell-
ward bound in Charon's wherry, With
food for both wor-'s, 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
zwanzigers) . . . *To pay the Stygian
Ferry !*

1st Pol. There is the girl, then ; go
and deserve them the moment you have

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

pointed out to us Signor Luigi and his mother. (*To the rest*) I have been noticing a house yonder, this long while: not a shutter unclosed since morning!

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

Blup. 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 *Panurge* consults *Hertrippa*—Believest thou, King Agrippa! Something might be done with that name.

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

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

2nd Pol. Flourish all round—"Put all possible obstacles in his way;" oblong dot at the end—"Detain him till further advices reach you;" scratch at bottom—"Send him back on pretence of some informality in the above;" ink-spirt on right-hand side, (which is the case here)—"Arrest him at once." Why and wherefore, I don't concern myself, but my instructions amount to this: if Signor Luigi leaves home to-night for Vienna—well and good, the passport deposed with us for our *visa* is really for his own use, they have 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 on the Hill above Asolo. LUIGI and his Mother entering.*

Mother. If there blew wind, you'd hear a long sigh, easing
The utmost heaviness of music's heart.
Luigi. Here in the archway?

Mother. Oh no, no—in farther,
Where the echo is made, on the ridge.
Luigi. Here surely, then.

How plain the tap of my heel as I leaped up!

Hark—"Lucius Junius!" The very ghost of a voice

Whose body is caught and kept by . . . what are those?

Mere withered wallflowers, waving overhead?

They seem an elvish group with thin bleached hair

That lean out of their topmost fortress—look

And listen, mountain men, to what we say,

Hand under chin of each grave earthy face:

Up and show faces all of you!—"All of you!"

That's the king dwarf with the scarlet comb; old Franz,

Come down and meet your fate! Hark—"Meet your fate!"

Mother. Let him not meet it, my Luigi—do not

Go to his City! Putting crime aside,
Half of these ills of Italy are feigned:
Your Pellicos and writers for effect,
Write for effect.

Luigi. Hush Say A. writes, and B.

Mother. The A.s and B.s write for effect, I say.

Then, evil is in its nature loud, while good

Is silent; you hear each petty injury,
None of his virtues; he is old beside,
Quiet and kind, and densely stupid.

Why
Do A. and B. not kill him themselves?

Luigi. They teach
Others to kill him—me—and, if I fail,
Others to succeed; now, if A. tried and failed,

I could not teach that: mine's the lesser task.

Mother. they visit night by night . . .
—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 other-
wise?

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 cicala laughs "There goes he,
and there!

"Feast him, the time is short; he is
on his way

"For the world's sake: feast him this
once, our friend!"

And in return for all this, I can trip
Cheerfully up the scaffold-steps. I go
This evening, mother!

Mother. But mistrust yourself—
Mistrust the judgment you pronounce
on him!

Luigi. Oh, there I feel—am sure
that I am right!

Mother. Mistrust your judgment
then, of the mere means

To this wild enterprise: say, you 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, sparerlied 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 sum-
mer nights—

Gone are they, but I have them in my
soul!

Mother. (He will not go!)

Luigi. You smile at me? 'T is
true,—

Voluptuousness, grotesqueness, ghas-
tliness,

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 only here.
 Every one knows for what his excellence
 Will serve, but no one ever will consider
 For what his worst defect might serve ;
 and yet
 Have you not seen me range our cop-
 pice yonder
 In search of a distorted ash ?—I find
 The wry spoilt branch a natural perfect bow.
 Fancy the thrice-sage, thrice-precautioned man
 Arriving at the palace on my errand !
 No, no ! I 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 guards—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 try me, or make
 sport of me ?
 How first the Austrians got these pro-
 vinces . . .
 (If that is all, I'll satisfy you soon)
 —Never by conquest but by cunning,
 for
 That treaty whereby . . .
Mother. Well ?
Luigi. (Sure he's arrived,
 The tell-tale cuckoo : spring's his con-
 fidant,
 And he lets out her April purposes !)
 Or . . better go at once to modern
 time.
 He has . . they have . . in fact, I
 understand
 But can't restate the matter ; that's
 my boast :
 Others could reason it out to you, and
 prove
 Things they have made me feel.
Mother. Why go to-night ?
 Morn's for adventure. Jupiter is now
 A morning star. I cannot hear you,
 Luigi !
Luigi. " I am the bright and morn-
 ing-star," saith God—
 And, " to such an one I give the morn-
 ing-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 pomps
 That triumph at the heels of June the
 god
 Leading his revel through our leafy
 world.

Yes, Chiara will be here.

Mother. In June : remember,
Yourself appointed that month for her
coming.

Luigi. Was that low noise the echo ?

Mother. The night-wind.
She must be grown—with her blue eyes
upturned

As if life were one long and sweet sur-
prise :

In June she comes.

Luigi. We were to see together
The Titan 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 hated him many a valley-thief
Caught in the sheep-pens, robber-chief
Swarthy and shameless, beggar-cheat,
Spy-prowler, or rough pirate found
On the sea-sand left aground :*

*And sometimes clung about his feet,
With bleeding lip and burning cheek,
A woman, bitterest wrong to speak
Of one with sullen, thick-set 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
He was by the very god,*

*Who ever in the darkness strode
Backward and forward, keeping watch
O'er his brazen bowls, such rogues to
catch*

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

Luigi. That king should still judge
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.*

*'T is 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 alway :
But when he saw the sweepy hair
Girt with a crown of berries rare
Which the god will hardly give to wear
To the maiden who singeth, dancing
bare*

*In the altar-smoke by the pine-torch
lights,*

*At his wondrous forest rites,—
Seeing this, he did not dare
Approach that threshold in the sun,
Assault the old king smiling there.
Such grace had kings when the world
began !*

[PIPPA, passes

Luigi. And such grace have they,
now that the world ends !

The Python at the city, on the throne,
And brave men, God would crown for
slaying him,
Lurk in bye-corners lest they fall his
prey.

Are crowns yet to be won in this late
time,

Which weakness makes me hesitate to
reach ?

'T is God's voice calls : how could I
stay ? Farewell !

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

1st Girl. There goes a swallow to
Venice—the stout seafarer !

Seeing those birds it makes one wish
for wings.

Let us all wish ; you, wish first !

2nd C. A. 1? This sunset.
To finish.

3rd Girl. That old—somebody I know,
 Greyer and older than my grandfather,
 To give me the same treat he gave last week—
 Feeding me on his knee with fig-peckers,
 Lampreys and red Breganze-wine, and mumbling
 The while some folly about how well I fare,
 Let sit and eat my supper quietly :
 Since had he not himself been late this morning
 Detained at—never mind where,—had he not . . .
 " Eh, baggage, had I not ! "—
 2nd Girl. How she can lie !
 3rd Girl. Look there—by the nails !
 2nd Girl. What makes your fingers red ?
 3rd Girl. Dipping them into wine to write bad words with
 On the bright table : how he laughed !
 1st Girl. My turn.
 Spring's come and summer's coming.
 I would wear
 A long loose gown, down to the feet and hands,
 With plaits here, close about the throat, all day ;
 And all night lie, the cool long nights, in bed ;
 And have new milk to drink, apples to eat,
 Deuzans and junetings, leather-coats . . .
 ah, I should say,
 This is away in the fields—miles !
 3rd Girl. Say at once
 You'd be at home : she'd always be at home !
 Now comes the story of the farm among
 The cherry orchards, and how April snowed
 White blossoms on her as she ran.
 Why, fool,
 They've rubbed the chalk-mark out, how ta'll you were,
 Twisted your starling's neck, broken his cage,
 Made a dunghill of your garden !
 1st Girl. They, destroy
 My garden since I left them ? well—perhaps !
 I would have done so : so I hope they have !

A fig-tree curled out of our cottage wall ;
 They called it mine, I have forgotten why,
 It must have been there long ere I was born :
 Cric—cric—I think I hear the wasps o'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.
 3rd Girl. How her mouth twitches !
 Where was I ?—before
 She broke in with her wishes and long gowns
 And wasps—would I be such a fool !—
 Oh, here !
 This is my way : I answer every one
 Who asks me why I make so much of him—
 (If you say, " you love him "—straight " he'll not be gulled ! ")
 " He that seduced me when I was a girl
 " Thus high—had eyes like yours, or hair like yours,
 " Brown, red, white,"—as the case may be : that pleases !
 See how that beetle burnishes in the path !
 There sparkles he along the dust : and, there—
 Your journey to that maize-tuft spoiled at least !
 1st Girl. When I was young, they said if you killed one
 Of those sunshiny beetles, that his friend
 Up there, would shine no more that day nor next.
 2nd Girl. When you were young ?
 Nor are you young, that's true.
 How your plump arms, that were, have dropped away !
 Why, I can span them. Cecco beats you still ?
 No matter, so you keep your curious hair.
 I wish they'd find a way to dye our hair
 Your colour—any lighter tint, indeed,
 Than black : the men say they are sick of black,
 Black eyes, black hair !
 4th Girl. Sick of yours, like enough

Do you pretend you ever tasted lamp-
reys

And ortolans? Giovita, of the palace,
Engaged (but there's no trusting him)
to slice me

Polenta with a knife that had cut up
An ortolan.

2nd Girl. Why, there! Is not that
Pippa

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

Where the lights are?

1st Girl. That she? No, or she
would sing.

For the Intendant said . . .

3rd Girl. Oh, you sing first!

Then, if she listens and comes close . . .

I'll tell you,—

Sing that song the young English noble
made,

Who took you for the purest of the
pure,

And meant to leave the world for you
—what fun!

2nd Girl. (Sings.)

You'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 in-
deed,

Not love, but, may be, like.

You'll look at least on love's remains,

A grave's one violet:

Your look?—that pays a thousand
pains.

What's death? You'll love me yet!

3rd Girl. [To PIPPA who approaches.]

Oh you may come closer—we shall not
eat you! Why, you seem the very
person that the great rich handsome
Englishman has fallen so violently in
love with. I'll tell you all about it.

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

Mon. Thanks, friends, many thanks!
I chiefly desire life now, that I may
recompense every one of you. Most I

know something of already. What, a
repast prepared? *Benedictio benedica-
tur . . .* 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 't was full summer at
Messina, as we priests used to cross in
procession the great square on Assump-
tion 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. Uguccio—

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

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

Mon. This night, Ugo. You have
managed my late brother's affairs
since the death of our elder brother:
fourteen years and a month, all but
three days. On the Third of Decem-
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 Third of December.
Talk of disappointments! There was
a young fellow here, Jules, a foreign
sculptor I did my utmost to advance,
that the Church might be a gainer by
us both: I 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 I 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 inter-

dict 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 villianous 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 double that by allowing you to trespass.

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

Mon. 1, 2—N^o 3!—ay, can you read the substance of a letter, N^o 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 the 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 this heir's ruffianly instrument, and their complot's effect, and the life of fear and bribes and ominous smiling silence? Did you throttle or stab my brother's infant? Come now!

Inten. So did 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 nor of me! I see her every day—saw her this morning: of course there is to be no killing; but at Rome the courtesans perish off every three years, and I can entice her thither—have indeed begun operations already. There's a certain hasty 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 Eelippa, 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 Bluplocks. 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 one's
feet:*

*There was nought above me, nought
below,*

*My childhood had not learned to
know:*

For, what are the voices of birds
—Ay, and of beasts,—but words, our
words,

Only so much more sweet?

The knowledge of that with my life
begun,

But I had so near made out the sun,
And counted your stars, the seven and
one,

Like the fingers of my hand:

Nay I could all but understand

Wherefore through heaven the white
moon ranges;

And just when out of her soft fifty
changes

No unfamiliar face might overlook
me—

Suddenly God took me.

[PIPPA passes.

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

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, thanks for your counsel, my
Zanze!

"Feast upon lampreys, quaff the
Breganze"—

The summer of life so easy to spend,
And care for to-morrow so soon put
away!

But winter hastens at summer's end,
And fire-fly, hedge-shrew, lob-worm,
pray.

How fare they?

No bidding me then to . . . what did
Zanze say?

"Pare your nails pearlwise, get your
small feet shoes

"More like" . . . (what said she?)—
"and less like canoes!"

How pert that girl was!—would I be
those pert

Impudent staring women! It had
done me,

However, surely no such mighty hurt

To learn his name who passed that jest
upon me:

No foreigner, that I can recollect,
Came, as she says, a month since, to in-
spect

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

Of raw-silk-coloured hair, at all events.

Well, if old Luca keep his good intents,
We shall do better, see what next year
brings!

I may buy shoes, my Zanze, not appear
More destitute than you perhaps next
year!

Bluph . . . something! I had caught
the uncouth name

But for Monsignor's people's sudden
clatter

Above us—bound to spoil such idle
chatter

As ours: it were indeed a serious
matter [shame

If silly talk like ours should put to
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 de-
parted

On some good errand or another,

For he passed just now in a traveller's
trim,

And the sullen company that prowled
About his path, I noticed, scowled

As if they had lost a prey in him.

And I was Jules the sculptor's bride,

And I was Ottima beside,

And now what am I?—tired of fooling.

Day for folly, night for schooling!

New year's day is over and spent,

Ill or well, I must be content.

Even my lily's asleep, I vow:

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

Call this flower a heart's-ease now !
 Something rare, let me instruct you,
 Is this, with petals triply swollen,
 Three times spotted, thrice the pollen ;
 While the leaves and parts that witness

Old proportions and their fitness,
 Here remain unchanged, unmoved now ;
 Call this pampered thing improved
 now !

Suppose there's a king of the flowers
 And a girl-show heid in his bowers—
 "Look ye, buds, this growth of ours,"
 Says he, "Zanze from the Brenta,
 "I have made her gorge potentia
 "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 ;
 "'T was but white when wild she grew.
 "And only by this Zanze's eyes
 "Of which we could not change the size,
 "The magnitude of all achieved
 "Otherwise, may be perceived."

Oh what a drear dark close to my poor day !

How could that red sun drop in that black cloud ?

Ah Pippa, morning's rule is moved away,

Dispensed with, never more to be allowed !

Day's turn is over, now arrives the night's.

Oh lark, be day's apostle
 To mavis, merle and throistle,
 Bid them their betters jostle

From day and its delights !

But at night, brother howlet, over the woods,

Toll the world to thy chantry ;

Sing to the bats' sleek sisterhoods

Full complines with gallantry :

Then, owls and bats, 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 bed-side.

And border Ottima's cloak's hem.

Ah me, and my important part with them,

This morning's hymn half promised when I rose !

True in some sense or other, I suppose.

[As she lies down.

God bless me ! I can pray no more to-night.

No doubt, some way or other, hymns say right,

All service ranks the same with God—

With God, whose puppets, best and worst,

Are we : there is no last nor first.

[She sleeps.

KING VICTOR AND KING CHARLES

A TRAGEDY

So far as I know, this Tragedy is the first artistic consequence of what Voltaire termed "a terrible event without consequences ;" and although it professes to be historical, I have taken more pains to arrive at the history than most readers would thank me for particularizing : since acquainted, as I will hope them to be, with the chief circumstances of Victor's remarkable European career—nor quite ignorant of the sad and surprising facts I am about to reproduce (a tolerable account of which is to be found, for instance, in 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 detail of the memoirs, correspondence, and relations of the time. From these only may be obtained a knowledge of the fiery and audacious temper, unscrupulous

selfishness, profound dissimulation, and singular fertility in resources, of Victor—the extreme and painful sensibility, prolonged immaturity of powers, earnest good purpose and vacillating will of Charles—the noble and right woman's manliness of his wife—and the ill-considered rascality and subsequent better-advised rectitude of D'Ormea. When I say, therefore, that I cannot but believe my statement (combining as it does what appears correct in Voltaire and plausible in Condorcet) more true to person and thing than any it has hitherto been my fortune to meet with, no doubt my word will be taken, and my evidence spared as readily.—*R. B.*

London, 1842.

PERSONS

VICTOR AMADEUS, First King of Sardinia. | POLYXENA, Wife of Charles.
CHARLES EMMANUEL, His Son, Prince of | D'ORMEA, Minister.
Piedmont.

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 Sebastians, no D'Ormeas on our path—

At Rivoli or Turin, still at hand, Arch-counsellor, prime confidant . . . force me!

Cha. Because I felt as sure, as I feel sure

We clasp hands now, of being happy once.

Young was I, quite neglected, nor concerned

By the world's business that engrossed so much

My father and my brother: if I peered From out my privacy,—amid the crash

And blaze of nations, domineered those two.

'T was war, peace—France our foe, now—England, friend—

In love with Spain—at feud with Austria! Well—

I wondered, laughed a moment's laugh for pride

In the chivalrous couple, then let drop My curtain—"I am out of it," I said—

When . . .

Pol. You have told me, Charles!

Cha. Polyxena—

When suddenly,—a warm March day,

just that! Just so much sunshine as the cottage child

Basks in delighted, while the cottager Takes off his bonnet, as he ceases work,

To catch the more of it—and it must fall

Heavily on my brother! Had you seen

Philip—the lion-featured! not like me!

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 dear 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 contempt:
 How should the Duke employ himself, forsooth,
 With such an one, while lordly Philip rode
 By him their Turin through? But he was punished,
 And must put up with—me! 'T was sad enough
 To learn my future portion and subunit.
 And then the wear and worry, blame on blame!
 For, spring-sounds in my ears, spring-smells about, [pent
 How could I but grow dizzy in their
 Dim palace-rooms at first? My mother's look
 As they discussed my insignificance,
 She and my father, and I sitting by,—
 I bore; I knew how brave a son they missed:
 Philip had gaily run state-papers through,
 While Charles was spelling at them painfully!
 But Victor was my father spite of that.
 "Duke Victor's entire life has been," I said,
 "Innumerable efforts to one end;
 "And on the point now of that end's success,
 "Our Ducal turning to a Kingly crown,
 "Where 's time to be reminded 't is his child
 "He spurns?" And so I suffered—scarcely suffered
 Since I had you at length!
Pol. —To serve in place
 Of monarch, minister and mistress, Charles!

Chr. But, once that crown obtained, then was 't not like
 Our lot would I alter? "When he rests, 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 is 't they want with me?
 Him with this mistress and this minister,
 —You see me and you hear him; judge us both!
 Pronounce what I should do, Polyxena!
Pol. Endure, endure, beloved! Say you not
 He is your father? All 's so incident
 To novel sway! Beside, our life must change:
 Or you'll acquire his kingcraft, or he'll find
 Harshness a sorry way of teaching it.
 I bear this—not that there's so much to bear.
Cha. You bear? Do not I know that you, tho' bound
 To silence for my sake, are perishing
 Piecemeal beside me? And how otherwise
 When every creep-hole from the hideous Court
 Is stopped; the Minister to dog me, here—
 The Mistress posted to entrap you, there?
 And thus shall we grow old in such a life;
 Not careless, never estranged,—but old: to alter
 Our life, there is so much to alter!
Pol. Come—
 Is it agreed that we forego complaint
 Even at Turin, yet complain we here
 At Rivoli? 'T were 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 succeded I
train

On the high-road, each gayer still than
each !

I noticed your Archbishop's pursuiv-
ant,

The sable cloak and silver cross , such
pomp

Bodes . . what now, Charles ? Can
you conceive ?

Cha. Not I.

Pol. A matter of some moment —

Cha. There's our life !

Which of the group of loiterers that
stare

From the lime-avenue, divines that I—
About to figure presently, he thinks,

In face of all assembled—am the one
Who knows precisely least about it ?

Pol. Tush !

D'Ormea's contrivance !

Cha. Ay, how otherwise

Should the young Prince serve for the
old King's foil ?

—So that the simplest courtier may
remark

'T were idle raising parties for a Prince
Content to linger D'Ormea's laughing-
stock.

Something, 't is 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 sin

Your eye once—ay, thus ! “ If Spain
claims . . . ” begin

—Just as you look at me !

Cha. Ah you ! Oh truly,
You have I seen, say, marshalling your
troops,

Dismissing councils, or, through doors
ajar,

Head sunk on hand, devoured by slow
chagrins

—Then radiant, for a crown had all at
once

Seemed possible again ! I can behold
Him, whose least whisper ties my spirit

fast,
In this sweet brow, nought could divert

me from
Save objects like Sebastian's shameless

lip,
Or worse, the clipped grey hair and

dead white face
And dwindling eye as if it ached with

guile,
D'Ormea wears . . .

*[As he kisses her, enter from the
KING's apartment D'ORMEA.]*

I said he would divert
My kisses from your brow !

D'O. [Aside.] Here ! So, King Vic-
tor

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 threat-
ened 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! ('T is in his eye, beside—

His voice: he knows it, and his heart's on flame [self,

Already!]) You surmise why you, my-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, overlooks the other paper*

CHARLES continues to hold.

My project for the Fiefs! As I supposed!

Sir, I must give you light upon those measures

—For this is mine, and that I spied of Spain,

Mine too!

Cha. Release me! Do you gloze on me

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

You make for me at Turin) your contempt?

—Your measure?—When was not any hateful task

D'Ormea's imposition? Leave my robe!

What post can I bestow, what grant concede?

Or do you take me for the King?

D'O. Not I! Not yet for King,—not for, as yet,

thank God, One who in . . . shall I say a year, a month?

Ay!—shall be wretcheder than e'er was slave

In his Sardinia,—Europe's spectacle And the world's bye-word! What?

The Prince aggrieved That I excluded him our counsels?

Here [*Touching the paper in CHARLES'S hand.*

Accept a method of extorting gold From Savoy's nobles, who must wring

its worth In silver first from tillers of the soil,

Whose hinds again have to contribute brass

To make up the amount: there's counsel, sir!

My counsel, one year old; and the fruit, this—

Savoy's become a mass of misery And wrath, which one man has to meet

—the King: You're not the King! Another coun-

sel, 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 themselves
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, 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. Clear up? 'Tis no such thing to envy, then?

You see the King's state in its length and breadth?

You blame me now for keeping you aloof

From counsels and the fruit of counsels?—Wait

Till I explain this morning's business!

Cha. [*Aside.*] No—
Stoop to my father, yes,—D'Ormea, no;

—The King's son, not to the King's counsellor!

I will do something, but at least retain
The credit of my deed! [*Aloud.*]

Then it is this

You now expressly come to tell me?

D'O. This
To tell! You apprehend me?

Cha. Perfectly.
Further, D'Ormea, you have shown yourself,

For the first time these many weeks and months,

Disposed to do my bidding?

D'O. From the heart!

Cha. Acquaint my father, first, I wait his pleasure:

Next . . . or, I'll tell you at a fitter time.

Acquaint the King!

D'O. [*Aside.*] If I 'scape Victor yet!

First, to prevent this stroke at me: if not,—

Then, to avenge it! [*To CHA.*] Gracious sir, I go. [*Goes.*]

Cha. God, I forbore! Which more offends, that man

Or that man's master? Is it come to this?

Have they supposed (the sharpest insult yet)

I needed e'en his intervention? No!

No—dull am I, conceded,—but so dull,
Scarcely! Their step decides me.

Pol. How decides?

Cha. You would be freed D'Ormea's eye and hers?

—Could fly the court with me and live content?

So, this it is for which the knights assemble!

The whispers and the closeting of late,
The savageness and insolence of old,

—For this!

Pol. What mean you?

Cha. How? You fail to catch
Their clever plot? I missed it, but could you?

These last two months of care to inculcate

How dull I am,—D'Ormea's present visit

To prove that, being dull, I might be worse

Were I a King—as wretched as now dull—

You recognise in it no winding up
Of a long plot?

Pol. Why should there be a plot?

Cha. The crown's secure now; I should shame the crown—

An old complaint; the point is, how to gain

My place for one, more fit in Victor's eyes,

His mistress the Sebastian's child.

Pol. In truth?

Cha. They dare not quite dethrone
Sardinia's Prince.

But they may descant on my dulness till

They sting me into even praying them
Grant leave to hide my head, resign my state,

And end the coil. Not see now? In a word,

They'd have me tender them myself my rights

As one incapable:—some cause for that,
Since I delayed thus long to see their drift!

I shall apprise the King he may resume
My rights this moment.

Pol. Pause! I dare not think
So ill of Victor.

Cha. Think no ill of him!

Pol.—Nor think him, then, so shallow as to suffer

His purpose be divined thus easily.
And yet—you are the last of a great line;

There's a great heritage at stake; new days

Seemed to await this newest of the realms

Of Europe:—Charles, you must withstand this!

Cha. Ah—

You dare not then renounce the splendid Court

For one whom all the world despises? Speak!

Pol. My gentle husband, speak I will, and truth.

Were this as you believe, and I once sure

Your duty lay in so renouncing rule,
I could . . . could? Oh what happiness it were—

To live, my Charles, and die, alone with you!

Cha. I grieve I asked you. To the presence, then!

By this, D'Ormea acquaints the King, no doubt,

He fears I am too simple for mere hints,
And that no less will serve than Victor's mouth

Demonstrating in council what I am.

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

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

That woman, call legitimate her child.

Cha. You see as much? Oh, let his will have way!

You'll not repent confiding in me, love?

There's many a brighter spot in Piedmont, far,

Than Rivoli. I'll seek him: or, suppose

You hear first how I mean to speak my mind?

—Loudly and firmly both, this time, be sure!

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, treading thus

Among the obscure trains I have laid, —my knights

Safe in the hall here—in that anteroom, My son,—D'Ormea, where? Of this, one touch—

[Laying down the crown.]

This fireball to these mute black cold 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 unlearned

When past the use,—“just this once more” (I thought)

“Use it with Spain and Austria happily,

“And then away with trick!” An oversight

I'd have repaired thrice over, any time These fifty years, must happen now!

There's peace

At length; and I, to make the most of peace,

Ventured my project on our people here,

As needing not their help: which Europe knows,

And means, cold-blooded, to dispose herself

(Apart from plausibilities of war)
To crush the new-made King—who
ne'er till now

Feared her. As Duke, I lost each foot
of earth

And laughed at her: my name was
left, my sword

Left, all was left! But she can take,
she knows,

This crown, herself conceded . . .

That 's to try,
Kind Europe! My career's not closed
as yet!

This boy was ever subject to my will,
Timid and tame—the fitter! D'Or-
mea, too—

What if the sovereign also rid himself
Of thee, his prime of parasites?—I
delay!

D'Ormea! [*As D'ORMEA enters, the
King seats himself.*]

My son, the Prince—attends he?

D'O. Sir,
He does attend. The crown prepared!
—it seems

That you persist in your resolve.

Who 's come?
The chancellor and the chamberlain?
My knights?

D'O. The whole Annunziata.—If,
my liege,

Your fortune had not tottered worse
than now . . .

Vic. Del Borgo has drawn up the
schedules? mine—

My son's, too? Excellent! Only,
beware

Of the least blunder, or we look but
fools.

First, you read the Annulment of the
Oaths;

Del Borgo follows . . . no, the Prince
shall sign; . . . ment:

Then let Del Borgo read the Instru-
ment which, I enter.

D'O. Sir, this may be truth;
You, sir, may do as you affect—may
break

Your engine, me, to pieces: say at least
If not a spring remain worth saving!
Take

My counsel as I've counselled many
times!

What if the Spaniard and the Austrian
threat?

There 's England, Holland, Venice—
which ally

Select you?

Vic. Aha! Come, D'Ormea,—
"truth"

Was on your lip a minute since. Allies?
I've broken faith with Venice, Holland,
England

—As who knows if not you?

D'O. But why with me
Break faith—with one ally, your best,
break faith?

Vic. When first I stumbled on you,
Marquis—'t was

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 trust to
guide

You safe (yes, on my soul) through
these affairs!

Vic. I was about to notice, had you
not

Prevented me, that since that great
town kept

With its chicane D'Ormea's satchel
stuffed

And D'Ormea's self sufficiently re-
cluse, [ment

He missed a sight,—my naval arma-
When I burned Toulon. How the
skiff exults

Upon the galliot's wave!—rises its
height,

O'ertops it even; but the great wave
bursts,

And hell-deep in the horrible profound
Buries itself the galliot: shall the skiff

Think to escape the sea's black trough
in turn?

Apply this: you have been my minis-
ter

—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 ebbcd
with me?

Whereas it cants you to another crest ;
I toss you to my son ; ride out your
ride !

D'O. Ah, you so much despise me ?
Vic. You, D'Ormea ?

Nowise : and I'll inform you why. A
king

Must in his time have many ministers,
And I've been rash enough to part with
mine

When I thought proper. Of the tribe,
'not one

(. . Or wait, did Pianezze ? . . ah,
just the same !)

Not one of them, ere his remonstrance
reached

The length of yours, but has assured
me (commonly

Standing much as you stand,—or
nearer, say,

The door to make his exit on his speech)
—I should repent of what I did.

D'Ormea,
Be candid, you approached it when I
bade you

Prepare the schedules ! But you
stopped in time,

You have not so assured me : how
should I

Despise you then ?

Enter CHARLES.

Vic. [*changing his tone.*] Are you
instructed ? Do

My order, point by point ! About it,
sir !

D'O. You so despise me ! [*Aside*]
One last stay remains—

The boy's discretion there.

[*To CHARLES.*] For your sake, Prince,
I pleaded, wholly in your interest,

To save you from this fate !
Cha. [*Aside.*] Must I be told

The Prince was supplicated for—by
him ?

Vic. [*to D'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, 't is like

Your face will ne'er again disgust me.
Go !

Through you, as through a breast of
glass, I see.

And for your conduct, from my youth
till now,

Take my contempt ! You might have
spared me much,

Secured me somewhat, nor so harmed
yourself :

That 's over now. Go, ne'er to come
again !

D'O. As son, the father—father as,
the son !

My wits ! My wits ! [*Goes.*
Vic. [*Seated.*] And you, what meant
you, pray,

Speaking thus to D'Ormea ?
Cha. I let us not

Weary ourselves with D'Ormea !
Those few words [*say.*

Have half unsettled what I came to
His presence vexes to my very soul.

Vic. One called to manage a king-
dom, Charles, needs heart

To bear up under worse annoyances
Than seems D'Ormea—to me, at least.

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

[*Aloud.*] Last night, sir, brought me
certain papers—these—

To be reported on,—your way of late.
Is it last night's result that you de-
mand ?

Vic. For God's sake, what has night
brought forth ? Pronounce

The . . what's your word ?—result !
Cha. Sir, that had proved

Quite worthy of your sneer, no doubt :
—a few

Lame thoughts, regard for you alone
could wring,

Lame as they are, from brains like
mine, believe !

As 't is, sir, I am spared both toil and
sneer.

These are the papers.
Vic. Well, sir ? I suppose

You hardly burned them. Now for
your result !

Cha. I never should have done great things of course,
But . . . oh my father, had you loved me more!

Vic. Loved? [*Aside*] Has D'Ormea played me false, I wonder?

[*Aloud.*] Why, Charles, a king's love is diffused—yourself

May overlook, perchance, your part in it.

Our monarchy is absolutest now
In Europe, or my trouble 's thrown away.

I love, my mode, that subjects each
and all

May have the power of loving, all and
Their mode: I doubt not, many have
their sons

To trifle with, talk soft to, all day long;
I have that crown, this chair, D'Ormea,
Charles!

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

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

[*Aloud.*] Aha!

I apprehend you: when all 's said, you
take

Your private station to be prized be-
yond

My own, for instance?

Cha. —Do and ever did
So take it: 't is the method you pursue
That grieves . . .

Vic. These words! Let me ex-
press, my friend,

Your thoughts. You penetrate what I
supposed

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. 'T is I will speak: you ever
hated me,

I bore it,—have insulted me, borne
too—

Now you insult yourself; and I remem-
ber

What I believed you, what you really
are,

And cannot bear it. What! My life
has passed

Under your eye, tormented as you
know.—

Your whole sagacities, one after one,
At leisure brought to play on me—to

prove me

A fool, I thought and I submitted; now
You'd prove . . . what would you

prove me?

Vic. This to me?

I hardly know you!

Cha. Know me? Oh indeed
You do not! Wait till I complain next
time

Of my simplicity!—for here's a sage
Knows the world well, is not to be de-
ceived,

[*vels,*
And his experience and his Macchia-
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 con-
cede,

And you accept, Sardinia's crown.

Cha. Farewell!
'T were vain to hope to change this: I
can end it.

Not that I cease from being yours,
when sunk
Into obscurity: I'll die for you,
But not annoy you with my presence.
Sir,
Farewell! Farewell!

Enter D'ORMEA.

D'O. [Aside.] Ha, sure he's changed again—
Means not to fall into the cunning trap! Then Victor, I shall yet escape you, Victor!

Vic. [suddenly placing the crown upon the head of CHARLES.]

D'Ormea, your King!

[To CHARLES.] My son, obey me! Charles,

Your father, clearer-sighted than yourself,

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

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

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? *[now?]*

Be re-assured, my Charles! Is't over Then, Marquis, tell the new King what remains

To do! A moment's work. Del Borgo reads

The Act of Abdication out, you sign it, Then I sign; after that, come back to me.

D'O. Sir, for the last time, pause!

Vic. Five minutes longer I am your sovereign, Marquis. Hesitate—

And I'll so turn those minutes to account

That . . . Ay, you recollect me! *[Aside.]* Could I bring

My foolish mind to undergo the reading

That Act of Abdication!

[As CHARLES motions D'ORMEA to precede him.]

Thanks, dear Charles!

[CHARLES and D'ORMEA retire.]

Vic. A novel feature in the boy,—indeed

Just what I feared he wanted most, Quite right,

This earnest tone: your truth, now, for effect!

It answers every purpose: with that look,

That voice,—I hear him: "I began no treaty,"

(He speaks to Spain,) "nor ever dreamed of this

"You show me; this I from my soul regret;

"But if my father signed it, bid not me Dishonour him—who gave me all, be-

side:"

And, "true," says Spain, "'t were harsh to visit that

"Upon the Prince." Then came the nobles trooping:

"I grieve at these exactions—I had cut "This hand off ere impose them; but

shall I

"Undo my father's deed?"—and they confer:

"Doubtless he was no party, after all; "Give the Prince time!"

Ay, give us time, but time! Only, he must not, when the dark day comes,

Refer our friends to me and frustrate all. We'll have no child's play, no despond-

ing fits,

No Charles at each cross turn entreat-

ing Victor

To take his crown again. Guard against that!

Enter D'ORMEA.

Long live King Charles!

No—Charles's counsellor!

Well, is it over, Marquis? Did I jest?

D'O. "King Charles!" What then may you be?

Vic. Anything!

A country gentleman that, cured of bustle,

Now beats a quick retreat toward Chambery,

Would hunt and hawk and leave you noisy folk

To drive your trade without him. I'm Count Remont—

Count Tende—any little place's Count!

D'O. Then Victor, Captain against Catinat

At Staffarde, where the French beat
you; and Duke

At Turin, where you beat the French;
King late

Of Savoy, Piedmont, Montferrat, 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 na-
tions there,

Clamour for you the main delinquent,
slipped

From King to—Count of any little
place)

Must needs surrender me, all in his
reach,—

I, sir, forgive you: for I see the end—
See you on your return—(you will re-
turn)—

To him you trust thus for the
moment . . .

Trust him? How?

My poor man, merely a prime-minister,
Make me know where my trust errs!

D'O. In his fear,
His love, his—but discover for your-
self

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, *D'Ormea*! No:
such am I,

Count Tende or Count anything you
please,

—Only, the same that did the things
you say,

And, among other things you say not,
used

Your finest fibre, meanest muscle,—
you

I used, and now, since you will have it
so,

Leave to your fate—mere lumber in the
midst,

You and your works. Why, what on
earth beside

Are you made for, you sort of ministers?
D'O. Not left, though, to my fate!

Your witless son
Has more wit than to load himself with
lumber:

He foils you that way, and I follow you.
Vic. Stay with my son—protect the
weaker side!

D'O. Ay, to be tossed the people like
a rag,

And flung by them for Spain and Aus-
tria's sport,

Abolishing the record of your part
In all this perfidy!

Vic. Prevent, beside,
My own return!

D'O. That's half prevented now!
'T will go hard but you find a wondrous
charm

In exile, to discredit me. The Alps,
Silk-mills to watch, vines asking vigil-
ance—

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 elapse for that, you
judge!

[*Shouts inside "KING CHARLES."*
D'O. Do you repent?

Vic. [*after a slight pause.*] . . . I've
kept them waiting? Yes!

Come in, complete the Abdication, sir!

[*They go out.*]

Enter POLYXENA.

Pol. A shout? The sycophants are free of Charles!
Oh is not this like Italy? No fruit
Of his or my distempered fancy, this,
But just an ordinary fact! Beside,
Here they've set forms for such proceedings; Victor
Imprisoned his own mother: he should know,
If any, how a son's to be deprived
Of a son's right. Our duty's palpable.
Ne'er was my husband for the wily king
And the unworthy subjects: be it so!
Come you save 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 ancestry—
Patience and self-devotion, fortitude,
Simplicity and utter truthfulness
—All which, they shout to lose!
So, now my work
Begins—to save him from regret. Save
Charles
Regret?—the noble nature! He's
not made
Like these Italians: 't is 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 yesterday
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 lazy ropes of
vine!
Now I'll teach you my language: I'm
not forced
To speak Italian now, Charles?
[*She sees the crown.*] What is this?

Answer me—who has done this. Answer!

Cha. He!
I am King now.
Pol. Oh worst, worst, worst of all!
Tell me! What, Victor? He has
made you King?
What's he then? What's to follow
this? You, King?
Cha. Have I done wrong? Yes, for
you were not by!
Pol. Tell me from first to last.
Cha. Flush—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 [King.
Tend upward: I am grown Sardinia's
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.

'T is 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 Chambéry, who dozes while she
reigns.

Pol. Most grateful shall we now be,
talking least

Of gratitude—indeed of anything
That hinders what yourself must need
to say

To Charles.

Cha. Pray speak, sir !

Vic. 'Faith, not much to say :
Only what shows itself, you 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, some shrewd
knave

Reached you behind ; and him foiled,
straight if thong

And handle of that shield were not cast
loose,

And you enabled to outstrip the wind,
Fresh foes assailed you, either side ;

'scape these,
And reach your place of refuge—e'en
then, odds

If the gate opened unless breath enough
Were left in you to make its lord a
speech.

Oh, you will see !

Cha. No : straight on shall I go,
Truth helping ; win with it or die with
it.

Vic. 'Faith, Charles, you're not
made Europe's fighting-man !

The barrier-guarder, if you please.
You clutch

Hold and consolidate, with envious
France

This side, with Austria that, the terri-
tory

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, sir,—at Chambéry, away
for ever,

As soon you will be, 't is farewell we bid
you :

Turn these few fleeting moments to
account !

'T is 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 Gardinia, how bring back
My father ?

Vic. I mean . . .

Pol. [*who watches VICTOR narrowly
this while.*]

Your father does not mean
You should be ruling for your father's
sake :

It is your people must concern you
wholly
Instead of him. You mean this, sir?
(He drops
My hand!)

Cha. That people is now part of me.

Vic. About the people! I took cer-
tain measures

Some short time since . . . Oh, I know
well, you know

But little of my measures! These
affect

The nobles; we've resumed some
grants, imposed

A tax or two: prepare yourself, in
short,

For clamour on that score. Mark me:
you yield

No jot of aught entrusted you!

Pol.

No jot

You yield!

Cha. My father, when I took the
oath,

Although my eye might stray in search
of yours,

I heard it, understood it, promised God
What you require. Till from this emi-
nence

He move me, here I keep, nor shall con-
cede

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 in-
stant, sir?

That Spanish claim perchance? And,
now you speak,

—This morning, my opinion was ma-
ture,

Which, boy-like, I was bashful in pro-
ducing

To one I ne'er am like to fear in future!
My thought is formed upon that Span-
ish 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

E'en this commending: howsoe'er
might seem

My feelings toward you, as a private
man, [*field*

They quit me in the vast and untried
Of action. Though I shall myself (as

late

In your own hearing I engaged to do)
Preside o'er my Sardinia, yet your help

Is necessary. Think the past forgotten
And serve me now!

D'O. I did not offer you
My service—would that I could serve

you, sir!

As for the Spanish matter . . .

Vic. But dispatch
At least the dead, in my good daugh-
ter's phrase,

Before the living! Help to house me
safe

Ere with D'Ormea you set the world
a-gape!

Here is a paper—will you overlook
What I propose reserving for my needs?

I get as far from you as possible:
Here 's what I reckon my expenditure.

Cha. [*reading*] A miserable fifty
thousand crowns!

Vic. Oh quite enough for country
gentlemen!

Beside the exchequer happens . . .
but find out

All that, yourself!

Cha. [still reading.] "Count Tende"
—what means this?

Vic. Me: you were but an infant
when I burst
Through the defile of Tende upon
France.

Had only my allies kept true to me!
No matter. Tende's, then, a name I
take

Just as . . .

D'O. —The Marchioness Sebastian
takes

The name of Spigno.

Cha. How, sir?

Vic. [to D'ORMEA.] Fool! All that
Was for my own detailing. [To
CHARLES.] That anon!

Cha. [to D'ORMEA.] Explain what
you have said, sir!

D'O. I supposed
The marriage of the King to her I
named,
Profoundly kept a secret these few
weeks,

Was not to be one, now he's Count.

Pol. [Aside.] With us
The minister—with him the mistress!

Cha. [to VICTOR.] No—
Tell me you have not taken her—that
woman

To live with, past recall!

Vic. And where's the crime . . .

Pol. [to CHARLES.] True, sir, this is
a matter past recall

And past your cognizance. A day be-
fore,

And you had been compelled to note
this—now

Why note it? The King saved his
House from shame:

What the Count did, is no concern of
yours.

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

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

Spoils everything: though I was over-
reached,

A younger brain, we'll trust, may extri-
cate

Sardinia readily. To-morrow, D'Or-
mea,

Inform the King!

D'O. [without regarding VICTOR, and
leisurely.]

Thus stands the case with Spain:
When first the Infant Carlos claimed
his proper

Succession to the throne of Tuscany . . .

Vic. I tell you that stands over!

Let that rest!

There is the policy!

Cha. [to D'ORMEA.] Thus much I
know,

And more—too much: the remedy?

D'O. Of course!

No glimpse of one.

Vic. No remedy at all!

It makes the remedy itself—time makes
it.

D'O. [to CHARLES.] But if . . .

Vic. [still more hastily.] In fine, I
shall take care of that:

And, with another project that I
have . . .

D'O. [turning on him.] Oh, since
Count Tende means to take again

King Victor's crown!—

Pol. [throwing herself at VICTOR'S
feet.] E'en now retake it, sir!

Oh, speak! We are your subjects
both, once more!

Say it—a word effects it! You meant
not,

Nor do mean now, to take it: but you
must!

'T is in you—in your nature—and the
shame's

Not half the shame 't would grow to
afterwards!

Cha. Polyxena!

Pol. A word recalls the knights—
Say it!—What's promising and what's
the past?

Say you are still King Victor!

D'O. Better say
The Count repents, in brief!

[VICTOR rises.
Cha. With such a crime

I have not charged you, sir!

Pol. Charles turns from me!

SECOND YEAR, 1731.—KING
CHARLES

PART I

Enter QUEEN POLYXENA and D'OR-
MEA.—A pause.

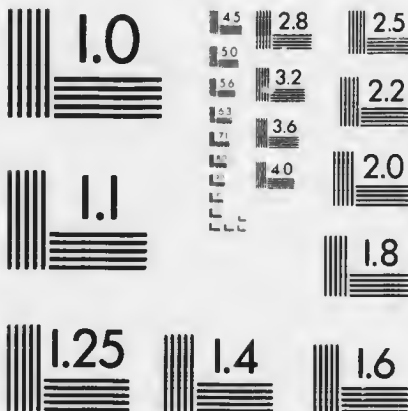
Pol. And now, sir, what have you to
say?

D'O. Count Tende . . .



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Pol. Affirm not I betrayed you ; you resolve
On uttering this strange intelligence
—Nay, post yourself to find me ere I reach
The capital, because you know King Charles
Tart as a day or two at Evian baths
Behind me :—but take warning,—here
a. a. thus

[*Seating 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

'T is 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, 't will 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 :

'T is last year's step, the Prince's voice !
D'O. I know.

Enter CHARLES—D'ORMEA retiring a little.

Cha. Now wish me joy, Polyxena !

Wish it me

The old way ! [*She embraces him.*]

There was too much cause for that ! But I have found myself again. What news

At Turin ? Oh, if you but felt the load I'm free of—free ! I said this year would end

Or it, or me—but I am free, thank God !

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 and smile no more

Until I cleared his name from obloquy.

We did the people right—'t was much
to gain
That point, redress our nobles' griev-
ance, 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 stipu-
late
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 re-
mained
At Evian to dispatch the Count his
news ;
'Tis gone to Chambéry 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
Chambéry
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 intention ?
D'O. Me ?
His heart, sir ; you may not be used to
read
Such evidence however ; therefore read
[*Pointing to POLYXENA'S papers.*]
My evidence.
Cha. [*to POLYXENA.*] Oh, worthy
this of you !
And of your speech I never have for-
gotten,
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 recognise Polyxena—
Oh worthy, to revive, and tenfold
worse,
That plague ! D'Ormea at your ear,
his slanders
Still in your hand ! Silent ?
Pol. As the wronged are.
Cha. And you, D'Ormea, since when
have you presumed
To spy upon my father ? I conceive
What that wise paper shows, and easily.
Since when ?
D'O. The when and where and how
be'ong
To me. 'Tis sad work, but I deal in
such.
You oft-times serve yourself ; I'd serve
you here :
Use makes me not so squeamish. In a
word,
Since the first hour he went to Cham-
béry,
Of his seven servants, five have I
suborned.
Cha. You hate my father ?
D'O. Oh, just as you will !
[*Looking at POLYXENA.*]
A minute since, I loved him—hate him,
now !
What matter ?—if you ponder just one
thing :
Has he that treaty ?—he is setting for-
ward !

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
designs! [*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. [*duty*]

Again I tender you my charge—its
Would bid me press you read those
documents.

Here, sir! [*Offering his badge of office.*]

Cha. [*taking it*] The papers also!
Do you think

I dare not read them?

Pol. Read them, sir!

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

Or my best dungeon . . .

D'O. Even say, Chambery!

'T is vacant, I surmise, by this.

Cha. You prove
Your words or pay their forfeit, sir.
Go there!

Polyxena, one chance to rend the veil
Thickening and blackening 'twixt us
two! Do say,

You'll see the falsehood of the charges
proved!

Do say, at least, you wish to see them
proved!

False charges—my heart's love of other
times!

Pol. Ah, Charles!

Cha. [*to D'ORMEA.*] Precede me, sir!

D'O. And I'm at length
A martyr for the truth! No end, they
say,

Of miracles. My conscious innocence!

[*As they go out, enter—by the
middle door, at which he pauses—*

VICTOR.

Vic. Sure I heard voices? No.
Well, I do best

To make at once for this, the heart o'
the place.

The old room! Nothing changed!

So near my seat,
D'Ormea? [*Pushing away the stool
which is by the KING's chair.*]

I want that meeting over first,
I know not why. Tush, he, *D'Ormea*,
slow

To hearten me, the supple knave?
That burst

Of spite so eased him! He'll inform
me . . .

What?

Why come I hither? All 's in rough:
let all

Remain rough. There 's full time to
draw back—nay,

There 's nought to draw back from, as
yet; whereas,

If reason should be, to arrest a course
Of error—reason good, to interpose

And save, as I have saved so many
times,

Our House, admonish my son's giddy
youth,

Relieve him of a weight that proves
too much—

Now is the time,—or now, or never.

'Faith,

This kind of step is pitiful, not due
To Charles, this stealing back—hither,
because

He 's from his capital! Oh Victor!
Victor!

But thus it is. The age of crafty men
Is loathsome; youth contrives to carry
off

Dissimulation; we may intersperse
Extenuating passages of strength,
Ardour, vivacity and wit—may turn
E'en guile into a voluntary grace:

But one's old age, when graces drop
away

And leave guile the pure staple of our
lives—

Ah, loathsome!

Not so—or why pause I? Turin
Is mine to have, were I so minded, for
The asking; all the army 's mine—
I've witnessed

Each private fight beneath me; all
the Court 's

Mine too; and, best of all, *D'Ormea* 's
still

D'Ormea and mine. There's some
grace clinging yet.

Had I decided on this step, ere mid-
night

I'd take the crown.

No. Just this step to rise
Exhausts me. Here am I arrived:
the rest

Must be done for me. Would I could
sit here

And let things right themselves, the
masque unmasque

Of the old King, crownless, grey hair
and hot blood,—

The young King, crowned, but calm be-
fore his time,

They say,—the eager mistress with her
taunts,—

And the sad earnest wife who motions
me

Away—ay, there she knelt to me!
E'en yet

I can return and sleep at Chambery
A dream out.

Rather shake it off at Turin,
King Victor! Say: to Turin—yes,
or no?

'T is this relentless noonday-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 scrutin-
ize me now)

And out I went 'mid crowds of men—
men talking,

Men watching if my lip fell or brow
knit,

Men saw me safe forth, put me on my
road:

That makes the misery of this return.

Oh had a battle done it! Had I
dropped,

Haling some battle, three entire days
old,

Hither and thither by the forehead—
dropped

In Spain, in Austria, best of all, in
France—

Spurned on its horns or underneath its
hooves,

When the spent monster went upon its
knees

To pad and pash the prostrate wretch
—I, Victor,

Sole to have stood up against France,
beat down

By inches, brayed to pieces finally
In some vast unimaginable charge,

A flying hell of horse and foot and guns
Over me, and all 's lost, for ever lost,
There 's no more Victor when the world
wakes up!

Then silence, as of a raw battle-field,
Throughout the world. Then after (as
whole days

After, you catch at intervals faint noise
Through the stiff crust of frozen blood)
—there creeps

A rumour forth, so faint, no noise at all,
That a strange old man, with face 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 laugh-
ter follow

The coin you fling into his cap! And
last,

Some bright morn, how men crowd
out the midst

Of the market-place, where takes the
old king breath

Ere with his crutch he strike the palace-
gate

Wide open!

To Turin, yes or no—or no?

Re-enter CHARLES with papers.

Cha. Just as I thought! A miser-
able 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 awfullest calamity !

Cha. —You mean, Did you require your crown again !

Oh yes, I should speak otherwise ! But turn not that

To jesting ! Sir, the truth ! Your health declines ?

Is aught deficient in your equipage ?

Wisely you seek myself to make complaint,

And foil the malice of the world which laughs

At petty discontents ; but I shall care That not a soul knows of this visit.

Speak !

Vic. [*Aside.*] Here is the grateful much-professing son

Prepared to worship me, for whose sole sake

I think to waive my plans of public good !

[*Aloud.*] Nay, Charles, if I did seek to take once more

My crown, were so disposed to plague myself,

What would be warrant for this bitterness ?

I gave it—grant I would resume it—well ?

Cha. I should say simply—leaving out the why

And how—you made me swear to keep that crown

And as you then intended . . .

Vic. Fool ! What way Could I intend or not intend ? As man,

With a man's will, when I say " I intend,"

I can intend up to a certain point, No 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 it-
self

Forthwith:—a year has wrought an
age's change.

This people 's not the people now, you
once

Could benefit; nor is my policy
Your policy.

Vic. [*with an outburst.*] I know it!
You undo

All I have done—my life of toil and
care!

I left you this the absolutest rule

In Europe: do you think I will sit still
And see you throw all power to the

populace—

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 my-
self

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
Chambery

Too much of brilliant Turin, Rivoli
here,

And Susa, and Veneria, and Superga—
Pined for the pleasant places he had
built

When he was fortunate and young—

Cha. My father!

Vic. Stay yet!—and if he said he
could not die

Deprived of baubles he had put aside,
He deemed, for ever—of the Crown

that binds

Your brain up, whole, sound and 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 in-
troduced

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 venturous yet politic: they style
me

Again, the Father of the Prince:
friends wink

Good-humouredly at the delusion you
So sedulously guard from all rough

truths

That else would break upon my dot-
age!—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'erhear
The little your importunate father
thrusts

Himself on you to say!—Ah, 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 buttress up 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 Moncaglièr
—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!

'T was for another purpose the Count
came.

The Count desires Moncaglièr. 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, Polyxena—
no praise!

KING CHARLES: PART II.

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

This at the last effects it: now, King
Charles

Or else King Victor—that 's a balance:
but now,

D'Ormea the arch-culprit, either turn
O' the scale,—that 's sure enough. A
point to solve,

My masters, moralists, whate'er your
style!

When you discover why I push myself
Into a pitfall you'd pass safely by,

Impart to me among the rest! No
matter,

Prompt are the righteous ever with
their rede

To us the wrongful: lesson them this
once!

For safe among the wicked are you set,
D'Ormea! We lament life's brevity,

Yet quarter c'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 ?

"T was a stump then ; a stump it still
must be :

While forward saplings, at the outset
checked,

In virtue of that first sprout keep their
style

Amid the forest's green fraternity.

Thus I shoot up to surely get lopped
down

And bound up for the burning. Now
for it !

*Enter CHARLES and POLYXENA with
Attendants.*

D'O. [rises] Sir, in the due discharge
of this my office—

This enforced summons of yourself
from Turin,

And the disclosure I am bound to make
To-night,—there must already be, I
feel,

So much that wounds . . .

Cha. Well, sir ?

D'O.

—That I, perchance,

May utter also what, another time,

Would irk much,—it may prove less
irksome now.

Cha. What would you utter ?

D'O.

That I from my soul

Grieve at to-night's event : for you I
grieve,

E'en grieve for . . .

Cha. Tush, another time for talk !
My kingdom is in imminent danger ?

L'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 comple-
ment

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 ; " Where-
as," 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 peace, the King who brought
them peace :

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

They love you, sir !

Cha. [to Attendants.] Bring the re-
galia forth !

Quit the room ! And now, Marquis,
answer me !

Why should the King of France invade
my realm ?

D'O. Why ? Did I not acquaint
your Majesty

An hour ago ?

Cha. I choose to hear again
What then I heard.

D'O. Because, sir, as I said,
Your father is resolved to have his
crown

At any risk ; and, as I judge, calls in
The foreigner to aid him.

Cha. And your reason
For saying this ?

[way !]

D'O. [Aside.] Ay, just his father's
[To CH.] The Count wrote yesterday to
your forces' Chief,

Rhebinder—made demand of help—

Cha.

To try

Rhebinder—he 's of alien blood : aught
else ?

D'O. Receiving a refusal,—some
hours after,

The Count called on Del Borgo to deliver

The Act of Abdication : he refusing,
Or hesitating, rather—

Cha. What ensued ?

D'O. At midnight, only two hours
since, at Turin,

He rode in person to the citadel
With one attendant, to 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

On his road to France for succour.

Cha. Very good !

You do your duty now to me your
monarch

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

For saving both of us disgrace, no
doubt ?

D'O. I give my counsel,—and the
only one.

A month since, I besought you to em-
ploy

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 her in-
tents

By these.

D'O. If who proposes might dispose,
I could soon satisfy you. Even these,

Hear what he 'll say at my presenting !
Cha. [who has signed them.] There !

About the warrants ! You 've my sig-
nature.

What turns you pale ? I do my duty
by you

In acting boldly thus on your advice.

D'O. [reading them separately.] Ar-
rest the people I suspected merely ?

Cha. Did you suspect them ?

D'O. Doubtless : but—but—sir,
This Forquiere 's governor of Turin,

And Rivarol and he have influence over
Half of the capital ! Rabella, too ?

Why, sir—

Cha. Oh, leave the fear to me !

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

Sir—

Cha. But you never bade arrest
those men,

So close related to my father too,

On trifling grounds ?

D'O. Oh, as for that, St. George,
President of Chambery's senators,

Is hatching treason ! still—

[More troubled.] Sir, Count Cumiane
Is brother to your father's wife !

What 's here ?

Arrest the wife herself ?

Cha. You seem to think
A venial crime this plot against me.

Well ?

D'O. [who has read the last paper.]
Wherefore am I thus ruined ?

Why not take

My life at once ? This poor formality
Is, let me say, unworthy you ! Pre-
vent 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 fickie-
ness !

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 compelled

To circumvent you; and the great *D'Ormea*,

That baffled *Alberoni* and tricked *Coscia*,

The miserable sower of such discord

'Twixt sire and son, is in the toils at last.

Oh I see! you arrive—this plan of yours,

Weak as it is, torments sufficiently A sick old peevish man—wrings hasty speech,

An ill-considered threat from him; that's noted;

Then out you ferret papers, his amusement

In lonely hours of lassitude—examine The day-by-day report of your paid spies—

And back you come: all was not ripe, you find,

And, as you hope, may keep from ripening yet,

But you were in bare time! Only, 'twere best

I never saw my father—these old men Are potent in excuses: and meanwhile, *D'Ormea*'s the man I cannot do without!

Pol. Charles—

Cha. Ah, no question! You against me too!

You'd have me eat and drink and sleep, live, die

With this lie coiled about me, choking me!

No, no, *D'Ormea*! You venture life, you say,

Upon my father's perfidy; and I

Have, on the whole, no right to disregard

The chains of testimony you thus wind About me; though 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,

Stand at the *Marquis'* orders: what he bids,

Implicitly perform! You are to bring A traitor here; the man that 's likest one

At present, fronts me; you are at his beck

For a full hour; he undertakes to show A fouler than himself,—but, failing that,

Return with him, and, as my father lives,

He dies this night! The clemency you blame

So oft, shall be revoked—rights exercised,

Too long abjured.

[*To D'ORMEA.*] Now, sir, about the work!

To save your king and country! Take the warrant!

D'O. You hear the sovereign's mandate, Count *Perugia*?

Obeys me! As your diligence, expect Reward! All follow to *Montcagliero*!

Cha. [*in great anguish.*] *D'Ormea!* [*D'ORMEA goes.*]

He goes, lit up with that appalling smile!

[*To POLYXENA after a pause.* At least you understand all this?

Pol. These means Of our defence—these measures of precaution?

Cha. It must be the best way: I should have else

Withered beneath his scorn.

Pol. What would you say?

Cha. Why, you don't think I mean to keep the crown,

Polyxena? *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 !

'T was 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—'t is no worse than when he left !

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

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

This Rivoli, all titles loathe, all state. We'd best go to your country—unless God

Send I die now !

Pol. Charles, hear me !

Cha. —And again Shall you be my Polyxena—you'll take me

Out of this woe ! Yes, do speak, and keep speaking !

I would not let you speak just now, for fear

You 'd counsel me against him : but talk, now,

As we two used to talk in blessed times : Bid me endure all his caprices ; take me

From this mad post above him !

Pol. I believe

We are undone, but from a different cause.

All your resources, down to the least guard,

Are at D'Ormea's beck. What if, the while,

He act in concert with your father ? We

Indeed were lost. This lonely Rivoli—Where find a better place for them ?

Cha. [*pacing the room.*] And why

Does Victor come ? To undo all that 's done,

Restore the past, prevent the future. Seat

His mistress in your seat, and place in mine

. . . Oh, my own people, whom will you find there,

To ask of, to consult with, to care for, To hold up with your hands ? Whom ?

One that 's false—

False—from the head's crown to the foot's sole, false !

The best is, that I knew it in my heart From the beginning, and expected this,

And hated you, Polyxena, because You saw thro' him, though I too saw thro' him,

Saw that he meant this while he crowned me, while

He prayed for me,—nay, while he kissed my brow,

I saw—

Pol. But if your measures take effect,

D'Ormea true to you ?

Cha. Then worst of all ! I shall have loosed that callous wretch on him !

Well may the woman taunt him with his child—

I, eating here his bread, clothed in his clothes,

Seated upon his seat, let slip D'Ormea To outrage him ! We talk—perchance he tears

My father from his bed ; the old hands feel

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

He finds D'Ormea ! D'Ormea too finds him !

The crowded chamber when the lights go out—

Closed doors—the horrid scuffle in the dark—

The accursed prompting of the minute ! My guards !

To horse—and after, with me—and prevent !

Pol. [*seizing his hand.*] King Charles ! Pause here upon this strip of time

Allotted you out of eternity ! Crowns are from God : in his name you

ho'd 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 't is,
no doubt,

Something of stain will ever rest on
you ;

No one will rightly know why you re-
fused

To abdicate ; they'll talk of deeds you
could

Have done, no doubt,—nor do I much
expect

Future achievement will blot out the
past,

Envelope it in haze—nor shall we two
Live happy any more. 'T will be, I

feel,

Only in moments that the duty 's seen
As palpably as now—the months, the

years

Of painful indistinctness are to come,
While daily must we tread these palace-

rooms

Pregnant with memories of the past :
your eye

May turn to mine and find no comfort
there,

Through fancies that beset me, as
yourself,

Of other courses, with far other issues,
We might have taken this great night :

such bear,

As I will bear ! What matters 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 !

'T is you I ask, not these your variety,
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 dis-

composed.

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
sum

Of what I can avail. Deliver it !
Cha. Take it, my father !

And now say in turn,
Was it done well, my father—sure not
well,

To try me thus ! I might have seen
much cause

For keeping it—too easily seen cause !
But, from that moment, e'en more

woefully

My life had pined away, than pine it
will.

Already you have much to answer for.
My life to pine is nothing,—her sunk
eyes

Were happy once ! No doubt, my
people think

I am their King still . . . but I cannot
strive !

Take it !

Vic. [one hand on the crown CHARLES
offers, the other on his neck.] So

few years give it quietly,
My son ! It will drop from me. See

you not ?

A crown 's unlike a sword to give away—
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. 'T is 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?

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!

'T is 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, sir!

He reigned at first through setting up yourself

As pattern: if he e'er seemed harsh to you,

'T was 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 't were to do again! That's idly wished.

Truthfulness might prove policy as good

As guile. Is this my daughter's forehead? Yes:

I've made it fitter now to be a queen's Than formerly: I've ploughed the deep lines there

Which keep too well a crown from slipping off.

No matter. Guile has made me King again.

Louis—'t was in King Victor's time:—

long since,

When Louis reigned and, also, Victor reigned,

How the world talks already of us two!

God of eclipse and each discoloured star,

Why do I linger then?

Ha! Where lurks he? D'Ormea! Nearer to your King!

Now stand!

[*Collecting his strength as D'ORMEA approaches.*

You lied, D'Ormea! I do not repent.

[*Dies.*

DRAMATIC LYRICS

In a late edition were 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." It is not worth while to disturb this arrangement. Part of the Poems were inscribed to my dear friend John Kenyon: I hope the whole may obtain the honour of an association with his memory.

R. B.

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,
singing this song.*

III

Hampden to hell, and his obsequies'
knell.
Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young
Harry as well!
England, good cheer! Rupert is near!
Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here

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

IV

Then, God for King Charles! Pym
and his snarls
To the Devil that pricks on such pesti-
lent carles!
Hold by the right, you double your
might;
So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for
the fight,

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

II. GIVE A ROUSE

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 despite
now,
King Charles!

II

Who gave me the goods that went
since?
Who raised me the house that sank
once?
Who helped me to gold I spent since?
Who found me in wine you drank once?

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

III

To whom used my boy George quaff
else,
By the old fool's side that begot him?
For whom did he cheer and laugh else,
While Noll's damned troopers shot
him?

¹ Such Poems as the majority in this volume 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.

(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, hon-
est and gay,
Laughs when you talk of surrendering,
"Nay!

"I've better counsellors; what coun-
sel they?

(Chorus) *"Boot, saddle, to horse,
and away!"*

THE LOST LEADER

I

Just for a handful of silver he left us,
Just for a riband to stick in his coat—
Found the one gift of which fortune
bereft us,
Lost all the others she lets us devote

They, with the gold to give, doled him
out silver,

So much was theirs who so little
allowed:

How all our copper had gone for his
service!

Rags—were they purple, his heart
had been proud!

We that had loved him so, followed
him, honoured him,

Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
Learned his great language, caught his
clear accents,

Made him our pattern to live and to
die!

Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for
us,

Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they
watch from their graves!

He alone breaks from the van and the
freemen,

He alone sinks to the rear and the
slaves!

II

We shall march prospering,—not thro'
his presence;

Songs may inspirit us,—not from his
lyre;

Deeds will be done,—while he boasts
his quiescence,

Still bidding crouch whom the rest
bade aspire:

Blot out his name, then, record one lost
soul more,

One task more declined, one more
footpath untro'd,

One more devils'-triumph and sorrow
for angels,

One wrong more to man, one more
insult to God!

Life's night begins: let him never
come back to us!

There would be doubt, hesitation
and pain,

Forced praise on our part—the glim-
mer 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 know-
ledge and wait us,

Pardoned in heaven, the first by the
throne!

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

[16—.]

I

I SPRANG to the stirrup, and Joris, and
he ;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped
all three ;
"Good speed !" cried the watch, as
the gate-bolts undrew ;
"Speed !" echoed the wall to us gal-
loping 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

'T was 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 Mecheln church-steeple we
heard the half-chime,
So, Joris broke silence with, "Yet
there is time !"

IV

At Aershot, up leaped of a sudden the
sun,
And against him the cattle stood black
every one,
To stare thro' the mist at us galloping
past,
And I saw my stout ga'loper Roland at
last,

- B.P.

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 mas-
ter, askance !
And the thick heavy spume-flakes
which aye a. d 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 shud-
dered 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.

T

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 com-
mon 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 descried, ways untried
As I ride, as I ride.

II

As I ride, as I ride
To our Chief and his Allied,
Who dares chide my heart's pride
As I ride, as I ride ?
Or are witnesses denied—
Through the desert waste and wide
Do I glide 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 horse plied,
Yet his hide, streaked and pied,
As I ride, as I ride,
Shows where sweat has sprung and
dried,
—Zebra-footed, ostrich-thighed—
How has vied stride with stride
As I ride, as I ride !

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
Stops veins I'd have subside
As I ride, as I ride !

NATIONALITY IN DRINKS

I

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

II

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

Up jumped Tokay on our table,
Like a pygmy castle-warder,
Dwarfish to see, but stout and able,
Arms and accoutrements all in order ;
And fierce he looked North, then,
wheeling South,
Blew with his bugle a challenge to
Drouth,

Cocked his flap-hat with the tosspot-feather,
Twisted his thumb in his red mous-tache,
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 !

T is the second time that I, at sea,
Right off Cape Trafalgar here,
Have drunk it deep in British Beer.
Nelson for ever—any time
Am I his to command in prose or
rhyme !

Give me of Nelson only a touch,
And I save it, be it little or much :
Here 's one our Captain gives, and so
Down at the word, by George, shall it
go !

He says that at Greenwich they point
the beholder

To Nelson's coat, " still with tar on the
shoulder,

" For he used to lean with one shoulder
digging,

" Jigging, as it were, and zig-zag-zig-
ging

" Up against the mizen-rigging ! "

GARDEN FANCIES

I. THE FLOWER'S NAME

I

HERE'S the garden she walked across,
Arm in my arm, such a short while
since :

Hark, now I push its wicket, the moss
Hinders the hinges and makes them
wince !

She must have reached this shrub ere
she turned,

As back with that murmur the
wicket swung ;

For she laid the poor snail, my chance
foot spurned,
To feed and forget it the leaves
among.

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 't is that you blow
not,

Mind, the shut pink mouth opens
never !

For while it pouts, her fingers wrestle,

Twinkling the audacious leaves between,
Till round they turn and down they nestle—

Is not the dear mark still to be seen ?

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 SCHAFNABURG- ENSIS

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 arbute and laurustine

Read it, so help me grace in my need,

From title-page to closing line.

Chapter on chapter did I count,

As a curious traveller counts 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 in-doors, brought out a
loaf,

Half a cheese, and a bottle of Chab-
lis ;

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 latis,*
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 crea-
tures

Tickled and toused and browsed him
all over,

And worm, slug, eft, with serious fea-
tures,

Came in, each one, for his right of
trover ?

—When the water-beetle with great
blind deaf face

Made of her eggs the stately deposit,

And the newt borrowed just so much of
the preface
As tiled in the top of his black wife's
closet ?

VIII

All that life and fun and romping,
All that frisking and twisting and
coupling,
While slowly our poor friend's leaves
were swamping
And clasps were cracking and covers
suppling !
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 trou-
sers 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-
elf, *sufficit* !
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 : *translating*
abrupt
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 burn-
ished,
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 't is 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 't were 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 h's 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 can be,
Spin him round and send him flying
Off to ~~the~~ ^{his} ~~Manichee~~ ?

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

IX

Or, there 's Satan !—one might venture
Pledge one's soul to him, yet leave
Such a flaw in the indenture
As he'd miss till, past retrieve,
Blast ! lay that rose-acacia
We're so proud of ! *Hy, Zy, Hine...*
'St, there 's Vespers ! *Piena 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 earring, a
casket,
A signet, a fan-mount, a filigree-bas-
ket !

VI

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

VII

Quick—is it finished ? The colour 's
too grim !
Why not soft like the phial's, enticing
and dim ?
Let it brighten her drin'k, 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
min'on 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 kiss me, old man, on my
mouth if you will !
But brush this dust off me, lest horror it
brings
Ere I know it—next moment I dance
at the King's !

THE CONFESSIONAL

(SPAIN)

I

It is a lie—their Priests, their Pope,
Their Saints, their . . . all they fear or
hope
Are lies, and lies—there ! through my
door
And 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 avaunt !
This poor wretched 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 alter 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 mayst demand and be pos-
sessed
" 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 despoite.

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 dressed,
That stapled block . . . God sink the
rest!

That head strapped back, that blinding
vest,

Those knotted hands and naked breast,
Till near one busy hangman pressed,
And, on the neck these arms car-
ressed. . . .

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
No 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 no-
thing?

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
returning."

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 swollen ambitions dwindle,
While just this or that poor impulse
Which for once had play unstified
Seems the sole work of a life-time
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 't is 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 capture.

VIII

Such am I: the secret 's mine now!
 She has lost me, I have gained her;
 Her soul 's mine: and thus, grown perfect,
 I shall pass my life's remainder.
 Life will just hold out the proving
 Both our powers, alone and blended:
 And then, come 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, 't is 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 resign:

IV

For each glance of the eye so bright and black,
 Though I keep with heart's endeavour,—
 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 sods
 Have struggled through its binding osier rods;
 Headstone and half-sunk footstone lean awry,
 Wanting the brick-work promised by-and-by;
 How the minute grey lichens, plate o'er plate,
 Have softened down the crisp-cut name and date!

LOVE.

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

MEETING AT NIGHT

I

The grey sea and the long black land;
 And the yellow half-moon large and low;
 And the startled little waves that leap
 In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
 As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
 And quench its speed 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 earthli 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 :
Then why not witness, calmly gazing,
If earth holds aught—speak truth—
above her ?
Above this tress, and this, I touch
But cannot praise, I love so much !

A WOMAN'S LAST WORD

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 bookshelf, 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, our 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 be-
 side ?

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 gerani-
 um'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
 evening smiles
 Miles and miles
 On the solitary pastures where our
 sheep
 Half-asleep
 Tinkle homeward thro' the twilight,
 stray or stop
 As they crop—
 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.

II

Now—the country does not even boast
 a tree,
 As you see,
 To distinguish slopes of verdure, cer-
 tain rills
 From the hills
 Intersect and give a name to, (else they
 run
 Into one)

Where the domed and daring palace
 shot its spires
 Up like fires
 O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall
 Bounding all,
 Made of marble, men might march on
 nor be pressed,
 Twelve abreast.

III

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

IV

Now,—the single little turret that re-
 mains
 On the plains,
 By the caper overrooted, by the gourd
 Overseored,
 While the patching houseleek's head of
 blossom winks
 Through the chinks—
 Marks the basement whence a tower in
 ancient time
 Sprang sublime,
 And a burning ring, all round, the
 chariots traced
 As they raced,
 And the monarch and his minions and
 his dames
 Viewed the games.

V

And I know, while thus the quiet-
 coloured eve
 Smiles to leave
 To their folding, all our many-tinkling
 fleecy
 In such peace,
 And the slopes and rills in undistin-
 guished grey
 Melt away—

That a girl with eager eyes and yellow
 hair

Waits me there
 In the turret whence the chariotceers
 caught soul

For the goal,
 When the king looked, where she looks
 now, breathless, dumb
 Till I come.

VI

But he looked upon the city, every side,
 Far and wide,
 All the mountains topped with temples,
 all the glades'
 Colonnades,
 All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts,—
 and then,
 All the men !
 When I do come, she will speak not,
 she will stand,
 Either hand
 On my shoulder, give her eyes the first
 embrace
 Of my face,
 Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight
 and speech
 Each on each.

VII

In one year they sent a million fighters
 forth
 South and North,
 And they built their gods a brazen
 pillar high
 As the sky,
 Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full
 force—
 Gold, of course.
 Oh heart ! oh blood that freezes, blood
 that burns !
 Earth's returns
 For whole centuries of folly, noise and
 sin !
 Shut them in,
 With their triumphs and their glories
 and the rest !
 Love is best.

A LOVERS' QUARREL

I

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 foaming head
On the beryl bed.
Paven smooth as a hermit's cell;
Each with a tale to tell,
Could my Love but attend as well.

III

Dearest, three months ago I
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 I
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:
'T is 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, dressed
In a sledging-cap and vest!
'T is 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!
'T was 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—
'T was 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 care ?
'T is the world the same
For my praise or blame,
And endurance is easy there.
Wrong in the one thing rare—
Oh, it is hard to bear !

XVIII

Here 's the spring back or close,
When the almond-blossom blows ;
We shall have the word
In a minor third
There is none but the cuckoo knows :
Heaps of the guelder-rose !
I must bear with it, I suppose.

XIX

Could but November come,
Were the noisy birds struck dumb
At the warning slash
Of his driver's-lash—
I would laugh like the valiant Thumb
Facing the castle glum
And the giant's fee-faw-fum !

XX

Then, were the world well stripped
Of the gear wherein equipped

We can stand apart,
Heart dispense with heart
In the sun, with the flowers unrippled,—
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, and 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 main-
tain 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,
'T is May perhaps ere the snow shall
have withered well off the heights:
You've the brown ploughed land be-
fore, 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 dash
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 yon cypress that points like
death's lean lifted forefinger.
Some think fireflies pretty, when they
mix in the corn and mingle,

Or thrud the stinking hemp till the
stalks of it seem a-tingle.
Late August or early September, the
stunning cicala is shrill,
And the bees keep their tiresome whine
round the resinous firs on the hill.
Enough of t' 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-pic-
ture—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
rhyming,) “the skirts of Saint
Paul has reached,
“Having preached us those six Lent-
lectures more unctuous than ever
he preached.”
Noon strikes,—here sweeps the pro-
cession! 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 haunches 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 flap 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, 't is
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 't is 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 thirds so plain-
tive, sixths diminished sigh on
sigh,
Told them something ? Those suspen-
sions, those solutions—" Must we
die ? "
Those commiserations—sevenths—" Life
might last ! w—out 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 your pleasure :
till in due time, one by one,
Some with lives that came to nothing,
some with deeds as well undone,
Death stepped tacitly and took them
where they never see the sun.

XI

But when I sit down to reason, think to
take my stand nor swerve,
While I triumph o'er a secret wrung
from nature's close reserve,
In you come with your cold music, till
I creep thro' every nerve.

XII

Yes, you, like a ghostly cricket, 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 her people, merely
born to bloom and drop,
"Here on earth they bore their fruit-
age, 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 chilly 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 aloed
arch
Of the villa-gate this warm March
day,
No flash snapped, no dumb thunder
rolled
In the valley beneath where, white
and wide
And washed by the morning water-
gold,
Florence lay out on the mountain-
side.

II

River and bridge and street and square
lay mine, as much at my beck and
call,

B.P.

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 fel-
lows know !
I' faith, I perceive not why I should
care
To break a silence that suits them
best,
But the thing grows somewhat hard to
bear
When I find a Giotto join the rest.

IV

On the arch where olives overhead
Print the blue sky with twig and leaf,
(That sharp-curved 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 grants 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 chaffer, come and
go
For pleasure or profit, her men
alive—
My business was hardly with them, I
trow,
But with empty cells of the human
hive ;
—With the chapter-room, the cloister-
porch,
The church's apsis, aisle or nave,
Its crypt, one fingers along with a
torch,
Its face set full for the sun to slave.

U

VI

Wherever a fresco peels and drops,
 Wherever an outline weakens and
 wanes
 Till the latest life in the painting stops,
 Stands One whom each fainter pulse-
 tick pains :
 One, wishful each scrap should clutch
 the brick,
 Each tinge not wholly escape the
 plaster,
 —A lion who dies of an ass's kick,
 The wronged great soul of an ancient
 Master.

VII

For oh, this world and the wrong it
 does !
 They are safe in heaven with their
 backs to it,
 The Michaels and Rafafs, 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 ?
 'T is their holiday now, in any case.

VIII

Much they reek 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
 Dellos.

IX

And here where your praise might yield
 returns,
 And a handsome word or two give
 help,
 Here, after your kind, the mastiff girns
 And the puppy pack of poodles yelp.
 What, not a word for Stefano there,
 Of brow once prominent and starry,
 Callel 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 !
 'T is 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 can-
 not be ;
 Earth here, rebuked by Olympus there :
 And grew content in your poor de-
 gree
 With your little power, by those sta-
 tues' godhead,
 And your little scope, by their eyes'
 full sway,
 And your little grace, by their grace
 embodied,
 And your little date, by their forms
 that stay.

XIII

You would fain be kinglier, say, than I
 am ?
 Even so, you will not sit like Theseus,
 You would prove a model ? The Son
 of Priam
 Has yet the advantage in arms' and
 knees' use.

You're wroth—can you slay your
snake like Apollo?

You're grieved—still Niobe 's the
grander!

You live—there 's the Racers' frieze
to follow:

You die—there 's the dying 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" 't is 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

'T is a life-long toil till our lamp be
leaven—

The better! What 's come to per-
fection perishes.

Things learned on earth, we shall prac-
tise in heaven:

Works done least rapidly, Art most
cherishes.

Thyself shalt afford the example,
Giotto!

Thy one work, not to decrease or
diminish,

Done at a stroke, was just (was it not?)
"O!"

Thy great Campanile is still to finish.

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 laugh-
ter

Our first step out of the gulf or in it?
Shall Man, such step within his endea-
vour,

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-ac-
quainters,

"And paint man, man, whatever
the issue!

"Make new hopes shine through the
flesh they fray,

"New fears aggrandise 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 guerdon
and glory

For daring so much, before they well
did it.

The first of the new, in our race's story,
Beats the last of the old; 't is no
idle quiddit.

The worthies began a revolution,
Which if on earth you intend to ac-
knowledge,
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 ended, begins
New work for the soul in another state,
Where it strives and gets weary, loses
and wins;
Where the strong and the weak, this
world's congeries,
Repeat in large what they practised
in small,
Through life after life in unlimited
series;
Only the scale 's to be changed,
that 's 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 our faith in the same has stood
the test—
Why, the child grown man, you burn
the rod,
The use of labour are surely done;
There remaineth a rest for the people
of God:
And I have had troubles enough, for
one.

XXIII

But at any rate I have loved the season
Of Art's spring-birth so dim and
dewy;
My sculptor is Nicolo the Pisan,
My painter—who but Cimabue?
Nor ever was man of them all indeed,
From these to Ghiberti and Ghirland-
ajo,
Could say that he missed my critic-
meed.
So, now to my special grievance—
heigh ho!

XXIV

Their ghosts still 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 Eng-
land's thick clime!"

(I hope they prefer their inheritance
Of a bucketful of Italian quick-lime.)

XXV

When they go at length, with such a
shaking

Of heads o'er the old delusion, sadly
Each master his way through the black
streets taking,

Where many a lost work breathes
though badly—

Why don't they bethink them of who
has merited?

Why not reveal, while their pictures
dree

Such doom, how a captive might be
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 Frà Angelico's:
But are you too fine, Taddeo Gaddi,
To grant me a taste of your intonaco,
Some Jerome that seeks the heaven
with a sad eye?

Not a churlish saint, Lorenzo Mon-
aco?

XXVII

Could not the ghost with the close red
cap,

My Pollajolo, the twice a craftsman,
Save me a sample, give me the hap
Of a muscular Christ that shows the
draughtsman?

No Virgin by him the somewhat petty,
Of finical touch and tempera
crumbly—

Could not Alesso Baldovinetti
Contribute so much, I ask him
humbly?

XXVIII

Margheritone of Arezzo,
With the grave-clothes garb and
swaddling barret

(Why purse up mouth and beak in a
pet so,
You bald old saturnine poll-clawed
parrot ?)
Not a poor glimmering Crucifixion,
Where in the foreground kneels the
donor ?
If such remain, as is my conviction,
The hoarding it does you but little
honour.

XXXIX

They pass; for them the panels may
thrill,
The tempera grow alive and tinglish;
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-step 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 Giamschid, the Persian
Sof's eye!
So, in anticipative gratitude,
What if I take up my hope and pro-
phesy?

XXXII

When the hour grows ripe, and a cer-
tain dotard
Is pitched, no parcel that needs in-
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 soul like a part-
ridge
Over Morello with squib and cracker.

XXXIII

This time we'll shoot better game and
bag 'em hot—
No mere display at the stone of
Dante,
But a kind of sober Witanagemot
(Ex: "Casa Guidi," *quod videas
ante*)
Shall ponder, once Freedom restored to
Florence,
How art may return that departed
with her.
Go, hated house, go each trace of the
Lorraine's,
And bring us the days of Orgagna
hither!

XXXIV

How we shall prologuize, how we shall
perorate,
Utter fit things upon art and history,
Feel truth at blood-heat and falsehood
at zero rate
Make of the want of the age no
mystery;
Contrast the fructuous and sterile eras,
Show—monarchy ever its uncouth
cub licks
Out of the bear's shape into Chimæra's,
While Pure Art's birth is still the re-
public's.

XXXV

Then one shall propose in a speech
(curt Tuscan,
Expurgate and sober with scarcely
an "*issimo*,")
To end now our half-told tale of Cam-
buscan,
And turn the Bell-tower's *all* to *all-
issimo* :

And fine as the beak of a young beccaccia

The Campanile, the Duomo's fit ally,
Shall soar up in gold full fifty braccia,
Completing Florence, as Florence,
Italy.

XXXVI

Shall I be alive that morning the scaffold

Is broken away, and the long-pent fire,

Like the golden hope of the world, un baffled

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 and I!

"DE GUSTIBUS—"

I

Your ghost will walk, you lover of trees,

(If our loves remain)

In an English lane,

By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.

Hark, those two in the hazel coppice—

A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,

Making love, say,—

The happier they!

Draw yourself up from the light of the moon,

And let them pass, as they will too soon,

With the 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 cicalas die of drouth,

And one sharp tree—'t is a cypress—stands,

By the many hundred years red-rusted,
Rough iron-spike'd, ripe fruit-o'er-crust'd,

My sentinel to guard the sands

To the water's edge. For, what expands

Before the house, but the great opaque blue breadth of sea without a break?

While, in the house, for ever crumbles
Some fragment of the frescoed walls,

From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.
A girl bare-footed brings, and tumbles

Down on the pavement, green-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
 recapture
 The first fine careless rapture !
 And though the field 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 assur-
 ance 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 si-
 lence, a space of three days,
 " Not a sound hath escaped to thy ser-
 vants, of prayer nor of praise,
 " To betoken that Saul and the Spirit
 have ended their strife,
 " And that, faint in his triumph, the
 monarch sinks back upon life

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 met,
 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
 grope I my way on
 Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open.
 Then once more I prayed,
 And I opened the foldskirts and entered,
 and I was not afraid
 But spoke, " Here is David, thy ser-
 vant ! " And no voice replied.
 At the first I saw nought but the black-
 ness ; 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 cen-
 tre, that goes to each side ;
 He relaxed not a muscle, but hung
 there as, caught in his pangs
 And waiting his change, the king-ser-
 pent 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 stifle the water
within the stream's bed ;
And now one after one seeks its lodging,
as star follows star
Into eve and the blue far above us,—so
blue and so far !

VI

—Then the 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 chil-
dren, 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 balm seeds not
here
" To console us ? The land has none
left such as he on the bier.
" Oh, would we might keep thee, my
brother !"—And then, the glad
chaunt
Of the marriage,—first go the young
maidens, next, she whom we want
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, I 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 tur-
ban 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 nubraced.
" Oh, the wild joys of living ! the leap-
ing from rock up to rock,
" The strong rending of boughs from
the fir-tree, the cool silver shock
" Of the plunge in a pool's living water,
the hunt of the bear,
" And the sultriness showing the lion is
couched in his lair.
" And the meal, the rich dates yellowed
over with gold dust divine,
" And the locust-flesh steeped in the
pitcher, the full draught of wine,
" And the sleep in the dried river-
channel where bulrushes tell
" That the water was wont to go warb-
ling so softly and well.
" How good is man's life, the mere liv-
ing ! 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 sword thou
didst guard
" When he trusted thee forth with the
armies, for glorious reward ?

' Didst thou see the thin hands of thy
 mother, held up as men sung
 "The low song of the nearly-departed,
 and hear her faint tongue
 "Joining in while it could to the wit-
 ness, ' Let one more attest,
 "' I have lived, seen Go! 's hand thro'
 a lifetime, and all was for best !'
 "Then they sang thro' their tears in
 strong triumph, not much, but the
 rest.
 "And thy brothers, the help and the
 contest, the working whence grew
 "Such result as, from seething grape-
 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
 throe
 "That, a-work in the rock, helps its
 labour and lets the gold go)
 "High ambition and deeds which sur-
 pass it, fame crowning them,—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 stopp'd,
 And waited the thing that should
 follow. Then Saul, who hung
 propped
 By the tent's cross-support in the cen-
 tre, 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 thun-
 derously 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 ver-
 dure, again hold the nest
 Of the dove, tempt the goat and its
 young to the green on his crest
 For their food in the ardours of sum-
 mer. 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 des-
 pair.
 Death was past, life not come : so he
 waited. Awhile his right hand
 Held the brow, helped the eyes left too
 vacant forthwith to remand
 To their place what new objects should
 enter : 't was Saul as before.
 I looked up and dared gaze at those
 eyes, nor was hurt any more
 Than by slow pallid sunsets in autumn,
 ye watch from the shore,
 At their sad level gaze o'er the ocean—
 a sun's slow decline
 Over hills which, resolved in stern
 silence, o'erlap and entwine
 Base with base to knit strength more
 intensely : so, arm folded arm
 O'er the chest whose slow heavings
 subsided.

XI

What spell or what charm,
 (For, awhile there was trouble within
 me) what next should I urge
 To sustain him where song had re-
 stored him ?—Song filled to the
 verge
 His cup with the wine of this life, press-
 ing all that it yields
 Of mere fruitage, the strength and the
 beauty : beyond, on what fields,
 Glean a vintage more potent and per-
 fect 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

Ten fancies grew rife
Which had come long ago on the pas-
ture, 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 or-
dained to be passed with my flocks,
"Let me people at least, with my fan-
cies, the plains and the rocks,
"Dream the life I am never to mix
with, and image the show
"Of mankind as they live in those
fashions I hardly shall know!
"Schemes of life, its best rules and
right uses, the courage that gains,
"And the prudence that keeps what
men strive for." And now these
old trains
Of vague thought came again; I grew
surer; so, once more the string
Of my harp made response to my
spirit, as thus—

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 mindest when these too, in
turn
"Broke a-bloom and the palm-tree
seemed perfect: yet more was to
learn,
"Even 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
produce them? Not so! stem
and branch
"Shall decay, nor be known in their
place, while the palm-wine shall
staunch
"Every wound of man's spirit in win-
ter. 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'er-
come 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 pro-
duced not, must everywhere trace
"The results of his past summer-
prime,—so, each ray of thy will,
"Every flash of thy passion and pro-
wess, 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 eye-
ball, 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 't is level before them)
their praise, and record
" With the gold of the graver, Saul's
story,—the statesman's great word
" Side by side with the poet's sweet
comment. The river 's a-wave
" With smooth paper-reeds grazing
each other when prophet-winds
rave :
" So the pen gives unborn generations
their due and their part
" In thy being! Taen, 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 ser-
vant, thy word was my word,—
Still be with me, who then at the sum-
mit of human endeavour
And scaling the highest, man's thought
could, gazed hopeless as ever
On the new stretch of heaven above me
—till, mighty to save,
Just one lift of thy hand cleared that
distance—God's throne from man's
grave!
Let me tell out my tale to its ending—
my voice to my heart
Which can scarce dare believe in what
marvels last night I took part,
As this morning I gather the fragments,
alone with my sheep,
And still fear lest the terrible glory
evanish like sleep!
For I wake in the grey dewy covert,
while Hebron upheaves
The dawn struggling with night on his
shoulder, and Kidron retrieves
Slow the damage of yesterday's sun-
shine.

XV

I say then,—my song
While I sang thus, assuring the mon-
arch, 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, dese-
crate, never quite lose.
So sank he along by the tent-prop till,
stayed by the pile
Of his armour and war-cloak and gar-
ments, he leaned there awhile,
And sat out my singing,—one arm
round the tent-prop, to raise
His bent head, and the other hung
slack—till I touched on the praise
I foresaw from all men in all time, to
the man patient there;
And thus ended, the harp falling for-
ward. Then first I was 'ware
That he sat, as I say, with my head
just above his vast knees
Which were thrust ont 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 so-
lace: he spoke not, but slow
Lifted up the hand slack at his side,
till he laid it with care
Soft and grave, but in mild settled will,
on my brow: thro' my hair
The large fingers were pushed, and he
bent back my head, with kind
power—
All my face back, intent to peruse it, as
men do a flower.
Thus held he me there with his great
eyes that scrutinized mine—
And oh, all my heart how it loved him!
but where was the sign?
I yearned—"Could I help thee, my
father, inventing a bliss,

" I would add, to that life of the past,
both the future and this ;
" I would give thee new life alto-
gether, 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 ! out-
broke—

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 dew-drop 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 experi-
ence, this deity known,
" I shall dare to discover some pro-
vince, some gift of my own.
" There's a faculty pleasant to exer-
cise, 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
distrust in the greatest of all ?
" Do I find love so full in my nature,
God's ultimate gift,
" That I doubt his own love can com-
pete with it ? Here, the parts
shift ?
" Here, the creature surpass the Crea-
tor,—the end, what Began ?
" Would I fain in my impotent yearn-
ing 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,
snatch Saul, the mistake,
" Saul, the failure, the ruin he seems
now,—and bid him awake
" From the dream, the probation, the
prelude, to find himself set
" Clear and safe in new light and new
life,—a new harmony yet
" To be run, and continued, and ended
—who knows ?—or endure !
" The man taught enough by life's
dream, of the rest to make sure ;
" By the pain-throb, triumphantly
winning intensified bliss,
" And the next world's reward and re-
pose, 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! Why am I not loth
 "To look that, even that in the face too? Why is it I dare
 "Think but lightly of such impulsance? What stops my despair?
 "This;—'t is not what man Does which exalts him, but what man Would do!
 "See the King—I would help him but cannot, the wishes fall through.
 "Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to enrich,
 "To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would—knowing which,
 "I know that my service is perfect. Oh, speak through me now!
 "Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst thou—so wilt thou!
 "So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost crown—
 "And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down
 "One spot for the creature to stand in! It is by no breath,
 "Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins issue with death!
 "As thy Love is discovered almighty, 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.
 "'T is 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:
 I repressed, I got through them as hardly, as strugglingly there,
 As a runner beset by the populace famished for news—
 Life or death. The whole earth was awakened, hell loosed with her crews;
 And the stars of night beat with emotion, and tingled and shot
 Out in fire the strong pain of pent knowledge: but I fainted not,
 For the Hand still impelled me at once and supported, suppressed
 All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet, and holy behest,
 Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the earth sank to rest.
 Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had withered from earth—
 Not so much, but I saw it die out in the day's tender birth;
 In the gathered intensity brought to the grey of the hills;
 In the shuddering forests' held breath; in the sudden wind-thrills;
 In the startled wild beasts that bore off, each with eye sidling still
 Though averted with wonder and dread; in the birds stiff and chill
 That rose heavily, as I approached them, made stupid with awe:
 E'en the serpent that slid away silent, —he felt the new law.
 The same stared in the white humid faces upturned by the flowers;
 The same worked in the heart of the cedar and moved the vine-bowers:
 And the little brooks witnessing murmured, persistent and low,
 With their obstinate, all but hushed voices—
 "E'en so, it is so!"

MY STAR

ALL that I know
 Of a certain star
 Is, it can throw
 (Like the angel 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 tower,
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 ex-
tends
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 widens fast,

And a rarer sort succeeds to these,
And we slope to Italy at last
And youth, by π ten degrees.

VI

I follow wherever I am led,
Knowing so well the leader's hand :
Oh woman-country, wooed not well,
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 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-cupped
Elf-nee lled mat of moss,

XIII

By the rose-flesh mushrooms, undivulged
Last evening—nay, in to-day's first dew
Yon sudden coral nipple bulged,
Where a freaked fawn-coloured flaky crew
Of 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;
Cut hemp-stalks steep in the narrow dyke.
See here again, how the lichens fret
And the roots of the ivy strike!

XVI

Poor little place, where its one priest comes
On a festa-day, if he comes at all,
To the dozen folk from their scattered homes,
Gathered within that precinct small
By the dozen ways one roams—

XVII

To drop from the charcoal-burners' huts,
Or climb from the hemp-dressers' low shed,
Leave the grange where the woodman stores his nuts,

Or the wattle-cote where the fowlers spread
Their gear on the rock's bare juts.

XVIII

It has some pretension too, this front,
With its bit of fresco half-moon-wise
Set over the porch, Art's early wont:
'T is John in the Desert, I surmise,
But has borne the weather's brunt—

XIX

Not from the fault of the builder, though,
For a pent-house properly projects
Where three carved beams make a certain show,
Dating—good thought of our architect's—
'Five, six, nine, he lets you know.

XX

And all day long a bird sings there,
And a stray sheep drinks at the pond at times;
The place is silent and aware;
It has had its scenes, its joys and crimes,
But that is its own affair.

XXI

My perfect wife, my Leonor,
Oh heart, my own, oh eyes, mine too,
Whom else could I dare look backward for,
With whom beside should I dare pursue
The path grey heads abhor?

XXII

For it leads to a crag's sheer edge with them;
Youth, flowery all the way, there stops—
Not they; age threatens and they content
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,
Mutely, 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 rebuff
 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, 't was something our two
 souls
 Should mix as mists do; each is suckled
 In each now: on, the new stream
 rolls,
 Whatever rocks obstruct.

XXVII

Think, when our one soul understands
 The great Word which makes all
 things new,
 When earth breaks up and heaven ex-
 pands,
 How will the change strike me and
 you
 In the house not made with hands?

XXVIII

Oh I must feel your brain prompt mine,
 Your heart anticipate my heart,
 You must be just before, in fine,
 See and make me see, for your part,
 New depths of the divine!

XXIX

But who could have expected this
 When we two drew together first
 Just for the obvious human bliss,
 To satisfy life's daily thirst
 With a thing men seldom miss?

XXX

Come back with me to the first of all,
 Let us lean and love it over again,
 Let us now forget and now recall,
 Break the rosary in a pearly rain,
 And gather what we let fall!

XXXI

What did I say?—that a small bird
 sings
 All day long, save when a brown pair
 Of hawks from the wood float with
 wide wings
 Strained to a bell: 'gainst noon-day
 glare
 You count the streaks and rings.

XXXII

But at afternoon or almost eve
 'T is 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 be-
 fore,
 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 be-
tween,
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 dwell-
ing-place
You trembled to forestall !

B.P.

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

You might have turned and tried a man,
Set him a space to weary and wear,
And prove which suited more your
plan,
His best of hope or his worst despair,
Yet end as he began.

XLVI

But you spared me this, like the heart
you are,
And filled my empty heart at a word,
If two lives join, there is oft a scar,
They are one and one, with a shadowy
third ;
One near one is too far.

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

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.

X

LI

I am named and known by that moment's feat ;
There took my station and degree ;
So grew my own small life complete,
As nature obtained her best of me—
One born to love you, sweet !

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 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
Will never let mine go, nor heart with-
stand
The beating of my heart to reach its
place.
When shall I look for thee and feel thee
gone ?
When cry for the old comfort and find
none ?
Never, I know ! Thy soul is in thy
face.

III

Oh, I should fade—'t is willed so !
Might I save,
Gladly I would, whatever beauty gave
Joy to thy sense, for that was preci-
ous too.
It is not to be granted. But the soul
Whence the love comes, all ravage
eaves that whole ;
Vainly the flesh fades ; soul makes
all things new.

IV

It would not be because my eye grew
dim
Thou couldst not find ~~the~~ love there,
thanks to Him
Who never is dishonoured in the
spark
He gave us from his fire of fires, and
bade
Remember whence it sprang, nor be
afraid
While that burns on, though all the
rest grow dark.

V

So, how thou wouldst be perfect, white
and clean
Outside as inside, soul and soul's
demesne
Alike, this body given to show it by !
Oh, three-parts through the worst of
life's abyss,
What plaudits from the next world
after this,
Couldst thou repeat a stroke and
gain the sky !

VI

And is it not the bitterer to think
That disengage our hands and thou
wilt sink
Although thy love was love in very
deed ?
I know that nature ! Pass a festive
day,
Thou dost not throw its relic-flower
away
Nor bid its music's loitering echo
speed.

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
time,
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 ;
't is 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—
Threelines, my face comes at so slight
a call :
And for all this, one little hour 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 list be
side,
" 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, mimick-
ing 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 needst 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,
" More than if such a picture I prefer
" Passing a day with, to a room's
bare side :
" The painted form takes nothing she
possessed,
" Yet, while the Titian's Venus lies at
rest,
" A man looks. Once more, what is
there to chide ? "

XIV

So must I see, from where I sit and
watch,
My own self sell myself, my hand at-
tach
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 sec !

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, sealing 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 cor-
onal,

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 forestall the
life behind

The death I have to go through!—
when I find,

Now that I want thy help most, all of
thee!

What did I fear? Thy love shall hold
me fast

Until the little minute's sleep is past
And I wake saved.—And yet it will
not be!

TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA

I

I WONDER how 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
groped

Among the honey-meal: and last,
Everywhere on the grassy slope
I traced it. Hold it fast!

V

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

VI

Such life here, through such lengths of
hours,

Such miracles performed in play,
Such primal naked forms of flowers,
Such letting nature have her way
While heaven looks from its towers !

VII

How say you ? Let us, O my dove,
Let us be unashamed of soul,
As earth lies bare to heaven above !
How is it under our control
To love or not to love ?

VIII

I would that you were all to me,
You that are just so much, no more.
Nor yours nor mine, nor slave nor free !
Where does the fault lie ? What
the core
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 passed away.

VI

What became of all the hopes,
Words and song and lute as well ?
Say, this struck you—"When life
gropes
"Feebly for the path where fell
"Light last on the evening slopes,

VII

"One friend in that path shall be,
"To secure my step from wrong ;
"One to count night day for me,
"Patient through the watches long,
"Serving most with none to see."

VIII

Never say—as something bodes—
"So, the worst has yet a worse !
"When life halts 'neath double loads,
"Better the 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
rent,
"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 hear my music ? So !
Break the string ; fold music's wing ;
Suppose Pauline had bade me sing !

III

My whole life long I learned to love.
This hour my utmost art I prove
And speak my passion—heaven or hell ?
She will not give me heaven ? 'T is
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 mend her bower now, your
hand left unsightly
By plucking the rose—my June will
do rightly.

III

And after, for pastime,
If June be refulgent
With flowers in completeness,
All petals, no prickles,
Delicious as trickles
Of wine poured at mass-time,—
And choose One indulgent
To redness and sweetness:
Or if, with experience of man and of
spider,
June use my June-lightning, the strong
insect-ridder,
And stop the fresh film-work,—why,
June will consider.

A PRETTY WOMAN

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 faces lies quiet there,
Who shall wonder
That I ponder
A conclusion? I will try it there.

IX

As,—why must one, for the love fore-
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,
"I 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 ;
Allow my finger to caress
Your lips' contour and downiness,
Provided it supply a glove.
The world's good word !—the Insti-
tute !
Guizot receives Montalembert !
Eh ? Down the court three lam-
pions 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 't is twilight, you see,—with such
suites to explore,
Such closets to search, such alcoves to
importune !

LIFE IN A LOVE

ESCAPE me ?

Never—

Beloved !

While I am I, and you are you,
So long as the world contains us both,
Me the loving and you the loth,
While the one eludes, must the other
pursue.
My life is a fault at last, I fear :
It seems too much like a fate, indeed !
Though I do my best I shall scarce
succeed.

But what if I fail of my purpose here ?
It is but to keep the nerves at strain,

To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,
And baffled, get up and begin again,—
So the chace takes up one's life,
that 's all.

While, look but once from your farthest
bound

At me so deep in the dust and dark,
No sooner the old hope goes to ground

Than a new one, straight to the self-
same mark,

I shape me—

Ever

Removed !

IN THREE DAYS

I

So, I shall see her in three days
And just one night, but nights are
short,

Then two long hours, and that is morn.
See how I come, unchanged, unworn !
Feel, where my life broke off from
thine,

How fresh the splinters keep and fine,—
Only a touch and we combine !

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 embrowns the gold.

IV

What great fear, should one say,
" Three days

" That change the world might change
as well

" Your fortune ; and if joy delays,

" Be happy that no worse befell ! "

What small fear, if another says,

" Three days and one short night be-
side

" May throw no shadow on your ways ;

" But years must teem with change
untried,

" With chance not easily defied,

" With an end somewhere undescried."

No fear !—or if a fear be born

This minute, it dies out in scorn.

Fear ? I shall see her in three days

And one night, now the nights are
short,

Then just two hours, and that is morn.

IN A YEAR

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 but 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 perplexed
 Grows belief!

Well, this cold clay clod
 Was man's heart:
 Crumble it, and what comes next?
 Is it God?

WOMEN AND ROSES

I

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 yet 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!

Once but of love, the poesy, the pas-
 sion,

Drink but 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 for once ! But no—the old measure,
 They circle thier 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 is far conquers what is near.
 Roses will bloom nor want beholders,
 Sprung from the dust where our flesh moulders.
 What shall arrive with the cycle's change ?
 A novel grace and a beauty strange.
 I will make an Eve, be the artist that began her,
 Shaped her to his mind !—Alas ! in like manner
 They circle their rose on my rose tree.

BEFORE

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,

" 'T is 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 ;
 Then go live his life out ! Life will try his nerves,
 When the sky, which noticed all, makes no disclosure,
 And the earth keeps up her terrible composure.

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 obsequious hide ?
 When will come an end to all the mock obeisance,
 And the price appear that pays for the misfeasance ?

VII

So much for the culprit. Who 's the martyred man ?
 Let him bear one stroke more, for be sure he can !
 He that strove thus evil's lump with good to leaven,
 Let him give his blood at last and get his heaven !

VIII

All or nothing, stake it ! Trusts he God or no ?
 Thus far and no farther ? farther ? be it so !
 Now, enough of your chicane of prudent pauses,
 Sage provisos, sub-intents and saving-clauses !

IX

Ah, " forgive " you bid him ? While God's champion lives,

Wrong shall be resisted : dead, why, he
forgives.
But you must not end my friend ere
you begin him ;
Evil stands not crowned on earth,
while breath is in him.

X

Once more—Will the wronger, at this
last of all,
Dare to say, " I did wrong," rising in
his fall ?
No ?—Let go, then ! Both the fight-
ers to their places !
While I count three, step you back as
many paces !

AFTER

TAKE the cloak from his face, and at
first
Let the corpse do its worst !

How he lies in his rights of a man !
Death has done all death can.
And, absorbed in the new life he leads,
He recks not, he heeds
Nor his wrong nor my vengeance ;
both strike
On his senses alike,
And are lost in the solemn and strange
Surprise of the change.

Ha, what avails death to erase
His offence, my disgrace ?
I would we were boys as of old
In the field, by the fold :
His outrage, God's patience, man's
scorn
Were so easily borne !

I stand here now, he lies in his place :
Cover the face !

THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL

A PICTURE AT FANO.

I

DEAR and great Angel, wouldst thou
only leave
That child, when thou hast done
with him, for me !
Let me sit all the day here, that when
eve
Shall find performed thy special
ministry,

And time come, for departure, thou,
suspending
Thy flight, mayst see another child for
tending,
Another still, to quiet and retrieve.

II

Then I shall feel thee step one step, no
more,
From where thou standest now, to
where I gaze,
—And suddenly my head is covered
o'er
With those wings, white above the
child who prays
Now on that tomb—and I shall feel
thee guarding
Me, out of all the world ; for me, dis-
carding
Yon heaven thy home, that waits
and opes its door.

III

I would not look up wither past thy
head
Because the door opes, like that
child, I know,
For I should have thy gracious face in-
stead,
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 gar-
ment'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 sup-
pressed.

V

How soon all wordly wrong would be
repaired !
I think how I should view the earth
and skies

And I sa, 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 be-
fore 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 con-
tent

—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 magnifi-
cent)

VIII

And since he did not work thus earn-
estly

At all times, and has else endured
some wrong—

I took one thought his picture struck
from me,

And spread it out, translating it to
song.

My love is here. Where are you, dear
old friend?

How rolls the Wairoa at your world's
far end?

This is Ancona, yonder is the sea.

MEMORABILIA

I

Ah, did you once see Shelley plain,
And did he stop and speak to you,
And did you speak to him again?
How strange it seems and new!

II

But you were living before that,
And also you are living after;
And the memory I started at—
My starting moves your laughter!

III

I crossed a moor, with a name of its
own
And a certain use in the world no
doubt,
Yet a hand's-breadth of it shines alone
Mid the blank miles round about:

IV

For there I picked up on the heather
And there I put inside my breast
A moulted feather, an eagle-feather! I
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 ex-
tend
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 rais-
ing ;
" Others 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
wonder :

I'll say—a fisher, on the sand
By Tyre the old, with ocean-plunder,
A netful, brought to land.

VI

Who has not heard how Tyrian shells
Enclosed the blue, that dye of dyes
Whereof one drop worked miracles,
And coloured like Astarte's eyes
Raw silk the merchant sells ?

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 am-
bition ;

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 conchs ! not fit for warp or woof !
Till cunning come to pound and
squeeze

And clarify,—refine to proof
The liquor filtered by degrees,
While the world stands aloof.

XII

And there 's the extract, flasket 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
eats :
Nobbs prints blue,—claret crowns
his cup :
Nokes outdares Stokes in azure feats,—
Both gorge. Who fished the murex
up ?
What porridge had John Keats ?

MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE-
GOTHA

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,
Baulks one of holding the base.

IV

See, our huge house of the sounds,
Hushing its hundreds at once,

Bids the last loiterer back to his bounds!

—O 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,
I praye, 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 book, younger folks
—helve!

I layed I not off-hand and runningly,
Just now, your masterpiece, hard number twelve?

He re '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,

"Know what procured me our Company's votes—

"A master were 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 discept,—has distinguished;

Three helps the couple, if ever yet man did;

Four protests; Five makes a dart at the thing wished:

Back to One, goes the case bandied.

XV

One says his say with a difference;

More of expounding, explaining!

All now is wrangle, abuse and vociferance;

Now there 's a truce, all 's subdued, self-restraining;

Five, though, stands out all the stiffer hence.

XVI

One is incisive, corrosive;

Two retorts, nettled, curt, erepitant;

HBC 1134412

Three makes rejoinder, expansive, explosive;
 Four overbears them all, strident and strepitant:
 Five . . . O Danaides, O Sieve *But not*

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 we exclaim—"But where's music,
 the dickens?"
 "Blot ye the gold, while your spider-
 web strengthens
 "—Blacked to the stoutest of tickens?"

XXI

I for man's effort am zealous:
 Prove me such censure unfounded!
 Seems it surprising a lover grows jeal-
 ous—
 Hopes 't was 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 truth and nature—
 Still our life's zigzags and dodges,
 Ins and outs, weaving a new legisla-
 ture—
 God's gold just shining its last where
 that lodges,
 Palled beneath man's usurpature. *ally. sequel of ground*

XXIV

So we o'er shroud 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 we the web its dimensions!

XXVI

Who thinks Hugues wrote for the deaf,
 Proved a mere mountain in labour?
 Better submit; try again; what's the
 clef?
 'Faith, 't is no trifle for pipe and for
 tabor—
 Four flats, the minor in F.

XXVII

Friend, your fugue taxes the finger:
 Learning it once, who would lose it?
 Yet all the while a misgiving will linger,
 Truth's golden o'er us although we
 refuse it—
Nature, thro' cobwebs we string her.

XXVIII

Hugues! I advise *med. horn*
 (Counterpoint glares like a Gorgon)
 Bid One, Two, Three, Four, Five,
 clear the arena!

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

-321

Say the word, straight I unstop the
full-organ,
Blare out the *mode Palestina*.

XXIX

While in the roof, if I'm right there,
... Lo you, the wick in the socket!
Hallo, you sacristan, shows 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, [cares
And find a poor devil has ended his
At the foot of your rotten-runged
rat-riddled stairs?
Do I carry the moon in my pocket?

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

A TRAGEDY

1843

PERSONS

The Grand-Master's Prefect.
The Patriarch's Nuncio.
The Republic's Admiral.
LOYS DE DREUX, Knight-Novice.

Initiated Druses—DJABAL, KHALIL, AN-
AEL, MAANI, KARSHOOK, RAGHIB,
AYOOB and others.
Uninitiated Druses.

Prefect's Guard, Nuncio's Attendants, Admiral's Force.

TIME, 14— PLACE, An Islet of the Southern Sporades, colonized by Druses of
Lebanon, and garrisoned by the Knights-Hospitaliers of Rhodes.
SCENE, A Hall in the Prefect's Palace.

ACT I

*Enter stealthily KARSHOOK, RAGHIB,
AYOOB and other initiated Druses,
each as he enters casting off a robe
that conceals his distinctive black
vest and white turban: then, as
giving a loose to exultation,—*

Kar. The moon is carried off in
purple fire:
Day breaks at last! Break glory,
with the day,
On Djabal's dread incarnate mystery
Now ready to resume its pristine shape
Of Hakeem, as the Khalif vanished erst
In what seemed death to uninstructed
eyes,
On red Mokattam's verge—our Found-
er's flesh,
As he resumes our Founder's function!
Ragh. —Death
Sweep to the Christian Prefect that en-
slaved

Solong us sad Druse exiles o'er the sea!
Ay. Most joy be thine, O Mother-
mount! Thy brood

B.P.

Returns to thee, no outcasts as we left,
But thus—but thus! Behind, our
Prefect's corse;
Before, a presenee 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,
'T is 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!

Y

[*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 mys-
teriously

Among the twinkling lights and darks
that haunt

Yon cornice ! Where the huge veil,
they suspend

Before the Prefect's chamber of de-
light,

Floats wide, then falls again as if its
slave,

The scented air, took heart now, and
anon

Lost heart to buoy its breadths of gor-
geousness

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 hand-breadths of gold fringe,
my son was set

To twist, the night he died !

Kar. Nay, hear the knave !

And I could witness my one daughter
borne,

A week since, to the Prefect's couch,
yet fold

These arms, be mute, lest word of mine
should mar

Our Master's work, delay the Prefect
here

A day, prevent his sailing hence for
Rhodes—

How know I else ?—Hear me denied
my right

By such a knave !

Ragh. [*interposing.*] Each ravage for
himself !

Bootv enough ! On, Druses ! Be
there found

Blood and a heap behind us ; with us,
Djabal

Turned Hakeem ; and before us, Le-
banon !

Yields the porch ? Spare not ! There
his minions dragged

Thy daughter, Karshook, to the Pre-
fect's couch !

Ayoob ! Thy son, to soothe the Pre-
fect'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. Hearken, Khalil ! Never
spoke

A boy so like a song-bird ; we avouch
thee

Prettiest of all our Master's instru-
ments

Except thy bright twin-sister ; thou
and Anacl

Challenge his prime regard : but we
may crave

(Such nothings as we be) a portion too
Of Djabal's favour ; in him we be-

lieved,
His bound ourselves, him moon by moon

obeyed,
Kept silence till this daybreak—so,

may claim

THE RETURN OF THE DRUSES

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Reward: who grudges me my claim?
Ay. 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 Re-
 turn?
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 in-
 terpose,
 "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. 'T was 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 our tribe) a race self-
 vowed
 To endless warfare with his hordes and
 him,
 The White-cross Knights of the adja-
 cent Isle?
Kar. And why else rend we down,
 wrench up, rase out?
 These Knights of Rhodes we thus so-
 licited
 For help, bestowed on us a fiercer pest
 Than aught we fled—their Prefect;
 who began
 His promised mere paternal govern-
 ance,
 By a prompt massacre of all our
 Sheikhs
 Able to thwart the Order in its scheme
 Of crushing, with our nation's memory
 Each chance of our return, and taming
 us
 Bondslaves to Rhodes for ever—all, he
 thinks
 To end by this day's treason.
Kha. Say I not?
 You, fitted to the Order's purposes,
 Your Sheikhs cut off, your very garb
 proscribed,
 Yet must receive one degradation more;
 The Knights at last throw off the mask
 —transfer,
 As tributary now and appanage,
 This islet they are but protectors of,
 To their own ever-craving liege, the
 Church,
 Who licenses all crimes that pay her
 thus.
 You, from their Prefect, were to be con-
 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 I
 Djabal is Hakeem, the incarnate
 Dread,
 The phantasm Khalif, King of Prodi-
 gies!

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 villainy complete, there
comes
This Patriarch's Nuncio with this Mas-
ter's Prefect
Their treason to consummate,—each
will face
For a cringing handful, an uplifted
nation;
For simulated Christians, confessed
Druses;
And, for slaves past hope of the
Mother-mountain,
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— [stand
Venice, whose promised argosies should
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 this; and yet, may one
dare hint,
Thou art the youngest of us?—though
employed
Abundantly as Djabal's confidant,
Transmitter of his mandates, even now.
Much less, 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. Karhook 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: 't is in the alcove at the
back

Of yonder columned porch, whose en-
trance 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 re-
veals

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.

Loys. Loys? Is not Loys gone
For ever?

Ayoob. Loys, the Frank Knight, re-
turned?

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, Khailil! 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, mark not those imperial linea-
ments,

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!* 'T is as our Isle
broke out in song

For joy, its Prefect-incubus drops off
To-day, and I succeed him in his rule

But no—they cannot dream of their
good fortune!

[*Aloud.*] Peace to you, Druses! I
have tidings for you,

But first for Djabal: where's your
tall bewitcher,

With that small Arab thin-lipped silver-
mouth?

Kha. [*Aside to 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 comrades slaughtered?

Loys. [*Aside.*] How they shrink

And whisper, with those rapid faces!
What?

The sight of me in their oppressors'
garb

Strikes terror to the simple tribe?
 God's shame
 On those that bring our Order ill repute!
 But all 's at end now; better days begin
 For these mild mountaineers from 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; 't were 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 pomp, 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, cousins! 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?)—"Intercourse
 "With few or none?" Forget you,
 I've been friendly
 With Djabal long ere you or any Druse?
 —Enough of him at Rennes, I think,
 beneath
 The Duke my father's roof! He'd tell
 by the hour,
 With fixed white eyes beneath his
 swarthy brow,
 Plausiblest stories . . .
Kha. Stories, say you?—Ah,
 The quaint attire!
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 awake while here you
 drowse!
 What brings me back? What should
 not bring me, rather?
 Our Patriarch's Nuncio visits you to-day—
 Is not my year's probation out? I
 come
 To take the knightly vows.
Kha. What 's that you wear?
Loys. This Rhodian cross? The
 cross your Prefect wore.
 You should have seen, as I saw, the full
 Chapter
 Rise, to a man, while they transferred
 this cross
 From that unworthy Prefect's neck to
 . . . (fool—
 My secret will escape me!) In a word,
 My year's probation passed, a Knight
 ere eve
 Am I; bound, like the rest, to yield
 my wealth
 To the common stock, to live in chastity,
 (We Knights espouse alone our Order's
 fame)
 —Change this gay weed for the black
 white-crossed gown,
 And fight to death against the Infidel
 —Not, therefore, against you, you
 Christians with
 Such partial difference only as befits
 The peace fullest 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 't were a camel-staff! Pull!
That 's my motto,
Annealed "*Pro fide*," on the blade in
blue.

Kha. No curve in it? Surely a
blade should curve!

Loys. Straight from the wrist!
Loose—it should poise itself!

K'a. [*wavering with irrepressible ex-
ultation the sword.*] We are a na-
tion, Loys, of old fame

Among the mountains! Rights have
we to keep

With the sword too!

[*Remembering himself.*] But I forget—
you bid me

Seek Djabal?

Loys. What! A sword's sight
scares you not?

(The People I will make of him and
them!

Oh let my Prefect-sway begin at once!)
Bring Djabal—say, indeed, that come
he must!

Kha. At noon seek Djabal in the
Prefect's Chamber,
And find . . . [*Aside.*] Nay, 't is 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 stealin'
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 villainous career?
The princely Synod! All I dared re-
quest

Was his dismissal; and they gra-
ciously

Consigned his very office to myself—
Myself may cure the Isle diseased!

And well

For them, they did so! Since I never
felt

How lone a lot, tho' brilliant, I em-
brace,

Till now that, past retrieval, it is mine.
To live thus, and thus die! Yet, as I

leapt

On shore, so home a feeling greeted me
That I could half believe in Djabal's
story,

He used to tempt my father with, at
Rennes—

And me, too, since the story brought
me here—

Of some Count Dreux and ancestor of
ours

Who, sick of wandering from Bouillon's
war,

Left his old name in Lebanon.

Long days

At least to spend in the Isle! and, my
news known

An hour hence, what if Anael turn on
me

The great black eyes I must forget?

Why, fool,

Recall them, then? My business is
with Djabal,

Not Anael! Djabal tarries: if I seek
him?—

The Isle is brighter than its wont to-
day!

ACT II

Enter DJABAL.

Dja. That a strong man should
think himself a God!

I—Hakeem? To have wandered
through the world,

Sown falsehood, and thence reaped
now scorn, now faith,

For my one chant with many a change,
my tale

Of outrage, and my prayer for ven-
geance—this

Required, forseeth, no mere man's
faculty,

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Nor less than Hakeem's? The per-
suading Loys
To pass probation here; the getting
access
By Loys to the Prefect; worst of all,
The gaining my tribe's confidence by
fraud
That would disgrace the very Frank,—
a few
Of Europe's secrets which subdue the
flame,
The wave,—to ply a simple tribe with
these,
Took Hakeem?

And I feel this first to-day!
Does the day break, is the hour immin-
ent

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
gainsays?

But now, because delusion mixed itself
Insensibly with this career, all 's
changed!

Have I brought Venice to afford us
convoy?

"True—but my jugglings wrought
that!" Put I heart

Into our people where no heart lurked?
—"Ah,

"What cannot an impostor do!"

Not this!
Not do this which I do! Not bid,
avaunt

Falsehood! Thou shalt not keep thy
hold on me!

—Nor even get a hold on me! 'T is
now—

This day—hour—minute—'t is as here
I stand [fect,

On the accursed threshold of the Pre-
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 Ayoob, Karshook saw—Maani
there

"Must tell you how I saw my father
sink;

"My mother's arms twine still about
my neck;

"I hear my brother shriek, here 's yet
the scar

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

"If you had woke like me, grown year
by year

"Out of the tumult in a far-off clime,
"Would it be wondrous such delusion
grew?

"I walked the world, asked help at
every hand;

"Came help or no? Not this and this?
Which helps

"When I returned with, found the Pre-
fect here,

"The Druses here, all here, but Ha-
keem's self,

"The Khalif of the thousand prophe-
cies,

"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 una-
bused,

"—Who, thus surrounded, slay for you
and them

"The Prefect, lead to Lebanon? No
Khalif,

"But Sheikh once more! Mere Dja-
bal—not" . . .

Enter KHALIL hastily.

Kha. —God Hakeem!

'T is 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
'T is chronicled thou badst them.

Dja. [Aside.] I abjure it!

'T is 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! 'T is my
office

Just to announce what well thou
know'st—but thus

Thou bidst me. At this self-same mo-
ment tend

The Prefect, Nuncio and the Admiral
Hither by their three sea-paths: nor
forget

Who were the trusty watchers!—thou
forget?

Like me, who do forget that Anael
bade . . .

Dja. [Aside.] Ay, Anael, Anael—is
that said at last?

Louder than all, that would be said, I
knew!

What does abjuring mean, confessing
mean,

To the people? Till that woman
crossed my path,

On went I, solely for my people's sake:
I saw her, and I then first saw myself,

And slackened pace: "if I should
prove indeed

"Hakeem—with Anael by!"

Kha. [Aside.] Ah, he is rapt!

Dare I at such a moment break on him

Even to do my sister's bidding? Yes:

The eyes are Djabal's and not Ha-
keem's yet,

Though but till I have spoken this, per-
chance.

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 Dja-
bal's shape

She knows, for Hakeem's shape she is
to know.

Something to say that will not from
her mind!

I know not what—"Let him but
come!" she said.

Dja. [Half-apart.] My nation—all
my Druses—how fare they?

Those I must save, and suffer thus to
save,

Hold they their posts? Wait they
their Khalif too?

Kha. All at the signal pant to flock
around

That banner of a brow!

Dja. [Aside.] And when they flock,
Confess them this: and after, for re-
ward,

Be chased with howlings to her feet
perchance?

—Have the poor outraged Druses, deaf
and blind,

Precede me there, forestall my story
there,

Tell it in mocks and jeers!

I lose myself!

Who needs a Hakeem to direct him
now?

I need the veriest child—why not this
child?

[Turning abruptly to KHALIL.]

You are a Druse too, Khalil; you were
nourished

Like Anael with our mysteries: if she
Could vow, so nourished, to love only
one

Who should avenge the Druses, whence proceeds
Your silence? Wherefore made you no essay,
Who thus implicitly can execute
My bidding? What have I done, you could not?
Who, knowing more than Anael the prostration
Of our once lofty tribe, the daily life
Of this detested . . .

Does he come, you say,
This Prefect? All's in readiness?
Kha. The sword,
The sacred robe, the Khalif's mystic tiar,
Laid up so long, are all disposed beside
The Prefect's chamber.
Dja. —Why did you despair?
Kha. I know our nation's state?
Too surely know,
As thou who speak'st to prove me!
Wrongs like 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—’t was, “Be silent, or worse fare!
“Endure till time's slow cycle prove complete;
“Who mayst thou be that takest on thee to thrust
“Into this peril—art thou Hakeem?”
No!
Only a mission like thy mission renders
All these obedient at a breath, subdues
Their private passions, brings their wills to one!
Dja. You think so?
Kha. Even now—when they have witnessed
Thy miracles—had I not threatened all
With Hakeem's vengeance, they would mar the work,
And couch ere this, each with his special prize,
Safe in his dwelling, leaving our main hope
To perish! No! When these have kissed thy feet
At Lebanon, the past purged off, the present

Clear,—for the future, even Hakeem's mission
May end, and I perchance, or any youth,
Shall rule them thus renewed.—I 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. [*KHAEL goes.*
Oh, not confess
To these, the blinded multitude—confess,
Before at least the fortune of my deed
Half authorize its means! Only to her
Let me confess my fault, who in my path
Curled up like incense from a mage-king's tomb
When he would have the wayfarer descend
Through the earth's rift and bear hid treasure forth!
When should my first child's-carelessness 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 joy?
Were her brow brighter, her eyes richer, still
Would I confess! On the gulf's verge I pause.
How could I slay the Prefect, thus and thus?
Anael, be mine to guard me, not destroy!
[*Goes.*

Enter ANAEL, and MAANI, who is assisting to array her in the ancient dress of the Druses.

An. Those saffron vestures of the tabret-girls!
Comes Djabal, think you?
Maa. Doubtless Djabal comes.
An. Dost thou snow-swathe thee kinglier, Lebanon,
Than in my dreams?—Nay, all the tresses off
My forehead! Look I lovely so? He says
That I am lovely.
Maa. Lovely: nay, that hangs Awry.

An. You tell me how a khandjar hangs ?
 The sharp side, thus, along the heart, see, marks
 The maiden of our class. Are you content
 For Djabal as for me ?
Maa. Content, my child.
An. Oh mother, tell me more of him !
 He comes
 Even now—tell more, fill up my soul with him !
Maa. And did I not . . . yes, surely . . . tell you all ?
An. What will be changed in Djabal when the Change
 Arrives ? Which feature ? Not his eyes !
Maa. 'T is 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 !
 'T is the old current which must swell thro' that,
 For what least tone, Maani, could I lose ?
 'T is 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 me vow never to wed but one
 Who saved my People—on that day . . . proceed !
Maa. Once more, then : from the time of his return
 In secret, changed so since he left the Isle
 That I, who screened our Emir's last of sons,

This Djabal, from the Prefect's massacre
 —Who bade him ne'er forget the child he was,
 —Who dreamed so long the youth he might become—
 I knew not in the man that child ; the man
 Who spoke alone of hope to save our tribe,
 How he had gone from land to land to save
 Our tribe—allies were sure, nor foes to dread ;
 And much he mused, days, nights, alone he mused :
 But never till that day when, pale and worn
 As by a persevering woe, he cried
 " Is there not one Druse left me ? "—
 and I showed
 The way to Khahl'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
 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

Who saffron-vested sound the tabret
there,

The girls who throng there in my
dream! One hour

And all is over: how shall I do aught
That may deserve next hour's exalting?
—How?—

[Suddenly to MAANI.]

Mother, I am not worthy him! I read
it

Still in his eyes! He stand as if to tell
me

I am not, yet forbears. Why else re-
vert

To one theme ever?—how mere human
gifts

Suffice him in myself—whose worship
fades,

Whose awe goes ever off at his ap-
proach,

As now, who when he comes . . .

[DJABAL enters.] Oh why is it
I cannot kneel to you?

Dja. Rather, 't is I
Should kneel to you, my Anael!

An. Even so!
For never seem you—shall I speak the
truth?—

Never a God to me! 'T is 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 attri-
butes

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 other frames, tho' not in mine, by
Loys

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

How shall I meet the rapture presently,
With doubt unexpiated, undisclosed?

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

Avow that all she loved in me was false?
—Which yet has served that flower-like

love of hers
To climb by, like the clinging gourd,
and clasp

With its divinest wealth of leaf and
bloom.

[itself]
Could I take down the prop-work, in
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 re-
placed

The old support thus silently with-
drawn!

But no; the beauteous fabric crushes
too.

'T is not for my sake but for Anael's
sake

I leave her soul this Hakeem where it
leans!

Oh could I vanish from her—quit the
Isle!

And yet—a thought comes: here my
work is done

At every point; the Druses must return—

Have convoy to their birth-place back, whoe'er

The leader be, myself or any Druse—
Venice is pledged to that: 't is for myself,

For my own vengeance in the Prefect's death,

I stay now, not for them: to slay or spare

The Prefect, whom imports it save myself?

He cannot bar their passage from the Isle;

What would his death be but my own reward?

Then, mine I will forego. It is foregone!

Let him escape with all my House's blood!

Ere he can reach land, Djabal disappears,

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

Live in her memory, keeping her sublime

Above the world. She cannot touch that world

By ever knowing what I truly am, Since Loys,—of mankind the only one

Able to link my present with my past, My life in Europe with my Island life,

Thence, able to unmask me,—I've disposed

Safely at last at Rhodes, and . . .

Enter KHALIL.

Kha. Loys greets thee!

Dja. Loys? To drag me back? It cannot be!

An. [*Aside.*] Loys! Ah, doubt may not be stifled so!

Kha. Can I have erred that thou so gazest? Yes,

I told thee not in the glad press of tidings

Of higher import, Loys is returned Before the Prefect, with, if possible,

Twice the light startledness of old. As though

On some inauguration he expects, To-day, the world's fate hung!

Dja. —And asks for me?

Kha. Thou knowest all things!

Thee in chief he greets,

But every Druse of us is to be happy

At his arrival, he declares: were Loys Thou, Master, he could have no wider soul

To take us in with. How I love that Loys!

Dja. [*Aside.*] Shame winds me with her tether round and round!

An. [*Aside.*] Loys? I take the trial! it is meet,

The little I can do, be done; that faith, All I can offer, want no perfecting

Which my own act may compass. Ay, this way

All may go well, nor that ignoble doubt Be chased by other aid than mine.

Advance

Close to my fear, weigh Loys with my Lord,

The mortal with the more than mortal gifts!

Dja. [*Aside.*] Before, there were so few deceived! and now

There's doubtless not one least Druse in the Isle

But, having learned my superhuman claims,

And calling me his Khalif-God, will 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.*] 'T is his voice.

The smooth Frank trifler with our people's wrongs,

The self-complacent boy-inquirer, loud
On this and that inflicted tyranny,
—Aught serving to parade an 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.
Khahl, along with me ! while Anael
waits

Till I return once more—and but once
more !

ACT III

ANAEI and LOYS.

An. Here leave me ! Here I wait
another. 'T was

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 es-
caped 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. Him

You could love only ? Where is Dja-
bal ? 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 ! 'T is love ! Oh Anael
speak to me !

Djabal—

An. Seek *Djabal* by the Prefect's
chamber

At noon ! [*She paces the room.*

Loys. [*Aside.*] And am I not the
Prefect now ?

Is it my fate to be the only one
Able to win her love, the only one

Unable to accept her love ? The past
Breaks up beneath my footing : came I
here

This morn as to a slave, to set her free
And take her thanks, and then spend
day by day

Content beside her in the Isle ? What
works

This knowledge in me now ? Her eye
has broken

The faint disguise away : for Anael's
sake

I left the Isle, for her espoused the
cause

Of the Druses, all for her I thought, till
now,

To live without !

—As I must live ! To-day
Ordains me Knight, forbids me . . .
never shall

Forbid me to profess myself, heart,
arm,

Thy soldier !

An. *Djabal* you demanded, comes !

Loys. [*Aside.*] What wouldst thou,
Loys ? See him ? Nought beside

Is wanting : I have felt his voice a
spell

From first to last. He brought me
here, made known

The Druses to me, drove me hence to
seek

Redress for them ; and shall I meet
him now,

When nought is wanting but a word of his,

To—what?—induce me to spurn hope, faith, pride,

Honour away,—to cast my lot among His tribe, become a proverb in men's mouths,

Breaking my high pact of companionship

With those who graciously bestowed on me

The very opportunities I turn

Against them! Let me not see Djabal now!

An. The Prefect also comes!

Loys. [Aside.] Him let me see, Not Djabal! Him, degraded at a word,

To soothe me,—to attest belief in me— And after, Djabal! Yes, ere I return To her, the Nuncio's vow shall have destroyed

This heart's rebellion, and coerced this will

For ever.

Anael, not before the vows 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 preference,

No more. In Djabal, Hakeem is absorbed!

And for a love like this, the God who saves

My race, selects me for his bride? One way!—

Enter DJABAL.

Dja. [to himself.] No moment is to waste then; 't is resolved.

If Khalil may be trusted to lead back My Druses, and if Loys can be lured

Out of the Isle—if I procure his silence, Or promise never to return at least,—

All's over. Even now my bark awaits; I reach the next wild islet and the next,

And lose myself beneath the sun for ever.

And now, to Anael!

An. Djabal, I am thine!

Dja. Mine? Djabal's?—As if Hakeem had not been?

An. Not Djabal's? Say first, do you read my thought?

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

Dja. I do not, I have said a thousand times.

An. (My secret's safe, I shall surprise him yet!)

Djabal, I knew your secret from the first:

Djabal, when first I saw you . . . (by our porch

You leant, and pressed the tinkling veil away,

And one fringe fell behind your neck—I see!)

. . . I knew you were not human, for I said

"This dim secluded house where the sea beats

"Is heaven to me—my people's huts are hell

"To them; this august form will follow me,

"Mix with the waves his voice will,—I have him;

"And they, the Prefect; Oh, my happiness

"Rounds to the full whether I choose or no!

"His eyes met mine, he was about to speak,

"His hand grew damp—surely he meant to say

"He let me love him: in that moment's bliss

"I shall forget my people pine for home—

"They pass and they repass with pallid eyes!"

I vowed at once a certain vow; this vow—

Not to embrace you till my tribe was saved.

Embrace me!

Dja. [Apart.] And she loved me! Nought remained

But that! Nay, Anael, is the Prefect dead?

An. Ah, you reproach me! True, his death crowns all,

I know—or should know: and I would do much,

Believe! but, death! Oh, you, who
have known death,
Would never doom the Prefect, were
death fearful

As we report!

Death!—a fire curls within us
From the foot's palm, and fills up to
the brain,

Up, out, then shatters the whole bub-
ble-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 assur-
ance

My vow will not be broken, for I must
Do something to attest my faith in you,
Be worthy you!

Dja. [*avoiding her.*] I come for that
—to say

Such an occasion is at hand: 't is 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:”
't was 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. Ayooob, Karshook,
keep

Their posts—wait but the deed's accom-
plishment

To join us with thy Druses to a man!

Still holds his course the Nuncio—near
an! near

The fleet from Candia steering!

Dja. [*Aside.*] All is lost!

—Or won?

Kha. And I have laid the sacred
robe,

The sword, the head-tiar, at the porch
—the place

Commanded. Thou wilt hear the Pre-
fect's trumpet.

Dja. Then I keep Anael,—him then,
past recall,

I slay—'t is 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 't is now that
Djabal

Would leave me—in the glory meet
for him!

Dja. As glory, I would yield the deed
to you [be

Or any Druse; what peril there may
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, re-
gain

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 æry thing :
What is there in his death ?

An. My brother said,
Is there no part in it for us ?

Dja. For Khalil,—
The trumpet will announce the Nuncio's entry ;

Here, I shall find the Prefect hastening
In the Pavilion to receive him—here
I slay the Prefect ; meanwhile Ayoob leads

The Nuncio with his guards within :
once these

Secured in the outer hall, bid Ayoob bar

Entry or egress till I give the sign
Which waits the landing of the argosies
You will announce to me : this double sign

That justice is performed and help arrived,

When Ayoob shall receive, but not before,
Let him throw ope the palace doors, admit

The Druses to behold their tyrant, ere
We leave for ever this detested spot.

Go, Khalil, hurry all ! No pause, no pause !

Whirl on the dream, secure to wake anon !

Kha. What sign ? and who the bearer ?

Dja. Who shall show
My ring, admit to Ayoob. How she stands !

Have I not . . . I must have some task for her.

Anael, not that way ! 'T is 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 !

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 revenged, 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 care now ; see each bench retains

Its complement of rowers ; I embark O' the instant, since this Knight will have it so.

Alas me ! Could you have the heart, my Loys ?

[To a Guard who whispers.] Oh, bring the holy Nuncio here forthwith !

[The Guards go.]

Loys, a rueful sight, confess, to see The grey discarded Prefect leave his post,

With tears i' the eye ! So, you are Prefect now ?

You depose me—you succeed me ? Ha, ha !

Loys. And dare you laugh, whom laughter less becomes

Than yesterday's forced meekness we beheld . . .

Pref. When you so eloquently pleaded, Loys,

For my dismissal from the post ?—Ah, meek

With cause enough, consult the Nuncio else !

And wish him the like meekness : for so staunch

A servant of the church can scarce have bought

His share in the Isle, and paid for it, hard pieces !

You've my successor to condole with, Nuncio !

I shall be safe by then i' the galley, Loys !

Loys. You make as you would tell me you rejoice

To leave your scene of . . .

Pref. Trade in the dear Druses ? Blood and sweat traffic ? Spare what yesterday

We had 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 [self—
 These savage wizards, and reward my-
Loys. The Knights who so repudiate your crime?
Pref. Loys, the Knights! we doubtless understood
 Each other; as for trusting to reward
 From any friend beside myself . . . no, no!
 I clutched mine on the spot, when it was sweet,
 And I had taste for it. I felt these wizards
 Alive—was sure they were not on me, only
 When I was on them: but with age comes caution:
 And stinging pleasures please less and sting more.
 Year by year, fear by fear! The girls were brighter
 Than ever ('faith, there 's yet one Anael left,
 I set my heart upon—Oh, prithee, let That brave new sword lie still!—These joys looked brighter,
 But siller the town, too, as I passed. With this alcove's delicious memories
 Began to mingle visions of gaunt fathers,
 Quick-eyed sons, fugitives from the mine, the oar,
 Stealing to catch me: brief, when I began

To quake with fear—(I think I hear the Chapter
 Solicited to let me leave, now all Worth staying for was gained and gone!—I say,
 Just when for the remainder of my life All methods of escape seemed lost—that then
 Up should a young hot-headed Loys spring,
 Talk very long and loud,—in fine, compel
 The Knights to break their whole arrangement, have me
 Home for pure shame—from this safehold of mine
 Where but ten thousand Druses seek my life,
 To my wild place of banishment, San Gines [lying.
 By Murcia, where my three fat manors Purchased by gains here and the Nuncio's gold,
 Are all I have to guard me,—that such fortune
 Should fall to me, I hardly could expect!
 Therefore I say, I'd love you!
Loys. Can it be?
 I play into your hands then? Oh no, no!
 The Venerable Chapter, the Great Order
 Sunk o' the sudden into fiends of the pit?
 But I will back—yet will unveil you!
Pref. Me?
 To whom?—perhaps Sir Galeas, who in Chapter
 Shook his white head thrice—and some dozen times
 My hand next morning shook, for value paid!
 To that Italian saint, Sir Cosimo?—Indignant at my wringing year by year
 A thousand bezants from the coral divers,
 As you recounted; felt the saint aggrieved?
 Well might he—I allowed for his half-share
 Merely one hundred! To Sir . . .
Loys. See! you dare
 Inculpate the whole Order; yet should I,
 A youth, a sole voice, have the power to change

Their evil way, had they been firm in it ?
Answer me !

Pref. Oh, the son of Bretagne's Duke,

And that son's wealth, the father's influence, too,
And the young arm, we'll even say, my
—The fear of losing or diverting these
Into another channel, by gainsaying
A novice too abruptly, could not influence

The Order ! You might join, for aught they cared,
Their red-cross rivals of the Temple !
Well,

I thank you for my part, at all events.
Stay here till they withdraw you !
You'll inhabit

My palace—sleep, perchance, in the alcove

Whither I go to meet our holy friend.
Good ! and now disbelieve me if you can,—

This is the first time for long years I enter

Thus [*lifts the arras*] without feeling
just as if I lifted

The lid up of my tomb.

Loys. They share his crime !
God's punishment will overtake you yet.

Pref. Thank you it does not ! Pardon this last flash :

I bear a sober visage presently
With the 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 hyæna 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 robe, etc., disposed.*]

Mine should never so
Have hurried to accomplishment !
Thee, Djabal,

Far other mood befitted I Calm the Robe

Should clothe this doom's awarder !

[*Taking the robe.*] Shall I dare
Assume my nation's Robe ? I am at least

A Druse again, chill Europe's policy
Drops from me : I dare take the Robe.

Why not

The Tiar ? I rule the Druses, and what more

Betokens it than rule ?—yet—yet—

[*Lays down the tiar.*]

[*Footsteps in the alcove.*] He comes.

[*Taking the sword.*]

If the Sword serve, let the Tiar lie !

So, feet

Clogged with the blood of twenty years
can fall

Thus lightly ! Round me, all ye
ghosts ! He'll lift . . .

Which arm to push the arras wide ?—
or both ?

Stab from the neck down to the heart
—there stay !

Near he comes—nearer—the next 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 slow to feel

'T is 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 beautiful thus,

But with the dagger 't is, I have to do !

An. With mine !

Dja. Blood—Arael ?

An. Djabal, 't is thy deed !

It must be ! I had hoped to claim it mine—

Be worthy thee—but I must needs confess

'T was not I, but thyself . . not I have . . Djabal !

Speak to me !

Dja. Oh, my punishment !

An. Speak to me

While I can speak ! touch me, despite the blood !

When the command passed from thy soul to mine,

I went, fire leading me, muttering of thee,

And the approaching exaltation,—
" make

" One sacrifice ! " I said,—and he sat there,

Bade me approach ; and, as I did approach,

Thy fire with music burst into my brain :

'T was but a moment's work, thou saidst—perchance

It may have been so ! Well, it is thy deed !

Dja. It is my deed !

An. His blood all this!—this !
and . .

And more ! Sustain me, Djabal !
Wait not—now

Let flash thy glory ! Change thyself and me !

It must be ! Ere the Druses flock to us !

At least confirm me ! Djabal, blood gushed forth—

He was our tyrant—but I looked he'd fall

Prone as asleep—why else is death called sleep ?

Sleep ? He bent o'er his breast ! 'T is 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 ! 'T is 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 blast me ! Once and ever,

The deed is mine ! Oh think upon the past !

An. [*to herself.*] Did I strike once, or twice, or many times ?

Dja. I came to lead my tribe where, bathed in glooms,

Doth Bahumid the Renovator sleep : Arael, I saw my tribe : I said, " With-

out

" 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, [ine !]

I hoped : I said Heaven had accepted

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 mean-
est
Of the crowd there, could wholly sub-
jugate
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—(per-
chance love thee

Better than ever!) Come, receive
their doom

Of infamy! O, best of all I love thee!
Shame with the man, no triumph with

the God,

Be mine! Come!

*Dja. Never! More shame yet?
and why?*

Why? You have called this deed
mine—it is mine!

And with it I accept its circumstance.
How can I longer strive with fate?

The past

Is past: my false life shall henceforth
show true. [this;

Hear me! The argosies touch land by
They bear us to fresh scenes and hap-
pier skies:

What if we reign together?—if we keep
Our secret for the Druses' good?—by

means

Of even their superstition, plant in
them

New life? I learn from Europe: all
who seek

Man's good must awe man, by such
means as these.

We two will be divine to them—we
are!

All great works in this world spring
from the ruins

Of greater projects—ever, on our earth,
Babels men block out, Babylons they

build.

I wrest the weapon from your hand!
I claim

The deed! Retire! You have my
ring—you bar

All access to the Nuncio till the forces
From Venice land!

An. Thou wilt feign Hakeem then?

*Dja. [putting the Tiara of Hakeem
on his head.] And from this mo-*

ment that I dare ope wide

Eyes that till now refused to see, begins
My true dominion: for I know myself,

And what am I to personate. No
word?

[ANAEI goes.]

'T is 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, 't is Hakeem saves you ! In !
Behold
Your Prefect !

*Enter LOYS. DJABAL hides the khand-
jar 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 't is 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 Pre-
fect !
Oh shrink not ! I do nothing in the
dark,
Nothing unworthy Breton blood, be-
lieve !
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 earnest-
ness
Imposed on me ; have, face to face,
confronted
The Prefect in full Chapter, charged on
him
The enormities of his long rule : he
stood

Mute, offered no defence, no crime
denied.
On which, I spoke of you, and of your
tribe,
Your faith so like our own, and all you
urged
Of old to me—I spoke, too, of your
goodness,
Your patience—brief, I hold hence-
forth the Isle
In charge, am nominally lord,—but
you,
You are associated in my rule—
Are the true Prefect ! Ay, such faith
had they
In my assurance of your loyalty
(For who insults an imbecile old man ?)
That we assume the Prefecture this
hour !
You gaze at me ! Hear greater won-
ders yet—
I throw down all the fabric I have
built !
These Knights, I was prepared to wor-
ship . . . 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?
 [*Guard lifts DJABAL'S robe ;*
DJABAL flings down the khandjar.
Loys. [after a pause.] Thou hast re-
 ceived 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! 'T is a long devised
 Conspiracy: the whole tribe is involved.
 He is their Khalif—'t is on that pre-
 tence—
 Their mighty Khalif who died long ago,
 And now comes back to life and light
 again—
 All is just now revealed, I know not
 how,
 By one of his confederates—who, struck
 With horror at this murder, first ap-
 prised
 The Nuncio. As 't was 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 [land
 To crush this handful: the Venetians

Even now in our behalf. Loys, we
 part!
 Thou, serving much, wouldst fain have
 served me more;
 It might not be. I thank thee. As
 thou hearest,
 We are a separated tribe: farewell!
Loys. Oh where will truth be found
 now? Canst thou so
 belie the Druses? Do they share thy
 crime?
 Those thou professest of our Breton
 stock,
 Are partners with thee? Why, I saw
 but now
 Khalil, my friend—he spoke with me—
 no word
 Of this! and Anael—whom I love, and
 who
 Loves me—she spoke no word of this!
Dja. Poor boy!
 Anael, who loves thee? Khalil, fast
 thy friend?
 We, offsets from a wandering Count
 of Dreux?
 No—older than the oldest—princelier
 Than Europe's princeliest 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
 wa't forsooth
 The kind interposition of a boy
 —Can only save ourselves if thou con-
 cede?
 —Khalil admire thee? He is my
 right hand,
 My delegate!—Anael accept thy love?
 She is my bride!
Loys. Thy bride? She one of
 them?
Dja. My bride!
Loys. And she retains her glorious
 eyes!
 She, with those eyes, has shared this
 miscreant's guilt!
 Ah—who but she directed me to find
 Djabal within the Prefect's chamber?
 Khalil

Bade me seek Djabal there, too! All
is truth!

What spoke the Prefect worse of them
than this?

Did the Church ill to institute long
since

Perpetual warfare with such serpentry?

And I—have I desired to shift my part,

Evade my share in her design? 'T is
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 mayst depart:
so, come!

Loys. Thy side?—I take protection
at thy hand?

Enter other Guards.

Guards. Fly with him! Fly, Sir
Loys! 'T is too true!

And only by his side thou mayst es-
cape!

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 ignor-
ance,

But that one Druse, a single faithful
Druse,

Made known the horror to the Nuncio.
Fly!

The Nuncio stands aghast. At least
let us

Escape thy wrath, O Hakeem! We
are nought

In thy tribe's persecution! [*To Loys.*]
Keep by him!

They hail him Hakeem, their dead
Prince returned:

He is their God, they shout, and at his
beck

Are life and death!

Loys. [*springing at the khandjar*
DJABAL had thrown down, seizes
him by the throat.]

Thus by his side am I!

Thus I resume my knighthood and its
warfare,

Thus end thee, miscreant, in thy pride
of place!

Thus art thou caught. Without, thy
dupes may cluster,

Friends aid thee, foes avoid thee,—
thou art Hakeem,

How say they?—God art thou! but
also here

Is the least, youngest, meanest the
Church calls

Her servant, and his single arm avails
To aid her as she lists. I rise, and
thou

Art crushed! Hordes of thy Druses
flock without:

Here thou hast me, who represent the
Cross,

Honour and Faith, 'gainst Hell, Ma-
honn 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-
plishes,

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
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, filling the hall
tumultuously, and speaking together.*

Here flock we, obeying the summons.
Lo, Hakeem hath appeared, and the
Prefect is dead, and we return to Leba-
non! 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?—"Leba-
non?" (My daughter—my daugh-
ter!)—But is Khalil to have the office
of Hamza?—Nay, rather, if he be wise,
the monopoly of henna and cloves.
Where is Hakeem?—The only prophet
I ever saw, prophesied at Cairo once, in
my youth: a little black Copht, dressed
all in black too, with a great stripe of
yellow cloth flapping down behind
him like the back-fin of a water-
serpent. Is this he? Biamrallah!
Biamreh! HAKEEM!

Enter the NUNCIO with Guards.

Nuncio [*to his Attendants.*] Hold both,
the sorcerer and this accomplice
Ye talk of, that accuseth him! And
tell

Sir Loys he is mine, the Church's hope:
Bid him approve himself our Knight
indeed!

Lo, this black disemboгуing of the Isle!

[*To the Druses.*] Ah children, what a
sight for these old eyes

That kept themselves alive this voyage
through

To smile their very last on ye! 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 out-
let? None?

The wizards stop each avenue? Keep
close!)

[*To the Druses.*] As if one came to a
son's house, I say,

So did I come—no guard with me—to
find . . .

Alas—alas!

A Druse. Who is the old man?

Another. Oh, ye are to shout!

Children, he styles you.

Druses. Ay, the Prefect's slain!
Glory to the Khalif, our Father!

Nuncio.

Even so!

I find, (ye prompt aright) your father
slain!

While most he plotted for your good,
that father

(Alas, how kind, ye never knew)—lies
slain!

[*Aside.*] (And hell's worm gnaw the
glozing knave—with me,

For being duped by his cajoleries!

Are these the Christians? These the
docile crew

My bezants went to make me Bishop
o'er?)

[*To his Attendants, who whisper.*]
What say ye does this wizard style
himself?

Hakeem? Biamrallah? The third
Fatemite?

What is this jargon? He—the insane
Khalif,

Dead near three hundred years ago,
come back

In flesh and blood again?

Druses. He mutters! Hear ye?
He is blaspheming Hakeem. The old
man

Is our dead Prefect's friend! Tear
him!

Nuncio. Ye dare not!

I stand here with my five-and-seventy
years,

The Patriarch's power behind me,
God's above!

Those years have witnessed since . . .
ere now

Misguided men arose against their
 lords,
 And found excuse; but ye, to be en-
 slaved
 By sorceries, cheats—alas! the same
 tricks, tried
 On my poor children in this nook of the
 earth,
 Could triumph, that have been suc-
 cessively
 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 [gift
 That so much love was wasted—every
 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 ship-fetter
 Called their arch-wizard by? [they
 whisper.] Oh, Djabal was 't?
Druses. But how a sorcerer? false
 wherein?
Nuncio. (Ay, Djabal!)
 How false? Ye know not, Djabal has
 confessed . . .
 Nay, that by tokens found on him we
 learn . . .
 What I sailed hither solely to divulge—
 How by his spells the demons were
 allured
 To seize you: not that these be aught
 save lies
 And mere illusions. Is this clear? I
 say,
 By measures such as these, he would
 have led you
 Into a monstrous ruin: follow ye?
 Say, shall ye perish for his sake, my
 sons?
Druses. Hark ye!
Nuncio. —Be of one privilege
 amerced?
 No! Infinite the Patriarch's mercies
 are!
 No! With the Patriarch's licence,
 still I bid
 Tear him to pieces who misled you!
 Hasten!
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
 Copt 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
 deluded youth!
 Whom seek'st thou? (I will teach
 him)—whom, my child?
 Thou know'st not what these know,
 what these declare.
 I am an old man, as thou seest—have
 done
 With life; and what should move me
 but the truth?
 Art thou the only fond one of thy
 tribe?
 'T is I interpret for thy tribe!
Kha. Oh, this
 Is the expected Nuncio! Druses,
 hear—
 Endure ye this? Unworthy to par-
 take
 The glory Hakeem gains you! While
 I speak,
 The ships touch land: who makes for
 Lebanon?

They plant the winged lion in these halls!

Nuncio. [*Aside.*] If it be true!
Venice?—Oh, never true!

Yet Venice would so gladly thwart our Knights,
And fain get footing here, stand close
by Rhodes!

Oh, to be duped this way!

Kha. Ere he appear

And lead you gloriously, repent, I say!

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

Ere the Venetians come? Cut off the
head,

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

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

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

The sorcerer in his very circle?
Where's

Our short black-bearded sallow 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,

Untrusting—they know nothing of our
Khalif!)

—Not see that if he lets a doubt arise

'Tis but to give yourselves the chance
of seeming

To have some influence in your own
Return!

That all may say ye would have trusted
him

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

friends! For, think—

What wonder when his change takes
place? But now

For your sakes, he should not reveal
himself!

No—could I ask and have, I would not
ask

The change yet!

Enter DJABAL and LOYS.

Spite of all, reveal thyself!

I had said, pardon them for me—for
Anael—

For our sakes pardon these besotted
men—

Ay, for thine own—they hurt not thee!
Yet now

One thought swells in me and keeps
down all else.

This Nuncio couples shame with thee,
has called

Imposture thy whole course, all bitter
things

Has said: he is but an old fretful
man!

Hakeem—nay, I must call thee Ha-
keem now—

Reveal thyself! See! Where is An-
ael?—See!

Loys. [*to DJA.*] Here are thy peo-
ple! Keep thy word to me!

Dja. Who of my people hath ac-
cused me?

Nuncio. So!

So this is Djabal, Hakeem, and what
not?

A fit deed, Loys, for thy first Knight's
day!

May it be augury of thy after-life!
Ever prove truncheon of the Church as
now

That, Nuncio of the Patriarch, having
charge

Of the Isle here, I claim thee [*turning
to DJA.*] as these bid me,

Forfeit for murder done thy lawful
prince,

Thou conjurer that peep'st 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

From me?—thou workest miracles?
(Attend!

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 foe,
 The Hospitallers, for this Isle—with-
 draw
 Her warrant of the deed which rein-
 states
 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: 't is not for
 courting Venice
 That I—that these implore thy blood
 of me!
 Lo ye, the subtle miscreant! Ha, so
 subtle?
 Ye, Druses, hear him! Will ye be
 deceived?
 How he evades me! Where 's the
 miracle
 He works? I bid him to the proof—
 fish up
 Your galley full of bezants that he
 sank!
 That were a miracle! One miracle!
 Enough of trifling, for it chafes my
 years.
 I am the Nuncio, Druses! I stand
 forth
 To save you from the good Republic's
 rag-
 When she shall find her fleet was sum-
 moned 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?
Druse's [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 [fess!
 To thy pure malice did one Druse con-
 fess
 How said I, Loys?
Nuncio. [to his Attendants who
 whisper] Ah, ye counsel so?
[Aloud.] 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 your-
 selves,
 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 cher-
 ished; all,
 Explicitly as late 't was 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! [crime—
Dared I think thee a partner in his
That blood could soil that hand? nay,
't is 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. Thou, Anael?
Loys. Nay Djabal, nay, one chance
for me—the last!
Thou hast had every other; thou hast
spoken
Days, nights, what falsehood listed
thee—let me
Speak first now; I will speak now!
Nuncio. Loys, pause!
Thou art the Duke's son, 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.] Who had foreseen
that one day, Loys
Would stake these gifts against some
other good
In the whole world? I give them
thee! I would

My strong will might bestow real
shape on them,
That I might see, with my own eyes,
thy foot
Tread on their very neck! 'T is 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?
Me!—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? 'T is well!
I have deserved this of thee, and sub-
mit.
Nor 't is much evil thou inflictest: life
Ends here. The cedars shall not wave
for us:
For there was crime, and must be pun-
ishment. [thee
See fate! By thee I was seduced! by
I perish: yet do I—can I repent?
I with my Arab instinct, thwarted ever
By my Frank policy,—and with, in
turn,
My Frank brain, thwarted by my
Arab heart—
While these remained in equipoise, I
lived
—Nothing; had either been predom-
inant,
As a Frank schemer or an Arab mystic,
I had been something;—now, each has
destroyed
The other—and behold, from out their
crash,
A third and better nature rises up—
My mere man's-nature! And I yield
to it:
I love thee, I who did not love before!
An. Djabal!
Dja. It seemed love, but it was not
love—
How could I love while thou adoredst
me?

Now thou despisest, art above me so
Immeasurably ! Thou, no other,
doonest
My death now ; this my steel shall
execnte
Thy judgment ; I shall feel thy hand
in it !
Oh, luxury to worship, to submit,
Transcended, doomed to death by thee !
An. My Djabal !
Dja. Dost hesitate ? I force thee
then ! Approach,
Druses ! for I am out of reach of fate ;
No further evil waits me. Speak the
doom !
Hear, Druses, and hear, Nuncio, and
hear, Loys !
An. HAKEEM ! [*She falls dead.*
[*The Druses scream, grovelling*
before him.
Ah Hakeem !—not on me thy wrath !
Biamrallah, pardon ! never doubted I !
Ha, dog, how sayest thou ?
[*They surround and seize the NUN-*
cio and his Guards. LOYS
flings himself upon the body of
ANAEL, on which DJABAL con-
tinues 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 [thee !
Her hair was plaited thus because of
Yes, feel the soft bright hair—feel !
Nuncio. [*struggling with those who*
have seized him.] What, because
His leman dies for him ? You think it
hard
To die ? Oh, would you were at
Rhodes, and choice
Of deaths should suit you !
Kha. [*bending over ANAEL'S body.*
Just restore her life !
So little does it ! there—the eyelids
tremble !
'T was not my breath that made them :
and the lips
Move of themselves. I could restore
her life !
Hakeem, we have forgotten—have pre-
sumed

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,
Anaël ?—See,
She smiles ! Were her lips open o'er
the teeth
Thus, when I spoke first ? She believes
in thee !
Go not without her to the Cedars, lord !
Or leave us both—I cannot go alone !
I have obeyed thee, if I dare so speak :
Hath Hakeem thus forgot all Djabal
knew ?
Thou feelest then my tears fall hot and
fast
Upon thy hand, and yet thou speakest
not ?
Ere the Venetian trumpet sound—ere
thou
Exalt thyself, O Hakeem ! save thou
her !
Nuncio. And the accursed Republic
will arrive
And find me in their toils—dead, very
like,
Under their feet !
What way—not one way yet
To foil them ? None ?
[*Observing DJABAL'S face.*
What ails the Khalif ? Ah,
That ghastly face ! A way to foil
them yet !
[*To the Druses.*] Look to your Khalif,
Druses ! Is that face
God Hakeem's ? Where is triumph,—
where is . . . what
Said he of exaltation—hath he prom-
ised
So much to-day ? Why then, exalt
thyself !
Cast off that husk, thy form, set free
thy soul
In splendour ! Now, bear witness !
here I stand—
I challenge him exalt himself, and I
Become, for that, a Druse like all of
you !
The Druses. Exalt thyself ! Exalt
thyself, O Hakeem !
Dja. [*advances.*] I can confess now
all from first to last.
There is no longer shame for me. I
am . . .

[Here the Venetian trumpet sounds—the Druses shout, his eye catches the expression of those about him, and, as the old dream comes back, he is again confident and inspired.]

—Am I not Hakeem? And ye would have crawled

But yesterday within these impure courts

Where now ye stand erect!—Not grand enough? *[beasts]*

—What more could be conceded to such As all of you, so sunk and base as you, Than a mere man?—A man among such beasts

Was miracle enough: yet him you doubt,

Him you forsake, him fain would you destroy—

With the Venetians at your gate, the Nuncio

Thus—(see the baffled hypocrite!) and, best,

The Prefect there!

Druses. No, Hakeem, ever thine!

Nuncio. He lies—and twice he lies—and thrice he lies!

Exalt thyself, Mahound! Exalt thyself!

Dja. Druses! we shall henceforth be far away— *[cedars—]*

Out of mere mortal ken—above the But we shall see ye go, hear ye return, Repeopling the old solitudes,—through thee,

My Khalil! Thou art full of me—I fill Thee full—my hands thus fill thee!

Yestereve,

—Nay, but this morn, I deemed thee ignorant

Of all to do, requiring word of mine To teach it: now, thou hast all gifts in one,

With truth and purity go other gifts, All gifts come clustering to that. Go, lead

My people home whate'er betide!

[Turning to the Druses.] Ye take This Khalil for my delegate? To him Bow as to me? He leads to Lebanon—Ye follow?

Druses. We follow! Now exalt thyself!

Dja. *[raises Loys.]* Then to thee, Loys! How I wronged thee, Loys!

—Yet, wronged, no less thou shalt have full revenge,

Fit for thy noble self, revenge—and thus.

Thou, loaded with such wrongs, the princely soul,

The first sword of Christ's sepulchre—thou shalt

Guard Khalil and my Druses home again!

Justice, no less—God's justice and no more,

For those I leave!—to seeking this, devote

Some few days out of thy Knight's brilliant life:

And, this obtained them, leave their Lebanon,

My Druses' blessing in thine ears—(they shall

Bless thee with blessing sure to have its way)

—One cedar-blossom in thy ducal cap, One thought of Anael in thy heart,—

perchance,

One thought of him who thus, to bid thee speed,

His last word to the living speaks! This done, *[first]*

Resume thy course, and, first amid the In Europe, take my heart along with thee!

Go boldly, go serenely, go augustly—What shall withstand thee then?

[He bends over ANAEL.] And last to thee!

Ah, did I dream I was to have, this day, Exalted thee? A vain dream—hast

thou not

Won greater exaltation? What remains

But press to thee, exalt myself to thee? Thus I exalt myself, set free my soul!

[He stabs himself: as he falls, supported by KHALIL and LOYS, the VENETIANS enter: the ADMIRAL advances.]

Admiral. God and St. Mark for Venice! Plant the Lion!

[At the clash of the planted standard, the Druses shout, and move tumultuously forward, LOYS drawing his sword.]

Dja. *[leading them a few steps between KHALIL and LOYS.]*

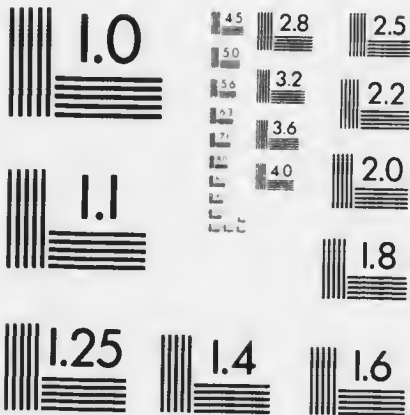
On to the Mountain! At the Mountain, Druses!

[Dies.]



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A BLOT IN THE 'SCUTCHEON

A TRAGEDY

1843

PERSONS

MILDRED TRESHAM.
GUENDOLEN TRESHAM.
THOROLD, Earl Tresham.
AUSTIN TRESHAM.

HENRY, Earl Mertoun.
GERARD, and other Retainers of Lord Tresham.

TIME 17—.

ACT I

SCENE I.—*The interior of a lodge in LORD TRESHAM'S park. Many Retainers crowded at the window, supposed to command a view of the entrance to his mansion. GERARD, the Warrener, his back to a table on which are flagons, etc.*

1st Ret. Ay, do! push, friends, and then you'll push down me!

—What for? Does any hear a runner's foot

Or a steed's trample or a coach-wheel's cry?

Is the Earl come or his least pour-suivant?

But there's no breeding in a man of you

Save Gerard yonder: here's a half-place yet,

Old Gerard!

Ger. Save your courtesies, my friend.

Here is my place.

2nd Ret. Now, Gerard, out with it! What makes you sullen, this of all the days

I' the year? To-day that young rich bountiful

Handsome Earl Mertoun, whom alone they match

With our Lord Tresham through the country-side.

Is coming here in utmost bravery To ask our master's sister's hand?

Ger.

What then?

2nd Ret. What then? Why, you, she speaks to, if she meets

Your worship, smiles on as you hold apart

The boughs to let her through her forest walks,

You, always favourite for your no-deserts,

You've heard, these three days, how Earl Mertoun sues

To lay his heart and house and broad lands too

At Lady Mildred's feet: and while we squeeze

Ourselves into a mousehole lest we miss One congee of the least page in his

train,

You sit o' one side—"there's the Earl," say I—

"What then?" say you!

3rd Ret. I'll wager he has let Both swans he tamed for Lady Mildred, swim

Over the falls and gain the river!

Ger. Ralph,

Is not to-morrow my inspecting-day For you and for your hawks?

4th Ret. Let Gerard be!

He's coarse-grained, like h's carved black cross-bow stock.

Ha, look now, while we squabble with him, look!

[now, Well done, now—is not this beginning, To purpose?

1st Ret. Our retainers look as fine— That's comfort. Lord, how Richard holds himself

With his white staff! Will not a knave behind

Prick him upright?

4th Ret. He's only bowing, fool! The Earl's man bent us lower by this much.

1st Ret. That's comfort. Here's a very cavalcade!

3rd Ret. I don't see wherefore
Richard, and his troop
Of silk and silver varlets there, should
find

Their perfumed selves so indispensable
On high days, holidays! Would it so
disgrace

Our family, if I, for instance, stood—
In my right hand a cast of Swedish
hawks,

A leash of greyhounds in my left?—

Ger. —With Hugh

The logman for supporter, in his right
The bill-hook, in his left the brush-
wood-shears!

3rd Ret. Out on you, crab! What
next, what next? The Earl!

1st Ret. Oh Walter, groom, our
horses, do they match
The Earl's? Alas, that first pair of the
six—

They paw the ground—Ah Walter!
and that brute

Just on his haunches by the wheel!

6th Ret. Ay—Ay!

You, Philip, are a special hand, I hear,
At soups and sauces: what's a horse
to you?

D'ye mark that beast they've slid into
the midst

So cunningly?—then, Philip, mark
this further;

No leg has he to stand on!

1st Ret. No? That's comfort.

2nd Ret. Peace, Cook! The Earl
descends.—Well, Gerard, see

The Earl at least! Come, there's a
proper man,

I hope! Why, Ralph, no falcon, Pole
or Swede,

Has got a starrier eye.

3rd Ret. His eyes are blue—

But leave my hawks alone!

4th Ret. So young, and yet

So tall and shapely!

5th Ret. Here's Lord Tresham's
self!

There now—there's what a nobleman
should be!

He's older, graver, loftier, he's more
like

A House's head!

2nd Ret. But you'd not have a
boy

—And what's the Earl beside?—pos-
sess too soon
That stateliness?

B.P.

1st Ret. Our master takes his
hand—

Richard and his white staff are on the
move—

Back fall our people—(tsh!—there's
Timothy

Sure to get tangled in his ribbon-ties—

And Peter's cursed rosette's a-comirg
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.*]

Good health, long life,
Great joy to our Lord Tresham and his
House!

6th Ret. My father drove his father
first to court,

After his marriage-day—ay, did he!

2nd Ret. God bless

Lord Tresham, Lady Mildred, and the
Earl!

Here, Gerard, reach your beaker!

Ger. Drink, my boys!

Don't mind me—all's not right about
me—drink!

2nd Ret. [*Aside*]. He's vexed, now,
that he let the show escape!

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

Ger. That way?

2nd Ret. Just so.

Ger. Then my way's here.

[*Goes.*]

2nd Ret. Old Gerard
Will die soon—mind I said, it! He was
used

To care about the pitifullest thing
That touched the House's honour, not
an eye

But his could see wherein: and on a
cause

Of scarce a quarter this importance,
Gerard

Fairly had fretted flesh and bone away
In cares that this was right, nor that
was wrong.

Such a point decorous and such square
by rule—

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

2nd Ret. God help him! Who's for
the great servants'-hall

To hear what's going on inside ? They'd
follow

Lord Tresham into the saloon.

3rd Ret. I !—

4th Ret. I !—

Leave Frank alone for catching, at the
door,

Some hint of how the parley goes inside !
Prosperity to the great House once
more !

Here's the last drop !

1st Ret. Have at you ! Boys,
hurrah !

SCENE II.—*A Saloon in the Mansion.*

Enter LORD TRESHAM, LORD MERTOUN,
AUSTIN, and GUENDOLEN.

Tresh. I welcome you, Lord Mer-
toun, 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 avour more, nor that the least,
—to think

The welcome I should give ;—'t is
given ! My lord,

My only brother, Austin—he's the
king's.

Our cousin, Lady Guendolen—be-
trothed

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 unimpas-
sioned words,

A gift, which, if as calmly 't is denied,
He must withdraw, content upon his
cheek,

Despair within his soul. That I dare
ask

Firmly, near boldly, near with confid-
ence

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
he ! 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 constancy,

How pure yet passionate, how calm yet kind,

How grave yet joyous, how reserved yet free

As light where friends are—how imbued with lore

The world most prizes, yet the simplest, yet

The . . . one might know I talked of Mildred—thus

We brothers talk!

Mer. I thank you.

Tresh. In a word,

Control's not for this lady; but her wish

To please me outstrips in its subtlety My power of being pleased: herself creates

The want she means to satisfy. My heart

Prefers your suit to her as 't were its own.

Can I say more?

Mer. No more—thanks, thanks —no more!

Tresh. This matter then discussed. . .

Mer. —We'll waste no breath.

On aught less precious. I'm beneath the roof

Which holds her: while I thought of that, my speech

To you would wander—as it must not do,

Since as you favour me I stand or fall. I pray you suffer that I take my leave!

Tresh. With less regret 't is 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

A messenger shall bring you the result.

Mer. You cannot bind me more to you, my lord.

Farewell till we renew . . . I trust, renew

A converse ne'er to disunite again.

Tresh. So may it prove!

Mer. You, lady, you, sir, take My humble salutation!

Guen. and Aus. Thanks!

Tresh. Within there!

[*Servants enter.* TRESHAM conducts MERTOUN to the door. Meantime AUSTIN remarks,

Well,

Here I have an advantage of the Earl, Confess now! I'd not think that all

was safe Because my lady's brother stood my friend!

Why, he makes sure of her—"do you say, yes—

"She'll not say, no,"—what comes it to beside?

I should have prayed the brother, "speak this speech,

"For Heaven's sake urge this on her—put in this—

"Forget not, as you'd save me, t'other thing,—

"Then set down what she says, and how she looks,

"And if she smiles, and" (in an under breath)

"Only let her accept me, and do you "And all the world refuse me, if you dare "

Guen. That way you'd take, friend Austin? What a shame

I was your cousin, tamely from the first

Your bride, and all this fervour's run to waste!

Do you know you speak sensibly to-day?

The Earl's a fool.

Aus. Here's Thorold. Tell him so!

Tresh. (returning.) Now, voices, voices! 'St! the lady's first!

How seems he?—seems he not . . come, faith give fraud

The mercy-stroke whenever they engage!

Down with fraud, up with faith! How seems the Earl?

A name! a blazon! if you knew their worth,

As you will never! come—the Earl?

Guen. He's young.
Tresh. What's she? an infant save in heart and brain.

Young! Mildred is fourteen, remark! And you . .

Austin, how old is she?

Guen. There's tact for you! I mean that being young was good excuse

It one should tax him . .

Tresh. Well?

Guen. —With lacking wit.

Tresh. He lacked wit? Where might he lack wit, so please you?

Guen. In standing straighter than the steward's rod

And making you the tiresomest harangue,

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

"Your cousin there will do me detriment

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

"In my old name and fame—be sure he'll leave

"My Mildred, when his best account of me

"Is ended, in full confidence I wear "My grandsire's periwig down either cheek.

"I'm lost unless your gentleness 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.

Yon golden creature, will you help us all?

Here's Austin means to vouch for much, but you

—You are . . what Austin only knows! Come up,

All three of us: she's in the library No doubt, for the day's wearing fast.

Precede!

Guen. Austin, how we must—!

Tresh. Must what? Must speak truth,

Malignant tongue! Detect one fault in 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— [Well, I think I brought him to contrition!— 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? That could suggest . . .
Guen. There, there! Do I not comprehend you'd be alone To throw those testimonies in a heap, Thorold's enlargings, Austin's brevities, With that poor silly heartless Guendolen's Ill-timed misplaced attempted smartnesses— And sift their sense out? now, I come to spare you Nearly a whole night's labour. Ask 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. [ment; He has desert, and that, acknowledged—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 woman all . . .
Mil. Dear Guendolen, 't is late! When yonder purple pane the climbing moon Pierces, I know 't is midnight.
Guen. Well, that Thorold Should rise up from such musings, and receive One come audaciously to graft himself Into this peerless stock, yet find no flaw, No slightest spot in such an one . . .
Mil. Who finds A spot in Mertoun?
Guen. Not your brother; therefore, Not the whole world.
Mil. I am weary, Guendolen.— Bear with me!
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 't was, 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! 'T is 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: 't will 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 cluster,

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. 'T is 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, ex-
ceed

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, confused

With rain and stormy flaw—and will you see

No dripping blossoms, no fire-tinted drops

On each live spray, no vapour steaming up,

And no expressless glory in the East? When 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. 'T was 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, "'t is 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 [spot

In its birth even I some fierce leprous 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 contempt)

—Contempt for you in! I would pluck it off

And cast it from me!—but no—no, you'll not

Repeat that?—will you, Mildred, repeat that?

Mil. Dear Henry!

Mer. I was scarce a boy—e'en now

What am I more? And you were infantine

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

On either side! My fool's-cheek reddens now

Only in the recalling how it burned That morn to see the shape of many a dream

—You know we boys are prodigal of charms

To her we dream of—I had heard of one,

Had dreamed of her, and I was close to 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?)

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 figh-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 perfected noontide follow?

All the dawn promised shall the day perform.

Mil. So may it be! but— You are cautious, love?

Are sure that unobserved you scaled the walls?

Mer. Oh, trust me! Then our final meeting's fixed?

To-morrow night?

Mil. Farewell! Stay, Henry, . . . wherefore?

His foot is on the yew-tree bough; the turf

Receives him: now the moonlight as he runs

Embraces him—but he must go—is gone.

Ah, once again he turns—thanks,
thanks, my love!
He's gone. Oh I'll believe him every
word!

I was so young, I loved him so, I had
No mother, God forgot me, and I fell.
There may be pardon yet: all's doubt
beyond.

Surely the bitterness of death is past!

ACT 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 [know,
The servants in my father's house, I
The trusted one. You'll speak the
truth.

Ger. I'll speak
God's truth. Night after night . . .

Tresh. Since when?
Ger. At least

A month—each midnight has some
man access

To Lady Mildred's chamber.

Tresh. Tush, "access"—
No wide words like "access" to me!

Ger. He runs
Along the woodside, crosses to the
South,

Takes the left tree that ends the
avenue . . .

Tresh. The last great yew-tree?

Ger. You might stand upon
The main boughs like a platform.

Then he . . .

Tresh. Quick!

Ger. Climbs up, and, where they
lessen at the top,

—I cannot see distinctly, but he throws,
I think—for this I do not vouch—a line

That reaches to the lady's casement—
Tresh. —Which

He enters not! Gerard, some wretched
fool

Dares pry into my sister's privacy!
When such are young, it seems a preci-
ous thing

To have approached,—to merely have
approached,

Got sight of, the abode of her they set
Their frantic thoughts upon! He does

not enter?

Gerard?

Ger. There is a lamp that's full
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
marauder?

Ger. But

He came, my lord, the first time he was
seen,

In a great moonlight, light as any day,
From Lady Mildred's chamber.

Tresh. [after a pause.] You have no
cause

—Who could have cause to do my
sister wrong?

Ger. Oh my lord, only once—let me
this once

Speak what is on my 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 to 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

Which, when ill thoughts beset us,
seems to give

Merciful God that made the sun and
stars,

The waters and the green delights of
earth,

The lie! I apprehend the monstrous
fact—

Yet know the maker of all worlds is
good,

And yield my reason up, inadequate
To reconcile what yet I do behold—

Blasting my sense! There's cheerful
day outside:

This is my library, and this the chair
My father used to sit in carelessly

After his soldier-fashion, while I stood
Between his knees to question him:

and here,
Gerard our grey retainer,—as he says,
Fed with our food, from sire to son, an
age,—

Has told a story—I am to believe!
That Mildred . . . oh no, no! both
tales are true,

Her pure cheek's story and the forester's!
Would she, or could she, err—much less,
confound

All guilts of treachery, of craft, of . . .
Heaven

Keep me within its hand!—I will sit
here

Until thought settle and I see my course.
Avert, oh God, only this woe from me!

[*As he sinks his head between his
arms on the table, GUENDOLEN'S
voice is heard at the door.*]

Lord Tresham! [*She knocks.*] Is Lord
Tresham there?

[*TRESHAM, hastily turning, pulls
down the first book above him and
opens it.*]

Tresh. Come in! [*She enters.*
Ha Guendolen—good morning.

Guen. Nothing more?
Tresh. What should I say more?

Guen. Pleasant question! more?
This more. Did I besiege poor Mil-
dred's brain

Last night till close on morning with
"the Earl,"

"The Earl"—whose worth did I
asseverate

Till I am very fain to hope that . . .
Thorold,

What is all this? You are not well!

Tresh. Who, I?

You laugh at me.

Guen. Has what I'm fain to hope,
Arrived then? Does that huge tome
show some blot

In the Earl's 'scutcheon come no longer
back

Than Arthur's time?

Tresh. When left you Mildred's
chamber?

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

To ask is, how I left her chamber,—
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

"E...trap by policies, if you would
worm

"The truth out: and that one is—
Mildred!" There,

There—reasoning is thrown away on
it!

Prove she's unchaste . . . why, you
may after prove

That she's a poisoner, traitress, what
you will!

Where I can comprehend nought,
nought's to say,

Or do, or think! Force on me but the
first

Abomination, — then outpour all
plagues,

And I shall ne'er make count of them!

Enter MILDRED.

Mil. What book
Is it I wanted, Thorold? Guendolen
Thought you were pale: you are not
pale. That book?

That's Latin surely.

Tresh. Mildred, here's a line,
(Don't lean on me: I'll English it for
you)

"Love conquers all things." What
love conquers them?

What love should you esteem—best
love?

Mil. True love.

Tresh. I mean, and should have said,
whose love is best

Of all that love or that profess to love?

Mil. The list's so long: there's
father's, mother's, husband's . . .

Tresh. Mildred, I do believe a
brother's love

For a sole sister must exceed them all.

For see now, only see! there's no alloy
Of earth that creeps into the perfect'st
gold

Of other loves—no gratitude to claim;
You never gave her life, not even aught

That keeps life—never tended her,
instructed,

Enriched her—so your love can claim
no right

O'er her save pure love's claim: that's
what I call

Freedom from earthliness. You'll
never hope

To be such friends, for instance, she
and you,

As when you hunted cowslips in the
woods

Or played together in the meadow hay.
Oh yes—with age, respect comes, and
your worth

Is felt, there's growing sympathy of tastes,
 There's ripened friendship, there's confirmed esteem:
 —Much head these make against the new comer!
 The startling apparition, the strange youth—
 Whom one half-hour's conversing with, or, say,
 Mere gazing at, shall change (beyond all change
 This Ovid ever sang about) your soul . . . Her soul, that is,—the sister's soul! With her
 'T was winter yesterday; now, all is warmth,
 The green leaf's springing and the turtle's voice,
 "Arise and come away!" Come whither?—far
 Enough from the esteem, respect, and all
 The brother's somewhat insignificant Array of rights! All which he knows before,
 Has calculated on so long ago! I think such love, (apart from yours and mine,) Contented with its little term of life, Intending to retire betimes, aware
 How soon the background must be place for it,
 —I think, am sure, a brother's love exceeds
 All the world's love in its unworldliness.
Mil. What is this for?
Tresh. This, Mildred, is it for! Or, no, I cannot go to it so soon! That's one of many points my haste left out—
 Each day, each hour throws forth its silk-slight film
 Between the being tied to you by birth, And you, until those slender threads compose
 A web that shrouds her daily life of hopes
 And fears and fancies, all her life, from yours:
 So close you live and yet so far apart!
 And must I rend this web, tear up, break down
 The sweet and palpitating mystery That makes her sacred? You—for you I mean,
 Shall I speak, shall I not speak?

Mil.

Speak!

Tresh.

I will.

Is there a story men could—any man
 Could tell of you, you would conceal from me?

I'll never think there's falsehood on that lip. [tell,"

Say "There is no such story men could
 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! 'T is 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!

'T were 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 un-erstood as if 't were written
down—

" His suit finds favour in your eyes : "
—now dictate

This morning's letter that shall coun-
termand

Last night's—do dictate that !

Mil. But Thorold—if
I will receive him as I said ?

Tresh. The Earl ?
Mil. I will receive him.

Tresh. [Starting up.] Ho there !
Guendolen !

GUENDOLEN and AUSTIN enter.

And, Austin, you are welcome, too !
Look there !

The woman there !
Aus. and Guen. How ? Mildred ?

Tresh. Mildred once !
Now the receiver night b night, when
sleep

Blesses the inmates of her father's
house,

—I say, the soft sly wanton that re-
ceives

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 eager-
ness

To mix 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 pro-
ceed no further.

Mil. Yes—
Proceed ! All's truth. Go from me !

Tresh. All is truth,
She tells you ! Well, you know, or
ought to know,

All this I would forgive in her. I'd con-
Each precept the harsh world enjoins,
I'd take

Our ancestors' stern verdicts one by
one,

I'd bind myself before them to exact
The prescribed vengeance—and one
word of hers,

The sight of her, the bare least memory
Of Mildred, my one sister, my heart's
pride

Above all prides, my all in all so long,
Would scatter every trace of my 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 to me of torture—I'll be-
tray

"No comrade I've pledged faith to !"
—you have heard

Of wretched women—all but Mildreds
—t'ed

By wild illicit ties to losels vile
You'd tempt them to forsake ; and
they'll reply

"Gold, friends, repute, I left for him, I
find

"In him, why should I leave him then
for gold,

"Repute or friends ?"—and you have
felt your heart

Respond to such poor outcasts of the
world

As to so many friends : bad as you
please,

You've felt they were God's men and
women still,

So, not to be disowned by you. But
she

That stands there, calmly gives her
lover up

As means to wed the Earl that she may
hide

Their intercourse the surlier : 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 yours but
by mine ?

Mildred—one word ! Only look at me,
then !

Aus. No, Guendolen ! I echo Thor-
old'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 yester-

day,
Who said, or thought at least a thou-

sand 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 detrac-

tion—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 hooting and
contempt,

—Would push his way thro' all the
hooters, gain

Your side, go off with you and all your
shame

To the next ditch you choose to die in !
 Austin,
 Do you love me ? Here's Austin,
 Mildred,—here's
 Your brother says he does not believe
 hal!—
 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 bid-
 ding 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, young—
 Each night ere I lie down, " I was so
 " 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 Guen-
 dolen, 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 tra-
 versed glades
 And dells and bosky paths which used
 to lead
 Into green wild-wood depths, be-
 wildering
 My boy's adventurous step. And now
 they tend
 Hither or soon or late ; the blackest
 shade

Breaks up, the thronged trunks of the
 trees ope wide,
 And the dim turret I have fled from,
 fronts
 Again my step ; the very river put
 its arm about me and conducted me
 To this detested spot. Why then, I'll
 shun
 Their will no longer : do your will with
 me !
 Oh, bitter ! To have reared a towering
 scheme
 Of happiness, and to behold it razed,
 Were nothing : all men hope, and see
 their hopes
 Frustrate, and grieve awhile, and hope
 anew.
 But I . . . to hope that from a line like
 ours
 No horrid prodigy like this would
 spring,
 Were just as though I hoped that from
 these old
 Confederates against the sovereign day,
 Children of older and yet older sires,
 Whose living coral berries dropped, as
 now
 On me, on many a baron's surcoat
 once,
 On many a beauty's wimple—would
 proceed
 No poison-tree, to thrust, from hell its
 root,
 Hither and thither its strange snaky
 arms.
 Why came I here ? What must I do ?
 [a bell strikes.] A bell ?
 Midnight ! and 't is 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 reassuring sun may dawn.

*[As he prepares to ascend the last
tree of the avenue, TRESHAM
arrests his arm.]*

Unhand me—peasant, by your grasp !
Here's gold.

'Twas a mad freak of mine. I said I'd
pluck

A branch from the white-blossomed
shrub beneath

The casement there. Take this, and
hold your peace.

Tresh. Into the moonlight yonder,
come with me !

—Out of the shadow !

Mer. I am armed, fool !

Tresh. Yes,

Gr 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 counten-
ance,

The thief is voluble and plausible.

But silently the slave of lust has
crouched

When I have fancied it before a man.

Your name ?

B.P.

Mer. I do conjure Lord Tresham
—ay,

Kiss'ng his foot, if so I might prevail—
That he for his own sake forbear to
ask

My name ! As heaven's above, his
future weal

Or woe depends upon my silence !
Vain !

I read your white inexorable face.

Know me, Lord Tresham !

[He throws off his disguises.]

Tresh. Mertoun !

[After a pause.] Draw now !

Mer. Hear me

But speak first !

Tresh. Not one least word on
your life !

Be sure that I will strangle in your
throat

The least word that informs me how
you live

And yet seem what you seem ! No
doubt 't was you

Taught Mildred still to keep that face
and sin.

We should join hands in frantic sym-
pathy

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 Mil-
dred, 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 !

B B

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 then I took : my life—you feel

How less than nothing were the giving you

The life you've taken ! But I thought my way

The better—only for your sake and hers :

And as you have decided otherwise,

Would I had an infinity of lives

To offer you ! Now say—instruct me—think

Can you from the brief minutes I have left

Eke out my reparation ? Oh think—think !

For I must wring a partial—dare I say, Forgiveness from you, ere I die ?

Tresh.

I do

Forgive you.

Mer. Wait and ponder that great word !

Bec use, if you forgive me, I shall hope To speak to you of—Mildred !

Tresh. Mertoun, haste

And anger have undone us. 'T is 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, 't was my very fear of you, my love

Of you—(what passion like a boy's for one

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

You, all accomplished, courted everywhere,

The scholar and the gentleman. I burned

To knit myself to you : but I was young,

And your surpassing reputation kept me

So far aloof ! Oh, wherefore all that love ? day

With less of love, my glorious yesterday Of praise and gentlest words and kindest looks,

Had taken place perchance six months ago.

Even now, how happy we had been ! And yet

I know the thought of this escaped you, Tresham !

Let me look up into your face ; I feel 'T is 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 ! What right was yours to set

Had you but heard ! What right was yours to set

The thoughtless foot upon her life and mine,

And then say, as we perish, " Had I thought,

"All had gone otherwise." We've
sinned and die :

Never you sin, Lord Tresham ! for
you'll die,

And God will judge you.

Tresh. Yes, be satisfied !
That process is begun.

Mer. And she sits there
Waiting for me ! Now, say you this to
her—

You, not another—say, I saw him die
As he breathed this, "I love her"—
you don't know

What those three small words mean !
Say, loving her

Lowers me down the bloody slope to
death

With memories . . . I speak to her,
not you,

Who had no pity, will have no remorse,
Perchance intend her . . . Die along
with me,

Dear Mildred ! 't is so easy, and you'll
'scape

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

Done to you ?—heartless men shall
have my heart,

And I tied down with grave-clothes
and the worm,

Aware, perhaps, of every blow—oh
God !—

Upon those lips—yet of no power to
tear

The felon stripe by stripe ! Die,
Mildred ! Leave

Their honourable world to them ! For
God

We're good enough, though the world
casts us out.

[A whistle is heard.]

Tresh. Ho, Gerard !

Enter GERARD, AUSTIN and 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, 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, re-
main you here

With Thorold until Gerard comes with
help :

Then lead him to his chamber. I must
go.

To Mildred.

Tresh. Guendolen, I hear each
word

You utter. Did you hear him bid me
give

His message ? Did you hear my
promise ? 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

Sits the woodside with all its whispers
up?

But will you ever so forget his breast
As carelessly to cross this bloody turf
Under the black yew avenue? That's
well!

You turn your head: and I then?—
Guen. What is done

Is done. My care is for the living.
Thorold,

Bear up against this burden: more
remains

To set the neck to!

Tresh. Dear and ancient trees
My fathers planted, and I loved so well!
What have I done that, like some
fabled crime

Of yore, lets loose a fury leading thus
Her miserable dance amidst you all?
Oh, never more for me shall winds
intone

With all your tops a vast antiphony,
Demanding and responding in God's
praise!

Hers ye are now, not mine! Farewell
—farewell!

SCENE II.—MILDRED'S Chamber. 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, 't is not so with me! The first woe
fell,

And the rest fall upon it, not on me:
Else should I bear that Henry comes
not?—fails

Just this first night out of so many
nights?

Loving is done with. Were he sitting
now,

As so few hours since, on that seat, we'd
love

No more—contrive no thousand happy
ways

To hide love from the loveless, any
more.

I think I might have urged some little
point

In my defence, to Thorold; he was
breathless

For the least hint of a defence: but no,
The first shame over, 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!

'T is she,

Mildred, will break her heart, not I!
The world

Forsakes me: only Henry's left me—
left?

When I have lost him, for he does not
come,

And I sit stupidly . . . Oh Heaven,
break up

This worse than anguish, this mad
apathy,

By any means or any messenger!

Tresh. [without.] Mildred!

Mil. Come in! Heaven hears
me!

[Enter TRESHAM.] You? alone?
Oh, no more cursing!

Tresh. Mildred, I must sit.
There—you sit!

Mil. Say it, Thorold—do not
look

The curse! deliver all you come to say!
What must become of me? Oh speak

that thought

Which makes your brow and cheeks so
pale!

Tresh. My thought?

Mil. All of it! [ago—
Tresh. How we waded—years

After those water-lilies, till the plash,
I know not how, surprised us; and you

dared

Neither advance nor turn back: so, we
stood

Laughing and crying until Gerard
came—

Once safe upon the turf, the loudest
too,

For once more reaching the relinquished
prize!

How idle thoughts are, some men's,
dying men's!

Mildred,—

Mil. You call me kindlier by my name

Than even yesterday : what is in that ?

Tresh. It weighs so much upon my mind that I

This morning took an office not my own !

I might . . . of course, I must be glad or grieved,

Content or not, at every little thing That touches you. I may with a

wrung heart

Even reprove you, Mildred ; I did more :

Will you forgive me ?

Mil. Thorold ? do you mock ?

Or no . . . and yet you bid me . . . say that word !

Tresh. Forgive me, Mildred !—are you silent, sweet ?

Mil. [*starting up.*] Why does not Henry Mertoun come to-night ?

Are you, too, silent ?

[*Dashing his mantle aside, and pointing to his scabbard, which is empty.*

Ah, this speaks for you !

You've murdered Henry Mertoun !

Now proceed !

What is it I must pardon ? This and all ?

Well, I do pardon you—I think I do.

Thorold, how very wretched you must be !

Tresh. He bade me tell you . . .

Mil. What I do forbid

Your utterance of ! So much that you may tell

And will not—how you murdered him . . . but, no !

You'll tell me that he loved me, never more

Than bleeding out his life there : must I say

" Indeed," to that ? Enough ! I pardon you.

Tresh. You cannot, Mildred ! for the harsh words, yes :

Of this last deed Another's judge : whose doom

I wait in doubt, despondency and fear.

Mil. Oh, true ! There's nought for me to pardon ! True !

You loose my soul of all its cares at once.

Death makes me sure of him for ever ! You

Tell me his last words ? He shall tell me them,

And take my answer—not in words, but reading

Himself the heart I had to read him late,

Which death . . .

Tresh. Death ? You are dying too ? Well said

Of Guendolen ! I dared not hope you'd die :

But she was sure of it.

Mil. Tell Guendolen I loved her, and tell Austin . . .

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 love and ignorance, And the brief madness and the long

despair—

You let him plead all this, because your code

Of honour bids you hear before you strike :

But at the end, as he looked up for life Into your eyes—you struck him down !

Tresh. No ! no !

Had I but heard him—had I let him speak

Half the truth—less—had I looked long on him

I had desisted ! Why, as he lay there, The moon on his flushed cheek, I

gathered all

The story ere he told it : I saw through The troubled surface of his crime and

yours

A depth of purity immovable.

Had I but glanced, where all seemed turbidest

Had gleamed some inlet to the calm, beneath ;

I would not glance : my punishment's
at hand.

There, Mildred, is the truth ' and you
—say on—

You curse me ?

Mil. As I dare approach that
Heaven

Which has not bade a living thing
despair,

Which needs no code to keep its grace
from stain,

But bids the vilest worm that turns on
it

Desist and be forgiven,—I—forgive
not,

But bless you, Thorold, from my soul
of souls !

[*Falls on his neck.*]

There ! Do not think too much upon
the past !

The cloud that's broke was all the same
a cloud

While it stood up between my friend
and you ;

You hurt him 'neath its shadow : but is
that

So past retrieve ? I have his heart,
you know ;

I may dispose of it : I give it you !

It loves you as mine loves ! Confirm
me, Henry ! [*Dies.*]

Tresh. I wish thee joy, beloved ! I
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,

'T will 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—remember
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.	VALENCE, Advocate of Cleves.
SABYNE, ADOLF, her Attendants.	PRINCE BERTHOLD, Claimant of the Duchy.
GUIBERT, GAUCELME, MAUFROY, CLUGNET, Courtiers.	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
Oh, miserable lady!

1st Court. Ay, indeed?

2nd Court. Well, Guibert?

3rd Court. But your news, my
friend, your news!

The sooner, friend, one learns Prince
Berthold's pleasure,

The better for us all: how writes the
Prince?

Give me! I'll read it for the common
[good.]

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
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.

The Prince's letter; why, of all men
else,

Comes it to me?

Adolf. By virtue of your place,
Sir Guibert! 'T was the Prince's ex-
press charge,

[there
His envoy told us, that the missive
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

[years,
At leisure minutes these half-dozen
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." . . . [judge!]
Gau. Sufficient " titles following," I 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 put 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?] You famish for promotion; what say
Clug. [*an old man.*] To give this letter were a sort, I take it,
 Of service: services ask recompense:
 What kind of corner may be Ravestein?
Gui. The castle?—Oh, you'd share her fortunes? Good!
 Three walls stand upright, full as good as four,
 With no such bad remainder of a roof.
Clug. Oh,—but the town?
Gui. Five houses, fifteen huts;
 A church whereto was once a spire, 't is judged; [thaw.
 And half a dyke, except in time of
Clug. Still, there's some revenue?
Gui. Else Heaven forfend!
 You hang a beacon out, should fogs increase;
 So, when the Autumn floats of pine-wood steer

Safe 'mid the white confusion, thanks to you, [in;
 Their grateful raftsmen flings a guil-ler
 —That's if he mean to pass your way next time.
Clug. If not?
Gui. Hang guilders, then—he blesses you!
Clug. What man do you suppose me? Keep your paper!
 And, let me say, it shows no handsome spirit
 To dally with misfortune: keep your place!
Gau. Some one must tell her.
Gui. Some one may: you may!
Gau. Sir Guibert, 't is no trifle turns me sick
 Of court-hypocrisy at years like mine,
 But this goes near it. Where's there news at all? [affirm
 Who'll have the face, for instance, to 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 [came,
 Was taken off sharp tidings as they 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 . . .

Gai. [snatching the paper from him.]

By your leave!

Your zeal transports you! 'T will 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! [bud]

His talent's full-blown, ours but in the We'll not advance to his perfection yet—

Will we, Sir Maufroy? See, I've ruined Maufroy

For ever as a courtier!

Gau.

Here's a coil!

And, count us, will you? Count its residue,

This boasted convoy, this day last year's crowd!

A birthday, too, a gratulation-day!

I'm dumb: bid that keep silence!

Mau. and others. Eh, Sir Guibert? He's right: that does say something: that's bare truth.

Ten—twelve, I make: a perilous dropping off!

Gai. 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!

Oui. 'Sdeath!

Nothing to beg for, to complain about?

It can't be! Ill news spreads, but not so fast

As thus to frighten all the world!

Gau. The world

Lives out of doors, sir—not with you and me

By presence-chamber porches, state-room stairs,

Wherever warmth's perpetual: outside 's free

To every wind from every compass-point

And who may get nipped needs be weather-wise.

The Prince comes and the lady's People go;

The snow-goose settles down, the swallows flee—

Why should they wait for winter-time? 'T is instinct;

Don't you feel somewhat chilly?

Gui. That 's their craft?

And last year's crows round and criers-forth

That strewed the garlands, overarched the roads, [songs]

Lighted the bonfires, sang the lo, Well 't is 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 crowding attestation, all works
well.
Yet this precisely do they thrust on us !
These cappings quick, these crook-and-
cringings low,
Hand to the heart, and forehead to the
knee,
With grin that shuts the eyes and opes
the mouth—
So tender they their love ; and, tender
made,
Go home to curse us, the first doit we
ask.
As if their souls were any longer theirs !
As if they had not given ample warrant
To who should clap a collar on their
neck, [flank,
Rings in their nose, a goad to either
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. 'T was probably
The suitor.
Gui. Oh, there is one ?
Adolf. With a suit
He'd fain enforce in person.
Gui. The good heart
—And the great fool ! Just ope the
mid-door's fold !
Is that a lappet of his cloak, I see ?
Adolf. If it bear plenteous sign of
travel . . . ay,
The very cloak my comrades tore !
Gui. Why tore ?
Adolf. He seeks the Duchess pres-
ence in that trim :
Since daybreak, was he posted here-
abouts

Lest he should miss the moment.
Gui. Where's he now ?
Adolf. Gone for a minute possibly,
not more :
They have ado enough to thrust him
back.
Gui. Ay—but my name, I caught ?
Adolf. Oh, sir—he said
—What was it ?—You had known him
formerly,
And, he believed, would help him did
you guess
He waited now ; you promised him as
much :
The old plea ! 'Faith, he's back,—re-
news 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 an !
his brow
At each repulse—
Gau. I noticed he'd a brow.
Adolf. So glancing, he grows calmer,
leans awhile
Over the balustrade, adjusts his dress,
And presently turns round, quiet again,
With some new pretext for admittance.
—Back !
(To GUIBERT.)—Sir, he has seen you !
Now cross halberts ! Ha —
Pascal is prostrate—there lies Fabian
too !
No passage ! Whither would the
madman press ?
Close the doors quick on me !
Gui. Too late ! He's here.
*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? 'T were hard, no listener for
their wrongs,

To turn them back upon the old de-
spair—

Harder, Sir Guibert, than imploring
thus—

So, I do—any way you please—im-
plore!

If you . . . but how should you re-
member Cleves?

Yet they of Cleves remember you so
well!

—Ay, comment on each trait of you
they keep,

Your words and deeds caught up at
second hand,—

Proud, I believe, at bottom of their
hearts,

Of the very levity and recklessness
Which only prove that you forget their
wrong.

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 advo-
cate 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
Complete the forehead pale and tresses

pure . . .

Val. Our city trusted me its miseries,
And I am come.

Gui. So much for taste! But
"come,"—

So may you be, for anything I know,
To beg the Pope's cross, or Sir Clugnet's

daughter,
And with an equal chance you get all

three!

If it was ever worth your while to come,
Was not the proper way worth finding

too?

Val. Straight to the palace-portal,
sir, I came—

Gui. —And said?—

Val. —That I had brought the
miseries

Of a whole city to relieve.

Gui. —Which saying
Won your admittance? You saw me,

indeed,
And here, no doubt, you stand: as

certainly,
My intervention, I shall not dispute,

Procures you audience; which, if I
procure,—

That paper's closely written—by Saint
Paul,

Here flock the Wrongs, follow the
Remedies,

Chapter and verse, One, Two, A, B and
C!

Perhaps you'd enter, make a reverence,
And launch these "miseries" from
first to last?

Val. How should they let me pause
or turn aside?

Gau. [to VALENCE.] My worthy sir,
one question! You've come
straight

From Cleves, you tell us: heard you
any talk

At Cleves about our lady?

Val. Much.

Gau. And what?

Val. Her wish was to redress all
wrongs she knew.

Gau. That, you believed?

Val. You see me, sir!

Gau. —Nor stopped

Upon the road from Cleves to Juliers
here,

For any—rumour you might find
afloat?

Val. I had my townsmen's wrongs to
busy me.

Gau. This is the lady's birthday, do
you know?

—Her day of pleasure?

Val. —That the great, I know,
For pleasure born, should still be on the
watch

To exclude pleasure when a duty offers:
Even as, for duty born, the lowly too
May ever snatch a pleasure if in reach:
Both will have plenty of their 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,

For you can't keep the hour of audi-
ence 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, 't is
yours, who ever played
The tempting serpent: else 't were 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
'T is some one's duty to present her
Grace—

I say, not mine—these say, not theirs
—such points

Have weight at court. Will you re-
lieve us all

And take it? Just say, "I am bidden
"This paper at the Duchess' feet!"

Val. No more?

I thank you, sir!

Adolf. Her Grace receives the
court!

Gui. [Aside.] Now, sursum corda,
quoth the mass-priest! Do—

Whoever's my kind saint, do let alone
These pushings to and fro, and pullings
back;

Peaceably let me hang o' the devil's
arm

The downward path, if you can't pluck
me off

Completely! Let me live quite his, or
yours!

[*The Courtiers begin to range themselves, and move toward the door.*]
after me, Valence! So, our famous

Cleves

Lacks bread? Yet don't we gallants
buy their lace? [know,

And dear enough—it beggars me, I
To keep my very gloves fringed
properly.

This, Valence, is our Great State Hall
you cross;

You 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 Val-
ence!

Val. I shall speak.

Gau. [*Aside to GUIBERT.*] Guibert—
it were no such ungraceful thing
If you and I, at first, seemed horror-
struck

With the bad news. Look here, what
you shall do!

Suppose you, first, clap hand to sword
and cry

"Yield strangers our allegiance? First
I'll perish

"Beside your Grace!"—and so give
me the cue

To...

Gui. —Clap your hand to note-book
and jot down

That to regale the Prince with? I
conceive.

[*To VALENCE.*] Do, Valence, speak, or
I shall half suspect [first,

You're plotting to supplant us, me the
l' lady's favour! Is 't the grand
harangue

You mean to make, that thus engrosses
you?

—Which of her virtues you'll apo-
strophize?

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. 'T is scarcely audience-nour, 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!

'T was 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 privi-
lege!

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, [good

Should be the power and leave of doing
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
't is audience-time!

The D. "When, if you left me, I
were left indeed!"

Would you subjoin that?—Bid the
court approach!

—Why should we play thus with each
other, Sabyne?

Do I not know, if courtiers prove remiss,
If friends detain me, and get blame for
it,

There is a cause ? Of last year's fervid
throng
Scarce one half comes now.

Sab. [Aside.] One half ? No, alas !

The D. So can the mere suspicion of
a cloud

Over my fortunes, strike each loyal
heart.

They've heard of this Prince Berthold ;
and, forsooth,

Some foolish arrogant pretence he
makes,

May grow more foolish and more
arrogant,

They please to apprehend ! I thank
their love.

Admit them !

Sab. [Aside.] How much has she
really learned ?

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,

The fitter to comport myself aright)
Not Romuald ? Xavier—what said
he to that ?

For Xavier hates a parasite, I know !
[SABYNE goes out.]

The D. Well, sunshine's everywhere,
and summer too.

Next year 't is the old place again, per-
haps—

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 [good

Nor care, concern myself with doing
Or ill, my task was just—to live,—to

live,
And, answering ends there was no need
explain,

To render Juliers happy—so they said.
All could not have been falsehood :

some was love,
And wonder and obedience. I did all

They looked for : why then cease to do
it now ?

Yet this is to be calmly set aside,
And—ere next birthday's dawn, for

aught I know,
Things change, a claimant may arrive,
and I . . .

It cannot nor it shall not be ! His
right ?

Well then, he has the right, and I have
not

—But who bade all of you surround my
life

And close its growth up with your
ducal crown

Which, plucked off rudely, leaves me
perishing ?

I could have been like one of you,—
loved, hoped,

Feared, lived and died like one of you
—but you

Would take that life away and give me
this,

And I will keep this ! I will face you !
Come !

Enter the Courtiers and VALENCE.

The Courtiers. Many such happy
mornings to your grace !

The D. [Aside, to them.] pay their
devoir.] The same words, the
same faces,—the same love !

I have been overfearful. These are
few ;

But these, at least, stand firmly : these
are mine.

As many come as may ; and if no more,
'T is 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, re-
versing.]*

'T is she—the vision this day last year
brought,

When, for a golden moment at our
Cleves,

She tarried in her progress hither.
Cleves

Chose me to speak its welcome, and I
spoke

—Not that she could have noted the
recluse

—Ungainly, old before his time—who
gazed.

Well, Heaven's gifts are not wasted,
and that gaze

Kept, and shall keep me to the end, her
own !

She was above it—but so would not
sink

My gaze to earth ! The People caught it, hers—

Thenceforward, mine ; but thus entirely mine,

Who shall affirm, had she not raised my soul

Ere she retired and left me—them ? She turns—

There's all her wondrous face at once ! The ground

Reels and . . . [*suddenly occupying himself with his paper.*]

These wrongs of theirs I have to plead ! *The D. [to the Court.]* Nay, compli-

ment enough ! and kindness' self Should pause before it wish me more such years.

'T was fortunate that thus, ere youth escaped, [pure,

I tasted life's pure pleasure—one such, Is worth a thousand, mixed—and youth 's for pleasure :

Mine is received ; let my age pay for it. *Gau.* So pay, and pleasure paid for,

thinks your Grace, Should never go together ?

Gui. How, Sir Gaucelme ? Hurry one's feast down unenjoyingly

At the snatched breathing-intervals of work ?

As good you saved it till the dull day's end

When, stiff and sleepy, appetite is gone. Eat first, then work upon the strength

of food !

The D. True : you enable me to risk my future,

By giving me a past beyond recall. I lived, a girl, one happy leisure year :

Let me endeavour to be the Duchess now !

And so,—what new's, 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,

Clutching, unconscious, each his empty rags

Whence the scant coin, which had not half bought bread,

That morn he shook forth, counted piece by piece,

And, well-advisedly, on perfumes spent them

To burn, or flowers to strew, before your path

—How, when the golden flood of music and bliss

Ebbed, as their moon retreated, and again

Left the sharp black-point rocks of misery bare

—Then I, their friend had only to suggest

"Saw she the horror as she saw the pomp !"

And as one man they cried "He speaks the truth :

"Show her the horror ! Take from our own mouths

"Our wrongs and show them, she will see them too !"

This they cried, lady ! I have brought the wrongs.

The D. Wrongs? Cleves has wrongs—
—apparent now and thus?

I thank you! In that paper? Give it me!

Val. (There, Cleves!) In this! (What did I promise, Cleves?)

Our weavers, clothiers, spinners are reduced

Since . . . Oh, I crave your pardon! I forget

I buy the privilege of this approach,
And promptly would discharge my debt. 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, 't was 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 't is with prayer's sole breath—

That the one day it boasted was God's day?

Still, I do thank you! Had you used respect,

Here might I dwindle to my last white leaf,

Here lose life's latest freshness, which even yet

May yield some wandering insect rest and food:

So, fling me forth, and—all is best for all!

[*After a pause.*] Prince Berthold, who art Juliers' Duke, it seems—

The King's choice, and the Emperor's, and the Pope's—

Be mine, too! Take this People! Tell not me

Of rescripts, precedents, authorities,
—But take them, from a heart that yearns to give!

Find out their love,—I could not; find their fear,—

I would not; find their like,—I never shall,

Among the flowers!

[*Taking off her coronet.*

Colombe of Ravestein

Thanks God she is no longer Duchess here!

Val. [*advancing to GUIBERT.*] Sir Guibert, knight they call you—
this of mine

Is the first step I ever set at court.
You dared make me your instrument, I find;

For that, so sure as you and I are men,
We reckon to the utmost presently:

But as you are a courtier and I none,
Your knowledge may instruct me. I,

already,

Have too far outraged, by my ignorance

Of courtier-ways, this lady, to proceed
A second step and risk addressing her:

—I am degraded—you, let me address!
Out of her presence, all is plain enough

What I shall do—but in her presence, too,

Surely there's something proper to be done.

[*To the others.*] You, gentles, tell me if I guess aright—

May I not strike this man to earth?

The Courtiers. [*as GUIBERT springs forward, withholding him.*] Let go!

—The clothiers' spokesman, Guibert? Grace a churl?

The D. [*to VALENCE.*] Oh, be acquainted with your party, sir!

He's of the oldest lineage Juliers boasts;
A lion crests him for a 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 Maufroy here

—No one dared meet it. Protestation's cheap,—

But, if to die for you did any good, [*TO GAUCELME.*] Would not I die, sir?

Say your worst of me! But it does no good, that's the mournful truth.

And since the hint of a resistance, even,

Would just precipitate, on you the first, A speedier ruin—I shall not deny,

Saving myself indubitable pain, I thought to give you pleasure (who

might say?) By showing that your only subject

found To carry the sad notice, was the man

Precisely ignorant of its contents; A nameless, mere provincial advocate;

One whom 't was like you never saw before,

Never would see again. All has gone wrong;

But I meant right, God knows, and you, I trust!

The D. A nameless advocate, this gentleman?—

—(I pardon you, Sir Guibert!)

Gui. [*rising, to VALENCE*]—Sir, and you?—

Val. —Rejoice that you are lightened of a load.

Now, you have only me to reckon with.

The D. One I have never seen, much less obliged?—

Val. Dare I speak, lady?

The D. Dare you! Heard you not

I rule no longer?

B.P.

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 your Advocate at Cleves"—

The D. [replacing the coronet.] Then I remain Cleves' Duchess! Take you note,

While Cleves but yields one subject of this stamp,

I stand her lady till she waves me off! For her sake, all the Prince claims I withhold;

Laugh at each menace; and, his power defying,

Return his missive with its due contempt!

[Casting it away.]

Gui. [picking it up.]—Which to the Prince I will deliver, lady,

[Note it down, Gaeelme]—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 it 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, for what zeal and faith in turn?

Hard money purchased me my place! No, no—

I'm right, sir—but your wrong is better still,

If I had time and skill to argue it. Therefore, I say, I'll serve you, how you please—

If you like,—fight you, as you seem to wish—

(The kinder of me that, in sober truth, I never dreamed I did you any harm) . . .

Gau. —Or, kinder still, you'll introduce, no doubt,

His merits to the Prince who's just at hand,

And let no hint drop he's made Chancellor

And Chamberlain and Heaven know 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 claim my worship ever

Who staunchly and steadfastly . . .

Enter ADOLF.

Adolf. The Prince arrives.
Courtiers. Ha? How?

Adolf. He leaves his guard a stage behind

At Aix, and enters almost by himself.

1st Court. The Prince! This foolish business puts all out.

2nd Court. Let Gauce me speak first!

3rd Court. Better I began

About the state of Juliers: should one say

All's prosperous and inviting him?

4th Court. —Or rather,

All's prostrate and imploring him?

5th Court. That's best.

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

4th Court. [to VALENCE.] Sir—sir—

If you'll but lend that paper—trust it me,

I'll warrant . . .

5th 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, Frankfort,—Milan;—Rome!—

Mel.

—The Grave.

—More weary seems your Highness, I remark,

Than sundry conquerors whose path I've watched

Through fire and blood to any prize they gain.

I could well wish you, for your proper sake,

Had met some shade of opposition here

—Found a blunt seneschal refuse unlock,

Or a scared usher lead your steps astray.

You must not look for next achievement's palm

So easily: this will hurt your conquering.

Berth. My next? Ay—as you say, my next and next!

Well, I am tired, that's truth, and moody too,

This quiet entrance-morning: listen why!

Our little burgh, now, Juliers—'t is indeed

One link, however insignificant,

Of the great chain by which I reach my hope,

—A link I must secure; but otherwise, You'd wonder I esteem it worth my grasp.

Just see what life is, with its shifts and turns!

It happens now—this very nook—to be A place that once . . . not a long while since, neither—

When I lived an ambiguous hanger-on Of foreign courts, and bore my claims about,

Dis arded 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 't was my day-dream, Lady

Colombe here

Might e'en compound the matter, pity me,

Be struck, say, with my chivalry and grace

(I was a boy!)—bestow her hand at length,
And make me Duke, in her right if not mine.

Here am I, Duke confessed, at Juliers now.

Hearken: if ever I be Emperor,
Remind me what I felt and said to-day!

Mel. All this consoles a bookish man like me.

—And so will weariness cling to you. Wrong,

Wrong! Had you sought the lady's court yourself,—

Faced the redoubtables composing it,
Flattered this, threatened that man,
bribed the other,—

Pleaded by writ and word and deed,
your cause,—

Conquered a footing inch by painful inch,—

And, after long years' struggle, pounced at last

On her for prize,—the right life had been lived,

And justice done to divers faculties
Shut in that brow. Yourself were visible

As you stood victor, then; whom now
—(your pardon!)

I am forced narrowly to search and see—

So are you hid by helps—this Pope,
your uncle—

Your cousin, the other King! You are a mind,—

They, 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 snug œconomy 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

[*Wall,*]
And failed so, under that grey convent—

Was I more happy than I should be now.

[*By this time, the Courtiers are ranged before him.*]

If failing of my Empire? Not a whit.
—Here comes the mind, it once had

tasked me sore
To baffle, but for my advantages!

All's best as 't is: these scholars talk and talk.

[*Seats himself.*]

The Courtiers. Welcome our Prince to Juliers!—to his heritage!

Our dutifullest service proffer we!

Clug. I, please your Highness, having exercised

The function of Grand Chamberlain at court,

With much acceptance, as men testify . . .

Berth. I cannot greatly thank you, gentlemen!
 The Pope declares my claim to the Duchy founded
 On strictest justice; 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
 Cnts 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.] 1st Court. Marshal! 2nd Court. Orator!
Gui. A variation of our mistress' way!
 Wipe off his boots' dust, Clugnet!—that, he waits!
 1st Court. Your place!
 2nd Court. Just now it was your own!
Gui. The devil's!
Berth. [to 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 [mine,
 For just so many dearest friends of 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 imbecities?
 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. 'T is well!

[*Aside.*] Array a handful thus against
 my world?

Not ill done, truly! Were not this a
 mind

To match one's mind with? Colombe!
 —Let us wait!

I failed so, under that grey convent
 wall!

She comes.

Gui. The Duchess! Strangers,
 range yourselves!

[*As the DUCHESS enters in conversation with VALENCE, BERTHOLD and the Courtiers fall back a little.*]

The D. Presagefully it beats, presage-
 fully,

My heart: the right is Berthold's and
 not mine.

Val. Grant that he has the right,
 dare I mistrust

Your power to acquiesce so patiently
 As you believe, in such a dream-like
 change

Of fortune—change abrupt, profound,
 complete?

The D. Ah, the first bitterness is
 over now!

Bitter I may have felt it to confront
 The truth, and ascertain those natures'
 value

I had so counted on; that was a pang:
 But I did bear it, and the worst is over.
 Let the Prince take them!

Val. —And take Juliers too?
 —Your people without crosses, wands
 and chains—

Only with hearts?

The D. There I feel guilty, sir!
 I cannot give up what I never had:
 For I ruled these, not them—these
 stood between.

Shall I confess, sir? I have heard by
 stealth

Of Berthold from the first; more news
 and more:

Closer and closer swam the thunder
 cloud,

But I was safely housed with these, I
 knew!

[*turn.*]
 At times, when to the casement I would
 At a bird's passage or a flower-tra's
 play,

I caught the storm's red glimpses on its
 edge—

Yet I was sure some one of all these
 friends

Would interpose: I followed the bird's
 flight

Or plucked the flower—some one would
 interpose!

Val. Not one thought on the People
 —and Cleves there!

The D. Now, sadly conscious my real
 sway was missed,

Its shadow goes without so much regret:
 Else could I not again thus calmly bid
 you,

Answer Prince Berthold!

Val. Then you acquiesce?

The D. Remember over whom it was
 I ruled!

Gui. [*stepping forward.*] Prince Ber-
 thold, 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—

[*sir!*]
Bu' s he bids, depart! Prevent it,
 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—'t will all be
 mine, you urge!

A day—an hour—that I myself may
 lay

My rule down! 'T is 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 re-
 joice

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 pre-
scribed

No less by courtesy than relationship
Which I remember, if you once forgot.
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 accredit ?
Where

Stand those should answer ?
Val. [advancing.] The lady is
alone !

Berth. Alone, and thus ? So weak
and yet so bold ?

Val. I said she was alone—
Berth. —And weak, I said.

Val. When is man strong until he
feels alone ?

It was some lonely strength at first, be
sure,

Created organs, such as those you seek,
By which to give its varied purpose
shape—

And, naming the selected ministrants,
Took sword, and shield, and sceptre,—
each, a man !

That strength performed its work and
passed its way :

You see our lady : there, the old shapes
stand !

—A Marshal, Chamberlain, and Chan-
cellor—

"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 s'eas breast out,—as, littered
'mid the waves

The desert-brute makes for the desert's
joy.

So turns our lady to her true resource,
Passing o'er hollow fictions, worn-out
types,

—And I am first her instinct fastens
on.

And prompt I say, as clear as heart can
speak,

The People will not have you ; nor
shall have !

It is not merely I shall go bring Cleves
And fight you to the last,—though
that does much,

And men and children,—ay, and
women too,

Fighting for home, are rather to be
feared

Than mercenaries fighting for their
pay—

But, say you beat us, since such things
have been,

And, where this Juliers laughed, you
set your foot

Upon a steaming bloody plash—what
then ?

Stand you the more our lord that there
you stand ?

Lord it o'er troops whose force you
concentrate,

A pillared flame whereto all ardours
tend—

Lord it 'mid priests whose schemes
you amplify,

A cloud of smoke 'neath which all
shadows brood—

But never, in this gentle spot of earth,
Can you become our Colombe, our

play-queen,
For whom, to furnish lilies for her

hair,
We'd pour our veins forth to enrich
the soil !

—Our conqueror ? Yes !—Our despot ?
Yes !—Our Duke ?

Know yourself, know us !
Berth. [who has been in thought.]

Know your lady, also !
[Very deferentially.]—To whom I needs

must exculpate myself
For having made a rash demand, at

least.

Wherefore to you, sir, who appear to be
Her chief adviser, I submit my claims,

[Giving papers.]
But, this step taken, take no further

step,
Until the Duchess shall pronounce
their worth.

Here be our meeting-place ; at night,
its time :

Till when I humbly take the lady's
leave !

[He withdraws. As the DUCHESS

turns to VALENCE, the Courtiers interchange glances and come forward a little.

1st Court. So, this was their device !

2nd Court. No bad device !

3rd Court. You'd say they love each other, Guibert's friend

From Cleves, and she, the Duchess !

4th Court. —And moreover, That all Prince Berthold comes for, is to help Their loves !

5th 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 recognise 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. ('T is 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 concern 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,— Him we might bend ; but see, the

papers here— Inalterably his requirement stays,

And cold hard words have we to deal with now. [pride,

In that large eye there seemed a latent 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 un-er 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—pronounce
She is the Duchess and no mate for me?

—Cleves, help me! Teach me,—
every haggard face,—

To sorrow and endure! I will do right
Whatever be the issue. Help me,
Cleves!

ACT IV

Evening. SCENE. An Antechamber.

Enter the Courtiers.

Mau. Now then, that we may
speak—how spring this mine?

Gau. Is Guibert ready for its match?
He cools!

Not so friend Valence with the Duchess
there!

"Stay, Valence! Are you not my
better self?"

And her cheek mantled—
Gui. Well, she loves him, sir:

And more,—since you will have it I
grow cool,—

he'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 ignor-
ance

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 acci-
dent,

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. Guilbert, 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:

'T was but a series of revenges taken
On your unselfishness for prospering ill.
But now that you're grown wiser,
what's our course?

Gui. —Wait, I suppose, till Valence
weds our lady,

And then, if we must needs revenge
ourselves,

Apprise the Prince.

Gau. —The Prince, ere then 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
smarting-while,

And something grows and grows and
ts to be

A mine 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 . . .
Gai. 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 ex-
amined 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 pro-
nounce

And not I, only, the result to be—
Berthold is heir; she has no shade of
right

To the distinction which divided us,
But, suffered to rule first, I know not
why,

Her rule connived at by those Kings
and Popes,

To serve some devil's-purpose,—now
'tis gained,

Whatever 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: 't was 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 in-
structed, 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.

Propose !

Berth. I offer her my hand.

Val. Your hand ?

Berth. A Duke's, yourself say ; and,
at no far time,

Something here whispers me—the
Emperor's.

The lady's mind is noble ; which
induced

This seizure of occasion ere my claims
Were—settled, let us amicably say !

Val. Your hand !

Berth. (He will fall down and
kiss it next !)

Sir, this astonishment's too flattering,
Nor must you hold your mistress' worth
so cheap.

Enhance it, rather,—urge that blood is
blood—

The daughter of the Burgraves, Land-
graves, Markgraves,

Remains their daughter ! I shall
scarce gainsay.

Elsewhere or here, the lady needs must
rule :

Like the imperial crown's great
chrysoprase,

They talk of—somewhat out of keeping
there,

And yet no jewel for a meaner cap.

Val. You wed the Duchess ?

Berth. Cry you mercy, friend !
Will the match also influence fortunes
here ?

A natural solicitude enough.

Be certain, no bad chance it proves for
you !

However high you take your present
stand,

There's prospect of a higher still re-
move—

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 char-
acter.

And you doubt your fitness to sup-
pl

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
withdrawn,

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
estimate

Love's value, and, such faith still
guiding me,

Dare I now test her ? Or grew faith
so strong

Solely because no power of test was
mine ?

Enter the DUCHESS.

The D. My fate, sir ! Ah, you turn
away. All 's over.

But you 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
henceforth.

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 re-
mote,

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, greatening, till he
ends—

The man of men, the spirit of all flesh,
The fiery centre of an earthly world!

The D. Some such a fortune I had
dreamed should rise

Out of my own—that is, above my
power

Seemed other, greater potencies to
stretch—

Val. For you?

The D. It was not I moved there,
I think:

But one I could,—though constantly
beside,

And aye approaching,—still keep dis-
tant from, [there.

And so adore. 'T was a man moved

Val. Who?

The D. I felt the spirit, never saw
the face.

Val. See it! 'T is 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—

Inmitigable 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 confid-
ence,

Open superiority, free pride—

Love owns not, yet were all that Ber-
thold owned:

Because where reason, even, finds no
flaw,

Unerringly a lover's instinct may.

The D. You reason, then, and doubt?

Val. I love, and know.

The D. You love?—How strange!
I never cast a thought

On that! Just see our selfishness!
You seemed

So much my own . . . I had no ground
—and yet,

I never dreamed another might divide
My power with you, much less exceed
it.

Val. Lady,

I am yours wholly,

The D. Oh, no, no, not mine!

"T is 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 [spoke!

The only woman—see how true they
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 Prince, without re-
serve,

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 cast 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. Despise, and let me die!

The D. Alas, sir, is it to be ever thus? Even with you as with the world? I know [deed

This morning's service was no vulgar 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 't was 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 ! [sank,

I was proud once : I saw you, and they
So that each, magnified a thousand
times,

Were nothing to you—but such no-
thingness,

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 Ber-
thold'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 fore-
headless—

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

For my part, this is scarce the hasty
showy

Chivalrous measure you give me credit
of.

Perhaps I had a fancy,—but 't is gone.
—Let her commence the unfriended

innocent,
And carry wrongs about from court to
court ?

No, truly ! The least shake of for-
tune's sand,

—My uncle-Pope chokes in a coughing
fit,

King-cousin takes a fancy to blue
eyes,—

And wondrously her claims would
brighten up ;

Forth comes a new gloss on the ancient
law,

O'er-looked provisos, past o'er
premises,

Follow in plenty. No : 't is 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 guild just
now

To lay, one moment, down their privilege
 With the notion they can any time at pleasure
 Retake it: that may turn out hazardous.
 We seem, in Europe, pretty well at end
 C' the night, with our great masque: those favoured few
 Who keep the chamber's top, and honour's chance
 Of the early evening, may retain their place
 And figure as they list till out of breath.
 But it is growing late: and I observe
 A dim grim kind of tipstaves at the doorway
 Not only bar new-comers entering now,
 But caution those who left, for any cause,
 And would return, that morning draws too near;
 The ball must die off, shut itself up.
 We—
 I think, may dance lights out and sunshine in,
 And sleep off headache on our frippery:
 But friend the other, who cunningly stole out,
 And, after breathing the fresh air outside,
 Means to re-enter with a new costume,
 Will be advised go back to bed, I fear.
 I stick to privilege, on second thoughts.
Mel. Yes— you evade the adventure:
 and, beside,
 Give yourself out for colder than you are.
 King Philip, only, notes the lady's eyes?
 Don't they come in for somewhat of the motive
 With you too?
Berth. Yes—no: I am past that now.
 Gone 't is: I cannot shut my soul to fact.
 Of course, I might by forethought and contrivance
 Reason myself into a rapture. Gone:
 And something better come instead, no doubt.
Mel. So be it! Yet, all the same,
 proceed my way,
 Though to your ends; so shall you prosper best!
 The lady,—to be won for selfish ends,—

B.P.

Will be won easier my unselfish . . .
 call it,
 Romantic way.
Berth. Won easier?
Mel. Will not she?
Berth. There I profess humility without 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 'T is for my own behoof,
 I court her with my true worth: wait the event!
 I learned my final lesson on that head
 When years ago,—my first and last essay—
 Before the priest my uncle could by help
 Of his superior, raise me from the dirt—
 Priscilla left me for a Brabant lord
 Whose cheek was like the topaz on his thumb.
 I am past illusion on that score.
Mel. Here comes
 The lady—
Berth. —And there you go. But do not! Give me
 Another chance to please you! Hear me plead!
Mel. You'll keep, then, to the lover, to the man?

Enter the DUCHESS—followed by ADOLF and SABYNE, and after an interval, by the Courtiers.

Berth. Good auspice to our meeting!
The D. May it prove!
 —And you, sir, will be Emperor one day?
Berth. (Ay, that's the point!) I may be Emperor.

The D. 'Tis not for my sake only, I
am proud
Of this you offer : I am prouder far
That from the highest state should
duly spring
The highest, since most generous, of
deeds.

Berth. (Generous—still that!) You
underrate yourself.
You are, what I, to be complete, must
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 under-
stand.

Our best course is to say these hideous
truths,

And see them, once said, grow endur-
able :

Like waters shuddering from their
central bed,

Black with the midnight bowels of the
earth,

That, once up-spouted by an earth-
quake'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 in-
justice, neither

Because I will not condescend to fictions
That promise what my soul can ne'er

acquit,

It does not follow that my guarded
phrase

May not include far more of what you
seek,

Than wide profession of less scrupulous
men.

You will be Empress, once for all :
with me

The Pope disputes supremacy—you
stand,

And none gainsays, the earth's first
woman.

The D. That—

Or simple Lady of Ravestein again?

Berth. The matter's not in my arbit-
rament :

Now I have made my claims—which I
regret—

Cede one, cede all.

The D. This claim then, you
enforce?

Berth. The world looks on.

The D. And when must I decide?

Berth. When, lady? Have I said
thus much so promptly

For nothing?—Poured out, with such
pains, at once

What I might else have suffered to
ooze forth

Droplet by droplet in a lifetime long—
For aught less than as prompt an

answer, too?

All's fairly told now : who can teach
you more?

The D. I do not see him.

Berth. I shall ne'er deceive.
This offer should be made befittingly

Did time allow the better setting forth
The good of it, with what is not so good,

Advantage, and disparagement as well :
But as it is, the sum of both must serve.

I am already weary of this place ;

My thoughts are next stage on to Rome.
Decide!

The Empire—or,—not even Juliers
now!

Hail to the Empress—farewell to the
Duchess!

*The Courtiers, who have been
drawing nearer and nearer, inter-
pose.*

Gau.—"Farewell," Prince? when we
break in at our risk—

Clug. Almost upon court-licence
trespassing—

Gau.—To point out how your claims
are valid yet!

You know not, by the Duke her father's
will,

The lady, if she weds beneath her rank,
Forfeits her Duchy in the next heir's
favour—

So 't is expressly stipulate. And if
It can be shown 't is her intent to wed
A subject, then yourself, next heir, by
right

Succeed to Juliers.

Berth. What insanity?—

Gai. 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?

Gai. 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?

Gai. 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 conjecture 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!

Gai. Hear you, Prince?

Berth. And what, sirs, please you,
may this prattle mean

Unless to prove with what alacrity
You give your lady's secrets to the
world?

How much indebted, for discovering
That quality, you make me, will be
found

When there's a keeper for my own to
seek.

Courtiers. "Our lady?"

Berth.—She assuredly remains.

The D. Ah, Prince—and you too can
be generous?

You could renounce your power, if this
were so,

And let me, as these phrase it, wed my
love

Yet keep my Duchy? You perhaps
exceed

Him, even, in disinterestedness!

Berth. How, lady, should all this affect my purpose?

Your will and choice are still as ever, free.

Say, you have known a worthier than myself [face—

In mind and heart, of happier form and Others must have their birthright: I have gifts,

To balance theirs, not blot them out of sight.

Against a hundred alien qualities, I lay the prize I offer, I am nothing: Wed you the Empire?

The D. And my heart away?

Berth. When have I made pretension to your heart?

I give none. I shall keep your honour safe;

With mine I trust you, as the sculptor trusts

You marble woman with the marble rose, [fall,

Loose on her hand, she never will let 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!

Gui. —Valence holds, of course!

Berth. Desire his presence!

[*ADOLF goes out.*]

Courtiers [to each other.] Out it all comes yet;

He'll have his word against the bargain yet:

He's not the man to tamely acquiesce. One passionate appeal—upbraiding even,

May turn the tide again. Despair not yet!

[*They retire a little.*]

Berth. [to MELCHIOR.] The Empire has its old success, my friend!

Mel. You've had your way: before the spokesman speaks,

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

And ever more be dumb! The Empire wins?

To better purpose have I read my books!

Enter VALENCE.

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

[*To VALENCE.*] Sir, one word with you!

I am a poor dependant of the Prince's—Pitched on to speak, as of slight consequence.

You are no higher, I find: in other words,

We two, as probably the wisest here, Need not hold diplomatic talk like fools.

Suppose I speak, divesting the plain fact

Of all their tortuous phrases, fit for them?

Do you reply so, and what trouble saved!

The Prince, then—an embroiled strange heap of news

This moment reaches him—if true or false,

All dignity forbids he should inquire In person, or by worthier deputy;

Yet somehow must inquire, lest slander come:

And so, 't is 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

Can have such chance yet fail so sig-
nally,

—But ever, ever this farewell to
Heaven,

Welcome to earth—this taking death
for life—

This spurning love and kneeling to the
world—

Oh Heaven, it is too often and too old !
Mel. Well, on this point, what but
an absurd rumour

Arises—these, its source—its subject,
you !

Your faith and loyalty misconstruing,
They say, your service claims the lady's
hand !

Of course, nor Prince nor lady can
respond :

Yet something must be said : for, were
it true

You made such claim, the Prince
would . . .

Val. Well sir,—would ?

Mel. —Not only probably withdraw
his suit,

But, very like, the lady might be forced
Accept your own. Oh, there are
reasons why !

But you'll excuse at present all save
one,—

I think so. What we want is, your
own witness,

For, or against—her good, or yours :
decide !

Val. [*Aside.*] Be it her good if she
accounts it so !

[*After a contest.*] For what am I but
hers, to choose as she ?

Who knows how far, beside, the light
from her

May reach, and dwell with, what she
looks upon ?

Mel. [*to the Prince.*] Now to him,
you !

Berth. [*to VALENCE.*] My friend ac-
quaints you, sir,

The noise runs . . .

Val. —Prince, how fortunate
are you,

Wedding her as you will, in spite of
noise,

To show belief in love ! Let her but
love you,

All else you disregard ! What else
can be ?

You know how love is incompatible
With falsehood—purifies, assimilates
All other passions to itself.

Mel. Ay, sir :

But softly ! Where, in the object we
select,

Such love is, perchance, wanting ?
Val. Then indeed,

What is it you can take ?
Mel. Nay, ask the world !

Youth, beauty, virtue, an illustrious
name,

An influence o'er mankind.
Val. When man perceives . . .

—Ah, I can only speak as for myself !
The D. Speak for yourself !

Val. May I ?—no, I have
spoken,

And time's gone by. Had I seen such
an one,

As I loved her—weighing thoroughly
that word— [love :

So should my task be to evolve her
If for myself !—if for another—well,

Berth. Heroic truly ! And your sole
reward,—

The secret pride in yielding up love's
right ?

Val. Who thought upon reward ?
And yet how much

Comes after—oh what amplest recom-
pense !

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
old

Die blissfully—that's past so long ago !
He wishes you no need, thought, care
of him—

Your good, by any means, himself
unseen,

Away, forgotten !—He gives that life's
task up,

As it were . . . but this charge which
I return—

[Offers the requisition, which she takes.]

Wishing your good.

The D. [having subscribed it.] And
opportunely, sir—

Since at a birthday's close, like this of
mine,

Good wishes gentle deeds reciprocate.
Most on a wedding day, as mine is too,
Should gifts be thought of : yours
comes first by right.

Ask of me ! *[asks,*

Berth. He shall have whate'er he
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 regis-
tered

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 d-erved !

I could not imitate—I hardly envy—
I do admire you. All is for the best.
Too costly a flower were this, I see it
now,

To pluck and set upon my barren helm
To wither—any garish plume will do.

I'll not insult you and refuse your
Duchy—

You can so well afford to yield it me,
And I were left, without it, sadly off.

It is—for me—if that will flatter
you,

A somewhat wearier life seems to re-
main

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—

Gul. [starting from the Courtiers.]
—And I ?

Do I not follow them, if I mayn't you ?
Shall not I get some little duties up

At Ravestein and emulate the rest ?

God save you, Gaucelme ! 'Tis my
Birthday, too !

Berth. You happy handful that
remain with me

. . . That is, with Dietrich the black
Barnabite

I shall leave over you—will earn your
wages,

Or Dietrich has forgot to ply his
trade !

Meantime,—go copy me the precedents
Of every installation, proper styles

And pedigrees of all your Juliers'
Dukes—

While I prepare to plod on my old way,
And somewhat wearily, I must confess !

The D. [with a light joyous laugh as she turns from them.] Come, Val-
ence, to our friends, God's earth . . .

Val. [as she falls into his arms.]—
And thee !

DRAMATIC 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 scar, 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
Seared up again like fire.

V

The chief's eye flashed ; but presently
Softened itself, as sheathes

A film the mother-eagle's eye
When her bruised eaglet breathes :
" You're wounded ! " " Nay," the
soldier's pride
Touched to the quick, he said :
" I'm killed, Sire ! " And his chief
beside,
Smiling the boy fell dead.

THE PATRIOT AN OLD STORY

I

It was roses, roses, all the way,
Vith 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 un-
done :
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
instead,

'T is 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: (Frà Pan-
dolf's hands *name*

Worked busily a day, and there she
stands.

Will't please you sit and look at her?
I said

"Frà 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

Frà 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—now shall I say?—too soon
made glad,

Too easily impressed; she liked what-
e'er

She looked on, and her looks went
everywhere.

Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her
breast,

The dropping of the daylight in the
West,

The bough of cherries some officious
poor

Broke, in the orchard for her, the white
mule

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 choose
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no

doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who

passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; 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
munificence

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, 't was 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 ; 't was 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

However that be, all eyes were bent
Upon me, when my cousins cast
Theirs down ; 't was time I should
present

The victor's crown, but . . . there,
't will 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 penante-
sheet

"About her ! Let her shun the
chaste,

"Or lay herself before their feet !

"Shall she whose body I embraced

"A night long, queen it in the day ?

"For honour's sake no crowns, I say !"

XI

I? What I answered? As I live,
 I never fancied such a thing
 As answer possible to give.
 What says the body when they spring
 Some monstrous torture-engine's
 whole
 Strength on it? No more says the
 soul.

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 had 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 con-
 tent
 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 fist, 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,
 Whereby the daily meal was earned.

Hard he laboured, long and well ;
O'er his work the boy's curls fell.

But ever, at each period,
He stopped and sang, " Praise God ! "

Then back again his curls he threw,
And cheerful turned to work anew.

Said Blaise, the listening monk, " Well
done ;

" I doubt not thou art heard, my son :

" As well as if thy voice to-day

" Were praising God, the Pope's great
way.

" This Easter Day, the Pope at Rome
" Praises God from Peter's dome."

Said Theocrite, " Would God that I
" Might praise him, that great way,
and die ! "

Night passed, day shone,
And Theocrite was gone.

With God a day endures alway,
A thousand years are but a day.

God said in heaven, " Nor day nor night
" Now brings the voice of my delight."

Then Gabriel, like a rainbow's birth,
Spread his wings and sank to earth ;

Entered, in flesh, the empty cell,
Lived there, and played the craftsman
well ;

And morning, evening, noon and night,
Praised God in place of Theocrite.

And from a boy, to youth he grew :
The man put off the stripling's hue :

The man matured and fell away
Into the season of decay :

And ever o'er the trade he bent,
And ever lived on earth content.

(He did God's will ; to him, all one
If on the earth or in the sun.)

God said, " A praise is in mine ear ;
" There is no doubt in it, no fear :

" So sing old worlds, and so
" New worlds that from my footstool
go.

" Clearer loves sound other ways :
" I miss my little human praise."

Then forth sprang Gabriel's wings, off
fell
The flesh disguise, remained the cell.

'T was 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 call and poor employ :
" Resume the craftsman and the boy ! "

Theocrite grew old at home ;
A new Pope dwelt in Peter's dome.

One vanished as the other died :
They sought God side by side.

INSTANS TYRANNUS

I

Of the million or two, more or less,
I rule and possess,
One man, for some cause undefined,
Was least to my mind.

II

I struck him, he grovelled of course—
For, what was his force ?
I pinned him to earth with my weight
And persistence of hate :
And he lay, would not moan, would not
curse,
As his lot might be worse.

III

" Were the object less mean, would he
stand
" At the swing of my hand !
" For obscurity helps him and blots
" The hole where he squats."
So, I set my five wits on the stretch
To inveigle the wretch.
All in vain ! Gold and jewels I threw,
Still he crouched there perdue ;
I tempted his blood and his flesh,
Hid in roses my mesh,
Choicest cates and the flagon's best
spilth :
Still he kept to his filth.

IV

Had he kith now or kin, were access
To his heart, did I press—
Just a son or a mother to seize !
No such booty as these.
Were it simply a friend to pursue
'Mid my million or two,
Who could pay me in person or pelf
What he owes me himself !
No : I could not but smile through my
chafe :
For the fellow lay safe
As his mates do, the midge and the nit,
—Through minuteness, to wit.

V

Then a humour more great took its
place
At the thought of his face,
The droop, the low cares of the mouth,
The trouble uncouth

"Twixt the brows, all that air one is fain
To put out of its pain.

And, " no ! " I admonished myself,

" Is one mocked by an elf,

" Is one baffled by toad or by rat ?

" The gravamen 's in that !

" How the lion, who crouches to suit

" His back to my foot,

" Would admire that I stand in de-
bate !

" 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, 't is 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 labour content
To enjoy the event.

VII

When sudden . . . how think ye, the
end ?

Did I say " without friend ? "

Say rather, from marge to blue marge

The whole sky grew his targe

With the sun's self for visible boss,

While an Arm ran across

Which the earth heaved beneath like a
breast

Where the wretch was safe prest !

Do you see ? Just my vengeance
complete,

The man sprang to his feet,

Stood erect, caught at God's skirts, and
prayed !

—So, I was afraid !

MESMERISM

I

ALL I believed is true !

I am able yet

All I want, to get

By a method as strange as new :

Dare I trust the same to you ?

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 smut,
And a cat's in the water-butt—

III

And the socket floats and flares,
And the house-beams groan,
And a foot unknown
Is surmised on the garret-stairs,
And the locks slip unawares—

IV

And the spider, to serve his ends,
By a sudden thread,
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

Command her soul to advance
And inform the shape
Which has made escape
And before my countenance
Answers me glance for glance—

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 I
On to the maze
Of the wild wood-ways,
Not turning to left nor right
From the pathway, blind with sight—

XVIII

Making thro' rain and wind
O'er the broken shrubs,
'Twixt the stems and stubs,
With a still, composed, strong mind,
Nor a care for the world behind—

XIX

Swifter and still more swift,
As the crowding peace
Doth to joy increase
In the wide blind eyes uplift
Thro' the darkness and the drift!

XX

While I—to the shape, I too
Feel my soul dilate
Nor a whit abate,
And relax not a gesture due,
As I see my belief come true.

XXI

For, there! have I drawn or no
Life to that lip?
Do my fingers dip
In a flame which again they throw
On the cheek that breaks a-glow?

XXII

Ha! was the hair so first?
What, unfileted,
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 Thou
That ownest the soul,
Ye 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 Thou wilt
At my hand its price one day!
What the price is, who can say?

THE GLOVE

(PETER RONSARD *loquitur*)

"HEIGHO," yawned one day King
Francis,
"Distance all value enhances!
"When a man's busy, why, leisure
"Strikes him as wonderful pleasure:
"Faith, and at leisure once is he?
"Straightway he wants to be busy.
"Here we've got peace; and aghast
I'm
"Caught thinking war the true pastime.
"Is there a reason in metre?
"Give us your speech, master Peter!"
I who, if mortal dare say so,
Ne'er am at loss with my Naso,
"Sire," I replied, "joys prove cloudlets:
"Men are the merest Ixions"—
Here the King whistled aloud, "Let's
"... Heigho... go look at our
lions!"

Such are the sorrowful chances
If you talk fine to King Francis.

And so, to the courtyard proceeding,
Our company, Francis was leading.
Increased by new followers tenfold
Before he arrived at the penfold;
Lords, ladies, like clouds which bedizen
At sunset the western horizon.
And Sir De Lorge pressed 'mid the
foremost
With the dame he professed to adore
most—
Oh, what a face! One by fits eyed
Her, and the horrible pitside;
For the penfold surrounded a hollow
Which led where the eye scarce dared
follow,
And shelved to the chamber secluded
Where Bluebeard, the great lion,
brooded.
The King hailed his keeper, an Arab,
As glossy and black as a scarab,
And bade him make sport and at once
stir
Up and out of his den the old monster.
They opened a hole in the wire-work
Across it, and dropped there a firework,

And fled: one's heart's beating redoubled;

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

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

Then earth 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, [mist
And whose faculties move in no small
When he versifies David the Psalmist)
I should study that brute to describe you

Illum 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 forehead,

By the hope in those eyes wide and steady,

He was leagues in the desert already,
Driving the flocks up the mountain,
Or catlike crouched hard by the fountain

To waylay the date-gathering negress:
So guarded he entrance or egress.

"How he stands!" quoth the King:
"we may well swear,

("No novice, we've won our spurs elsewhere

"And so can afford the confession,)

"We exercise wholesome discretion

"In keeping aloof from his threshold;

"Once hold you, those jaws want no fresh hold,

"Their first would too pleasantly purloin

"The visitor's brisket or surloin:

"But who's he would prove so foolhardy?

"Not the best man of Marignan, pardie!"

The sentence no sooner was uttered,
Than over the rails a glove fluttered,
Fell close to the lion, and rested:

The dame 'twas, who flung it and jested
With life so, De Lorge had been wooing
For months past; he sat there pursuing
His suit, weighing out with nonchalance
Fine speeches like gold from a balance.

Sound the trumpet, no true knight's a tarrier!

De Lorge made one leap at the barrier,
Walked straight to the glove,—while the lion

Ne'er moved, kept his far-reaching eye on

The palm-tree-edged desert-spring's sapphire,

And the musky oiled skin of the Kaffir,—

Picked it up, and as calmly retreated,
Leaped back where the lady was seated,
And full in the face of its owner
Flung the glove.

"Your heart's queen, you de-throne her?

"So should I!"—cried the King—
"t was mere vanity,

"Not love, set that task to humanity!"
Lords and ladies alike turned with loathing

(From such a proved wolf in sheep's clothing.

Not so, I; for I caught an expression
In her brow's undisturbed self-possession

Amid the Court's scoffing and 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 crueible,

To what "speeches like gold" were reducible,

And, finding the finest prove copper,
Felt the smoke in her face was but proper;

To know what she had *not* to trust to,

Was worth all the ashes and dust too.
She went out 'mid hooting and laughter;
Clement Marot stayed; I followed after,
And asked, as a grace, what it all
meant?

If she wished not the rash deed's recai-
ment?

"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
nor dare!

"With my scorn—what De Lorge
could compare!

"And the endless descriptions of death
"He would brave when my lip formed
a breath,

"I must reckon as braved, or, of course,
"Doubt his word—and moreover,
perforce,

"For such gifts as no lady could spurn,
"Must offer my love in return.

"When I looked on your lion, it
brought

"All the dangers at once to my thought,
"Encountered by all sorts of men,

"Before he was lodged in his den,—
"From the poor slave whose club or
bare hands

"Dug the trap, set the snare on the
sands,

"With no King and no Court to ap-
plaud,

"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
check?

"But when the heart suffers a blow,
"Will the pain pass so soon, do you
know?"

I looked, as away she was sweeping,
And saw a youth eagerly keeping
As close as he dared to the doorway.
No doubt that a noble should more
weigh

His life than befits a plebeian;
And yet, had our brute been Nemean
(I judge by a certain calm fervour
The youth stepped with, forward to
serve her)

—He'd have scarce thought you did
him the worst turn

If you whispered "Friend, what you'd
get, first earn!"

And when, shortly after, she carried
Her shame from the Court, and they
married,

To that marriage some happiness,
maugre

(The voice of the Court, I dared augur.
For De Lorge, he made women with
men vie,

Those in wonder and praise, these in
envy;

And in short stood so plain a head taller
That he wooed and won . . . how do
you call her?

The beauty, that rose in the sequel
To the King's love, who loved her a week
well.

And 't was noticed he never would
honour

De Lorge (who looked daggers upon her)
With the easy commission of stretching
His legs in the service, and fetching
His wife, from her chamber, those stray-
ing

Sad gloves she was always mislaying,
While the King took the closet to chat
in,—

But of course this adventure came pat
in.

And never the King told the story,
How bringing a glove brought such
glory,

But the wife smiled—"His nerves are
grown firmer:

"Mine he brings now and utters no
murmur."

Venienti 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 laughs 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
shoots,

" The creaking of his clumsy boots."
I am as sure that this he would do,
As that Saint Paul's is striking two.
And I think I rather . . . woe is me !
—Yes, rather should see him than not
see,

If lifting a hand would seat him there
Before me in the empty chair
To-night, when my head aches indeed,
And I can neither think nor read
Nor make these purple fingers hold
The pen ; this garret's freezing cold !

And I've a Lady—there he wakes
The laughing fiend and prince of snakes
Within me, at her name, to pray
Fate send some creature in the way
Of my love for her, to be down-torn,
Upthrust and outward-borne,
So I might prove myself that sea
Of passion which I needs must be !
Call my thoughts false and my fancies
quaint

And my style infirm and its figures
faint,

All the critics say, and more blame yet,
And not one angry word you get.
But, please you, wonder I would put
My cheek beneath that lady's foot

R.P.

Rather than trample under mine
The laurels of the Florentine,
And you shall see how the devil spends
A fire God gave for other ends !
I tell you, I stride up and down
This garret, crowned with love's best
crown,

And feasted with love's perfect feast,
To think I kill for her, at least ,
Body and soul and peace and fame,
Alike youth's end and manhood's aim,
—So is my spirit, as flesh with sin,
Filled full, eaten out and in
With the 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 thro' the country-
side

Breathed hot and instant on my trace—
I made six days a hiding-place
Of that dry green old aqueduct
Where I and Charles, when boys, have
plucked

The fire-flies from the roof above,
Bright creeping thro' the moss they
love :

—How long it seems since Charles was
lost !

Six days the soldiers crossed and crossed
The country in my very sight ;
And when that peril ceased at night,
The sky broke out in red dismay
With signal fires ; well, there I lay
Close covered o'er in my recess,
Up to the neck in ferns and cress,
Thinking on Metternich our friend,
And Charles's miserable end,
And much beside, two days ; the third,
Hunger o'ercame me when I heard
The peasants from the village go
To work among the maize ; you know,
With us in Lombardy, they bring

E E

Provisions packed on mules, a string
 With little bells that cheer their task,
 And casks, and boughs on every cask
 To keep the sun's heat from the wine;
 These I let pass in jingling line,
 And, close on them, dear noisy crew,
 The peasants from the village, too;
 For at the very rear would troop
 Their wives and sisters in a group
 To help, I knew; when these had
 passed,

I threw my glove to strike the last,
 Taking the chance: she did not start,
 Much less cry but, but stooped apart,
 One instant rapidly glanced round,
 And saw me beckon from the ground:
 A wild bush grows and hides my crypt;
 She picked my glove up while she
 stripped

A branch off, then rejoined the rest
 With that; my glove lay in her breast:
 Then I drew breath; they disappeared:
 It was for Italy I feared.

An hour, and she returned alone
 Exactly where my glove was thrown.
 Meanwhile came many thoughts; on
 me

Rested the hopes of Italy;
 I had devised a certain tale
 Which, when 't was told her, could not
 fail

Persuade a peasant of its truth;
 I meant to call a freak of youth
 This hiding, and give hopes of pay,
 And no temptation to betray.
 But when I saw that woman's face,
 Its calm simplicity of grace,
 Our Italy's own attitude
 In which she walked thus far, and
 stood,

Planting each naked foot so firm,
 To crush the snake and spare the
 worm—

At first sight of her eyes, I said,
 "I am that man upon whose head
 They fix the price, because I hate
 The Austrians over us: the State
 Will give you gold—oh, gold so
 rough!—

"If you betray me to their clutch,
 And be your death, for aught I know,
 If once they find you saved their foe.
 Now, you must bring me food and
 drink,

"And also paper, pen and ink,
 And carry safe what I shall write

"To Padua, which you'll reach at night
 Before the duomo shuts; go in,
 And wait till Tenebræ begin;
 Walk to the third confessional,
 Between the pillar and the wall,
 And kneeling whisper, *Whence comes*

peace?
 Say it a second time, then cease;
 And if the voice inside returns,
 From Christ and Freedom: what
 concerns

"The cause of Peace?—for answer, slip
 My letter where you placed your lip;
 Then come back happy we have done
 Our mother service—I, the son,
 As you the daughter of our land!"

Three mornings more, she took her
 stand

In the same place, with the same eyes:
 I was no surer of sun-rise
 Than of her coming: we conferred
 Of her own prospects, and I heard
 She had a lover—stout and tall,
 She said—then let her eyelids fall,
 "He could do much"—as if some
 doubt

Entered her heart,—then, passing out,
 She could not speak for others, who
 Had other thoughts; herself she
 knew:

And so she brought me drink and food.
 After four days, the scouts pursued
 Another path; at last arrived
 The help my Paduan friends contrived
 To furnish me: she brought the news.
 For the first time I could not choose
 But kiss her hand, and lay my own
 Upon her head—"This faith was
 shown

"To Italy, our mother; she
 Uses my hand and blesses thee."
 She followed down to the sea-shore;
 I left and never saw her more.

How very long since I have thought
 Concerning—much less wished for—
 aught

Beside the good of Italy,
 For which I live and mean to die!
 I never was in love; and since
 Charles proved false, what shall now
 convince

My inmost heart I have a friend?
 However, if I pleased to spend
 Real wishes on myself—say, three—
 I know at least what one should be.

I would grasp Metternich until
I felt his red wet throat distil
In blood thro' these two hands. And
next,

Nor much for that am I perplexed—
Charles, perjured traitor, for his part,
Should die slow of a broken heart
Under his new employers. Last
—Ah, there, what should I wish? For

last
Do I grow old and out of strength.
If I resolved to seek at length
My father's house again, how scared
They all would look, and unprepared!
My brothers live in Austria's pay

Disowned me long ago, men say;
And all my early mates who used
To praise me so—perhaps induced
More than one early step of mine—
Are turning wise; while some opine
"Freedom grows license," some suspect
"Haste breeds delay," and recollect
They always said, such premature
Beginnings never could endure!
So with a sullen "All's for best,"
The land seems settling to its rest.
I think then, I should wish to stand
This evening in that dear, lost land,
Over the sea the thousand miles,
And know if yet that woman smiles
With the calm smile; some little farm
She lives in there, no doubt: what
harm

If I sat on the door-side bench,
And, while her spindle made a trench
Fantastically in the dust,
Inquired of all her fortunes—just
Her children's ages and their names,
And what may be the husband's aims,
For each of them. I'd talk this out,
And sit there, for an hour about,
Then kiss her hand once more, and lay
Mine on her head, and go my way.

So much for idle wishing—how
It steals the time! To business now.

THE ENGLISHMAN IN ITALY

PIANO DI SORRENTO

FORTÈ, Fortù, my beloved one,

Sit here by my side,
On my knees put up both little feet!
I was sure, if I tried,
I could make you laugh spite of Scirocco,
Now, open your eyes,
Let me keep you amused till he vanish
In black from the skies,

With telling my memories over
As you tell your beads;
All the Plain saw me gather, I garland
—The flowers or the weeds.

Time for rain! for your long hot dry
Autumn

Had net-worked with brown
The white skin of each grape on the
bunches,

Marked like a quail's crown,
Those creatures you make such account
of,

Whose heads,—speckled 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
splitting

In halves on the tree:
And betwixt the loose walls of great
flintstone,

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 woke me before
I could open my shutter, made fast
With a bough and a stone,

And look thro' the twisted dead vine-
twigs,

Sole lattice that's known.
Quick and sharp rang the rings down
the net-poles,

While, busy beneath,
Your priest and his brother tugged 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 skiff

Arrive about noon from Amalfi,
 —Our fisher arrive,
 And pitch down his basket before us,
 All trembling alive
 With pink and grey jellies, your sea-
 fruit ;
 You touch the strange lumps,
 And mouths gape there, eyes open, all
 manner
 Of horns and of humps,
 Which only the fisher looks grave at,
 While round him like imps
 Cling screaming the children as naked
 And brown as his shinups ;
 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, [filling
 All the young ones are kneeling and
 Their laps with the snails
 Tempted out by this first rainy
 weather,—
 Your best of regales,
 As to-night will be proved to my sorrow,
 When, supping in state,
 We shall feast our grape-gleaners (two
 dozen,
 Three over one plate)
 With lasagne so tempting to swallow
 In slippery ropes,
 And gourds fried in great purple slices,
 That colour of popes.

Meantime, see the grape bunch they've
 brought you :
 The rain-water slips
 O'er the heavy blue bloom on each globe
 Which the wasp to your lips
 Still follows with fretful persistence :
 Nay, taste, while awake,
 This half of a curd-white smooth cheese-
 ball
 That peels, flake by flake,
 Like an onion, each smoother and
 whiter ;
 Next, sip this weak wine
 From the thin green glass flask, with its
 stopper,
 A leaf of the vine ;
 And end with the prickly-pear's red
 flesh
 That leaves thro' its juice
 The stony black seeds on your pearl-
 teeth.
 Scirocco is loose !
 Hark, the quick, whistling pelt of the
 olives
 Which, thick in one's track,
 Tempt the stranger to pick up and bite
 them,
 Tho' not yet half black !
 How the old twisted olive trunks
 shudder,
 The medlars let fall
 Their hard fruit, and the brittle great
 fig-trees
 Snap off, figs and all,
 For here comes the whole of the tem-
 pest !
 No refuge, but creep
 Back again to my side and my shoulder,
 And listen or sleep.
 O how will your country show next
 week,
 When all the vine-boughs
 Have been stripped of their foliage to
 pasture
 The mules and the cows ?
 Last eve, I rode over the mountains ;
 Your brother, my guide,
 Soon left me, to feast on the myrtles
 That offered, each side,
 Their fruit-balls, black, glossy and
 luscious, —
 Or strip from the sorbs
 A treasure, or, rosy and wondrous,
 Those hairy gold orbs !
 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-chasms and piles of loose
 stones
 Like the loose broken teeth
 Of some monster which climbed there
 to die
 From the ocean beneath—
 Place was grudged to the silver-grey
 fume-wood
 That clung to the path,
 And the rosemary ever a-dying
 That, spite the wind's wrath,
 So loves the salt rock's face to seaward,
 And lentisks as staunch
 To the stone where they root and bear
 berries,
 And . . . what shows a branch
 Coral-coloured, transparent, with cir-
 clets
 Of pale sea green leaves ;
 Over all trod my mule with the caution
 Of gleaners o'er sheaves,
 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, [ness
 And within me my heart to bear wit-
 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, [-hut :
 E'en the myrtle-leaves curl, shrink and
 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 Galli ;
 No ages can sever
 The Three, nor enable their sister
 To join them,—halfway
 On the voyage, she looked at Ulysses—
 No farther to-day,
 Tho' the small one, just launched in the
 wave,
 Watches a fast-high and steady
 From under the rock, her bold sister
 Swum halfway already.
 Fortù, 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 discourse
 Which (all nature, no art)
 The Dominican brother, these three
 weeks,

Was getting by heart.
 Not a pillar nor post but is dized
 With red and blue papers;
 All the roof waves with ribbons, each
 altar

A-blaze with long tapers;
 But the great masterpiece is the scaffold
 Rigged glorious to hold
 All the fiddlers and fifers and drummers
 And trumpeters bold,
 Not afraid of Bellini nor Auber,
 Who, when the priest's hoarse,
 Will strike us up something that's brisk
 For the feast's second course.
 And then will the flaxen-wigged Image
 Be carried in pomp
 Thro' the plain, while in gallant proces-
 sion

The priests mean to stomp.
 All round the glad church lie old bottles
 With gunpowder stopped,
 Which will be, when the Image re-
 enters,

Religiously popped;
 And at night from the crest of Calvano
 Great bonfires will hang,
 On the plain will the trumpets join
 chorus,

And more poppers bang.
 At all events, come—to the garden,
 As far as the wail;
 See me tap with a hoe on the plaster
 Till out there shall fall
 A scorpion with wide angry nippers!

—"Such trifles!" you say?
 Fortù, in my England at home,
 Men meet gravely to-day
 And debate, if abolishing Corn-laws
 Be righteous and wise
 —If 't were proper, Scirocco should
 vanish
 In black from the skies!

IN A GONDOLA

He sings.

I SEND my heart up to thee, all my
 heart
 In this my singing.
 For the stars help me, and the sea bears
 part;
 The very night is clinging
 Closer to Venice' streets to leave one
 space
 Above me, whence thy face
 May light my joyous heart to thee its
 dwelling-place.

She speaks.

Say after me, and try to say
 My very words, as if each word
 Came from you of your own accord,
 In your own voice, in your own way:
 "This woman's heart and soul and
 brain
 "Are mine as much as this gold chain
 "She bids me wear; which" (say
 again)
 "I choose to make by cherishing
 "A precious thing, or choose to fling,
 "Over the boat-side, ring by ring."
 And yet once more say . . . no word
 more!

Since words are only words. Give o'er!
 Unless you call me, all the same,
 Familiarly by my pet name,
 Which if the Three should hear you call,
 And me reply to, would proclaim
 At once our secret to them all.
 Ask of me, too, command me, blame—
 Do, break down the partition-wall
 'Twixt us, the daylight world beholds
 Curtained in dusk and splendid folds!
 What's left but—all of me to take?
 I am the Three's: prevent them, slake
 Your thirst! 'T is 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 shuntters 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 ope I burst.

II

The bee's kiss, now!
Kiss me as if you entered gay
My heart at some noonday,
A bud that dares not disallow
The claim, so all is rendered up,
And passively its shattered cup
Over your head to sleep I bow.

He sings.

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

Say again, what we are?
The sprite of a star,

I lure thee above where the destinies bar
My plumes their full play
Till a ruddier ray
Than my pale one announce there is
withering away
Some . . . Scatter the vision for ever!
And now,
As of old, I am I, thou art thou!

He muses.

Oh, which were best, to roam or rest?
The land's lap or the water's breast?
To sleep on yellow millet-sheaves,
Or swim in lucid shallows just
Eluding water-lily leaves,
An inch from Death's black fingers,
thrust
To lock you, whom release he must;
Which life were best on Summer eves?

He speaks, musing.

Lie back; could thought of mine im-
prove you?
From this shoulder let there spring
A wing; from this, another wing;
Wings, not legs and feet, shall move
you!
Snow-white must they spring, to blend
With your flesh, but I intend
They shall deepen to the end,
Broader, into burning gold.
Till both wings crescent-wise enfold
Your perfect self, from 'neath your feet
To o'er your head, where, lo, they meet
As if a million sword-blades hurled
Defiance from you to the world!
Rescue me thou, the only real!
And scare away this mad ideal
That came, nor motions to depart!
Thanks! Now, stay ever as thou art!

Still he muses.

I

What if the Three should catch at last
Thy serenader? While there's cast,
Paul's cloak about my head, and fast
Gian pinions me, himself has past
His stylet thro' my back; I reel;
And . . . is it thou I feel?

II

They trail me, these three godless
knaves,
Past every church that saints and saves,
Nor stop till, where the cold sea raves
By Lido's wet accursed graves,

They scoop mine, roll me to its brink,
And . . . on thy breast I sink !

She replies, musing.

Dip your arm o'er the boat-side, elbow-
deep,
As I do : thus : were death so unlike
sleep,
Caught this way ? Death's to fear
from flame or steel, [—feel !
Or poison doubtless ; but from water
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,
'T is proper to be choice in what I wear.

He speaks.

Row home ? must we row home ? Too
surely
Know I where its front 's demurely
Over the Giudecca piled ;
Window just with window mating,
Door on door exactly waiting,
All 's the set face of a child :
But behind it, where 's a trace
Of the staidness and reserve,
And formal lines without a curve,
In the same child's playing-face ?
No two windows look one way
O'er the small sea-water thread
Below them. Ah, the autumn day
I, passing, saw you overhead !
First, out a cloud of curtain blew,
Then a sweet cry, and last came you—
To catch your lory that must needs
Escape just then, of all times then,
To peek a tall plant's fleecy seeds,
And make me happiest of men.
I scarce could breathe to see you reach
So far back o'er the balcony
To catch him ere he climbed too high
Above you in the Smyrna peach
That quick the round smooth cord of
gold,
This coiled hair on your head, unrolled,
Fell down you like a gorgeous snake
The Roman girls were wont, of old.
When Rome there was, for coolness'
sake
To let lie curling o'er their bosoms.
Dear lory, may his beak retain
Ever its delicate rose stain

As if the wounded lotus-blossoms
Had marked their thief to know again !

Stay longer yet, for others' sake
Than mine ! What should your cham-
ber do ?

—With all its rarities that ache
In silence while day lasts, but wake
At night-time and their life renew,
Suspended just to pleasure you
Who brought against their will together
These objects, and, while day lasts,
weave

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

With all the sensitive tight strings
Which dare not speak, now to itself
Breathes slumberously, as if some elf
Went in and out the chords, his wings
Make murmur wheresoe'er they graze
As an angel may, between the maze
Of midnight palace-pillars, on [gone
And on, to sow God's plagues, have
Through guilty glorious Babylon.
And while such murmurs flow, the
nymph

Bends o'er the harp-top from her shell
As the dry limpet for the lymph
Come with a tune he knows so well.
And how your statues' hearts must
swell !

And how your pictures must descend
To see each other, friend with friend !
Oh, could you take them by surprise,
You'd find Schidone's eager Duke
Doing the quaintest courtesies
To that prim saint by Haste-thee-Luke !
And, deeper into her rock den,
Bold Castelfranco's Magdalen
You'd find retreated from the ken
Of that robed counsel-keeping Ser—
As if the Tizian thinks of her,
And is not, rather, gravely bent
On seeing for himself what toys
Are these, his progeny invent,
What litter now the board employs
Whereon he signed a document
That got him murdered ! Each enjoys
Its night so well, you cannot break
The sport up, so, indeed must make
More stay with me, for others' sake.

S. 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 Zanze! 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, upon
thy breast.

Still kiss me! Care not for the
cowards! Care

Only to put aside the 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

Who wrote the book there, on the shelf—
How, forsooth, was I to know it
If Waring meant to glide away
Like a ghost at break of day?
Ne'er 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
meaning?)

"Had well borne out whoc'er believed
"In more to come!" But who goes
gleaning

Hedge-side chance-blades, while full-
sheaved

Stand corn-fields by him? Pride,
o'erweening

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 ne'er 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
Demoniac-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, 't is 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-! y more!
Back, with the quiet face of yore,
So hungry for acknowledgment
Like mine! I'd fool him to his bent.
Feed, should not he, to heart's content?
I'd say, "to only have conceived,
"Planned your great works, apart
from progress,
"Surpasses little works achieved!"
I'd lie so, I should be believed.
I'd make such havoc of the claims
Of the day's distinguished names
To feast him with, as feasts an ogress
Her feverish sharp-toothed gold-
crowned child!

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

vi

Ichabod, Ichabod,
The glory is departed!
Travels Waring East away?
Who, of knowledge, by hearsay,
Reports a man upstarted
Somewhere as a god,
Hordes grown European-hearted,
Millions of the wild made tame
On a sudden at his fame?
In Vishnu-land what Avatar?
Or who in Moscow, toward the Czar,
With the demurest of footfalls
Over the Kremlin's pavement bright
With serpentine and syenite,
Steps, with five other Generals
That simultaneously take snuff,
For each to have pretext enough
And kerchiefwise unfold his sash
Which, softness' self, is yet the stuff
To hold fast where a steel chain snaps,
And leave the grand white neck no gash?
Waring in Moscow, to those rough
Cold northern natures borne perhaps,
Like the lambwhite maiden dear
From the circle of mute kings
Unable to repress the tear,
Each as his sceptre down he flings,
To Dian's fane at Taurica,
Where now a captive priestess, she
always

Mingles her tender grave Hellenic
speech

With theirs, turned to the hailstone-
beaten beach,

As pours some pigeon, from the myrrhy
!nds

Rapt by the whirlblast to fierce Scythian
strands

Where breed the swallows, her melodi-
ous cry

Amid their barbarous twitter!

In Russia? Never! Spain were
fitter!

Ay, most likely 't is in Spain

That we and Waring meet again

Now, while he turns down that cool
narrow lane

Into the blackness, out of grave Madrid
All fire and shine, abrupt as when

their's slid

Its stiff gold blazing pall

From some black coffin-lid.

Or, best of all,

I love to think

The leavi'g us was just a feint;

Back here to London did he slink,
And now works on without a wink
Of sleep, and we are on the brink
Of something great in fresco-paint :
Some garret's ceiling, walls and floor,
Up and down and o'er and o'er
He splashes, as none splashed before
Since great Caldara Polidore.
Or Music means this land of ours
Some favour yet, to pity won
By Purcell from his Rosy Bowers,—
'Give me my so-long promised son,
'Let Waring end what I begun !'
Then down he creeps and out he steals
Only when the night conceals
His face ; in Kent 't is cherry-time,
Or hops are picking : or at prime
Of March he wanders as, too happy,
Years ago when he was young,
Some mild eve when woods grew sappy
And the early moths had sprung
To life from many a trembling sheath
Woven the warm boughs beneath ;
While small birds said to themselves
What should soon be actual song,
And young gnats, by tens and twelves,
Made as if they were the throng
That crowd around and carry aloft
The sound they have nursed, so sweet
and pure,
Out of a myriad noises soft,
Into a tone 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 't is, 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 thwarts a shrill voice
cried,
" (A neck as bronzed as a Lascar's)
" 'Buy wine of us, you English brig ?
" 'Or fruit, tobacco and cigars ?
" 'A pilot for you to Triest ?
" 'Without one, look you ne'er so big,
" 'They'll never let you up the bay !
" 'We natives should know best.'
" I turned, and 'just those fellows'
way.'
" Our captain said, 'The' long-shore
thieves
" 'Are laughing at us in their sleeves.'

III

" In truth, the boy leaned laughing
back ;
" And one, half-hidden by his side
" Under the furled sail, soon I spied,
" With great grass hat and kerchief
black,
" Who looked up with his kingly throat,
" Said somewhat, while the other shook

" His hair back from his eyes to look
 " Their longest at us; then the boat,
 " I know not how, turned sharply
 round,
 " Laying her whole side on the sea
 " As a leaping fish does; from the lee
 " Into the weather, cut somehow
 " Her sparkling path beneath our bow,
 " And so went off, as with a bound,
 " Into the rosy and golden half
 " Of the sky, to overtake the sun
 " And reach the shore, like the sea-calf
 " Its singing cave; yet I caught one
 " Glance ere away the boat quite
 passed,
 " And neither time nor toil could mar
 " Those features: so I saw the last
 " Of Waring!—"You? Oh, never
 star
 Was lost here but it rose afar!
 Look East, where whole new thousands
 are!
 In Vishnu-land what Avatar?

THE TWINS

" Give " and " It-shall-be-given-unto-
 you."

I

GRAND rough old Martin Luther
 Bloomed fables—flowers on furze,
 The better the uncouth:
 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 Dabitur,

V

" While Date was in good case
 " Dabitur flourished too:
 " For Dabitur'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,
 " Dabitur 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!

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 a wren instead!

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 noblesake,
 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 friends ! "

IX

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

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-flies'
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 burn-
ing 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 't is so,
Since now at length my fate I know,
'Ince nothing all my love avails,
Since all, my life seemed meant for,
fails,
Since this was written and needs
must be—

My whole heart rises up to bless
Your name in pride and thankfulness !
Take back the hope you gave,—I claim
Only a memory of the same,
—And this beside, if you will not blame,
Your leave for one more last ride
with 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 't is 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 with, dim-described.
This foot once planted on the goal,
This glory-garland round my soul,
Could I descry such? Try and test!
I sink back shuddering from the quest.
Earth being so good, would heaven seem
best?

Now, heaven and she are beyond this
ride.

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 ladles,
Split open the kegs of salted sprats,
Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,
And even spoiled the women's chats,
By drowning their speaking
With shrieking and squeaking
In fifty different sharps and flats.

III

At last the people in a body
To the Town Hall came flocking:
"Tis clear," cried they, "our Mayor's
a noddy;
"And as for our Corporation—
shocking
"To think we buy gowns lined with
ermine
"For dolts that can't or won't 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 sat in council,
At length the Mayor broke silence:
"For a guilder I'd my ermine gown
sell,
"I wish I were a mile hence!
"It's easy to bid one rack one's brain—
"I'm sure my poor head aches again,
"I've scratched it so, and all in vain.
"Oh for a trap, a trap, a trap!"
Just as he said this, what should hap
At the chamber door but a gentle tap?
"Bless us," cried the Mayor, "what's
that?"

(With the Corporation as he sat,
Looking little though wondrous fat;
Nor brighter was his eye, nor moister
Than a too-long-opened oyster,
Save when at noon his paunch grew
nutinous

For a plate of turtle green and glutinous)
"Only a scraping of shoes on the mat?
"Anything like the sound of a rat
"Makes my heart go pit-a-pat!"

V

"Come in!"—the Mayor cried, look-
ing bigger:
And in did come the strangest figure!
His queer long coat from heel to head
Was half of yellow and half of red,
And he himself was tall and thin,
With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin,
And light loose hair, yet swarthy skin,
No tuft on cheek nor beard on chin,
But lips where smiles went out and in;
There was no guessing his kith and kin:
And nobody could enough admire
The tall man and his quaint attire.
Quoth one: "It's as my great-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 exclamation
 Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation.

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 grumbling;
 And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling;
 And out of the houses the rats came tumbling.
 Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,
 Brown rats, black rats, grey rats, tawny rats,
 Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,
 Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,
 Cocking tails and pricking whiskers,
 Families by tens and dozens,
 Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives—
 Followed the Piper for their lives.
 From street to street he piped advancing,
 And step for step they followed dancing,
 Until they came to the river Weser
 Wherein all plunged and perished!
 —Save one who, stout as Julius Cæsar,
 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 drysaltery!
 " 'So, munch on, crunch on, take your nuncheon,
 " 'Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon!'—
 " And just as a bulky sugar-puncheon,
 " All ready staved, like a great sun shone
 " Glorious scarce an inch before me,
 " Just as methought it said, 'Come, bore me!'—
 " —I found the Weser rolling o'er me."

VIII

You should have heard the Hamelin people
 Ringing the bells till they rocked the steeple.
 "Go," cried the Mayor, "and get long poles,
 "Poke out the nests and block up the holes!
 "Consult with carpenters and builders,
 "And leave in our town not even a trace
 "Of the rats!"—when suddenly, up the face
 Of the Piper perked in the market-place,
 With a, "First, if you please, my thousand guilders!"

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
sunk,
"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 some-
thing 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 dinnertime
"Bagdat, and accept the prime
"Of the Head-cook's pottage, all he's
rich in,
"For having left, in the Caliph's
kitchen,
"Of a nest of scorpions no survivor :
"With him I proved no bargain-driver,
"With you, don't think I'll bate a
stiver !
"And folks who put me in a passion
"May find me pipe after another
fashion."

XI

"How ?" cried the Mayor, "d'ye
think I brook
"Being worse treated than a Cook ?
"Insulted by a lazy ribald
"With idle pipe and vesture piebald ?
"You threaten us, fellow ? Do your
worst,
"Blow your pipe there till you burst !"

XII

Once more he stepped 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,
—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, [Street
As the Piper turned from the High
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 moun-
tain-side,
A wondrous portal opened wide,
As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed ;
And the Piper advanced and the child-
ren 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 sting;
 " 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
 Ope 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 mer.'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 't was a lost endeav-
 our, [ever,

And Piper and dancers were gone for
 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

:

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,
Branch'd through and through with
many a vein
Whence iron's dug, and copper's dealt ;
Look right, look left, look straight
before,—
Beneath they mine, above they smelt,
Copper-ore and iron-ore,
And forge and furnace mould and melt,
And so on, more and ever more,
Till at the last, for a bounding belt,
Comes the salt sand hoar of the great
sea-shore,
—And the whole is our Duke's country.

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 transfixed,
And pin him true, both eyes betwixt ?
And that's why the old Duke would
rather
He lost a salt-pit than my father,
And loved to have him ever in call ;
That's why my father stood in the hall
When the old Duke brought his infant
out
To show the people, and while th' v
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-
funne :
—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 pine,
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.
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 ;

'T was 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 'he smallest lady alive,
Made in a piece of nature's madness,
Too small, almost, for the life and
gladness

That over-filled her, as some hive
Out of the bears' reach on the high
trees

Is crowded with its safe merry bees :
In truth, she was not hard to please !
Up she looked, down she looked, round
at the mead,

Straight at the castle, that's best indeed
To look at from outside the walls :

As for us, styled the "serfs and thralls,"
She as much thanked me as if she had
said it,

(With her eyes, do you understand ?)
Because I patted her horse while I led
it ;

And Max, who rode on her other hand,
Said, no bird flew past but she inquired
What its true name was, nor ever
seemed tired—

If that was an eagle she saw hover,
And the green and grey bird on the
field was the plover.

When suddenly appeared the Duke :
And as down she sprung, the small foot
pointed

On to my hand,—as with a rebuke,
And as if his backbone were not jointed,
The Duke stepped rather aside than
forward,

And welcomed her with his grandest
smile ;

And, mind you, his mother all the
while

Chilled in the rear, like a wind to nor'-
ward ;

And up, like a weary yawn, with its
pullies

Went, in a shriek, the rusty portcullis ;
And, like a glad sky the north-wind
gullies,

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 when 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, huntsman's
wife,

(I had a wife, I know what I say)
Never in all the world such an one !
And here was plenty to be done,
And she that could do it, great or small,
She was to do nothing at all.
There was already this man in his post,
Thus 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 mid chagrin ;
And the Duke perceived that she was
ailing,
And said in his heart, " 'T is 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 strict-
ures ?

And when old poets had said their say
of it,

How taught old painters in their
pictures ?

We must revert to the proper channels,
Workings in tapestry, paintings on

panels,
And gather up woodcraft's authentic
traditions :

Here was food for our various ambitions,
As on each case, exactly stated—

To encourage your dog, now, the
properest chirrup,
Or best prayer to St. Hubert on mount-
ing your stirrup—
We of the household took thought and
debated.
Blessed was he whose back ached with
the jerkin
His sire was wont to do forest-work in ;
Blesseder he who nobly sunk "ohs"
And "ahs" while he tugged on his
grandsire's trunk-hose ;
What signifies hats if they had no rims
on.
Each slouching before and behind like
the scallop,
And able to serve at sea for a shallop,
Loaded with lacquer and looped with
crimson ?
So that the deer now, to make a short
rhyme on 't,
What with our Venerers, Prickers and
Verderers,
Might hope for real hunters at length
and not murderers,
And oh the Duke's tailor, he had a hot
time on 't !

XI

Now you must know that when the first
dizziness
Of flap-hats and buff-coats and jack-
boots subsided,
The Duke put this question, "The
Duke's part provided,
"Had not the Duchess some share in
the business ?"
For out of the mouth of two or three
witnesses
Did he establish all fit-or-unfitnesses :
And, after much laying of heads to-
gether,
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 towelling,
"Let her preside at the disembowel-
ling."

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-
mudgeon,
If she clung to the perch, as to take it
in dudgeon ?
Yet when the Duke to his lady signified,
Just a day before, as he judged most
dignified,
In what a pleasure she was to partici-
pate,—
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 hunt-
Was conduct ever more affronting ?
With all the ceremony settled—
With the towel ready, and the sewer
Polishing up his oldest ewer,
And the jennet pitched upon, a piebald,
Black-barred, cream-coated and pink
eye-balled,—
No wonder if the Duke was nettled !
And when she persisted nevertheless,—
Well, I suppose here's the time to con-
fess
That there ran half round our lady's
chamber
A balcony none of the hardest to
clamber ;
And that Jacynth the tire-woman,
ready in waiting,
Stayed in call outside, what need of
relating ?
And since Jacynth was like a June rose,
why, a fervent

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 courtyard
 arch,
 Down in the valley, what should meet
 him
 But a troop of gipsies on their march?
 No doubt with the annual gifts to greet
 him.

Now, in your land, gipsies reach you,
only
After reaching all lands beside ;
North they go, South they go, trooping
or lonely,
And still, as they travel far and wide,
Catch they and keep now a place 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 [on.]

The very fruit they are meant to feed
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 brute can baffle;
Or a lock that's a puzzle of wards within wards;
Or, if your colt's fore-foot inclines to curve inwards.

XII

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

Horseshoes they hammer which turn
 on a swivel
 And won't allow the hoof to shrivel
 Then they cast bells like the shell of
 the winkle
 That keep a stout heart in the ram
 with their tinkle ;
 But the sand—they pinch and pound it
 like otters ;
 Commend me to gipsy glass-makers
 and potters !
 Glasses they'll blow you, crystal-clear,
 Where just a faint cloud of rose shall
 appear,
 As if in pure water you dropped and
 let die
 A bruised black-blooded mulberry ;
 And that other sort, their crowning
 pride,
 With long white threads distinct inside,
 Like the lake-flower's fibrous roots
 which dangle
 Loose such a length and never tangle,
 Where the bold sword-lily cuts the clear
 waters,
 And the cup-lily couches with all the
 white daughters :
 Such are the works they put their hand
 to,
 The uses they turn and twist iron
 and sand to.
 And these made the troop, which our
 Duke saw sally
 Toward his castle from out of the valley,
 Men and women, like new-hatched
 spiders,
 Come out with the morning to greet our
 riders.
 And up they wound till they reached
 the ditch,
 Whereat all stopped save one, a witch
 That I knew, as she hobbled from the
 group,
 By her gait directly and her stoop,
 I, whom Jacynth was used to importune
 To let that same witch tell us our for-
 tune,
 The oldest gipsy then above ground ;
 And, sure as the autumn season came
 round,
 She paid us a visit for profit or pastime,
 And every time, as she swore, for the
 last time.
 And presently she was seen to sidle
 Up to the Duke till she touched his
 bridle,
 So that the horse of a sudden reared up

As under its nose the old witch peered
 up
 With her worn-out eyes, or rather eye-
 holes
 Of no use now but to gather brine,
 And began a kind of level whine
 Such as they use to sing to their vio's
 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-marten pelt,
 Ready to put what he gave in her
 pouch safe,—
 Till, either to quicken his apprehension,
 Or possibly with an after-intention,
 She was come, she said, to pay her duty
 To the new Duchess, the youthful
 beauty.
 No sooner had she named his lady,
 Than a shine lit up the face so shady,
 And its smirk returned with a novel
 meaning—
 For it struck him, the babe just wanted
 weaning ;
 If one gave her a taste of what life was
 and sorrow,
 She, foolish to-day, would be wiser to-
 morrow ;
 And who so fit a teacher of trouble
 As this sordid crane 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, 't was plain from
 his gesture,
 The life of the lady so flower-like and
 delicate [helicat.
 With the loathsome squalor of this
 1, in brief, was the man the Duke
 beckoned
 From out of the throng, and while 1
 drew near

He told the crone—as I since have reckoned
By the way he bent and spoke into her ear
With circumspection and mystery—
The main of the lady's history,
Her frowardness and ingratitude ;
And for all the crone's submissive attitude
I could see round her mouth the loose
plaits tightening,
And her brow with assenting intelligence brightening,
As though she engaged with hearty goodwill
Whatever he now might enjoin to fulfil,
And promised the lady a thorough frightening.
And so, just giving her a glimpse
Of a purse, with the air of a man whoimps
The wing of the hawk that shall fetch the hernshaw,
He bade me take the gipsy mother
And set her telling some story or other
Of hill or dale, oak-wood or fernshaw,
To wile away a weary hour
For the lady left alone in her bower,
Whose mind and body craved exertion
And yet shrank from all better diversion.

XIV

Then clapping heel to his horse, the mere curveter,
Out rode the Duke, and after his hollo
Horses and hounds swept, huntsman and servitor,
And back I turned and bade the crone follow.
And what makes me confident what's to be told you
Had all along been of this crone's devising,
Is, that, on looking round sharply, behold you,
There was a novelty quick as surprising :
For first, she had shot up a full head in stature,
And her step kept pace with mine nor faltered,
As if age had foregone its usurpature,
And the ignoble mien was wholly altered,
And the face looked quite of another nature,

And the change reached too, whatever the change meant,
Her shaggy wolf-skin cloak's arrangement :
For where its tatters hung loose like sedges,
Gold coins were glittering on the edges,
Like the band-roll strung with tomons
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 unmistakable eye-points duly
Live and aware looked out of their places.
So, we went and found Jacynth at the entry
Of the lady's chamber standing sentry ;
I told the command and produced my companion,
And Jacynth rejoiced to admit any one,
For since last night, by the same token,
Not a single word had the lady spoken :
They went in both to the presence together,
While I in the balcony watched the weather.

XV

And now, what took place at the very first of all,
I cannot tell, as I never could learn it ;
Jacynth constantly wished a curse to fall
On that little head of hers and burn it
If she knew how she came to drop so soundly
Asleep of a sudden and there continue
The whole time sleeping as profoundly
As one of the boars my father would pin you
'Twixt the eyes where life holds garrison,
—Jacynth forgive me the comparison !
But where I begin my own narration
Is a little after I took my station
To breathe the fresh air from the balcony,
And, having in those days a falcon eye,
To follow the hunt thro' the open country,
From where the bushes thinlier crested
The hillocks, to a plain where's not one tree.
When, in a moment, my ear was arrested
By—was it singing, or was it saying,

Or a strange musical instrument playing
 In the chamber?—and to be certain
 I pushed the lattice, pulled the curtain,
 And there lay Jacynth asleep,
 Yet as if a watch she tried to keep,
 In a rosy sleep along the floor
 With her head against the door;
 While in the midst, on the seat of state,
 Was a queen—the gipsy woman late,
 With head and face downbent
 On the lady's head and face intent:
 For, coiled at her feet like a child at
 ease,
 The lady sat between her knees,
 And o'er them the lady's clasped hands
 met,
 And on those hands her chin was set,
 And her upturned face met the face of
 the crone
 Wherein the eyes had grown and grown
 As if she could double and quadruple
 At pleasure the play of either pupil
 —Very like, by her hands' slow fanning,
 As up and down like a gor-crow's
 flappers
 They moved to measure, or bell
 clappers.
 I said, is it blessing, is it banning,
 Do they applaud you or burlesque you—
 Those hands and fingers with no flesh
 on?
 But, just as I thought to spring in to
 the rescue,
 At once I was stopped by the lady's
 expression:
 For it was life her eyes were drinking
 From the crone's wide pair above
 unwinking,
 —Life's pure fire received without
 shrinking,
 Into the heart and breast whose heav-
 ing
 Told you no single drop they were
 leaving,
 —Life, that filling her, passed redund-
 ant
 Into her very hair, back swerving
 Over each shoulder, loose and abund-
 ant,
 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,
 The selfsame contagion gained me,
 And I kept time to the wondrous chime,
 Making out words and prose and rhyme,
 Till it seemed that the music furled
 Its wings like a task fulfilled, and
 dropped
 From under the words it first had
 propped,
 And left them midway in the world,
 Word took word as hand takes hand,
 I could hear at last, and understand,
 And when I held the unbroken thread,
 The gipsy said:—

“And so at last we find my tribe,
 “And so I set thee in the midst,
 “And to one and all of them describe
 “What thou saidst and what thou
 didst,
 “Our long and terrible journey through,
 “And all thou art ready to say and do
 “In the trials that remain:
 “I trace them the vein and the other
 vein
 “That meet on thy brow and part
 again,
 “Making our rapid mystic mark;
 “And I bid my people prove and probe
 “Each eye's profound and glorious
 globe
 “Till they detect the kindled 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
 “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 deliver-
 ance,
 " Into our arms for evermore ;
 " And thou shalt know, those arms
 once curled
 " About thee, what we knew before,
 " How love is the only good in the
 world.
 " Henceforth be loved as heart can love,
 " Or brain devise, or hand approve !
 " Stand up, look below,
 " It is our life at thy feet we throw
 " To step with into light and joy ;
 " Not a power of life but we employ
 " To satisfy thy nature's want ;
 " Art thou the tree that props the
 plant,
 " Or the climbing plant that seeks the
 tree—
 " Canst thou help us, must we help
 thee ?
 " If any two creatures grew into one,
 " They would do more than the world
 has done ;
 " Though each apart were never so
 weak,
 " Ye vainly through the world should
 seek
 " For the knowledge and the might
 " Which in such union grew their
 right :
 " So, to approach at least that end,
 " And blend,—as much as may be,
 blend
 " Thee with us or us with thee,—
 " As climbing plant or propping-tree,
 " Shall some one deck thee, over and
 down,

" Up and about, with blossoms and
 leaves ?
 " Fix his heart's fruit for thy garland
 crown,
 " Cling with his soul as the gourd-vine
 cleave,
 " Die on thy boughs and disappear
 " While not a leaf of thine is sere ?
 " Or is the other fate in store,
 " And art thou fitted to adore,
 " To give thy wondrous self away,
 " And take a stronger nature's sway ?
 " I foresee and could foretell
 " Thy future portion, sure and well :
 " But these passionate eyes speak true,
 speak true,
 " Let them say what thou shalt do !
 " Only be sure thy daily life,
 " In its peace or in its strife,
 " Never shall be unobserved ;
 " We pursue thy whole career,
 " And hope for it, or doubt, or fear,—
 " Lo, hast thou kept thy path or
 swerved,
 " We are beside thee in all thy ways,
 " With our blame, with our praise,
 " Our shame to feel, our pride to show,
 " Glad, angry—but indifferent, no !
 " Whether it be thy lot to go,
 " For the good of us all, where the
 haters meet
 " In the crowded city's horrible street ;
 " Or thou step alone through the mor-
 tals
 " 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 frame-
 work 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 sun-
 beam,
 " Touches the flesh and the soul awakes,
 " Then— "

Ay, then indeed something
 would happen !
 But what ? For here her voice
 changed like a bird's ;
 There grew more of the music and less
 of the words ;
 Had Jacynth only been by me to clap
 pen
 To paper and put you down every
 syllable
 With those clever clerkly fingers,
 All I've forgotten as well as what lingers
 In this old brain of mine that's but ill
 able
 To give you even this poor version
 Of the speech I spoil, as it were, with
 stammering
 —More fault of those who had the
 hammering
 Of prosody into me and syntax,
 And did it, not with hobnails but 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,
 Then came, shall I say, a snap—
 And the charm vanished !
 And my sense returned, so strangely
 banished,
 And, starting as from a nap,
 I knew the crone was bewitching my
 lady,
 With Jacynth asleep : and but one
 spring made I
 Down from the casement, round to the
 portal,
 Another minute and I had entered,—
 When the door opened, and more than
 mortal
 Stood, with a face where to my mind
 centred
 All beauties I ever saw or shall see,
 The Duchess : I stopped as if struck by
 palsy.
 She was so different, happy and beau-
 tiful,
 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 com-
 manding ;
 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 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 courtyard like a desertplace,
 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 be-
 neath her
 Would have been only too glad for her
 service
 To dance on hot ploughshares like a
 Turk dervise,
 But, unable to pay proper duty where
 owing it,
 Was reduced to that pitiful method of
 showing it.
 For though the moment I began setting
 His saddle on my own nag of Berold's
 begetting,
 (Not that I meant to be obtrusive)
 She stopped me, while his rug was
 shifting,
 By a single rapid finger's lifting,

And, with a gesture kind but conclusive,
And a little shake of the head, refused
me,—

I say, although she never used me,
Yet when she was mounted, the gipsy
behind her,

And I ventured to remind her,
I suppose with a voice of less steadiness
Than usual, for my feeling exceeded me,
—Something to the effect that I was in
readiness [me,—

Whenever God should please she needed
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 grudge-
ment),

And ever shall, till the Day of Judg-
ment,

And then,—and then,—to cut short,
—this is idle,

These are feelings it is not good to
foster,—

I pushed the gate wide, she shook the
bridle,

And the palfrey bounded,—and so we
lost her.

XVI

When the liquor's out why clink the
cannikin?

I did think to describe you the panic in
The redoubtable breast of our master
the mannikin,

And what was the pitch of his mother's
yellowness,

How she turned as a shark to snap the
spare-rib

Clean off, sailors say, from a pearl-
diving Carib,

When she heard, what she called the
flight of the feloness

—But it seems such child's play,
What they said and did with the lady
away!

And to dance on, when we've lost the
music,

Always made me—and no doubt makes
you—sick.

Nay, to my mind, the world's face
looked so stern

As that sweet form disappeared through
the postern,

She that kept it in constant good
humour,

It ought to have stopped; there
seemed nothing to do more.

But the world thought otherwise and
went on,

And my head's one that its spite was
spent on:

Thirty years are fled since that morning,
And with them all my head's adorning.

Nor did the old Duchess die outright,
As you expect, of suppressed spite,

The natural end of every adder
Not suffered to empty its poison-
bladder:

But she and her son agreed, I take it,
That no one should touch on the story
to wake it,

For the wound in the Duke's pride
rankled fiery,

So, they made no search and small
inquiry—

And when fresh gipsies have paid us a
visit, I've

Noticed the couple were never in-
quisitive,

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, [head,

And took, in her place, the household's
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



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Heightened the mellowness of her
cheek's yellowness

(To get on faster) until at last her
Cheek grew to be one master-plaster
Of mucus and fucus from mere use of
ceruse :

In short, she grew from scalp to udder
Just the object to make you shudder.

XVII

You're my friend—

What a thing friendship is, world
without end !

How it gives the heart and soul a stir-
up

As if somebody touched you a glorious
runlet,

And poured out, all lovelily, sparkingly,
sunlit,

Our green Moldavia, the streaky syrup,
Cotnar as old as the time of the Druids—
Friendship may match with that
monarch of fluids ;

Each supple a dry brain, fills you its
ins-and-outs,

Gives your life's hour-glass a shake
when the thin sand doubts

Whether to run on or stop short, and
guarantees

Age is not all made of stark sloth and
arrant ease.

I have seen my little lady once more,
Jacynth, the gipsy, Berold, and the
rest of it, [before ;

For to me spoke the Duke, as I told you
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 thrall.
My father was born here, and I inherit
His fame, a chain he bound his son
with ;

Could I pay in a lump I should prefer it,
But there's no mine to blow up and get
done with :

So, I must stay till the end of the
chapter.

For, as to our middle-age-manners-
adapting,

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 Jacynth
reposes,

And our children all went the way of
the roses :

It's a long lane that knows no turnings.
One needs but little tackle to travel in ;

So, just one stout cloak shall I induce :
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 ? We 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
began 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 it with—as it by accident—

"You never knew then, how it all ended,
 "What fortune good or bad attended
 "The little lady your Queen befriended?"
 —And when that's told me, what's remaining?
 This world's too hard for my explaining.
 The same wise judge of matters equine
 Who still preferred some slim four-year-old
 To the big-boned stock of mighty Berold,
 And, for strong Cotnar, drank French weak wine,
 He also must be such a lady's scorner!
 Smooth Jacob still robs homely Esau:
 Now up, now down, the world's one see-saw.
 —So, I shall find out some snug corner
 Under a hedge, like Orson the wood-knight,
 Turn myself round and bid the world good night;
 And sleep a sound sleep till the trumpet's blowing
 Wakes me (unless priests cheat us laymen)
 To a world where will be no further throwing
 Pearls before swine that can't value them. Amen!

A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL,

SHORTLY AFTER THE REVIVAL OF
 LEARNING IN EUROPE

LET us begin and carry up this corpse,
 Singing together.
 Leave we the common crofts, the vulgar 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, citted to the top,
 Crowded with culture!

All the peaks soar, but one the rest excels;
 Clouds overcome it;
 No, yonder sparkle is the citadel's
 Circling its summit.
 Thither our path lies; wind we up the heights:
 Wait ye the warning?
 Our low life was the level's and the night's;
 He's for the morning.
 Step to a tune, square chests, erect each head,
 'Ware the beholders!
 This is our master, famous calm and dead,
 Borne on our shoulders.

Sleep, crop and herd! sleep, darkling thorpe and croft
 Safe from the weather!
 He, whom we convoy to his grave aloft,
 Singing together,
 He was a man born with thy face and throat,
 Lyric Apollo!
 Long he lived nameless: how should spring take note
 Winter would follow? [gone!
 Till lo, the little touch, and youth was cramped and diminished,
 Moaned he, "New measures, other feet anon!
 "My dancee 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. [parts—
 Image the whole, then execute the
 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 chorists!)
 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-hydropic 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 seel: 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 un-
 perplexed
 Seeking shall find him.
 So, with the throttling hands of death
 at strife,
 Ground he at grammar;
 Still, thro' the rattle, parts of speech
 were rife:
 While he could stammer
 He settled *Hoti's* business—let it be!—
 Properly based *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 purlieus,
 All ye highfliers of the feathered race,
 Swallows and curlews!
 Here's the top-peak; the multitude
 below
 Live, for they can, there:
 This man decided not to Live but
 Know—

Bury this man there ?
 Here—here's his place, where meteors
 shoot, clouds form,
 Lightnings are loosened,
 Stars come and go ! Let joy break
 with the storm,
 Peace let the dew send !
 Lofty designs must close in like effects :
 Loftily lying,
 Leave him—still loftier than the world
 suspects,
 Living and dying.

THE HERETIC'S TRAGEDY

A MIDDLE-AGE INTERLUDE

ROSA MUNDI ; SEU, FULCITE ME
 FLORIBUS. A CONCEIT OF MASTER
 GYSBRECHT, CANON-REGULAR OF
 SAINT JODOCUS-BY-THE-BAR, YPRES
 CITY. CANTUQUE, *Virgilius*. AND
 HATH OFTEN BEEN SUNG AT HOCK-
 TIDE AND FESTIVALS. GAVISUS
 ERAM, *Jessides*.

(It would seem to be a glimpse from
 the burning of Jacques du Bourg-
 Molay, at Paris, A.D. 1314 ; as dis-
 torted by the refraction from Flemish
 brain 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 Aldabrod,
 He sold it to Sultan Saladin :
 Till, caught by Pope Clement, a-buzz-
 ing there,
 Hornet-prince of the mad wasps'
 hive,

B.P.

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 tunbrils 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 bavins that kindle forth-
 with ;

Billets that blaze substantial and
 slow ;

Pine-stump split deftly, dry as pith ;
 Larch-heart that chars to a chalk-
 white glow :

Then up they hoist me John in a chafe,
 Sling him fast like a hog to scorch,
 Spit in his face, then leap back safe,
 Sing " Laudes " and bid clap-to the
 torch.

CHORUS

Laus Deo—who bids clap-to the
 torch.

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 band goes
 round ?

Or threat with his fist, since his arms
 are spliced ?

Or kick with his feet, now his legs are
 bound ?

—Thinks John, I will call upon Jesus Christ.

[*Here one crosseth himself.*]

VI

Jesus Christ—John had bought and sold,

Jesus Christ—John had eaten and drunk ;

To him, the Flesh meant silver and gold.
(*Salvâ reverentiâ.*)

Now it was, "Saviour, bountiful lamb,
"I have roasted thee Turks, though men roast me !

"See thy servant, the plight wherein I am !

"Art thou a saviour ? Save thou me !"

CHORUS

'Tis John the mocker cries, "Save thou me !"

VII

Who maketh God's menace an idle word ?

—Saith, it no more means what it proclaims,

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

For she too prattles of ugly names.

—Saith, he knoweth but one thing,—
what he knows ?

That God is good and the rest is breath ;

Why else is the same styled Sharon's rose ?

Once a rose, ever a rose, he saith.

CHORUS

O, John shall yet find a rose, he saith !

VIII

Alack, there be roses and roses, John !
Some, honied of taste like your leman's tongue :

Some bitter ; for why ? (roast gaily on !)

Their tree struck root in devil's dung.
When Paul once reasoned of righteousness

And of temperance and of judgment to come,

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

CHORUS

What cometh to John of the wicked thumb ?

IX

Ha, ha, John plucketh now at his rose
To rid himself of a sorrow at heart !

Lo,—petal on petal, fierce rays unclosed ;
Anther on anther, sharp spikes out-

start ;
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 fire amain,

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

To the Person, he bought and sold again—

For the Face, with his daily buffets rife—

Feature by feature It took its place :
And his voice, like a mad dog's

choking bark,
At the steady who's of the Judge's

face—
Died. Forth John's soul flared into

the dark.

SUBJOINETH THE ABBOT DEODAET

God help all poor souls lost in the dark !

HOLY-CROSS DAY

ON WHICH THE JEWS WERE FORCED
TO ATTEND AN ANNUAL CHRISTIAN
SERMON IN ROME

[“Now was come about Holy-Cross Day, and now must my lord preach his first sermon to the Jews : as it was of old cared for in the merciful bowels of the Church, that, so to speak, a crumb at least from her conspicuous table here in Rome, should be, though but once yearly, cast to the famishing dogs, under-trampled and bespitten-upon beneath the feet of the guests. And a moving sight in truth, this, of so many of the besotted blind rest and ready-to-perish Hebrews ! now maternally brought—nay, (for He saith, ‘Com-

pel them to come in') haled, as it were, by the head and hair, and against their obstinate hearts, to partake of the heavenly grace. What awakening, what striving with tears, what working of a yeasty conscience! Nor was my lord wanting to himself on so apt an occasion; witness the abundance of conversions which did incontinently reward him: though not to my lord be altogether the glory."—*Diary by the Bishop's Secretary, 1600.*]

What the Jews really said, on thus being driven to church, was rather to this effect:—

I

FEE, faw, fum! bubble and squeak!
Blessedest Thursday's the fat of the week.

Rumble and tumble, sleek and rough,
Stinking and savoury, smug and gruff,
Take the church-road, for the bell's due chime

Gives us the summons—'tis sermon-time!

II

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

Up stumps Solomon—bustling too?
Shame, man! greedy beyond your years
To handsel the bishop's shaving-shears?

Fair play's a jewel! Leave friends in the lurch?

Stand on a line ere you start for the church!

III

Higgledy piggedly, 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.
Hist! square shoulders, settle your thumbs
And buzz for the bishop—here he comes.

IV

Bow, wow, wow—a bone for the dog!
I liken his Grace to an acorned hog.
What, a boy at his side, with the bloom of a lass,
To help and handle my lord's hour-glass!
Didst ever behold so lithe a chine?
His cheek hath laps like a fresh-singed swine.

V

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

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 curtesy—and what comes next?

VI

See to our converts—you doomed black dozen—

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

You seven, that were beggars, will live less sparely;

You took your turn and dipped in the hat,

Got fortune—and fortune gets you; mind that!

VII

Give your first groan—compunction's at work;

And soft! from a Jew you mount to a Turk.

Lo, Micah,—the selfsame beard on chin
He was four times already converted in!

Here's a knife, clip quick—it's a sign of grace—

Or he ruins us all with his hanging-face.

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, woe is me!

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

Were spurred through the Corso, stripped to the waist;

Jew brutes, with sweat and blood well spent

To usher in worthily Christian Lent.

X

It grew, when the hangmen entered our
bounds,
Yelled, prieked 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 op-
pressed 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 withstand Barabbas now !

"Was our outrage sore ? But the
worst we spared,

"To have called these—Christians, had
we dared !

"Let defiance to them pay mistrust of
thee,

"And Rome make amends for Calvary !

XIX

" 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,—
Ones 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
ministrant :
" And if he quickened breath there,
't would 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 [hue,
" In shape, all said, in feature and in
" 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
blossoming
" Of plentifully-watered palms in
spring :
" Since well beseems it, whoso mounts
the throne,
" For beauty, knowledge, strength,
should stand alone,
" And mortals love the letters of his
name."

—Stop ! Have you turned two pages ?
Still the same.
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 worm-
 ing dogs.'
 " Whereof the name in sundry cata-
 logues
 " 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 griped 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 towns-
 men tell.

Ages ago, a lady there,
 At the farthest window facing the East
 Asked, " Who rides by with the royal
 air ? "

The bridesmaids' prattle around her
 ceased ;
 She leaned forth, one on either hand ;
 They saw how the blush of the bride
 increased—

They felt by its beats her heart ex-
 pand—
 As one at each ear and both in a breath
 Whispered, " The Great-Duke Fer-
 dinand."

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 pile which the mighty shadow
 makes.

(For Via Larga is three-parts light,
 But the palace overshadows one,
 Because of a crime which may God
 requite !

To Florence and God the wrong was
 done,
 Through the first republic's murder
 there
 By Cosimo and his cursed son.)

The Duke (with the statue's face in the
 square)
 Turned in the midst of his multitude
 At the bright approach of the bridal
 pair.

Face to face the lovers stood
 A single minute and no more,
 While the bridegroom bent as a man
 subdued—

Bowed till his bonnet brushed the floor—
 For the Duke on the lady a kiss 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
paradise!

"I fly to the Duke who loves me well,
"Sit by his side and laugh at sorrow
"Ere I count another ave-bell.

"'Tis only the coat of a page to borrow,
"And tie my hair in a horse-boy's trim,
"And I save my soul—but not to-
morrow"—

(She checked herself and her eye grew
dim)

"My father tarries to bless my state:
"I must keep it one day more for him.

"Is one day more so long to wait?
"Moreover the Duke rides past, I know;
"We shall see each other, sure as fate."

She turned on her side and slept. Just
so!

So we resolve on a thing and sleep:
So did the lady, ages ago.

That night the Duke said, "Dear or
cheap

"As the cost of this cup of bliss may
prove

"To body or soul, I will drain it deep."

And on the morrow, bold with love,
He beckoned the bridegroom (close on
call,
As his duty bade, by the Duke's
alcove)

And smiled "'T was a very funeral,
"Your lady will think this feast of
ours,—

"A sham to efface, whate'er befall!

"What if we break from the Arno
bowers,

"And try if Petraja, cool and green,
"Cure last night's fault with this
morning's flowers?"

The bridegroom, not a thought to be
seen

On his steady brow and quiet mouth,
Said, "Too much favour for me so
mean!

"But, alas! my lady leaves the South;
"Each wind that comes from the
Apennine

"Is a menace to her tender youth:

"Nor a way exists, the wise opine,
"If she quits her palace twice this year,
"To avert the flower of life's decline."

Quoth the Duke, "A sage and a kindly
fear.

"Moreover Petraja is cold this spring:
"Be our feast to-night as usual here!"

And then to himself—"Which night
shall bring

"Thy bride to her lover's embraces,
fool—

"Or I am the fool, and thou art the
king!

"Yet my passion must wait a night,
nor cool—

"For to-night the Envoy arrives from
France.

"Whose heart I unlock with thyself,
my tool.

"I need thee still and might miss per-
chance.

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

" For I ride—what should I do but ride ?
 " And passing her palace, if I list,
 " May glance at its window—well
 betide ! "

So said, so done : nor the lady missed
 One ray that broke from the ardent
 brow,
 Nor a curl of the lips where the spirit
 kissed.

Be sure that each renewed the vow,
 No morrow's sun should arise and set
 And leave them then as it left them now.

But next day passed, and next day yet,
 With still fresh cause to wait one day
 more
 Ere each leaped over the parapet.

And still, as love's brief morning wore,
 With a gentle start, half smile, half sigh,
 They found love not as it seemed before.

They thought it would work infallibly,
 But not in despite of heaven and earth :
 The rose would blow when the storm
 passed by.

Meantime they could profit in winter's
 dearth
 By store of fruits that supplant the
 rose :
 The world and its ways have a certain
 worth :

And to press a point while these oppose
 Were simple policy ; better wait :
 We lose no friends and we gain no foes.

Meantime, worse fates than a lover's
 fate,
 Who daily may ride and pass and look
 Where his lady watches behind the
 grate !

And she—she watched the square like a
 book

Holding one picture and only one,
 Which daily to find she undertook :

When the picture was reached the book
 was done,

And she turned from the picture at
 night to scheme
 Of tearing it out for herself next sun.

So weeks grew months, years ; gleam
 by gleam
 The glory dropped from their youth
 and love,
 And both perceived they had dreamed
 a dream ;

Which hovered as dreams do, still
 above :
 But who can take a dream for a truth ?
 Oh, hide our eyes from the next
 remove !

One day as the lady saw her youth
 Depart, and the silver thread that
 streaked
 Her hair, and, worn by the serpent's
 tooth,

The brow so puckered, the chin so
 peaked,—
 And wondered who the woman was,
 Hollow-eyed and haggard-cheeked,

Fronting her silent in the glass—
 " Summon here," she suddenly said,
 " Before the rest of my old self pass,

" Him, the Carver, a hand to aid,
 " Who fashions the clay no love will
 change,
 " And fixes a beauty never to fade.

" Let Robbia's craft so apt and strange
 " Arrest the remains of young and fair,
 " And rivet them while the seasons
 range.

" Make me a face on the window there,
 " Waiting as ever, mute the while,
 " My love to pass below in the square !

" And let me think that it may beguile
 " Dreary days which the dead must
 spend

" Down in their darkness under the
 aisle,

" To say, ' What matters it at the end ?
 " ' I did no more while my heart was
 warm

" ' Than does that image, my pale-
 faced friend.'

"Where is the use of the lip's red
charm,
"The heaven 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—

Eyeing 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
escapes I
"Will its record stay?" And he bade
them fetch

Some subtle moulder of brazen shapes—
"Can the soul, the will, die out of a
man

"Ere his body find the grave that
gapes?

"John of Douay shall effect my plan,
"Set me on horseback here aloft,
"Alive, as the crafty sculptor can,

"In the very square I have crossed so
oft:

"That men may admire, when future
suns

"Shall touch the eyes to a purpose soft,

"While the mouth and the brow stay
brave in bronze—

"Admire and say, 'When he was alive
"How he would take his pleasure
once!"

"And it shall go hard but I contrive
"To listen the while, and laugh in my
tomb
"At idleness which aspires to strive."

So! While these wait the trump of
doom,

How do their spirits pass, I wonder,
Nights and days in the narrow room?

Still, I suppose, they sit and ponder
What a gift life was, ages ago,
Six steps out of the chapel yonder.

Only they see not God, I know,
Nor all that chivalry of his,
The soldier-saints who, row on row,

Burn upward each to his point of bliss—
Since, the end of life being manifest,
He had burned his way thro' the world
to this,

I hear you reproach, "But delay was
best,

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

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

As a virtue golden through and through,
Sufficient to vindicate itself
And prove its worth at a moment's
view!

Must a game be played for the sake of
pelf?

Where a button goes, 't were an epigram
To offer the stamp of the very Guelph.

The true has no value beyond the sham:
As well the counter as coin, I submit,
When your table's a hat, and your prize,
a dram.

Stake your counter as boldly every
whit,

Venture as warily, use the same skill,
Do your best, whether winning or
losing it,

If you choose to play!—is my principle.
Let a man contend to the uttermost
For his life's set prize, be it what it will!

The counter our lover's 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 endeav-
our,

To set its struggling passion free
From pride, and vainer ties dissever,
And give herself to me for ever.

But passion sometimes would prevail,
Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain
A sudden thought of one so pale

For love of her, and all in vain:
So, she was come through wind and
rain.

Be sure I looked up at her eyes
Happy and proud; at last I knew
Porphyria worshipped me; surprise
Made my heart swell, and still it
grew

While I debated what to do.
That moment she was mine, mine, fair,
Perfectly pure and good: I found
A thing to do, and all her hair

In one long yellow string I wound
Three times her little throat around,
And strangled her. No pain felt she;
I am quite sure she felt no pain.

As a shut bud that holds a bee,
I warily oped her lids: again
Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.
And I untightened next the tress
About her neck; her cheeks 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 fed,
And I, its love, am gained instead!
Porphyria's love: she guessed not how
Her darling one wish would be heard.
And thus we sit together now,
And all night long we have not stirred,
And yet God has not said a word!

"CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK TOWER CAME"

(See Edgar's song in "LEAR.")

I

My first thought was, he lied in every
word,
That hoary cripple, with malicious
eye
Askance to watch the working of his
lie
On mine, and mouth scarce able to
afford
Suppression of the glee, that pursed and
scored
Its edge, at one more victim gained
thereby.

II

What else should he be set for, with his
staff?
What, save to waylay with his lies,
ensnare
All travellers who might find him
posted there,
And ask the road? I guessed what
skull-like laugh
Would break, what crutch 'gin write
my epitaph
For pastime in the dusty thorough-
fare,

III

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

Hides the Dark Tower. Yet
acquiescingly
I did turn as he pointed : neither pride
Nor hope rekindling at the end descried,
So much as gladness that some end
might be.

IV

For, what with my whole world-wide
wandering,
What with my search drawn out
thro' years, my hope
Dwindled into a ghost not fit to cope
With that obstreperous joy success
would bring,—
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
estrays.

IX

For mark ! no sooner was I fairly found
Pledged to the plain, after a pace or
two,
Than, pausing to throw backward a
last view
O'er the safe road, 't was 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 ; no-
thing 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 ! penury, 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 doek's harsh swarth leaves,
bruised as to baulk
All hope of greenness ? 'tis a brute must
walk
Pashing their life out, with a brute's
intents.

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 gaunt and colloped
neck a-strain,
And shut eyes underneath the rusty
mane ;
Seldom went such grotesqueness with
such woe ;
I never saw a brute I hated so ;
He must be wicked to deserve such
pain.

XV

I shut my eyes and turned them on my
heart.
As a man calls for wine before he
fights,
I asked one draught of earlier,
happier sights,
Ere fitly I could hope to play my part.
Think first, fight afterwards—the
soldier's art :
One taste of the old time sets all to
rights.

XVI

Not it ! I fancied Cuthbert's reddening
face
Beneath its garniture of curly gold,
Dear fellow, till I almost felt him fold
An arm in mine to fix me to the place,
That way he used. Alas, one night's
disgrace !
Out went my heart's new fire and
left it cold.

XVII

Giles then, the soul of honour—there he
stands
Frank as ten years ago when knighted
first.
What honest men should dare (he
said) he durst.
Good—but the scene shifts—faugh !
what hangman hands
Pin to his breast a parchment ? His
own bands
Read it. Poor traitor, spit upon and
curs !

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 dis-
mal flat
Came to arrest my thoughts and
change their train.

XIX

A sudden little river crossed my path
As unexpected as a serpent comes.
No sluggish tide congenial to the
glooms ;
This, as it frothed by, might have been
a bath
For the fiend's glowing hoof—to see
the wrath
Of its black eddy bespate with flakes
and spumes.

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, deterred
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 fight must so have seemed in that
fell cirque.
What penned them there, with all
the plain to choose?
No foot-print leading to that horrid
mews,
None out of it. Mad brewage set to
work
Their brains, no doubt, like galley-
slaves the Turk
Pits for his pastime, Christians
against Jews.

XXIV

And more than that—a furlong on—
why, there!
What bad use was that engine for,
that wheel,
Or brake, not wheel—that harrow fit
to reel
Men's bodies out like silk? with all the
air
Of Tophet's tool, on earth left unaware,
Or brought to sharpen its rusty teeth
of steel.

XXV

Then came a bit of stubbed ground,
once a wood,
Next a marsh, it would seem, and
now mere earth
Desperate and done with; (so a fool
finds mirth,
Makes a thing and then mars it, till his
mood

Changes and off he goes!) within a
rood —
Bog, clay and rubble, sand and stark
black dearth.

XXVI

Now blotches rankling, coloured gay
and grin,
Now patches where some leanness of
the soil's
Broke into moss or substances like
boils;
Then came some palsied oak, a cleft in
him
Like a distorted mouth that splits its
rim
Gaping at death, and dies while it
recoils.

XXVII

And just as far as ever from the end!
Nought in the distance but the
evening, nought
To point my footstep further! At
the thought,
A great black bird, Apollyon's bosom-
friend,
Sailed past, nor beat his wide wing
dragon-penned
That brushed my cap—perchance
the guide I sought.

XXVIII

For, looking up, aware I somehow grew,
'Spite of the dusk, the plain had
given place
All round to mountains—with such
name to grace
Mere ugly heights and heaps now
stolen in view.
How thus they had surprised me,—
solve it, you!
How to get from them was no clearer
case.

XXIX

Yet half I seemed to 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,
 Dotard, a-dozing at the very nonce,
 After a life spent training for the
 sight !

XXXI

What in the midst lay but the Tower
 itself ?
 The round squat turret, blind as the
 fool's heart,
 Built of brown stone, without a coun-
 terpart
 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.*"

A SOUL'S TRAGEDY

ACT FIRST,

BEING WHAT WAS CALLED THE
 POETRY OF CHIAPPINO'S LIFE :
 AND ACT SECOND, ITS PROSE.

London, 1846.

PERSONS.

LUITOLFO and EULALIA, betrothed lovers. | OGNIBEN, the Pope's Legate.
 CHIAPPINO, their friend. | Citizens of Faenza.

TIME, 15—. PLACE, FAENZA.

ACT I

Inside LUITOLFO'S house. CHIAPPINO,
 EULALIA.

Eu. What is it keeps Luitolfo ?
 Night's fast falling,

And 't was 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 my-
self

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 [sel

I dare to be ashamed of, and thy coun-
Would die along my coward lip, I
know.

But I do turn to thee. This craven
tongue,

These features which refuse the soul its
way,

Reclaim thou ! Give me truth—
truth, power to speak

—And after be sole present to approve
The spoken truth ! Or, stay, that
spoken truth,

Who knows but you, too, may ap-
prove ?

Eu. Ah, well—

Keep silence then, Chiappino !

Ch. You would hear,
You shall now,—why the thing we
please to style

My gratitude to you and all your friends
For service done me, is just gratitude
So much as yours was service—and no
more.

I was born here, so was Luitolfo ; both
At one time, much with the same cir-
cumstance

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. " Be-
cause," replies the world

To its complacent self, " these play-
fellows,

" Who took at church the holy-water
drop

" Each from the other's finger, and so
forth,—

" Were of two moods : Luitolfo was
the proper

" Friend-making, everywhere friend-
finding soul,

" Fit for the sunshine, so, it followed
him.

" A happy-tempered bringer of the best
" Out of the worst ; who bears with
what 's past cure,

" And puts so good a face on 't—wisely
passive

"Where action's fruitless, while he remedies

"In silence what the foolish rail against;

"A man to smooth such natures as parade

"Of opposition must exasperate;

"No general gauntlet-gatherer for the weak

"Against the strong, yet over-scrupulous

"At lucky junctures; one who won't forego

"The after-battle work of binding wounds,

"Because, forsooth he'd have to bring himself

"To side with wound-inflictors for their leave!"

—Why do you gaze, nor help me to repeat

What comes so glibly from the common mouth,

About Luitolfo and his so-styled friend?

Eu. Because, that friend's sense is obscured . . .

Ch. I thought

You would be readier with the other half

Of the world's story, my half! Yet, 't is true,

For all the world does say it. Say your worst!

True, I thank God, I ever said "you sin,"

When a man did sin: if I could not say it,

I glared it at him; if I could not glare it,

I prayed against him; then my part seemed over.

God's may begin yet: so it will, I trust.

Eu. If the world outraged you, did we?

Ch. What 's "me"

That you use well or ill? It 's man, in me,

All your successes are an outrage to, You all, whom sunshine follows, as you say!

Here 's our Faenza birthplace; they send here

A provost from Ravenna: how he rules,

You can at times be eloquent about.

"Then, end his rule!"—"Ah yes, one stroke does that!

"But patience under wrong works slow and sure.

"Must violence still bring peace forth? He, beside,

"Returns so blandly one's obeisance! ah—

"Some latent virtue may be lingering yet,

"Some human sympathy which, once excite,

"And all the lump were leavened quietly:

"So, no more talk of striking, for this time!"

But I, as one of those he rules, won't bear

These pretty takings-up and layings-down

Our cause, just as you think occasion suits.

Enough of earnest, is there? You'll play, will you?

Diversify your tactics, give submission, Obsequiousness and flattery a turn,

While we die in our misery patient deaths? [first:

We all are outraged then, and I the I, for mankind, resent each shrug and

smirk,

Each beck and bend, each . . all you do and are,

I hate!

Eu. We share a common censure, then.

'T is well you have not poor Luitolfo's part

Nor mine to point out in the wide offence.

Ch. Oh, shall I let you so escape me, lady?

Come, on your own ground, lady,—from yourself,

(Leaving the people's wrong, which most is mine)

What have I got to be so gratefu' for? These three last fines, no doubt, one on the other

Paid by Luitolfo?

Eu. Shame, Chiappino!

Ch. Shame

Fall presently on who deserves it most!

—Which is to see. He paid my fines —my friend,

Your prosperous smooth lover presently,

Then, scarce your wooer,—soon, your
husband : well—
I loved you.

Eu. Hold !

Ch. You knew it, years ago.
When my voice faltered and my eye
grew dim
Because you gave me your silk mask to
hold—

My voice that greatens when there 's
need to curse

The people's Provost to their heart's
content,

—My eye, the Provost, who bears all
men's eyes,

Banishes now because he cannot
bear,—

You knew . . . but you do your parts—
my part, I :

So be it ! You flourish, I decay : all's
well.

Eu. I hear this for the first time.

Ch. The fault 's there ?

Then my days spoke not, and my
nights of fire

Were voiceless ? Then the very heart
may burst

Yet all prove nought, because no minc-
ing 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 preg-
nant wit ;

See how your words come from you in a
crowd !

Luitolfo 's first to place you o'er him-
self

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 must be, you are wronged, and that
the wrongs

Luitolfo pities . . .

Ch. —You too pity ? Do !

B P.

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 whate'er
he would

—Must have him load me with his
benefits

For fortune's fiercest stroke ?

Eu. Justice to him

That 's now entreating, at his risk per-
haps,

Justice for you ! Did he once call
those acts [fits ?

Of simple friendship—bounties, bene-
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 :
why spurn

" A trifle out of superfluity ?
" He had forgotten he had done as
much."

So had not I ! Henceforth, try as I
could

To take him at his word, there stood by
you

My benefactor ; who might speak and
laugh

And urge his nothings, even banter me
Before you—but my tongue was tied.
A dream!

Let 's wake: your husband . . . how
you shake at that!

Good—my revenge!

Eu. Why should I shake? What
forced

Or for me to be Luitolfo's bride?

Ch. There 's my revenge, that no-
thing 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, disl
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, by
chance,

This morning to our Provost; so, ere
night

I leave the city on pain of death. And
now

On my account there 's gallant 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:

"'T is vain contending; I would
better go."

And I do go—and straight to you he
turns

Light of a load; and ease of that per-
mits

His visage to repair the natural bland
Economy, sore broken late to suit

My discontent. Thus, all are pleased
—you, with him,

He with himself, and all of you with me
—"Who," say the citizens, "had done
far better

"In letting people sleep upon their
woes,

"If not possessed with talent to relieve
them

"When once awake;—but then I
had," they'll say,

"Doubtless some unknown compensat-
ing pride

"In what I did; and as I seem content
"With ruining myself, why, so should
they be."

And so they are, and so be with his
prize

The devil, when he gets them speedily!
Why does not your Luitolfo come? I
long

To don this cloak and take the Lugo
path.

It seems you never loved me, then?

Eu. Chiappino!

Ch. Never?

Eu. Never.

Ch. That's sad. Say what I might,
There was no help from being sure this
while

You loved me. Love like mine must
have return,

I thought: no river starts but to some
sea.

And had you loved me, I could soon
devise

Some specious reason why you stifled
love,

Some fancied self-denial on your part,
Which made you choose Luitolfo; so,

excepting

From the wide condemnation of all
here,

One woman. Well, the other dream
may break!

If I knew any heart, as mine loved you,
Loved me, though in the vilest breast

't were lodged,
I should, I think, be forced to love
again:

Else there 's no right nor reason in the
world.

Eu. "If you knew," say you,—but
I did not know.

That 's where you're blind, Chiappino!
—a disease

Which if I may remove, I'll not repent

The listening to. You cannot, will not, see

How, place you but in every circumstance

Of us, you are just now indignant at, You'd be as we.

Ch. I should be? . . . that, again! I, to my friend, my country and my love,

Be as Luitolfo and these Faentines?

Eu. As we.

Ch. Now, I'll say something to remember.

I trust in nature for the stable laws
Of beauty and utility—Spring shall plant,

And Autumn garner to the end of time:
I trust in God—the right shall be the right

And other than the wrong, while he endures:

I trust in my own scul, that can perceive [good

The outward and the inward, nature's
And God's: so, seeing these men and myself,

Having a right to speak, thus do I speak.—

I'll not curse—God bears with them, well may I—

But I—protest against their claiming me.

I simply say, if that 's allowable,
I would not (broadly) do as they have done.

—God curse this townful of born slaves,
bred slaves,

Branded into the blood and bone,
slaves! Curse

Whoever loves, above his liberty,
House, land or life! and . . .

[*A knocking without.*
—bless my hero-friend,

Luitolfo!

Eu. How he knocks!

Ch. The peril, lady!

"Chiappino, I have run a risk—a risk!

"For when I prayed the Provost (he 's my friend)

"To grant you a week's respite of the sentence

"That confiscates your goods, exiles yourself,

"He shrugged his shoulder—I say, shrugged it! Yes,

"And fright of that drove all else from my head.

"Here 's a good purse of *scudi*: off with you,

"Lest of that shrug come what God only knows!

"The *scudi*—friend, they're trash—no thanks, I beg!

"Take the north gate,—for San Vitale's suburb,

"Whose double taxes you appealed against,

"In discomposure at your ill-success

"Is apt to stone you: there, there—only go!

"Beside, Eulalla here looks sleepily.

"Shake . . . o' you hurt me, so you squeeze m' wrist!"

—Is it not thus you'll speak, adventurous friend?

[*As he opens the door, LUITOLFO rushes in, his garments disordered.*

Eu. Luitolfo! Blood?

Luit. There's more—and more of it! Eulalia—take the garment! No—you, friend!

You take it and the blood from me—you dare!

Eu. Oh, who has hurt you? where's the wound?

Ch. "Who," say you? The man with many a touch of virtue yet!

The Provost's friend has proved too frank of speech,

And this comes of it. Miserable hound! This comes of temporizing, as I said!

Here's fruit of your smooth speeches and soft looks!

Now see my way! As God lives, I 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. 'T is through me they reach you, then!

Friend, seem the man you are! Lock arms—that 's right!

Now tell me what you've done; explain how you

That still professed forbearance, still preached peace,

Could bring yourself . . .

Luit. What was peace for, Chiappino?

I tried peace: did that promise, when peace failed,

Strife should not follow? All my peaceful days

Were just the prelude to a day like this. I cried "You call me 'friend': save my true friend!

"Save him, or lose me!"

Ch. But you never said You meant to tell the Provost thus and thus.

Luit. Why should I say it? What else did I mean?

Ch. Well? He persisted?

Luit. —"Would so order it You should not trouble him too soon again."

I saw a meaning in his eye and lip; I poured my heart's store of indignant words

Out on him: then—I know not! He retorted,

And I . . . some staff lay there to hand—I think

He bade his servants thrust me out—I struck . . .

Ah, they come! Fly you, save yourselves, you two!

The dead back-weight of the beheading axe!

The glowing trip-hook, thumbscrews and the gadge!

Eu. They do come! Torches in the Place! Farewell, [us—

Chiappino! You can work no good to 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—

He obeys he knows not how. Then, if I must— [gate?

Answer me! Do you know the Lugo *Eu.* The north-west gate, over the bridge?

Luit. I know.

Ch. Well, there—you are not frightened? all my route

Is traced in that: at Venice you escape Their power. Eulalia, I am master here!

[*Shouts from without. He pushes out LUITOLFO, who complies mechanically.*

In time! Nay, help me with him—so! He's gone.

Eu. What have you done? On you, perchance, all know

The Provost's hater, will men's vengeance fall

As our accomplice.

Ch. Mere accomplice? 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 'T is not a very hard thing so to die.

My cousin of the pale-blue tearful eyes, Poor Cesca, suffers more from one day's life

With the stern husband; Tisbe's heart goes forth

Each evening after that wild son of hers, To track his thoughtless footstep through the streets:

How easy for them both to die like this !
I am not sure that I could live as they.

Ch. Here they come, crowds ! They
pass the gate ? Yes !—No !—
One torch is in the courtyard. Here
flock all.

Eu. At least Luitolfo has escaped.
What cries !

Ch. If they would drag one to the
market-place,
One might speak there !

Eu. List, list !

Ch. They mount the steps.

Enter the Populace.

Ch. I killed the Provost !

The Populace [speaking together.] 'T
was Chiappino, friends !

Our saviour ! The best man at last as
first !

He who first made us feel what chains
we wore,

He also strikes the blow that shatters
them,

He at last saves us—our best citizen !

—Oh, have you only courage to speak
now ?

My eldest son was christened a year
since

"Cino" to keep Chiappino's name in
mind—

Cino, for shortness merely, you
observe !

The city 's in our hands. The guards
are fled.

Do you, the cause of all, come down—
come up—

Come out to counsel us, our chief, our
king,

Whate'er rewards you ! Choose your
own reward !

The peril over, its reward begins !

Come and harangue us in the market-
place !

Eu. Chiappino ?

Ch. Yes—I understand your eyes !
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 suc-
ceeds,

We easily shall make him full amends :
And meantime—if we save them as
they pray,

And justify the deed by its effects ?

Eu. You would, for worlds, you had
denied at once.

Ch. I know my own intention, be
assured !

All 's well. Precede us, fellow-citizens !

ACT II

*The Market-place. LUITOLFO in dis-
guise mingling with the Populace
assembled opposite the Provost's
Palace.*

1st 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 sup-
pressed here, exactly a month ago, by
our illustrious fellow-citizen, thrice-
noble saviour, and new Provost that is
like to be, this very morning,—Chiap-
pino !

Luit. He the new Provost ?

2nd. Up those steps will he go, and
beneath yonder pillar stand, while Og-
niben, the Pope's Legate from Raven-
na, reads the new dignitary's title to
the people, according to established
custom : for which reason, there is the
assemblage you inquire about.

Luit. Chiappino—the late Provost's
successor ? Impossible ! But tell me
of that presently. What I would
know first of all is, wherefore Luitolfo
must so necessarily have been killed
on that memorable night ?

3rd. 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 un-
reasonably fearing the indignation of
an aroused and liberated people, fled
precipitately. He may have got trod-
den to death in the press at the south-
east gate, when the Provost's guards
fled through it to Ravenna, with their
wounded master,—if he did not rather
hang himself under some hedge.

Luit. Or why not simply have lain
perdue in some quiet corner,—such as

San Cassiano, where his estate was,—receiving daily intelligence from some sure friend, meanwhile, as to the turn matters were taking here—how, for instance, the Provost was not dead, after all, only wounded—or, as to-day's news would seem to prove, how Chiappino was not Brutus the Elder, after all, only the new Provost—and thus Luitolfo be enabled to watch a favourable opportunity for returning? Might it not have been so?

3rd. Why, he may have taken that are of himself, certainly, for he came of a cautious stock. I'll tell you how his uncle, just such another gingerly treader on tiptoes with finger on lip,—how he met his death in the great plague-year: *dico vobis!* Hearing that the seventeenth house in a certain street was infected, he calculates to pass it in safety by taking plentiful breath, say, when he shall arrive at the eleventh house; then scouring by, holding that breath, till he be got so far on the other side as number twenty-three, and thus elude the danger.—And so did he begin; but, as he arrived at thirteen, we will say,—thinking to improve on his precaution by putting up a little prayer to St. Nepomucene of Prague, this exhausted so much of his lungs' reserve, that at sixteen it was clean spent,—consequently at the fatal seventeen he inhaled with a vigour and persistence enough to suck you any latent venom out of the heart of a stone—Ha, ha!

Luit. [Aside.] (If I had not lent that man the money he wanted last spring, I should fear this bitterness was attributable to me.) Luitolfo is dead then, one may conclude?

3rd. 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.

1st. (Our friend has the bile! After all, I do not dislike finding somebody vary a little this general gape of admiration at Chiappino's glorious qualities.) Pray, how much may you know of what has taken place in Faenza since that memorable night?

Luit. It is most to the purpose, that I know Chiappino to have been by profession a hater of that very office of Provost, you now charge him with proposing to accept

1st. Sir, I'll tell you. That night was indeed memorable. Up we rose, a mass of us, men, women, children; out fled the guards with the body of the tyrant; we were to defy the world: but, next grey morning, "What will Rome say?" began everybody. You know we are governed by Ravenna, which is governed by Rome. And quietly into the town, by the Ravenna road, comes on muleback a portly personage, Ogniben by name, with the quality of Pontifical Legate; trots briskly through the streets humming a "*Cur fremuere gentes,*" and makes directly for the Provost's Palace—there it faces you. "One Messer Chiappino is your leader? I have known three-and-twenty leaders of revolts!" (laughing gently to himself)—"Give me the help of your arm from my mule to yonder steps under the pillar—So! And now, my revolters and good friends, what do you want? The guards burst into Ravenna last night bearing your wounded Provost; and, having had a little talk with him, I take on myself to come and try appease the disorderliness, before Rome, hearing of it, resort to another method: 't is I come, and not another, from a certain love I confess to, of composing differences. So do you understand, you are about to experience this unheard-of tyranny from me, that there shall be no heading nor hanging, no confiscation nor exile: I insist on your simply pleasing yourselves. And now, pray, what does please you? To live without any government at all? Or having decided for one, to see its minister murdered by the first of your body that chooses to find himself wronged, or disposed for reverting to first principles and a justice anterior to all institutions.—and so will you carry matters, that the rest of the world must at length unite and put down such a den of wild beasts? As for vengeance on what has just taken place,—once for all, the wounded man assures me he cannot conjecture who struck him; and this

so earnestly, that one may be sure he knows perfectly well what intimate acquaintance could find admission to speak with him late last evening. I come not for vengeance therefore, but from pure curiosity to hear what you will do next." And thus he ran on, on, easily and volubly, till he seemed to arrive quite naturally at the praise of law, order, and paternal government by somebody from rather a distance. All our citizens were in the snare, and about to be friends with so congenial an adviser; but that Chiappino suddenly stood forth, spoke out indignantly, and set things right again.

Luit. Do you see? I recognise him there!

3rd. Ay but, mark you, at the end of Chiappino's longest period in praise of a pure republic,—“And by whom do I desire such a government should be administered, perhaps, but by one like yourself?”—returns the Legate: thereupon speaking for a quarter of an hour together, on the natural and only legitimate government by the best and wisest. And it should seem there was soon discovered to be no such vast discrepancy at bottom between this and Chiappino's theory, place but each in its proper light. “Oh, are you there?” quoth Chiappino: “Ay, in that, I agree,” returns Chiappino: and so on.

Luit. But did Chiappino cede at once to this?

1st. 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 righthand (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 lefthand: 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, for you are found delivering an opinion like this! Why, what is this perpetual yearning to exceed, to subdue, to be better than, and a king over, one's fellows,—all that you so disclaim,—but the very tendency yourself are most proud of, and under another form, would oppose to it,—only in a lower stage of manifestation? You don't want to be vulgarly superior to your fellows after their poor fashion—to have me hold solemnly up your gown's tail, or hand you an express of the last importance from the Pope, with all these bystanders noticing how unconcerned you look the while: but neither does our gaping friend, the bungess 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 . . .

1st. Why that, a month gone by, the indomitable Chiappino, marrying as he will Luitolfo's love—at all events succeeding to Luitolfo's wealth—becomes the first inhabitant of Faenza, and a proper aspirant to the provostship; which we assemble here to see conferred on him this morning. The Legate's Guard to clear the way! He will follow presently.

Luit. (withdrawing a little.) I understand the drift of Eulalia's communications less than ever. Yet she surely said, in so many words, that Chiappino was in urgent danger: wherefore, disregarding her injunction to continue in my retreat and await the result of, what she called, some experi-

ment yet in process—I hastened here without her leave or knowledge : what could I else ? But if this they say be true—if it were for such a purpose, she and Chiappino kept me away . . . Oh, no, no ! I must confront him and her before I believe this of them. And at the word, see !

Enter CHIAPPINO and EULALIA.

Eu. We part here, then ? The change in your principles would seem to be complete.

Ch. Now, why refuse to see that in my present course I change no principles, only re-adapt them and more adroitly ? I had despaired of, what you may call the material instrumentality of life ; of ever being able to rightly operate on mankind through such a deranged machinery as the existing modes of government : but now, if I suddenly discover how to inform these perverted institutions with fresh purpose, bring the functionary limbs once more into immediate communication with, and subjection to, the soul I am about to bestow on them—do you see ? Why should one desire to invent, as long as it remains possible to renew and transform ? When all further hope of the old organization shall be extinct, then, I grant you, it may be time to try and create another.

Eu. And there being discoverable some hope yet in the hitherto much-abused old system of absolute government by a Provost here, you mean to take your time about endeavouring to realize those visions of a perfect State, we once heard of ?

Ch. Say, I would fain realize my conception of a palace, for instance, and that there is, abstractedly, but a single way of erecting one perfectly. Here, in the market-place is my allotted building-ground ; here I stand without a stone to lay, or a labourer to help me,—stand, too, during a short day of life, close on which the night comes. On the other hand, circumstances suddenly offer me (turn and see it) the old Provost's house to experiment upon—ruinous, if you please, wrongly constructed at the beginning, and ready to tumble now. But materials abound, a crowd of workmen

offer their services ; here, exists yet a Hall of Audience of originally noble proportions, there a Guest-chamber of symmetrical design enough : and I may restore, enlarge, abolish or unite these to heart's content. Ought I not make the best of such an opportunity, rather than continue to gaze disconsolately with folded arms on the flat pavement here, while the sun goes slowly down, never to rise again ? Since you cannot understand this nor me, it is better we should part as you desire.

Eu. So, the love breaks away too !

Ch. No, rather my soul's capacity for love widens—needs more than one object to content it,—and, being better instructed, will not persist in seeing all the component parts of love in what is only a single part,—nor in finding that so many and so various loves, are all united in the love of a woman,—manifest uses in one instrument, as the savage has his sword, sceptre and idol, all in one club-stick. Love is a very compound thing. The intellectual part of my love I shall give to men, the mighty dead or the illustrious living ; and determine to call a mere sensual instinct by as few fine names as possible. What do I lose ?

Eu. Nay, I only think, what do I lose ? and, one more word—which shall complete my instruction—does friendship go too ? What of Luitolfo, the author of your present prosperity ?

Ch. How the author ?—

Eu. That blow now called yours . . .

Ch. Struck without principle or purpose, as by a blind natural operation : yet to which all my thought and life directly and advisedly tended. I would have struck it, and could not : he would have done his utmost to avoid striking it, yet did so. I dispute his right to that deed of mine—a final action with him, from the first effect of which he fled away,—a mere first step with me, on which I base a whole mighty superstructure of good to follow. Could he get good from it ?

Eu. So we profess, so we perform !

Enter OGNIBEN. EULALIA stands apart.

Ogni. I have seen three-and-twenty leaders of revolts ! By your leave, sir !

Perform? What does the lady say of performing?

Ch. Only the trite saying, that we must not trust profession, only performance.

Ogni. She'll not say that, sir, when she knows you longer; you'll instruct her better. Ever judge of men by their 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 winekegs 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 . . .

Ogni. 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?

Ogni. Why, look you, when they tax you with tergiversation or duplicity, you may answer—you begin to perceive that, when all 's done and said, both great parties in the State, the

advocators of change in the present system of things, and the opponents of it, patriot and anti-patriot, are found working together for the common good; and that in the midst of their efforts for and against its progress, the world somehow or other still advances: to which result they contribute in equal proportions, those who spend their life in pushing it onward, as those who give theirs to the business of pulling it back. Now, if you found the world stand still between the opposite forces, and were glad, I should conceive you: but it steadily advances, you rejoice to see! 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, blows from which he saves me—I thank the antagonist equally!" Moreover, you may enlarge on the loss of the edge of party-animosity with age and experience . . .

Ch. And naturally time must wear off such asperities: the bitterest adversaries get to discover certain points of similarity between each other, common sympathies—do they not?

Ogni. Ay, had the young David but sat first to dine on his cheeses with the Philistine, he had soon discovered an abundance of such common sympathies. 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 slung the stone, cut off the giant's head, made a spoil of it, and after ate his cheeses alone, with the better appetite, for all I can learn. My friend, as you, with a quickened eye-sight, go on discovering, much good on the worse side, remember that the same process should 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 wider I may extend its action.” I desire to be able, with a quickened eye-sight, to descry beauty in corruption where others see foulness only: but I hope I shall also continue to see a redoubled beauty in the higher forms of matter, where already everybody sees no foulness at all. I must retain, too, my old power of selection, and choice of appropriation, to apply to such new gifts; else they only dazzle instead of enlightening me. God has his archangels and consorts with them: though he made too, and intimately sees what is good in, the worm. Observe, I speak only as you profess to think and so ought to speak: I do justice to your own principles, that is all.

Ch. But you very well know that the two parties do, on occasion, assume each other's characteristics. What more disgusting, for instance, than to see how promptly the new emancipated slave will adopt, in his own favour, the very measures of precaution, which pressed soreliest on himself as institutions of the tyranny he has just escaped from? Do the classes, hitherto without opinion, get leave to express it? there follows a confederacy immediately, from which—exercise your individual right and dissent, and woe be to you!

Ogni. And a journey over the sea to you! That is the generous way. Cry—“Emancipated slaves, the first excess, and off I go!” The first time a poor devil, who has been bastinadoed steadily his whole life long, finds himself let alone and able to legislate, so, begins pettishly, while he rubs his soles, “Woe be to whoever brings anything in the shape of a stick this way!”—you, rather than give up the very innocent pleasure of carrying one to switch flies with,—you go away, to everybody's sorrow. Yet you were quite reconciled to staying at home while the governors used to pass, every now and then, some such edict as “Let no man indulge in owning a stick which

is not thick enough to chastise our slaves, if need require!” Well, there are pre-ordained hierarchies among us, and a profane vulgar subjected to a different law altogether; yet I am rather sorry you should see it so clearly: for, do you know what is to—all but save you at the Day of Judgment, all you men of genius? It is this; that, while you generally began by pulling down God, and went on to ‘the end of your life, in one effort at setting up your own genius in his place,—still, the last, bitterest concession wrung with the utmost unwillingness from the experience of the very loftiest of you, was invariably—would one think it?—that the rest of mankind, down to the lowest of the mass, stood not, nor ever could stand, just on a level and equality with yourselves. That will be a point in the favour of all such, I hope and believe.

Ch. Why, men of genius are usually charged, I think, with doing just the reverse; and at once acknowledging the natural inequality of mankind, by themselves participating in the universal craving after, and deference to, the civil distinctions which represent it. You wonder they pay such undue respect to titles and badges of superior rank.

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 pceevish 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 holder 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 indeed, to do something with! But lo, how we keep the good people waiting! I only desired to do justice to the noble sentiments which animate you, and which you are too modest to duly enforce. Come, to our main business: shall we ascend the steps? I am going to propose you for Provost to the people; they know your antecedents, and will accept you with a joyful unanimity: whereon I confirm their choice. Rouse up! Are you nerving yourself to an effort? Beware the disaster of Messere 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 effect. See the good people crowding about yonder palace steps—which we may have to ascend, after all! My 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.

Eu. I was determined to justify my choice, Chiappino; to let Luitolfo's

nature vindicate itself. Henceforth we are undivided, whatever be our fortune.

Ogn. 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 enduring till we have time for really becoming so of ourselves, without their aid; when they leave us. The sweetest child we

all smile on for his pleasant want of the whole world to break up, or suck in his mouth, seeing no other good in it—would be rudely handled by that world's inhabitants, if he retained those angelic infantine desires when he had grown six feet high, black and bearded. But, little by little, he sees fit to forego claim after claim on the world, puts up with a less and less share of its good as his proper portion; and when the octogenarian asks barely a sup of gruel and a fire of dry sticks, and thanks you as for his full allowance and right in the common good of life,—hoping nobody may murder him,—he who began by asking and expecting the whole of us to bow down in worship to him,—why, I say he is advanced, far onward, very far, nearly out of sight like our friend Chiappino yonder. And now—(Ay, good-bye to you! He turns round the north-west gate: going to Lugo again? Good-bye!)—And now give thanks to God, the keys of the Provost's palace to me, and yourselves to profitable meditation at home! I have known *Four-and-twenty* leaders of revolts.

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.

LURIA, a Moor, Commander of the Florentine Forces.	BRACCIO, Commissary of the Republic of Florence.
HUSAIN, a Moor, his friend.	JACOPO (LAFO), his Secretary.
PUCCIO, the old Florentine Commander, now LURIA's Chief Officer.	TIBURZIO, Commander of the Pisans.
	DOMIZIA, a noble Florentine Lady.

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 soldiership 's our warrant, sir:
So, while my secretary ends his task,
Have out two horsemen, by the open roads,
To post with it to Florence!
- Puc. [returning the paper.] All seems here;
Unless . . . Ser Braccio, 't is 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,
'T were 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;
'T is 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, such slaves are they ?

If they pronounce this sentence as you bid,

Declare the treason, claim its penalty,—

And sudden out of all the blaze of life,
On the best minute of his brightest day,

From that adoring army at his back,
Thro' Florence' joyous crowds before

his face,
Into the dark you beckon Luria . . .

Brac.

Then—

Why, Lapo, when the fighting-people vaunt,

We of the other craft and mystery,

May we not smile demure, the danger past ?

Sec.

Sir, no, no, no,—the danger, and your spirit

At watch and ward ? Where 's danger on your part,

With that thin flitting instantaneous steel

'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 lynxskins, yonder ; hold his bared black arms

Into the sun from the tent-opening ; laugh

When his horse drops the forage from his teeth

And reighs 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 the Signory . . .

" Bury this trial in your breast for ever,

" Blot it from things or done or dreamed about !

" So Luria shall receive his meed to-day
" With no suspicion what reverse was

near,—

" As if no meteoric finger hushed
" The doom-word just on the de-

stroyer's lip,

" Motioned him off, and let life's sun fall straight."

Brac. [*looks to the wall of the tent.*]
Did he draw that ?

Sec.

With charcoal, when the watch

Made the report at midnight ; Lady Domizia

Spoke of the unfinished Duomo, you remember ;

That is his fancy how a Moorish front
Might join to, and complete, the body,

—a sketch,—

And again where the cloak hangs, yonder in the shadow.

Brac. He loves that woman.

Sec.

She is sent the spy

Of Florence,—spies on you as you on him :

Florence, if only for Domizia's sake,

Is surely safe. What shall I write?
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
 return,
 Have ever proved too much for Floren-
 tines,
 Even for the best and bravest of our-
 selves—
 If in the struggle when the soldier's
 sword
 Should sink its point before the statist's
 pen,
 And the calm head replace the violent
 hand,
 Virtue on virtue still have fallen away
 Before ambition with unvarying fate.
 Till Florence' self at last in bitterness
 Be forced to own such falls the natural
 end,
 And, sparing further to expose her sons
 To a vain strife and profitless disgrace,
 Declare, "The foreigner, one not my
 child,
 "Shall henceforth lead my troops,
 reach height by height
 "The glory, then descend into the
 shame;
 "So shall rebellion be less guilt in him,
 "And punishment the easier task for
 me."
 —If on the best of us such brand she set,
 Can I suppose an utter alien here,
 This Luria, our inevitable foe,
 Confessed a mercenary and a Moor,
 Born free from many ties that bind the
 rest
 Of common faith in Heaven or hope on
 earth,
 No past with us, no future,—such a
 spirit
 Shall hold the path from which our
 staunchest broke,
 Stand firm where every famed precursor
 fell?
 My Lapo, I will frankly say, these
 proofs
 So duly noted of the man's intent,
 Are for the doting fools at home, not me.

The charges here, they may be true or
 false:
 —What is set down? Errors and
 oversights,
 A dallying interchange of courtesies
 With Pisa's General,—all that, hour by
 hour,
 Puccio's pale discontent has furnished
 us,
 Of petulant speeches, inconsiderate
 acts,
 Now overhazard, overcaution now;
 Even that he loves this lady who be-
 lieves
 She outwits Florence, and whom Flor-
 ence posted
 By my procurement here, to spy on me,
 Lest I one minute lose her from my
 sight—
 She who remembering her whole House's
 fall,
 That nest of traitors strangled in the
 birth,
 Now labours to make Luria (poor de-
 vice
 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: [live
 On what I know must be, yet while I
 Shall never be, because I live and know.
 Brute force shall not rule Florence!
 Intellect
 May rule her, bad or good as chance
 supplies,—
 But intellect it shall be, pure if bad,
 And intellect's tradition so kept up!
 Till the good come—'t was 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 swords-
man's-gear

(Fetched from the camp where, at their
foolish best,

When all was done they frightened no-
body)

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!

Lur. [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 't
the thick

Of your duties, doubtless, while we
idlers sat . . .

Lur. No—in that paper,—it was in
that paper

What you were saying!

Brac. Oh—my day's 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,

H would be forced to set about an-
other,

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,

B.P.

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 Flor-
entines!

No crowning deed, 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 suc-

cess,

Delay—best speed,—half loss, at times,
—whole gain:

They want results—as if it were their
fault!

And you, with warmest wish to be my
friend,

Will not be able now to simply say
"Your servant has performed his task

—enough!

"You ordered, he has executed: good!

"Now walk the streets in holiday attire,
"Congratulate your friends, till noon

strikes fierce,

"Then form bright groups beneath the
Duomo's shade!"

No, you will have to argue and explain,
Persuade them, all is not so ill in the

end,

Tease, tire them out! Arrive, arrive,
Lucchese!

Dom. Well, you will triumph for the
past enough,

Whatever be the present chance; no
service

Falls to the ground with Florence: she
awaits

Her saviour, will receive him fittingly.

Lur. Ah Braccio, you know Florence!
Will she, think you,

Receive one . . . what means "fit-
tingly receive"?

—Receive compatriots, doubtless—I
am none :

And yet Domizia promises so much !

Brac. Kind' women still give men a
woman's prize.

I know not o'er which gate most boughs
will arch,

Nor if the Square will wave red flags or
blue.

I should have judged, the fullest of
rewards

Our State gave Luria, when she made
him chief

Of her whole force, in her best captain's
place.

Lur. That, my reward ? Florence
on my account

Relieved Ser Puccio ?—mark you, my
reward !

And Puccio 's having all the fight's true
joy—

Goes here and there, gets close, may
fight, himself,

While I must order, stand aloof, o'ersee.
That was my calling, there was my
true place !

I should have felt, in some one over me,
Florence impersonate, my visible head,

As I am over Puccio,—taking life
Directly from her eye ! They give me
you :

But do you cross me, set me half to
work ?

I enjoy nothing—though I will, for
once !

Decide, shall we join battle ? may I
wait ?

Brac. Let us compound the matter ;
wait till noon :

Then, no arrival,—

Lur. Ah, noon comes too fast !
I wonder, do you guess why I delay

Involuntarily the final blow
As long as possible ? Peace follows it !

Florence at peace, and the calm studi-
ous heads

Come out again, the penetrating eyes ;
As if a spell broke, all resumed, each
art

You boast, more vivid that it slept
awhile.

'Gainst the glad heaven, o'er the white
palace-front

The interrupted scaffold climbs anew ;
The walls are peopled by the painter's
brush ;

The statue to its niche ascends to dwell.

The present noise and trouble have re-
tired

And left the eternal past to rule once
more ;—

You speak its speech and read its
records plain,

Greece lives with you, each Roman
breathes your friend :

But Luria—where will then be Luria's
place ?

Dom. Highest in honour, for that
past's own sake,

Of which his actions, sealing up the sum
By saving all that went before from
wreck,

Will range as part, with which be wor-
shipped too.

Lur. Then I may walk and watch
you in your streets,

Lead the smooth life my rough life
helps no more,

So different, so new, so beautiful—
Nor fear that you will tire to see parade

The club that slew the lion, now that
crooks

And shepherd-pipes come into use
again ?

For very lone and silent seems my East
In its drear vastness : still it spreads,
and still

No Braccios, no Domizias anywhere—
Not ever more !—Well, well, to-day is
ours !

Dom. [to 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, 't is not sure the quiet lasts for
ever !

Your placid heads still find rough hands
new work ;

Some minutes' chance—there comes
the need of mire :

And, all resolved on, I too hear at last.
Oh, you must find some use for me, Ser
Braccio!

You hold my strength; 't were best
dispose of it:

What you created, see that you find
food for—

I shall be dangerous else!

Brac. How dangerous, sir?

Lur. There are so many ways, Domi-
zia warns me,

And one with half the power that I
possess,

Grows very formidable! Do you
doubt?

Why, first, who holds the army . . .

Dom. While we talk,
Morn wears; we keep you from your
proper place,

The field.

Lur. Nay, to the field I move no
more;

My part is done, and Puccio's may
begin:

I cannot trench upon his province
longer

With any face.—You think yourselves
so safe?

Why see—in concert with Tiburzio,
now—

O, ' could . . .

D. G. A trumpet!

Lur. My Lucchese at last!
Arrived, as sure as Florence stands!

Your leave! [*Springs out.*]

Dom. How plainly is true greatness
charactered

By such unconscious sport as Luria's
here,

Strength sharing least the secret of
itself!

Be it with head that schemes or hand
that acts,

Such save the world which none but
they could save,

Yet think whate'er they did, that
world could do.

Brac. Yes: and how worthy note,
that these same great ones

In hand or head, with such uncon-
sciousness

And all its due entailed humility,
Should never shrink, so far as I per-
ceive,

From taking up whatever tool there be
Effects the whole world's safety or

mishap,

Into their mild hands as a thing of
course!

The statist finds it natural to lead

The mob who might as easily lead
him—

The captain marshals troops born
skilled in war—

Statist and captain verily believe!

While we poor scribes . . . you catch
me thinking now,

That I shall in this very letter write
What none of you are able! To it,

Lapo! [*DOMIZIA goes.*]

This last, worst, all-affected childish fit
Of Luria's, this be-praised uncon-

sciousness,

Convinces me; the past was no child's
play:

It was a man beat Pisa,—not a child.
All's mere dissimulation—to remove

The fear, he best knows we should
entertain.

The utmost danger was at hand. Is't
written?

Now make a duplicate, lest this should
fail,

And speak your fullest on the other
side.

Sec. I noticed he was busily repairing
My half-effacement of his Duomo
sketch,

And, while he spoke of Florence, turned
to it,

As the Mage Negro king to Christ the
babe.—

I judge his childishness the mere re-
lapse

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 bar-
barous 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 instru-
 ment,
 And will thee dead : yet do I trust it
 not.
 Nor man's devices nor Heaven's mem-
 ory
 Of wickedness forgot on earth so soon,
 But thy own nature,—hell and thee I
 trust,
 To keep thee constant in that wicked-
 ness,
 Where my revenge may meet thee.
 Turn aside
 A single step, for gratitude or shame,—
 Grace but this Luria,—this wild mass
 of rage
 I have prepared to launch against thee
 now,—
 With other payment than thy noblest
 found,—
 Give his desert for once its due reward,—
 And past thee would my sure destruc-
 tion 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 recom-
 pense,
 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 bewilder-
 ment
 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 pronounc-
 ing thus,
 Judge Porzio's actions worthy such
 reward ?
 But Berto, with the ever-passionate
 pulse,
 —Oh that long night, its dreadful hour
 on hour,

In which no way of getting his fair fame
 From their inexplicable charges free,
 Was found, save pouring forth the
 impatient blood
 To show its colour whether false or no !
 My brothers never had a friend like me
 Close in their need to watch the time,
 then speak,
 —Burst with a wakening laughter on
 their dream,
 Cry, " Florence was all falseness, so,
 false here ! "
 And show them what a simple task re-
 mained—
 To leave dreams, rise, and punish in
 God's name
 The city wedded to the wickedness.
 None stood by them as I by Luria
 stand. [due
 So, when the stranger cheated of his
 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 ?

'T is Lucca ?

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 re-
 ward !

And where will then be room for me ?
 Yet, praised,

Remember who was first to promise
 praise,

And envy those who also can perform !
 [Goes.]

Lur. This trumpet from the
 Pisans ?—

Hus. In the camp ;

A very noble presence—Braccio's vis-
 age

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 heardest 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 [men.

And those absorbing, concentrating
They use thee.

Lur. And I feel it, Husain ! yes,
And care not—yes, an alien force like
mine

Is only called to play its part outside
Their different nature ; where its sole
use seems

To fight with and keep off an adverse
force

As alien,—which repelled, mine too
withdraws :

Inside, they know not what to do with
me.

Thus I have told them laughingly and
oft,

But long since am prepared to learn
the worst.

Hus. What is the worst ?

Lur. I will forestall them, Husain,
Will speak the destiny they dare not
speak—

Banish myself before they find the
heart.

I will be first to say, " The work re-
wards !

" I know, for all your praise, my use is
over.

" So may it prove !—meanwhile 't is
best I go,

" Go carry safe my memories of you all
" To other scenes of action, newer
lands."—

Thus leaving them confirmed in their
belief

They would not easily have tired of me.
You think this hard to say ?

Hus. Say or not say,
So thou but go, so they but let thee go !

This hating people, that hate each
the other,

And in one blandness to us Moors
unite—

Locked each to each like slippery
snakes, I say,

Which still in all their tangles, hissing
tongue

And threatening tail, ne'er do each
other harm ;

While any creature of a better blood,
They seem to fight for, while they circle
safe

And never touch it,—pines without a
wound, [breath.

Withers away beside their eyes and
See thou, if Puccio come not safely out

Of Braccio's grasp, this Braccio sworn
his foe,

As Braccio safely from Domizia's toils
Who hates him most ! But thou, the
friend of all,

... Come out of them !

Lur. The Pisan trumpet now !

Hus. Breathe free—it is an enemy,
no friend ! [Goes.

Lur. He keeps his instincts, no new
culture mars

Their perfect use in him ; just so the
brutes

Rest not, are anxious without visible
cause,

When change is in the elements at
work,

Which man's trained senses fail to
apprehend.

But here,—he takes the distant chariot-
wheel

For thunder, festal flame for lightning's
flash,

The finer traits of cultivated life
For treachery and malevolence : I see !

Enter TIBURZIO.

Lur. Quick, sir, your message ! I
but wait your message
To sound the charge. You bring no
overture
For truce ?—I would not, for your
General's sake,
You spoke of truce : a time to fight is
come,

And, whatsoe'er the fight's event, he
keeps
His honest soldier's name to beat me
with,
Or leaves me all himself to beat, I
trust !

Tib. I am Tiburzio.

Lur. You ? 'Tis—yes . . Tiburzio !
You were the last to keep the ford 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 im-
minent
On Pisa,—that you have us in the
toils,

Us her last safeguard, all that inter-
cepts

The rage of her implacablest of foes
From Pisa,—if we fall to-day, she falls.
Tho' Lucca will arrive, yet, 't is 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 extreme chance is ours, but, that
chance failing,

You win this battle. Wherefore say I
this ?

To be well apprehended when I add,
This danger absolutely comes from
you.

Were you, who threaten thus, a Flor-
entine . . .

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 communi-
cate

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,

Seek but the sure destruction saviours
find.

Lur. Tiburzio !

Tib. All the wonder is of course.

I am not here to teach you, nor direct,
Only to loyally apprise—scarce that.

This is the latest letter, sealed and safe,

As it left here an hour ago. One way
Of two thought free to Florence, I
command.

The duplicate is on its road; but this,—
Read it, and then I shall have more to
say.

Lur. Florence!

Tib. Now, were yourself a Floren-
tine,

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 ser-
vice,

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's
side

Rather than Pisa; 't is 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 scale,—

Old ties dissolving, things resume their
place

And all begins again. Break seal and
read!

At least let Pisa offer for you now!

And I, as a good Pisan, shall rejoice—
Though for myself I lose, in gaining
you,

This last fight and its opportunity;
The chance it brings of saving Pisa yet,
Or in the turn of battle dying so

That shame should want its extreme
bitterness.

Lur. Tiburzio, you that fight for
Pisa now

As I for Florence . . say my chance
were yours!

You read this letter, and you find . .
no, no!

Too mad!

Tib. I read the letter, find they
purpose

When I have crushed their foe, to crush
me: well?

Lur. You, being their captain, what
is it you do?

Tib. Why as it is, all cities are alike;
As Florence pays you, Pisa will pay me.
I shall be as belied, whate'er the event,
As you, or more: my weak head, they
will say,

Prompted this last expedient, my faint
heart

Entailed on them indelible disgrace,
Both which defects ask proper punish-
ment.

Another tenure of obedience, mire!
You are no son of Pisa's: break and
read!

Lur. And act on what I read? What
act were fit?

If the firm-fixed foundation of my faith
In Florence, who to me stands for man-
kind,

—If that break up and, disimprisoning
From the abyss . . . Ah friend, it
cannot be!

You may be very sage, yet—all the
world

Having to fail, or your sagacity,
You do not wish to find yourself alone!

What would the world be worth?
Whose love be sure?

The world remains: you are deceived!

Tib. Your hand!

I lead the vanguard.—If you fall, be-
side,

The better: I am left to speak! For
me,

This was my duty, nor would I rejoice
If I could help, it misses its effect;

And after all you will look gallantly
Found dead here with that letter in
your breast.

Lur. Tiburzio—I would see these
people once

And test them ere I answer finally!

At your arrival let the trumpet sound:
If mine return not then the wonted cry
It means that I believe—am Pisa's!

Tib. Well! [*Goes.*
Lur. My heart will have it he speaks true! My blood
 Beats close to this Tiburzio as a friend.
 If he had stept into my watch-tent,
 night
 And the wild desert full of foes around,
 I should have broke the bread and
 given the salt
 Secure, and, when my hour of watch
 was done,
 Taken my turn to sleep between his
 knees,
 Safe in the untroubled brow and honest
 eye.
 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 step into the pathless drift—
 The calm instructed eye of man holds
 fast

By the sole bearing of the visible star,
 Sure that when slow the whirling
 wreck subside,
 The boundaries, lost now, shall be
 found again,—
 The palm-trees and the pyramid over
 all.
 Yes: I trust Florence: Pisa is de-
 ceived.
Enter BRACCIO, PUCCIO, and DOMIZIA.
Brac. Noon's at an end: no Lucca?
 You must fight.
Lur. Do you remember ever, gentle
 friends,
 I am no Florentine?
Dom. It is yourself
 Who still are forcing us, importunately,
 To bear in mind what else we should
 forget.
Lur. For loss!—for what I lose in
 being none!
 No shrewd man, such as you yourselves
 respect,
 But would remind you of the stranger's
 loss
 In natural friends and advocates at
 home,
 Hereditary loves, even rivalships
 With precedent for honour and reward.
 Still, there's a gain, too! If you take
 it so,
 The stranger's lot has special gain as
 well.
 Do you forget there was my own far
 East [once,
 I might have given away myself to,
 As now to Florence, and for such a gift,
 Stood there like a descended deity?
 There, worship waits us: what is it
 waits here? [*Shows the letter.*
 See! Chance has put into my hand
 the means
 Of knowing what I earn, before I work.
 Should I fight better, should I fight the
 worse,
 With payment palpably before me?
 See!
 Here lies my whole reward! Best
 learn it now
 Or keep it for the end's entire delight?
Brac. If you serve Florence as the
 vulgar serve,
 For swordsman's-pay alone,—break
 seal and read!
 In that case, you will find your full
 desert.

Lur. Give me my one last happy moment, friends !
 You need me now, and all the graciousness
 This letter can contain will hardly balance
 The after feeling, that you need no more.
 This moment . . . oh, the East has use with you !
 Its sword still flashes—is not flung aside
 With the past praise, in a dark corner yet !
 How say you ? 'T is not so with Florentines—
 Captains of yours—for them, the ended war
 Is but a first step to the peace begun :
 He who did well in war, just earns the right
 To begin doing well in peace, you know :
 And certain my precursors,—would not such
 Look to themselves in such a chance as mine, [haps ?
 Secure the ground they trod upon, per-
 For I have heard, by fits, or seemed to hear,
 Of strange mishap, mistake, ingratitude,
 Treachery even. Say that one of you
 Surmised this letter carried what might turn
 To harm hereafter, cause him prejudice :
 What would he do ?
Dom. [hastily.] Thank God and take revenge !
 Hurl her own force against the city straight !
 And, even at the moment when the foe
 Sounded defiance . . .

[TIBURZIO'S trumpet sounds in the distance.]

Lur. Ah, you Florentines !
 So would you do ? Wisely for you, no doubt !
 My simple Moorish instinct bids me clench
 The obligation you relieve me from,
 Still deeper ! [To 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 IACOPO.

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 subaltern 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,
 [vent
 That Luria would detach me and pre-
 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,
 'T is half a victory, no conclusive one ?

Puc. Two operations where a sole had served.

Jac. And Luria's fault was—?

Puc. Oh, for fault—not much !
 He led the attack, a thought impetuously,
 —There 's commonly more prudence ;
 now, he seemed
 To hurry measures, otherwise well-judged.

By over-concentrating strength at first
 Against the enemy's van, both wings escaped :

That 's reparable, yet it is a fault.

Enter BRACCIO.

Jac. As good as a full victory to Florence,
 With the advantage of a fault beside—
 What is it, Puccio ?—that by pressing forward

With too impetuous . . .

Brac. The report anon !
Thanks, sir—you have elsewhere a
charge, I know. [*Puccio goes.*
There 's nothing done but I would do
again ;

Yet, Lapo, it may be the past proves
nothing,
And Luria has kept faithful to the close.

Jac. I was for waiting.

Brac. Yes : so was not I.
He could not choose but tear that letter
—true !

Still, certain of his tones, I mind, and
looks :

You saw, too, with a fresher soul than I.
So, Porzio seemed an injured man,
they say !

Well, I have gone upon the broad, sure
ground.

Enter LURIA, PUCCIO, and DOMIZIA.

Lur. [*to Puc.*] Say, at his pleasure I
will see Tiburzio !

All 's at his pleasure.

Dom. [*to Lur.*] Were not fore-
warned

You would reject, as you do constantly,
Praise,—I might tell you how you have
deserved

Of Florence by this last and crowning
feat :

But words offend.

Lur. Nay, you may praise me now.
I want instruction every hour, I find,
On points where once I saw least need
of it ;

And praise, I have been used to slight
perhaps,

Seems scarce so easily dispensed with
now.

After a battle half one's strength is
gone ;

The glorious passion in us once ap-
peased,

Our reason's calm cold dreadful voice
begins.

All justice, power and beauty scarce
appear

Monopolized by Florence, as of late,
To me, the stranger : you, no doubt,
may know

Why Pisa needs must bear her rival's
yoke.

And peradventure I grow nearer you.
For I, too, want to know and be as-
sured.

When a cause ceases to reward itself,
Its friend seeks fresh sustainments ;
praise is one,

And here stand you—you, lady, praise
me well.

But yours—(or pardon)—is un-
learned 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 't is shaped
as act,

Takes flesh i' the world, and clothes it-
self a king.

But when the act comes, stands for
what 't is 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 ? Still, you are of the
trade, my Puccio !

You have the fellow-craftsman's sym-
pathy.

There 's none cares, like a fellow of the
craft,

For the all-unestimated sum of pains
That go to a success the world can see :

They praise then, but the best they
never know

—While you know ! So, if envy mix
with it,

Hate even, still the bottom-praise of
all,

Whatever be the dregs, that drop 's
pure gold !

—For nothing 's like it ; nothing else
records

Those daily, nightly drippings in the
dark

Of the heart's blood, the world lets
drop away

For ever—so, pure gold that praise
must be !

And I have yours, my soldier ! yet
the best

Is still to come. There 's one looks on
apart

Whom all refers to, failure or success ;
What 's done might be our best, our
utmost work,

And yet inadequate to serve his need.
Here 's Braccio now, for Florence—
here 's our service—

Well done for us, seems it well done for him ?

His chosen engine, tasked to its full strength

Answers the end ? Should he have chosen higher ?

Do we help Florence, now our best is wrought ?

Brac. This battle, with the foregone services,

Saves Florence.

Lur. Why then, all is very well !
Here am I in the middle of my friends,
Who know me and who love me, one and all !

And yet . . . 't is 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 Florentines,

What is it in your eyes . . . those lips, those brows . . .

Nobody spoke it, yet I know it well !—
Come now—this battle saves you, all 's at end,

Your use of me is o'er, for good, for ill,—
Come now, what 's done against me, while I speak,

In Florence ? Come ! I feel it in my blood,

My eyes, my hair, a voice is in my ears
That spite of all this smiling and soft speech

You are betraying me ! What is it you do ?

Have it your way, and think my use is over—

Think you are saved and may throw off the mask—

Have it my way, and think more work remains

Which I could do,—so, show you fear me not !

Or prudent be, or daring, as you choose,
But tell me—tell what I refused to know

At noon, lest heart should fail me !
Well ? That letter ?

My fate is sealed at Florence ! What is it ?

Brac. Sir, I shall not deny what you divine.

It is no novelty for innocence
To be suspected, but a privilege :

The after certain compensation comes,
Charges, I say not whether false or true,

Have been preferred against you some time since,

Which Florence was bound, plainly, to receive,

And which are therefore undergoing now

The due investigation. That is all.
I doubt not but your innocence will prove

Apparent and illustrious, as to me,
To them this evening, when the trial ends.

Lur. My trial ?
Dom. Florence, Florence to the end,
My whole heart thanks thee !

Puc. [to 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 now
Of what it should be, or is like to be.

When it is passed, applaud or disapprove !

Up to that point, what is there to impugn?

Lur. They are right, then, to try me?

Brac.

I assert,

Maintain and justify the absolute right
Of Florence to do all she can have done
In this procedure,—standing on her
guard,

Receiving even services like yours

With utmost fit suspicious wariness.

In other matters, keep the mummery
up!

Take all the experiences of all the
world,

Each knowledge that broke through a
heart to life,

Each reasoning which, to reach, burnt
out a brain,

—In other cases, know these, warrant
these,

And then dispense with these—'t is
very well!

Let friend trust friend, and love de-
mand love's like,

And gratitude be claimed for benefits,—
There 's grace in that,—and when the
fresh heart breaks,

The new brain proves a ruin, what of
them?

Where is the matter of one moth the
more

Singed in the candle, at a summer's
end?

But Florence is no simple John or
James

To have his toy, his fancy, his conceit

That he 's the one excepted man by
fate,

And, when fate shows him he 's 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 re-
fuse;

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,—the unseen sun
above,

Which draws and holds suspended all
of us,

Binds transient vapours into a single
cloud

Differing from each and better than
they all.

And shall she dare to stake this 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 strength's
proper sake?

But the truth is, she did create that
strength,

Draw to the end the corresponding
means.

The world is wide—are we the only
men?

Oh, for the time, the social purpose'
sake,

Use words agreed on, bandy epithets,
Call any man the sole great wise and
good!

But shall we therefore, standing by
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
glows!

She takes me out of all the world as him,
Fixing my coldness till like ice it checks
The fire! So, Braccio, Luria, which is
best?

Lur. Ah, brave me? And is this
indeed the way

To gain your good word and sincere
esteem?

Am I the baited animal that must turn
And fight his baiters to deserve their
praise?

Obedience is mistake then? Be it so!
Do you indeed remember I stand here
The captain of the conquering army,—
mine—

With all your tokens, praise and
promise, ready

To show for what their names meant
when you gave,

Not what you style them now you take
away?

If I call in my troops to arbitrate,
And dash the first enthusiastic thrill
Of victory with this you menace now—
Commend to the instinctive popular
sense, [ward,—

My story first, your comment after—
Will they take, think you, part with
you or me?

If I say, I, the labourer they saw work,
Ending my work, ask pay, and find my
lords

Have all this while provided silently
Against the day of pay and proving
faith,

By what you call my sentence that 's
to come—

Will friends advise I wait complacently?

If I meet Florence half way at their
head,

What will you do, my mild antagonist?

Brac. I will rise up like fire, proud
and triumphant

That Florence knew you thoroughly
and by me,

And so was saved. "See, Italy," I'll
say,

"The crown of our precautions! Here's
a man

"Was far advanced, just touched on
the belief

"Less subtle cities had accorded long;

"But we were wiser: at the end comes
this!"

And from that minute, where is Luria?
Lost!

The very stones of Florence cry against

The all-exacting, nought-enduring fool,

Who thus resents her first probation,
flouts

As if he, only, shone and cast no shade,
He, only, walked the earth with privi-
lege

Against suspicion, free where angels
fear:

He, for the first inquisitive mother's-
word,

Must turn, and stand on his defence,
forsooth!

Reward? You will not be worth pun-
ishment!

Lur. And Florence knew me thus!
Thus I have lived,—

And thus you, with the clear fine intel-
lect,

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,

Your understanding sympathy ap-
prove

Such a report of me? Was this the
end?

Or is even this the end? Can I stop
here?

You, lady, with the woman's stand
apart,

The heart to see with, past man's brain
and eyes,

... I cannot fathom why you should
destroy

The unoffending one, you call your
friend—

Still, lessoned by the good examples
here

Of friendship, 't is but natural I ask—
Had you a further aim, in aught you
urged,

Than your friend's profit—in all those instances
Of perfidy, all Florence wrought of wrong—

All I remember now for the first time ?

Dom. I am a daughter of the Traversari,

Sister of Porzio and of Berto both :

So, have foreseen all that has come to pass.

I knew the Florence that could doubt their faith,

Must needs mistrust a stranger's—dealing them

Punishment, would deny him his reward.

And I believed, the shame they bore and died,

He would not bear, but live and fight against—

Seeing he was of other stuff than they.

Lur. Hear them ! 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 unseen during the preceding dialogue.*]

Here !

Thus I bear witness, not in word but deed.

I live for Pisa ; she's not lost to-day

By many chances—much prevents from that !

Her army has been beaten, I am here, But Lucca comes at last, one happy chance !

I rather would see Pisa three times lost Than saved by any traitor, even by you ;

The example of a traitor's happy for— Would bring more evil in the end than good ;—

Pisa rejects the traitor, craves yourself ! I, in her name, resign forthwith to you My charge,—the highest office, sword and shield !

You shall not, by my counsel, turn on Florence

Your army, give her calumny that ground—

Nor bring one soldier : be you all we gain !

And all she 'll lose,—a head to deck some bridge,

And save the cost o' the crown should deck the head.

Leave her to perish in her perfidy, Plague-stricken and stripped naked to all eyes,

A proverb and 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 good citizen

Whom I have ever kept beneath my eye,

Ready as fit, to serve in this event

Florence, who clear foretold it from the first—

Through me, she gives you the command and charge

She takes, through me, from him who held it late !

A painful trial, very sore, was yours :

All that could draw out, marshal in array

The selfish passions 'gainst the public Sights, scorns, neglects, were heaped

on you to bear :

And ever you did bear and bow the head !

It had been sorry trial, to precede Your feet, hold up the promise of reward

For luring gleam ; your footsteps kept the track .

Thro' dark and doubt : take all the light at once !

Trial is over, consummation shines ; Well have you served, as well henceforth command !

Puc. No, no . . I dare not ! I am grateful, glad ;

But Luria—you shall understand he's wronged—

And he's my captain—this is not the way

We soldiers climb to fortune : think again !

The sentence is not even passed, beside !

I dare not . . where's the soldier could ?

Lur. Now, Florence—

Is it to be ?—You will know all the strength

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 insult-
 ing words,
 Sarcastic looks, sharp gestures—one of
 which
 Would stop you, fatal to your finer
 sense.
 But if he stolidly advance, march mute
 Without a mark upon his callous hide,
 Through the mere brushwood you
 grow angry with,
 And leave the tatters of your flesh upon,
 —You have to learn that when the
 true bar comes,
 The murk mid-forest, the grand ob-
 stacle,
 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 ingrati-
 tude :
 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. [cumb !
 Now real wrong fronts me : see if I suc-
 Florence withstands me ?—I will pun-
 ish 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 BRACC.] Let my complacent bland
 accuser go,
 Carry his self-approving head and
 heart

Safe through the army which would
 trample him
 Dead in a moment at my word or sign !
 Go, sir, to Florence ; tell friends what I
 say—
 That while I wait my sentence, theirs
 waits them !
 [To DOM.] You, lady,—you have black
 Italian eyes !
 I would be generous if I might . . oh,
 yes—
 For I remember how so oft you seemed
 Inclined at heart to break the barrier
 down
 Which Florence finds God built between
 us both.
 Alas, for generosity ! this hour
 Asks retribution : bear it as you may,
 I must—the Moor—the savage,—
 pardon you !
 Puccio, my trusty soldier, see them
 forth !

ACT IV

EVENING

Enter PUCCIO and JACOPO

Puc. What Luria will do ? Ah, 't is
 yours, fair sir,
 You and your subtle-witted master's
 part,
 To tell me that ; I tell you what he can.
Jac. Friend, you mistake my station :
 I observe
 The game, watch how my betters play,
 no more.
Puc. But mankind are not pieces—
 there's your fault !
 You cannot push them, and, the first
 move made,
 Lean back and study what the next
 shall be,
 In confidence that, when 't is fixed upon,
 You find just where you left them,
 blacks and whites :
 Men go on moving when your hand's
 away.
 You build, I notice, firm on Luria's
 faith
 This whole time,—firmlier than I
 choose to build,
 Who never doubted it—of old, that is—
 With Luria in his ordinary mind.
 But now, oppression makes the wis-
 man mad :
 How do I know he will not turn and
 stand

And hold his own against you, as he may?

Suppose he but withdraw to Pisa—well,—

Then, even if all happen to your wish, Which is a chance . . .

Jac. Nay—'t was an oversight, Not waiting till the proper warrant came :

You could not take what was not ours to give.

But when at night the sentence really comes,

Our city authorizes past dispute Luria's removal and transfers the charge,

You will perceive your duty and accept?

Puc. Accept what? muster-rolls of soldiers' names?

An army upon paper?—I want men, The hearts as well as hands—and where 's a heart

But beats with Luria, in the multitude I come from walking through by Luria's side?

You gave them Luria, set him thus to grow,

Head-like, upon their trunk; one heart feeds both,

They feel him there, live twice, and well know why. [ant,

—For they do know, if you are ignorant, Who kept his own place and respected theirs.

Managed their sweat, yet never spared his blood.

All was your act: another might have served—

There 's peradventure no such dearth of heads—

But you choose Luria—so, they grew one flesh.

And now, for nothing they can understand,

Luria removed, off is to roll the head; The body 's mine—much I shall do with it!

Jac. That 's at the worst.

Puc. —No, at the best, it is! Best, do you hear? I saw them by his side.

Only we two with Luria in the camp Are left that keep the secret? You think that?

Hear what I know: from rear to van, no heart

But felt the quiet patient hero there Was wronged, nor in the moveless 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,

Bear him to Florence as their natural lord,

Partake his fortune, live or die with him.

Jac. And by mistake catch up along with him

Puccio, no doubt, compelled in self-despite

To still continue second in command!

Puc. No, sir, no second nor so fortunate!

Your tricks succeed with me too well for that!

I am as you have made me, live and die To serve your end; a mere trained fighting-hack

With words, you laugh at while they leave your mouth,

For my life's rule and ordinance of God! I have to do my duty, keep my faith,

And earn my praise, and guard against my blame,

As I was trained. I shall accept your charge,

And fight against one better than myself,

Spite of my heart's conviction of his worth.

That, you may count on!—just as hitherto

I have gone on, persuaded I was wronged,

Slighted, insulted, terms we learn by rote,—

All because Luria superseded me— Because the better nature, fresh-inspired,

Mounted above me to its proper place!

What mattered all the kindly graciousness,

The cordial brother's-bearing? This was clear—

I, once the captain, was subaltern now, And so must keep complaining like a fool!

Go, take the curse of a lost soul, I say !
 You neither play your puppets to the
 end,
 Nor treat the real man,—for his 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, is your laugh-
 ing-stock ?

One word for all : whatever Luria does,
 —If backed by his indignant troops he
 turn,

Revenge himself, and Florence go to
 ground,—

Or, for a signal everlasting shame,
 He pardon you, simply seek better
 friends,

Side with the Pisans and Lucchese for
 change

—And if I, pledged to ingrates past be-
 lief,

Dare fight against a man such fools call
 false,

Who, inasmuch as he was true, fights
 me,—

Whichever way we win, he wins for
 worth,

For every soldier, for all true and good !
 Sir, chronicling the rest, omit not this !

As they go, enter LURIA and HUSAIN.

Hus. Saw'st thou ?—For they are
 gone ! The world lies bare

Before thee, to be tasted, felt and seen
 Like what it is, now Florence goes
 away !

Thou livest now, with men art man
 again !

Those Florentines were all to thee of
 old ;

But Braccio, but Domizia, gone is each,
 There lie beneath thee thine own multi-
 tudes !

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,
 B.P.

Find out God's fault in thee as in the
 rest ?

Oh watch, but listen only to these fiends
 Once at their occupation ! Ere ye
 know,

The free great heaven is shut, their
 stifling pall

Drops till it rets the very tingling hair,
 So weighs it on our head,—and, for the
 earth,

Our common earth is tethered up and
 down,

Over and across—"here shalt thou
 move," they cry !

Lur. Ay, Husain ?

Hus. So have they spoiled all be-
 side !

So stands a man girt round with Flor-
 entines,

Priests, greybeards, Braccios, women,
 boys and spies,

All in one tale, all singing the same
 song,

How thou must house, and live at bed
 and board,

Take pledge and give it, go their every
 Breathe to their measure, make thy
 blood beat time

With theirs—or, all is nothing—thou
 art lost—

A savage, how shouldst thou perceive
 as they ?

Feel glad to stand 'neath God's close
 naked hand !

Look up to it ! Why down they pull
 thy neck,

Lest it crush thee, who feel'st it and
 wouldst kiss,

Without their priests that needs must
 glove it first,

Lest peradventure flesh 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 in-
 stincts, thine !

Should dare to take thee with thine in-
 stincts 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 Flo-
rence, 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 glow's when in the heart
fresh blood

Boils up, thou heart of me! Now, live
again!

Again love as thou likest, hate as free!
Turn to no Braccios nor Domizias now,
To ask, before thy very limbs dare
move,

If Florence' welfare be concerned
thereby!

Lur. So clear what Florence must
expect of me?

Hus. Both armies against Florence!
Take revenge!

Wide, deep—to live upon, in feeling
now,—

And, after live, in memory, year by
year—

And, with the dear conviction, die at
last!

She lies now at thy pleasure: pleasure
have!

Their vaunted intellect that gilds our
sense,

And blends with life, to show it better
by,

—How think'st thou?—I have turned
that light on them!

They called our thirst of war a transient
thing;

"The battle-element must pass away

"From life," they said, "and leave a
tranquil world."

—Master, I took their light and turned
it full

On that dull turgid vein they said
would burst

And pass away; and as I looked on
life,

Still everywhere I tracked this, though
it hid

And shifted, lay so silent as it thought,
Changed shape and hue yet ever was
the same. [life!

Why, 't was all fighting, all their nobler
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 back-
ground.] 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 sel-
fishness,

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 arguest end
Thou hast arisen: second not in rank
So much as time, to him who first or-
dained

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

Pound each of them and, measuring them, live ?

My light love keeps the matchless circle safe,

My slender life proves what has passed away.

I lived when they departed ; lived to cling

To thee, the mighty stranger ; thou wouldst rise

And burst the thralldom, and avenge, I knew.

I have done nothing ; all was thy strong bole.

But a bird's weight can break the infant tree

Which after holds an aery in its arms,

And 't was my care that nought should warp thy spire

From rising to the height ; the roof is reached

O' the forest, break through, see extend the sky !

Go on to Florence, Luria ! 'T is man's cause !

Fail thou, and thine own fall were least to dread

Thou keepest Florence in her evil way,
Encouragest her sin so much the more—

And while the ignoble past is justified,
Thou all the surelier warp'st the future growth,

The chiefs to come, the Luria: 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, 't is 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, [low,

Not even in a dream, that outrage !)—

As shamed in her own eyes henceforth for ever,

Low, for the rival cities round to laugh,
Conquered and pardoned by a hireling Moor !

—For him, who did the irreparable wrong,

What would be left, his life's illusion fled,—

What hope or trust in the forlorn wide world ?

How strange that Florence should mistake me so !

Whence grew this ? What withdrew her faith from me ?

Some cause ! These fretful-blooded children talk

Against their mother,—they are wronged, they say—

Notable wrongs her smile makes up again !
 So, taking fire at each supposed offence,
 They may speak rashly, suffer for their speech :
 But what could it have been in word or deed
 Thus injured me ? Some one word spoken more
 Out of my heart, and all had changed perhaps
 My fault, it must have been,—for, what gain they ?
 Why risk the danger ? See, what I could do !
 And my fault, wherefore visit upon them,
 My Florentines ? The notable revenge,
 I meditated ! To stay passively,
 Attend their summons, be as they dispose !
 Why, if my very soldiers keep the rank,
 And if my chieftains acquiesce, what then ?
 I ruin Florence, teach her friends mistrust,
 Confirm her enemies in harsh belief,
 And when she finds one day, as find she must,
 The strange mistake, and how my heart was hers,
 Shall it console me, that my Florentines
 Walk with a sadder step, in graver guise,
 Who took me with such frankness, praised me so,
 At the glad outset ? Had they loved me less,
 They had less feared what seemed a change in me.
 And after all, who did the harm ? Not they !
 How could they interpose with those old fools
 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 souls intent upon our battle here,
 Found that he rose too soon, or set too late,
 Gave us no vantage, or gave Pisa much—
 Therefore we wronged him ! Does he turn in ire
 To burn the earth that cannot understand ?
 Or drop out quietly, and leave the sky,
 His task once ended ? Night wipes blame away.
 Another morning from my East shall spring
 And find all eyes at leisure, all disposed
 To watch and understand its work, no doubt.
 So, praise the new sun, the successor praise,
 Praise the new Luria and forget the old !
[Taking a phial from his breast.]
 —Strange ! This is all I brought from my own land
 To help me : Europe would supply the rest,
 All needs beside, all other helps save one !
 I thought of adverse fortune, battles lost,
 The natural upbraiding of the loser,
 And then this quiet remedy to seek
 At end of the disastrous day.

[He drinks.]

'T is 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 to an understanding ear enough;
And all that my brief stay permits, be-
side.

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 de-
fect

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!

'T is night now.

Well—I broke off with? . . .

Puc. Of the past campaign

You spoke—of measures to be kept in
mind

For future use. [time!

Lur. True, so . . . but, time—no

As well end here: remember this, and
me!

Farewell now!

Puc. Dare I speak?

Lur. South o' the river—

How is the second stream called . . . no,
—the third?

Puc. Pesa.

Lur. And a stone's-cast from the
fording-place,

To the east,—the little mount's name?

Puc. Lupo.

Lur. Ay!

Ay—there the tower, and all that side
is safe!

With San Romano, west of Evola,
San Miniato, Scala, Empoli,

Five towers in all,—forget not!

Puc. Fear not me!

Lur.—Nor to memorialize the Coun-
cil 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, howsoe'er it
prove,

And give up the command to me—is
much,

Too much, perhaps: but what you tell
me now,

Even will affect the other course you
choose—

Poor as it may be, perils even that!
Refuge you seek at Pisa: yet these

plans

All militate for Florence, all conclude
Your formidable work to make her

queen

Of the country,—which her rivals rose
against

When you began it,—which to inter-
rupt,

Pisa would buy you off at any price!
You cannot mean to sue for Pisa's

help,

With this made perfect and on record?

Lur. I—
At Pisa, and for refuge, do you say?

Puc. Where are you going, then?
You must decide

On leaving us, a silent fugitive,
Alone, at night—you, stealing through

our lines,

Who were this morning's Luria,—you
escape

To painfully begin the world once more,
With such a past, as it had never been!

Where are you going?

Lur. Not so far, my Puccio,
But that I hope to hear, enjoy and

praise

(If you mind praise from your old cap-
tain yet)

Each happy blow you strike for Flor-
ence!

Puc. Ay,
But ere you gain your shelter, what
may come?

For see—though nothing 's surely
known as yet,

Still—truth must out—I apprehend the
worst.

If mere suspicion stood for certainty
Before, there 's nothing can arrest the
step

Of Florence toward your ruin, once on
foot.

Forgive her fifty times, it matters not !
And having disbelieved your innocence,
How can she trust your magnanimity ?
You may do harm to her—why then,
you will !

And Florence is sagacious in pursuit.
Have you a friend to count on ?

Lur. One sure friend.

Puc. Potent ?

Lur. All-potent.

Puc. And he is apprised ?

Lur. He waits me.

Puc. So !—Then I, put in your
place,

Making my profit of all done by you,
Calling your labours mine, reaping
their fruit,

To this, the State's gift, now add yours
beside—

That I may take as my peculiar store
These your instructions to work Flor-
ence good.

And it, 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
righthand,

And so the bad thoughts came and the
worse words,

And all went wrong and painfully
enough,—

No wonder,—till, the right spot
stumbled on,

All the joys, ps, and there is peace at
once !

I am yours now,—a tool your right
hand yields !

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 ? 't is 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 command, 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, Floren-
tines

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 under-
stand.

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 com-
mand,

Both served them and succeeded, in
due time;

He knows the way, holds proper docu-
ments, [truth

And has the power to lay the simple
Before an active spirit, as I count
yours:

And also there 's Tiburzio, my new
friend,

Will, at a word, confirm such evidence,
He being the great chivalric soul we
know.

I put it to your tact, sir—were 't not
well,

—A grace, though but for contrast's
sake, no more,—

If you who witness, and have borne a
share

Involuntarily in my mischance,
Should, of your proper motion, set your
skill

To indicate—that is, investigate
The right or wrong of what mischance
befell

Those famous citizens, your 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 satisfied!
For me, a straw thrown up into the air,

My testimony goes for a straw's worth.
I used to hold by the instructed brain,

And move with Braccio as my master-
wind;

The heart leads surelier: I must move
with you--

As greatest now, who ever were the
best.

So, let the last and humblest of your
servants

Accept your charge, as Braccio's here-
tofore,

And tender homage by obeying you!

[*JACOPO goes.*
Lur. Another!—Luria goes not
poorly forth.

If we could wait! The only fault 's
with time;

All men become good creatures: but
so slow!

Enter DOMIZIA.

Lur. Ah, you once more?
Dom. Domizia, whom you knew,

Performed her task, and died with it.
'T is 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 edge it
stood,

With nought beyond to live for,—is
that reached?

Already are new undreamed energies
Outgrowing under, and extending far-
ther

To a new object;—there 's another
world!

See! I have told the purpose of my life;

'T is gained: you are decided, well or ill—

You march on Florence, or submit to her—

My work is done with you, your brow declares.

But—leave you? More of you seems yet to reach!

I stay for what I just begin to see.

Lur. So that you turn not to the past!

Dom. You trace

Nothing but ill in it—my selfish impulse,

Which sought its end and disregarded yours?

Lur. Speak not against your nature: best, each keep

His own—you, yours—most, now that I keep mine,

—At least, fall by it, having too weakly stood.

God's finger marks distinctions, all so fine, [use,

We would confound: the lesser has its 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 's something makes me understand Your nature: I have seen it.

Dom. Aught like mine?

Lur. In my own East . . if you would stoop and help

My barbarous illustration! It sounds ill;

Yet there 's no wrong at bottom: rather, praise.

Dom. Well?

Lur. We have creatures there, which if you saw

The first time, you would doubtless marvel at

For their surpassing beauty, craft and strength.

And though it were a lively moment's shock

Wherein you found the purpose of forked tongues

That seem innocuous in their iambent play,

Yet, once made know such grace requires such guard,

Your reason soon would acquiesce, I think,

In wisdom which made all things for the best—

So, take them, good with ill, contentedly, [sting.

The prominent beauty with the latent I am glad to have seen you wondrous

Florentines:

Yet . .

Dom. I am here to listen.

Lur. My own East!

How nearer God we were! He glows above

With scarce an intervention, presses close

And palpitatingly, his soul o'er ours! We feel him, nor by painful reason

know!

The everlasting minute of creation Is felt there; now it is, as it was then;

All changes at his instantaneous will, Not by the operation of a law

Whose maker is elsewhere at other work.

His hand is still engaged upon his world—

Man's praise can forward it, man's prayer suspend,

For is not God all-mighty? To recast The world, erase old things and make

them new,

What costs it him? So, man breathes nobly there!

And inasmuch as feeling, the East's gift,

Is quick and transient—comes, and lo, is gone—

While Northern thought is slow and durable,

Surely a mission was reserved for me, Who, born with a perception of the

power And use of the North's thought for us of the East,

Should have remained and turned it to account,

Giving thought's character and permanence

To the too transitory feeling there— Writing God's message plain in mortal

words.

Instead of which, I leave my fated field For this where such a task is needed

least, Where all are born consummate in the art

I just perceive a chance of making mine,—

And then, deserting thus my early post,
I wonder that the men I come among
Mistake me! There, how all had understood,

Still brought fresh stuff for me to stamp
and keep,

Fresh instinct to translate them into law!

Me, who . . .

Dom. Who here the greater task achieve,

More needful even : who have brought fresh stuff

For us to mould, interpret and prove right,—

New feeling fresh from God, which, could we know

O' the instant, where had been our need of it?

—Whose life re-teaches us what life should be,

What faith is, loyalty and simpleness, All, once revealed but taught us so long since

That, having mere tradition of the fact,—

Truth copied falteringly from copies faint, [said

The early traits all dropped away,—we On sight of faith like yours, "So looks

not faith

"We understand, described and praised before."

But still, the feat was dared; and though at first

It suffered from our haste, yet trace by trace

Old memories reappear, old truth returns,

Our slow thought does its work, and all 's re-known.

Oh noble Luria! What you have decreed

I see not, but no animal revenge, No brute-like punishment of bad by worse—

It cannot be, the gross and vulgar way Traced for me by convention and mistake,

Has gained that calm approving eye and brow!

Spare Florence, after all! Let Luria trust

To his own soul, and I will trust him mine!

Lur. In time!

Dom. How, Luria?

Lur. It is midnight now,
And they arrive from Florence with my fate.

Dom. I hear no step.

Lur. I feel one, as you say.

Enter HUSAIN.

Hus. The man returned from Florence!

Lur. As I knew.

Hus. He seeks thee.

Lur. And I only wait for him. Aught else?

Hus. A movement of the Lucchese troops

Southward—

Lur. Toward Florence? Have out instantly . . .

Ah, old use clings! Puccio must care henceforth.

In—quick—'t is 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 us far beyond the day's event, A battle's loss or gain: the mass remains,—

Keep but the model safe, new men will rise

To take its mould, 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 dis-

grace,

Repair our harm—so were to-day's
work done; [see ?
But where find Luria for our sons to
No, I look farther. I have testified
(Declaring my submission to your arms)
Her full success to Florence, making
clear [spoke,
Your probity, as none else could: I
And out it shone!
Lur. Ah—until Braccio spoke!
Brac. Till Braccio told in just a
word the whole—
His lapse to error, his return to know-
ledge:
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. Let the mid-
night end!

'T is morn approaches! Still you
answer not?
Sunshine succeeds the shadow past
away;
Our faces, which phantasmal grew and
false,
Are all that felt it: they close round
you, turn
Themselves now in its complete vanish-
ing.
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.

CHRISTMAS-EVE AND EASTER-DAY

FLORENCE, 1850

CHRISTMAS-EVE

I

Out of the little chapel I burst,
Into the fresh night-air again.
Five minutes full, I waited first
In the doorway, to escape the rain
That drove in gusts down the common's
centre,
At the edge of which the chapel stands,
Before I plucked up heart to enter.
Heaven knows how many sorts of
hands
Reached past me, groping for the latch
Of the inner door that hung on catch
More obstinate the more they fumbled,
Till, giving way at last with a scold
Of the crazy hinge, in squeezed or
tumbled
One sheep more to the rest in fold,
And left me irresolute, standing sentry
In the sheepfold's lath-and-plaster
entry,
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 pal-
ing-gaps,
—They house in the gravel-pits per-
haps,
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
So cleverly (thanks in part to the ma-
son),
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 Gomor-
 rah behind him.

II

Well, from the road, the lanes or the
 common,
 In came the flock: the fat weary
 woman,
 Panting and bewildered, down-clap-
 ping
 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' drop-
 ping,
 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 Peni-
 tent 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 sta-
 tion?
 "A carer for none of it, a Gallio!"—
 Thus, plain as print, I read the glance
 At a common prey, in each counten-
 ance
 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 scan-
 dal:
 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 perfec-
 tion
 "To which you carry your trick of ex-
 clusiveness,
 "And, taking God's word under wise
 protection,
 "Correct its tendency to diffusive-
 ness,
 "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-vestment:
 " 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 spikewise
 At the shutting door, and entered likewise,
 Received the hinge's accustomed greeting,
 And crossed the threshold's magic pentacle,
 And found myself in full conventicle,
 —To wit, on Zion Chapel Meeting,
 On the Christmas-Eve of 'Forty-nine,
 Which, calling its flock to their special clover,
 Found all assembled and one sheep over,
 Whose lot, as the weather pleased, was mine.

III

I very soon had enough of it.
 The hot smell and the human noises,
 And my neighbour's coat, the greasy cuff of it,
 Were a pebble-stone that a child's hand poises,
 Compared with the pig-of-lead-like pressure
 Of the preaching-man's immense stupidity,
 As he poured his doctrine forth, full measure,
 To meet his audience's avidity.

You needed not the wit of the Sibyl
 To guess the cause of it all, in a twinkling:
 No sooner got our friend an inkling
 Of treasure hid in the Holy Bible,
 (Whene'er 't was 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 Scriptures.
 And you picked them up, in a sense, no doubt:
 Nay, had but a single face of my neighbours
 Appeared to suspect that the preacher's labours
 Were help which the world could be saved without,
 'T is odds but I might have borne in quiet
 A qualm or two at my spiritual diet,
 Or (who can tell?) perchance even mustered
 Somewhat to urge in behalf of the sermon:
 But the flock sat on, divinely flustered,
 Sniffing, methought, its dew of Hermon
 With such content in every snuffle,
 As the devil inside us loves to ruffle.
 My old fat woman purred with pleasure,
 And thumb round thumb went twirling faster,
 While she, to his periods keeping measure,
 Maternally devoured the pastor.
 The man with the handkerchief, untied it,
 Showed us a horrible wen inside it,
 Gave his eyelids yet another screwing,
 And rocked himself as the woman was doing.
 The shoemaker's lad, discreetly chok-
 ing,

Kept down his cough. 'T was 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 ; 'T is ever dry walking there, on the moss— [hill.

Besides, you go gently all the way up— I stooped under and soon felt better ; My head grew lighter, my limbs more supple, As I walked on, glad to have slipt the fetter.

My mind was full of the scene I had left, That placid flock, that pastor vociferant,

—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 and reproducing, More or less perfectly (who can tell ?),

Of the mood itself, that strengthens by using ;

And how it happens, I understand well. A tune was born in my head last week,

Out of the thump-thump and shriek-shriek

Of the train, as I came by it, up from Manchester ;

And when, next week, I take it back again,

My head will sing to the engine's clack 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-
Eve,
Does the selfsame weary thing take
place ?
The same endeavour to make you be-
lieve,
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 lead-
ing me)
—In youth I looked to these very skies,
And probing their immensities,
I found God there, his visible power ;
Yet felt in my heart, amid all its sense
Of the power, an equal evidence
That his love, there too, was the nobler
dower.
For the loving worm within its clod,
Were diviner than a loveless god
Amid his worlds, I will dare to say.
You know what I mean : God 's all,
man 's nought :
But also, God, whose pleasure brought
Man into being, stands away
As it were a handbreadth off, to give
Room for the newly-made to live,
And look at him from a place apart,
And use his gifts of brain and heart,

Given, indeed, but to keep for ever.
Who speaks of man, then, must not
sever

Man's very elements from man,
Saying, " But all is God's "—whose
plan

Was to create man and then leave him
Able, his own word saith, to grieve him,
But able to glorify him too,
As a mere machine could never do,
That prayed or praised, all unaware
Of its fitness for aught but praise and
prayer,

Made perfect as a thing of course.

Man, therefore, stands on his own stock
Of love and power as a pin-point rock,
And, looking to God who ordained di-
vorce

Of the rock from his boundless contin-
ent,

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 't is not a thing to bear increase
As power does : be love less or more

In the heart of man, he keeps it shut
Or opes it wide, as he pleases, but

Love's sum remains what it was before.
So, gazing up, in my youth, at love

As seen through power, ever above
All modes which make it manifest,

My soul brought all to a single test—
That he, the Eternal First and Last,

Who, in his power, had so surpassed
All man conceives of what is might,—

Whose wisdom, too, showed infinite,
—Would prove as infinitely good ;

Would never, (my soul understood,)
With power to work all love desires,

Bestow e'en less than man requires :
That he who endlessly was teaching,

Above my spirit's utmost reaching,
 What love can do in the leaf or stone,
 (So that to master this alone,
 This done in the stone or leaf for me,
 I must go on learning endlessly)
 Would never need that I, in turn,
 Should point him out defect unheeded,
 And show that God had yet to learn
 What the meanest human creature
 needed,—

—Not life, to wit, for a few short years,
 Tracking his way through doubts and
 fears,

While the stupid earth on which I stay
 Suffers no change, but passive adds
 Its myriad years to myriads,
 Though I, he gave it to, decay,
 Seeing death come and choose about
 me.

And my dearest ones depart without
 me,

No: love which, on earth, amid all the
 shows of it,

Has ever been seen the sole good of
 life in it,

The love, ever growing there, spite of
 the strife in it,

Shall arise, made perfect, from death's
 repose of it.

And 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 as able to satiate
 The love, thy gift, as my spirit's wonder

Thou art able to quicken and sublim-
 ate,

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,

Sprang across them and stood steady.
 'T was a moon-rainbow, vast and per-
 fect,

From heaven to heaven extending, per-
 fect

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-
 flexed,

Another rainbow rose, a mightier,
 Fainter, flushier and flightier,—
 Rapture dying along its verge.

Oh, whose foot shall I see emerge,
 Whose, from the straining topmost
 dark,

On to the keystone of that arc?

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,
 Some one man knew God called his
 name.

For me, I think I said, "Appear!
 " Good were it to be ever here.

" If thou wilt, let me build to thee
 " Service-tabernacles three,

" Where, forever in thy presence,
 " In ecstatic acquiescence,

" Far alike from thriftless learning
 " And ignorance's undiscerning,

" I may worship and remain!"
 Thus at the show above me, gazing

With upturned eyes, I felt my brain
 Glutted with the glory, blazing

Throughout its whole mass, over and
 under,

Until at length it burst asunder,
 And out of it bodily there streamed,

The too-much glory, as it seemed,
 Passing from out me to the ground,

Then palely serpentining round
Into the dark with mazy error.

VIII

All at once I looked up with terror.
He was there.
He himself with his human air,
On the narrow pathway, just before.
I saw the back of him, no more—
He had left the chapel, then, as I.
I forgot all about the sky.
No face : only the sight
Of a sweepy garment, vast and white,
With a hem that I could recognise.
I felt terror, no surprise ;
My mind filled with the cataract,
At one bound of the mighty fact.
" I remember, he did say
Doubtless, that, to this world's end,
Where two or three should meet and
pray,
He would be in the midst, their friend ;
Certainly he was there with them ! "
And my pulses leaped for joy
Of the golden thought without alloy,
That I saw his very vesture's hem.
Then rushed the blood back, cold and
clear
With a fresh enhancing shiver of fear ;
And I hastened, cried out while I
pressed
To the salvation of the vest,
" But not so, Lord ! It cannot be
" That thou, indeed, art leaving me—
" Me, that have despised thy friends !
" Did my heart make no amends ?
" Thou art the love of God—above
" His power, didst hear me place his
love,
" And that was leaving the world for
thee :
" Therefore thou must not turn from
me
" As I had chosen the other part.
" Folly and pride o'ercame my heart.
" Our best is bad, nor bears thy test ;
" Still, it should be our very best.
" I thought it best that thou, the spirit,
" Be worshipped in spirit and in truth,
" And in beauty, as even we require it—
" Not in the forms burlesque, uncouth.
" I left but now, as scarcely fitted
" For thee : I knew not what I pitied.
" But, all I felt there, right or wrong,
" What is it to thee, who curest sin-
ning ?
" Am I not weak as thou art strong ?

" I have looked to thee from the be-
ginning,
" Straight up to thee through all the
world
" Which, like an idle scroll, lay furled
" To nothingness on either side :
" And since the time thou wast des-
cried,
" Spite 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 see the~~
it
In the cleansing sun, his wool,—
Steeps in the flood of noontide white-
ness
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 eddy-
ing
On, just before me, still to be followed,
As it carried me after with its motion :
What shall I say ?—as a path were hol-
lowed
And a man went weltering through the
ocean,
Sucked along in the flying wake
Of the luminous water-snake.
Darkness and cold were cloven, as
through
I passed, upborne yet walking too.
And I turned to myself at intervals,—
" So he said, so it befalls.
" God who registers the cup
" Of mere cold water, for his sake
" To a disciple rendered up,
" Disdains not his own thirst to slake
" At the poorest love was ever offered :
" And because my heart I proffered,
" With true love trembling at the brim,
" He suffers me to follow him
" For ever, my own way,—dispensed
" From seeking to be influenced

"By all the less immediate ways
 "That earth, in worships manifold,
 "Adopts to reach, by prayer and praise,
 "The garment's hem, which, lo, I
 hold!"

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 the colonnade
 With arms wide open to embrace
 The entry of the human race
 To the breast of . . . what is it, yon
 building,

Ablaze in front, all paint and gilding,
 With marble for brick, and stones of
 price

For garniture of the edifice?
 Now I see; it is no dream;
 It stands there and it does not seem:
 For ever, in pictures, thus it looks,
 And thus I have read of it in books
 Often in England, leagues away,
 And wondered how these fountains
 play,

Growing up eternally
 Each to a musical water-tree,
 Whose blossoms drop, a glittering boon,
 Before my eyes, in the light of the
 moon,

To the granite lavers underneath.
 Liar and dreamer in your teeth!
 I, the sinner that speak to you,
 Was in Rome this night, and stood,
 and knew

Both this and more. For see, for see,
 The dark is rent, mine eye is free
 To pierce the crust of the outer wall,
 And I view inside, and all there, all,
 As the swarming hollow of a hive,
 The whole Basilica alive!
 Men in the chancel, body and nave,
 Men on the pillars' architrave,
 Men on the statues, men on the tombs

B.P.

With popes and kings in their porphyry
 wombs,
 All furnishing in expectation
 Of the main-altar's consummation.
 For see, for see, the rapturous moment
 Approaches, and earth's best endow-
 ment

Blends with heaven's; the taper-fires
 Pant up, the winding brazen spires
 Heave loftier yet the baldachin;
 The incense-gaspings, long kept in,
 Suspire in clouds; the organ blatant
 Holds his breath and grovels latent,
 As if God's hushing finger grazed him,
 (Like Behemoth when he praised him)
 At the silver bell's shrill tinkling,
 Quick cold drops of terror sprinkling
 On the sudden pavement strewed
 With faces of the multitude.
 Earth breaks up, time drops away,
 In flows heaven, with its new day
 Of endless life, when he who trod,
 Very man and very God,
 This earth in weakness, shame and pain,
 Dying the death whose signs remain
 Up yonder on the accursed tree,—
 Shall come again, no more to be
 Of captivity the thrall,
 But the one God, All in all,
 King of kings, Lord of lords,
 As his servant John received the words,
 "I died, and live for evermore!"

XI

Yet I was left outside the door.
 "Why sit I here on the threshold-stone,
 Left till he return, alone
 Save for the garment's extreme fold
 Abandoned still to bless my hold?"
 My reason, to my doubt, replied,
 As if a book were opened wide,
 And at a certain page I traced
 Every record undefaced,
 Added by successive years,—
 The harvestings of truth's stray years
 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

I.J.

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.

—'T was thus my reason straight re-
plied

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 abus-
ing me

That I should wait here lonely and
coldly,

Instead of rising, entering boldly,
Baring truth's face, and letting drift
Her veils of lies as they choose to shift ?
Do these men praise him ? I will raise
My voice up to their point of praise !
I see the error ; but above

The scope of error, see the love.—

Oh, love of those first Christian days !
—Fanned so soon into a blaze,
From the spark preserved by the
trampled sect,

That the antique sovereign Intellect
Which then sat ruling in the world,
Like a change in dreams, was hurled
From the throne he reigned upon :
You looked up and he was gone.
Gone, his glory of the pen !

—Love, with Greece and Rome in ken,
Bade her scribes abhor the trick
Of poetry and rhetoric,
And exult with hearts set free,
In blessed imbecility

Scrawled, perchance, on some torn sheet
Leaving Sallust incomplete.

Gone, his pride of sculptor, painter !

—Love, while able to acquaint her
While the thousand statues yet

Fresh from chisel, pictures wet
From brush, she saw on every side,
Chose rather with an infant's pride
To frame those portents which impart
Such unction to true Christian Art.

Gone, music too ! The air was stirred
By happy wings : Terpander's bird
(That, when the cold came, fled away)
Would tarry not the wintry day,—
As more-enduring sculpture must,
Till filthy saints rebuked the gust
With which they chanced to get a sight
Of some dear naked Aphrodite
They glanced a thought above the toes
of,

By breaking zealously her nose off.
Love, surely, from that music's linger-
ing,

Might have filched her organ-fingering,
Nor chosen rather to set prayings
To hog-grunts, praises to horse-neigh-
ings.

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 sense's satisfaction
To the mere outside of human crea-
tures,
Mere perfect form and faultless fea-
tures.

What ? with all Rome here, whence to
levy

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 meet-
 ing it,
 A trunk and legs would perfect the
 statue,
 Could man carve so as to answer voli-
 tion.
 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 ! '

XII

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 eddy-
 ing
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 /ing wake
Of the luminous wa . . -snake.

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 ocean,
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Of the luminous wa . . -snake.

XIV

Alone ! I am left alone once more—
(Save for the garment's extreme fold
Abandoned still to bless my hold)
Alone, beside the entrance-door
Of a sort of temple,—perhaps a college,
—Like nothing I ever saw before
At home in England, to my knowledge.
The tall old quaint irregular town !

It may be . . . though which, I can't
affirm . . . any

Of the famous middle-age towns of
Germany ;

And this flight of stairs where I sit
down,

Is it Halle, Weimar, Cassel, Frankfort,
Or Göttingen, I have to thank for 't ?

It may be Göttingen,—most likely.

Through the open door I catch ob-
liquely

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 [man—

A shoot of love from my heart to the

That sallow virgin-minded studious

Martyr to mild enthusiasm,

As he uttered a kind of cough-prelu-
dious

That woke my sympathetic spasm,

(Beside some spitting that made me
sorry)

And stood, surveying his auditory

With a wan pure look, well nigh cele-
stial,—

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 spectacles,
Let the eyes stream out like lamps
from cells,

And giving his head of hair—a hake
Of undressed tow, for colour and quan-
tity—

One rapid and impatient shake,
(As our own young England adjusts a
jaunty tie

When about to impart, on mature di-
gestion,

Some thrilling view of the surplice-
question)

—The Professor's grave voice, sweet
though hoarse,

Broke into his Christmas-Eve 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 't were 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,

'T was obviously as well to take

The popular story,—understanding

How the ineptitude of the time,

And the penman's prejudice, expand-
ing

Fact into fable fit for the clime,

Had, by slow and sure degrees, tran-
slated it

Into this myth, this Individuum,—

Which, when reason had strained and
abated it

Of foreign matter. left, for residuum,

A Man!—a right true man, however,
Whose work was worthy a man's endeavour :

Work, that gave warrant almost sufficient

To his disciples, for rather believing
He was just omnipotent and omniscient,

As it gives to us, for as frankly receiving

His word, their tradition,—which, though it meant

Something entirely different

From all that those who only heard it,
In their simplicity thought and averred it,

Had yet a meaning quite as respectable :

For, among other doctrines delectable,
Was he not surely the first to insist on

The natural sovereignty of our race ?—
Here the lecturer came to a pausing-place.

And while his cough, like a drouthy piston,

Tried to dislodge the husk that grew to him,

I seized the occasion of bidding adieu to him,

The vesture still within my hand.

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 with ruthless ingenuity

Atom by atom, and leaves you—vacuity.

Thus much of Christ, does he reject ?

And what retain ? His intellect ?

What is it I must reverence duly ?

Poor intellect for worship, truly,

Which tells me simply what was told

(If mere morality, bereft
Of the God in Christ, be all that 's left)

Elsewhere by voices manifold ;

With this advantage, that the stater

Made nowise the important stumble

Of adding, he, the sage and humble,

Was also one with the Creator.

You urge Christ's followers' simplicity :

But how does shifting blame, evade it ?

Have wisdom's words no more felicity ?

The stumbling-block, his speech—who laid it ?

How comes it that for one found able

To sift the truth of it from fable,

Millions believe it to the letter ?

Christ's goodness, then—does that fare better ?

Strange goodness, which upon the score

Of being goodness, the mere due

Of man to fellow-man, much more

To God,—should take another view

Of its possessor's privilege,

And bid him rule his race ! You pledge

Your fealty to such rule ? What, all—

From heavenly John and Attic Paul,

And that brave weather-battered Peter

Whose stout faith only stood completer

For buffets, sinning to be pardoned,

As, 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 propound

His claim to rise o'er us an inch ?

Were goodness all some man's invention,

Who arbitrarily made mention

What we should follow, and whence flinch,—

What qualities might take the style

Of right and wrong,—and had such guessing

Met with as general acquiescing

As graced the alphabet erewhile,

When A got leave an Ox to be,

No Camel (quoth the Jews), like G,—

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, per-
 chance,
 " That these found truth out at a
 glance,
 " Than marvel how the bat discerns
 " Some pitch-dark cavern's fifty turns,
 " Led by a finer tact, a gift
 " He boasts, which other birds must
 shift
 " Without, and grope as best they can."
 No, freely I would praise the man,—
 Nor one whit more, if he contended
 That gift of his, from God, descended.
 Ah friend, what gift of man's does not ?
 No nearer something, by a jot,
 Rise an infinity of nothings
 Than one : take Euclid for your
 teacher :
 Distinguish kinds : do crownings,
 clothings,
 Make that creator which was creature ?
 Multiply gifts upon man's head,
 And what, when all 's done, shall be
 said
 But—the more gifted he, I ween !
 That one 's made Christ, this other,
 Pilate,
 And this might be all that has been,—
 So what is there to frown or smile at ?
 What is left for us, save, in growth
 Of soul, to rise up, far past both,

From the gift looking to the giver,
 And from the cistern to the river,
 And from the finite to infinity,
 And from man's dust to God's divinity?

XVII

Take all in a word : the truth in God's
 breast

Lies trace for trace upon ours im-
 pressed :

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 pro-
 claimed [named.

Law through the worlds, and right mis-
 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,

'T is 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 mo-
 tive

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 ob-
 tains
 A new truth ; no conviction gains
 Of an old one only, made intense
 By a fresh appeal to his faded sense.

XVIII

" Can it be that he stays inside ?
 Is the vesture left me to commune with ?
 Could my soul find aught to sing in tune
 with
 Even at this lecture, if she tried ?
 Oh, let me at lowest sympathize
 With the lurking drop of blood that lies
 In the desiccated brain's white roots
 Without throb for Christ's attributes,
 As the lecturer makes his special boast !
 If love's dead there, it has left a ghost.
 Admire we, how from heart to brain
 (Though to say so strike the doctors
 dumb)
 One instinct rises and falls again,
 Restoring the equilibrium.
 And how when the Critic had done his
 best,
 And the pearl of price, at reason's test,
 Lay dust and ashes levigable
 On the Professor's lecture-table,—
 When we looked for the inference and
 monition
 That our faith, reduced to such condi-
 tion, [hole,—
 Be swept forthwith to its natural dust—
 He bids us, when we least expect it,
 Take back our faith,—if it be not just
 whole,
 Yet a pearl indeed, as his tests affect it,
 Which fact pays damage done reward-
 ingly,
 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 learn-
 ing ?
 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 anapæsts in comic-trimeter ;
 Or curing the halt and maimed ' Ike-
 tides,' [ease :
 While we lounged on at our indebted
 Instead of which, a tricky demon
 Sets her at Titus or Philemon !
 When ignorance wags his ears of
 leather
 And hates God's word, 't is altogether ;
 Nor leaves he his congenial thistles
 To go and browse on Paul's Epistles.
 —And you, the audience, who might
 ravage
 The world wide, enviably savage,
 Nor heed the cry of the retriever,
 More than Herr Heine (before his
 fever),—
 I do not tell a lie so arrant
 As say my passion's wings are furled up
 And, without plainest heavenly war-
 rant,
 I were ready and glad to give the world
 up—
 But still, when you rub brow meticu-
 lous,
 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 pra-
 vity,—
 Go on, you shall no more move my
 gravity
 Than, when I see boys ride a-cockhorse,
 I find it in my heart to embarrass them
 By hinting that their stick 's a mock
 horse,
 And they really carry what they say
 carries them."

XIX

So sat I talking with my mind.
I did not long to leave the door
And find a new church, as before,
But rather was quiet and inclined
To prolong and enjoy the gentle resting
From further tracking and trying and
testing.

"This tolerance is a genial mood!"

(Said I, and a little pause ensued).

"One trims the bark 'twixt shoal and
shelf,

And sees, each side, the good effects of
it,

A value for religion's self,

A carelessness about the seats 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 both our faiths (though
duller

His shine through a dull spirit's prism)

Originally had one colour!

Better pursue a pilgrimage

Through ancient and through 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

—'T was 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 fleet, g

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 endea-
vour

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 yor lucid way

Loaded with stars divides the vault?

But soon my soul repairs its fault

When, sharpening sense's hebetude,

She turns on my own life! So viewed,

No mere mote's-breadth but teems
immense

With witnessings of providence:

And woe to me if when I look

Upon that record, the sole book

Unsealed to me, I take no heed

Of any warning that I read!

Have I been sure, this Christmas Eve,

God's own hand did the rainbow weave,

Whereby the truth from heaven slid

Into my soul?—I cannot bid

The world admit he stooped to heal

My soul, as if in a thunder-peal

Where one heard noise, and one saw
flame,

I only knew he named my name:

But what is the world to me, for sorrow

Or joy in its censure, when to-morrow

It drops the remark, with just-turned
head

Then, on again, 'That man is dead?'

Yes, but for me—my name called,—
drawn

As a conscript's lot from the lap's
black yawn,

He has dipt into on a battle-dawn:

Bid out of life by a nod, a glance,—

Stumbling, mute-mazed, at nature's
chance,—

With a rapid finger circled round,

Fixed to the first poor inch of ground

To fight from, where his foot was found;

Whose ear but a minute since lay free

To the wide camp's buzz and gossipry—

Summoned, a solitary man,

To end his life where his life began,

From the safe glad rear, to the dreadful
van !
Soul of mine, hadst thou caught and
held
By the hem of the vesture !—"

XXI

And I caught
At the flying robe, and unrepelled
Was lapped again in its folds full-
fraught
With warmth and wonder and delight,
God's mercy being infinite.
For scarce had the words escaped my
tongue,
When, at a passionate bound, I sprung
Out 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 succes-
sor,
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 plac-
able,
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 slum-
ber.
Yet kept my seat, a warning ghastly.
Through the heads of the sermon, nine
in number,
And woke up now at the tenth and
lastly.
But again, could such disgrace have
happened ?
Each friend at my elbow had surely
nudged it ;

And, as for the sermon, where did my
nap end ?
Unless I heard it, could I have 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 in-
stead ?—
Saying, " Because the water found
" Welling up from underground,
" Is mingled with the taints of earth,
" While thou, I know, dost laugh at
dearth,
" And couldst, at wink or word, con-
vulse
" The world with the leap of a river-
pulse,—
" Therefore I turned from the oozings
muddy,
" And bring thee a chalice I found, in-
stead :
" See the brave veins in the breccia
ruddy !
" One would suppose that the marble
bled.
" What matters the water ? A hope I
have nursed,
" The waterless cup will quench my
thirst."
—Better have knelt at the poorest
stream

That trickles in pain from the straightest rift !

For the less or the more is all God's gift,
Who blocks up or breaks wide the granite-seam.

And here, is there water or not, to drink ?

I then, in ignorance and weakness,
Taking God's help, have attained to think

My heart does best to receive in meekness

That mode of worship, as most to his mind,

Where earthly aids being cast behind,
His All in All appears serene

With the thinnest human veil between,
Letting the mystic lamps, the seven,

The many motions of his spirit,
Pass, as they list, to earth from heaven.

For the preacher's merit or demerit,
It were to be wished the flaws were fewer

In the earthen vessel, holding treasure,
Which lies as safe in a golden ewer ;

But the main thing is, does it hold good measure ?

Heaven soon sets right all other matters !—

Ask, else, these ruins of humanity,
This flesh worn out to rags and tatters,

This soul at struggle with insanity,
Who thence take comfort, can I doubt ?

Which an empire gained, were a loss without.

May it be mine ! And let us hope
That no blessing befall the Pope,

Turn'd sick at last of to-day's buffoonery,

Of posturings and petticoatings,
Beside his Bourbon bully's gloatings

In the bloody orgies of drunk poltroonery !

Nor may the Professor forego its peace
At Göttingen presently, when, in the dusk

Of his life, if his cough, as I fear, should increase,

Prophesied of by that horrible husk—
When thicker and thicker the darkness fills

The world through his misty spectacles,
And he gropes for something more substantial

Than a fable, myth or personification,—
May Christ do for him what no mere man shall,

And stand confessed as the God of salvation !

Meantime, in the still recurring fear
Lest myself, at unawares, be found,

While attacking the choice of my neighbours round,

With none of my own made—I choose here !

The giving out of the hymn reclaims me ;

I have done : and if any blames me,
Thinking that merely to touch in brevity

The topics I dwell on, were unlawful,—
Or worse, that I trench, with undue levity,

On the bounds of the holy and the awful,—

I praise the heart, and pity the head of him,

And refer myself to THEE, instead of him,

Who head and heart alike discernest,
Looking below light speech we utter

When frothy spume and frequent sputter

Prove that the soul's depths boil in earnest !

May truth shine out, stand ever before us !

I put up pencil and join chorus
To Hepzibah Tune, without further apology,

The last five verses of the third section
Of the seventeenth hymn of Whitfield's Collection,

To conclude with the doxology.

EASTER-DAY

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 make 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 con-
 trived

"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 ap-
 plause.

"In all God's acts—(as Plato cries

"He doth)—he should geometrize.

"Whence, I desiderate . . ."

I see!

You would grow as a natural tree,
 Stand as a rock, soar up like fire.
 The world 's so perfect and entire,
 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 fiat,—
 Beside, perhaps, as many more
 As those that drove you out before,
 Now added, where was little need.
 Questions impossible, indeed,

To us who sat still, all and each
 Persuaded that our earth had speech,
 Of God's, writ down, no matter if
 In cursive type or hieroglyph,—
 Which one fact freed us from the yoke
 Of guessing why he never spoke.
 You come back in no better plight
 Than when you left us,—am I right ?

VI

So, the old process, I conclude,
 Goes on, the reasoning 's pursued
 Further. You own, " 'T is well
 averred,

" A scientific faith 's absurd,
 "—Frustrates the very end 't was
 meant

" To serve. So, I would rest content
 " With a mere probability,

" But, probable ; the chance must lie
 " Clear on one side,—lie all in rough,

" So long as there be just enough
 " To pin my faith to, though it hap

" Only at points : from gap to gap
 " One hangs up a huge curtain so,

" Grandly, nor seeks to have it go
 " Foldless and flat along the wall.

" What care I if some interval
 " Of life less plainly may depend

" On God ? I'd hang there to the end ;
 " And thus I should not find it hard

" To be a Christian and debarred
 " From trailing on the earth, till furled

" Away by death.—Renounce the
 world !

" Were that a mighty hardship ? Plan
 " A pleasant life, and straight some

man
 " Beside you, with, if he thought fit,

" Abundant means to compass it,
 " Shall turn deliberate aside

" To try and live as, if you tried
 " You clearly might, yet most despise.

" One friend of mine wears out his eyes,
 " Slighting the stupid joys of sense,

" In patient hope that, ten years hence,
 " 'Somewhat completer,' he may say,

" 'My list of *coleoptera* !'
 " While just the other who most laughs

" At him, above all epitaphs
 " Aspires to have his tomb describe

" Himself as sole among the tribe
 " Of snuffbox-fanciers, who possessed

" A Grignon with the Regent's crest.
 " So that, subduing, as you want,

" Whatever stands predominant
 " Among my earthly appetites

" For tastes and smells and sounds and
 sights,

" I shall be doing that alone,

" To gain a palm-branch and a throne,

" Which fifty people undertake

" To do, and gladly, for the sake

" Of giving a Semitic guess,

" Or playing pawns at blindfold chess."

VII

Good : and the next thing is,—look
 round

For evidence enough ! 'T is 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
 crow

From such an eminence ! Or, no—

The human heart 's best ; you prefer

Making that prove the minister

To truth ; you probe its wants and
 needs,

And hopes and fears, then try what
 creeds

Meet these most aptly,—resolute

That faith plucks such substantial fruit

Wherever these two correspond,

She little needs to look beyond,

And puzzle out who Orpheus was,

Or Dionysius Zagrias.

You'll find sufficient, as I say,

To satisfy you either way ;

You wanted to believe ; your pains

Are crowned—you do : and what 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 [black

Shuddered at,—all, the heavens grew
 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, 't were 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 choose the fair and pick the sweet.

But there 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 Cæsar'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 't is 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 we jeered at, send the jeer
 Back to ourselves with good effect—
 "There were my beetles to collect!
 "My box—a trifle, I confess,
 "But here I hold it, nevertheless!"
 Poor idiots, (let us pluck up heart
 And answer) we, the better part
 Have chosen, though 't were only
 hope,—

Nor envy moles like you that grope

Amid your veritable muck,
More than the grasshoppers would
truck,

For yours, their passionate life away,
That spends itself in leaps all day
To reach the sun, you want the eyes
To see, as they the wings to rise
And match the noble hearts of them !
Thus the contemner we contemn,—
And, when doubt strikes us, thus we
ward

Its stroke off, caught upon our guard,
—Not struck enough to overturn
Our faith, but shake it—make us learn
What I began with, and, I wis,
End, having proved,—how hard it is
To be a Christian !

XI

" Proved, or not,
" Howe'er you wis, small thanks, I wot,
" You get of mine, for taking pains
" To make it hard to me. Who gains
" By that, I wonder ? Here I live
" In trusting ease ; and here you drive
" At causing me to lose what most
" Yourself would mourn for had ye
lost ! "

XII

But, do you see, my friend, that thus
You leave St. Paul for Æschylus ?
—Who made his Titan's arch-device
The giving men *blind hopes* to spice
The meal of life with, else devoured
In bitter haste, while lo, death loured
Before them at the platter's edge !
If faith should be, as I allege,
Quite other than a condiment
To heighten flavours with, or meant
(Like that brave curry of his Grace)
To take at need the victuals' place ?
If, having dined, you would digest
Besides, and turning to your rest
Should find instead . . .

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, watch, till light,
Upon those chimney-stacks and roofs,
Give, through my window-pane, grey
proofs

That Easter-day is breaking slow.
On such a night, three years ago,
It chanced that I had cause to cross
The common, where the chapel was,
Our friend spoke of, the other day—
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 case, 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,
 Whosaid 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, water-
 logged,
 "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 [show
 "Capping the hills ; for earth must
 "All signs of meaning to pursue
 "Her tasks as she was wont to do
 "—The skylark, taken by surprise
 "As we ourselves, shall recognise
 "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 !'"

This nonsense, throwing back my head
With light complacent laugh, I found
Suddenly all the midnight round
One fire. The dome of heaven had
stood

As made up of a multitude
Of handbreadth cloudlets, one vast
rack

Of ripples infinite and black,
From sky to sky. Sudden there went,
Like horror and astonishment,
A fierce vindictive scribble of red
Quick flame across, as if one said
(The angry scribe of Judgment)

"There—

"Burn it!" And straight I was aware
That the whole ribwork round, minute
Cloud touching cloud beyond compute,
Was tinted, each with its own spot
Of burning at the core, till clot
Jammed against clot, and spilt its fire
Over all heaven, which 'gan suspire
As fanned to measure equable,—
Just so great conflagrations kill
Night overhead, and rise and sink,
Reflected. Now the fire would shrink
And wither off the blasted face
Of heaven, and I distinct might trace
The sharp black ridgy outlines left
Unburned like network—then, each
cleft

The fire had been sucked back into,
Regorged, and out it surging flew
Furiously, and night writhed inflamed,
Till, tolerating to be tamed
No longer, certain rays world-wide
Shot downwardly. On every side
Caught past escape, the earth was lit;
As if a dragon's nostril split
And all his famished ire o'erflowed;
Then as he winced at his lord's goad,
Back he inhaled: whereat I found
The clouds into vast pillars bound,
Based on the corners of the earth,
Propping the skies at top: a dearth
Of fire in 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 resc'ed 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 tardi'y, alas!)

"To letting the dear remnant pass,

"One day,—some drops of earthly good

"Untasted! Is it for this mood,

"That thou, whose earth delights so
well,

"Hast made its complement a hell?"

XVII

A final belch of fire like blood,
Overbroke all heaven in one flood
Of doom. Then fire was sky, and sky
Fire, and both, one brief ecstasy,
Then ashes. But I heard no noise
(Whatever was) because a voice
Beside me spoke thus, "Life is done,
"Time ends, Eternity's begun,
"And thou art judged for evermore."

XVIII

I looked up; all seemed as before;
Of that cloud-Tophet overhead,

No trace was left : I saw instead
The common round me, and the sky
Above, stretched drear and emptily
Of life. 'T was 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 hept

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
bathed

B. P.

All else, broke, grizzled with despair,
Against the soul of blackness there.
A gesture told the mood within—
That wrapped right hand which based
the chin,

That intense meditation fixed
On his procedure,—pity mixed
With the fulfilment of decree.
Motionless, thus, he spoke to me,
Who fell before his feet, a mass,
No man now.

XX

" All is come to pass.

" Such shows are over for each soul

" They had respect to. In the roll

" Of Judgment which convinced man-
kind

" 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 be-
twixt.

" The earthly joys lay palpable,—

" A taint, in each, distinct as well ;

" The heavenly fitted, faint and rare,

" Above them, but as truly were

" Taintless, so, in their nature, best.

" Thy choice was earth : thou didst at-
test

" 'T was fitter spirit should subserve

" The flesh, than flesh refine to nerve

" Beneath the spirit's play. Advance

" No claim to their inheritance

" Who chose the spirit's fugitive

" Brief gleams, and yearned, ' This
were to live

" ' Indeed, if rays, completely pure

" ' From flesh that dulls them, could
endure,—

" ' Not shoot in meteor-light athwart

" ' Our earth, to show how cold and
swart

" ' It lies beneath their fire, but stand

" ' As stars do, destined to expand,

M M

" ' Prove veritable worlds, our home ! '
 " Thou saidst,—' Let spirit star the
 domc
 " ' 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 : ' t is 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 ! Ex-
 pend
 " Eternity upon its shows,
 " Flung thee as freely as one rose

" Out of a summer's opulence,
 " Over the Eden-barrier whence
 " Thou art excluded. Knock in vain ! "

xxiii

I sat up. All was still again.
 I breathed free : to my heart, back fled
 The warmth. " But, all the world ! "
 —I said.
 I stooped and picked a leaf of fern,
 And recollected I might learn
 From books, how many myriad sorts
 Of fern exist, to trust reports,
 Each as distinct and beautiful
 As this, the very first I cull.
 Think, from the first leaf to the last !
 Conceive, then, earth's resources ! Vast
 Exhaustless beauty, endless change
 Of wonder ! And this foot shall range
 Alps, Andes,—and this eye devour
 The bee-bird and the aloe-flower ?

xxiv

Then the voice, " Welcome so to rate
 " The arras-folds that variegates
 " The earth, God's antechamber, well !
 " The wise, who waited there, could tell
 " By these, what royalties in store
 " Lay one step past the entrance-door.
 " For whom, was reckoned, not too
 much,
 " This life's munificence ? For such
 " As thou,—a race, whereof scarce one
 " Was able, in a million,
 " To feel that any marvel lay
 " In objects round his feet all day ;
 " Scarce one, in many millions more,
 " Willing, if able, to explore
 " The secreter, minuter charm !
 " —Brave souls, a fern-leaf could dis-
 arm
 " Of power to cope with God's intent,—
 " Or scared if the south firmament
 " With north-fire did its wings reflex !
 " 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; 't is 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 throng 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
 "Emblazoning man's heritage?—
 "Can this alone absorb thy sight,
 "As pages were not infinite,—
 "Like the omnipotence which tasks
 "Itself, to furnish all that asks
 "The soul it means to satiate?
 "What was the world, the starry state
 "Of the broad skies,—what, all
 plays
 "Of power and beauty intermixed,
 "Which now thy soul is chained be-
 twixt,—
 "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
 drear
 "Deficiency gapes every side!
 "The good, tried once, were bad, re-
 tried.
 "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 [sense,
 "The creature's new world-widened
 "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 ful-
 fil.
 "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,—
 "Who, though found grateful and con-
 tent,
 "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 stunted soul, I nipped
 " Of budding wings, else now equipped
 " For voyage from summer isle to isle !
 " And though she needs must reconcile
 " Ambition to the life on ground,
 " Still, I can profit by late found
 " But precious knowledge. Mind is
 best—
 " I will seize mind, forego the rest,
 " And try how far my tethered strength
 " May crawl in this poor breadth and
 length.
 " Let me, since I can fly no more,
 " At least spin dervish-like about
 " (Till giddy rapture almost doubt
 " I fly) through circling sciences,
 " Philosophies and histories !
 " Should the whirl slacken there, then
 verse,
 " Fining to music, shall asperse
 " Fresh and fresh fire-dew, till I strain
 " Intoxicate, half-break my chain !
 " Not joyless, though more favoured
 feet
 " Stand calm, where I want wings to
 beat
 " The floor. At least earth's bond is
 broke ! "

XXVIII

Then, (sickening even while I spoke)
 " Let me alone ! No answer, pray,
 " To this ! I know what thou wilt say !
 " All still is earth's,—to know, as
 much
 " As feel its truths, which if we touch
 " With sense, or apprehend in soul,
 " What matter ? I have reached the
 goal—
 " '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 sup-
 plied,
 " Was ever table on outside.
 " Such gleams made bright the earthen
 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? "T is 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 be-
hoof,

"Both could and did invent that
scheme

"Of perfect love: 't would well besem
"Cain's nature thou wast wont to
praise,

"Not tally with God's usual ways!"

xxx

And I cowered deprecatingly—
"Thou Love of God! Or let me die,

"Or grant what shall seem heaven al-
most!

"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,— [Light

The shock of that strange Northern
Set my head swimming, bred in me

A dream. And so I live, you see,
Go through the world, try, prove, re-
ject,

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 [judged,

"No ease henceforth, as one that 's
"Condemned to earth for ever, shut
"From heaven!"

But Easter-Day breaks! But
Christ rises! Mercy every way
Is infinite;—and who can say?

MEN AND WOMEN

FLORENCE, 185—.

“TRANSCENDENTALISM:
A POEM IN TWELVE BOOKS”

STOP playing, poet! May a brother
speak?

'T is you speak, that 's your error.
Song 's our art:

Whereas you please to speak these
naked thoughts

Instead of draping them in sights and
sounds.

—True thoughts, good thoughts,
thoughts fit to treasure up!

But why such long prolusion and 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
hin 'ers 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, 't is true;

We see and hear and do not wonder
much:

If you could tell us what they mean,
indeed!

As German 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—
Colloquized with the cowslip on such
themes!

We find them extant yet in Jacob's
prose.

But by the time youth slips a stage or
two

While reading prose in that tough book
he wrote,

(Collating and emendating the same
And settling on the sense most to our
mind)

We shut the clasps and find life's sum-
mer 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 stout 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 showed before, be-
lieve,

Was your own boy-face o'er the finer
chords

Bent, following the cherub at the top
That points to God with his paired half-
moon wings.

HOW IT STRIKES A CONTEMPORARY.

I ONLY knew one poet in my life :
And this, or something like it, was his way.

You saw go up and down Valladolid,
A man of mark, to know next time you saw.

His very serviceable suit of black
Was courtly once and conscientious still,

And many might have worn it, though none did :

The cloak, that somewhat shone and showed the threads,

Had purpose, and the ruff, significance.
He walked and tapped the pavement with his cane,

Scenting the world, looking it full in face,

An old dog, bald and blindish, at his heels.

They turned up, now, the alley by the church,

That leads 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 ferrel of his stick

Trying the mortar's temper 'tween the chinks

Of some new shop a-building, French and fine.

He stood and watched the cobbler at his trade,

The man who slices lemons into drink,
The coffee-roaster's brasier, and the boys

That volunteer to help him turn its winch.

He glanced o'er books on stalls with half an eye,

And fly-leaf ballads on the vendor's string,

And broad-edge bold-print posters by the wall.

He took such 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,—you stared at him,

And found, less to your pleasure than surprise,

He seemed to know you and expect as much.

So, next time that a neighbour's tongue was loosed,

It marked the shameful and notorious fact,

We had among us, not so much a spy,
As a recording chief-inquisitor,

The town's true master if the town but knew !

We merely kept a governor for form,
While this man walked about and took account

Of all thought, said and acted, then went home,

And wrote it fully to our Lord the King
Who has an itch to know things, he knows why,

And reads them in his 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 fate ?
When altogether old B. disappeared

And young C. got his mistress,—was 't our friend,

His letter to the King, that did it all ?
What paid the bloodless man for so much pains ?

Our Lord the King has favourites manifold,
And shifts his ministry some once a month ;

Our city gets new governors at whiles,—
But never word or sign, that I could hear,

Notified to this man about the streets
The King's approval of those letters coned

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
otherwise !

The whole street might o'erlook him as
he sat,

Leg crossing leg, one foot on the dog's
back,

Playing a decent cribbage with his maid
(Jacynth, you 're sure her name was)
o'er the cheese

And fruit, three red halves of starved
winter-pears,

Or treat of radishes in April. Nine,

Ten, struck the church clock, straight to
bed went he.

My father, like the man of sense he
was,

Would point him out to me a dozen
times ;

" St—St," he'd whisper, " the Corregi-
dor ! "

I had been used to think that personage
Was one with lacquered breeches, lus-
trous belt,

And feathers like a forest in his hat,
Who blew the trumpet and proclaimed
the news,

Announced the bull-fights, gave each
church its turn,

And memorized the miracle in vogue !
He had a great observance from us
boys ;

We were in error ; that was not the
man.

I'd like now, yet had haply been
afraid,

To have just looked, when this man
came to die,

And seen who lined the clean gay garret
sides

And stood about the neat low truckie-
bed,

With the heavenly manner of relieving
guard.

Here had been, mark, the general-in-
chief,

Thro' a whole campaign of the world's
life and death,

Doing the King's work all the dim day
long,

In his old coat and up to knees in mud,
Smoked like a herring, dining on a
crust,—

And, now the day was won, relieved at
once !

No further show or need for that old
coat,

You are sure, for one thing ! Bless us,
all the while

How sprucely we are dressed out, you
and I !

A second, and the angels alter that.

Well, I could never write a worse,—
could you ?

Let's to the Prado and make the most
of time.

ARTEMIS PROLOGIZE

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 lone-
liness.

Of men, the chaste adere me, hanging
crowns

Of poppies red to blackness, bell and
stem,

Upon my image at Athenai here ;
 And this dead Youth, Asclepius bends
 above,
 Was dearest to me. He, my buskined
 step
 To follow through the wild-wood leafy
 ways,
 And chase the panting stag, or swift
 with darts
 Stop the swift ounce, or lay the leopard
 low,
 Neglected homage to another god :
 Whence Aphrodite, by no midnight
 smoke
 Of tapers lulled, in jealousy despatched
 A noisome lust that, as the gadbee
 stings,
 Possessed his stepdame Phaidra for
 himself
 The son of Theseus her great absent
 spouse.
 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 murder-
 ous cord :
 Yet, ere she perished, blasted in a scroll
 The fame of him her swerving made not
 swerve.
 And Theseus, read, returning, and be-
 lieved,
 And exiled, in the blindness of his
 wrath, [first,
 The man without a crime who, last as
 Loyal, divulged not to his sire the
 truth.
 Now Theseus from Poseidon had ob-
 tained
 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 rein, and urged
 their speed

Along the rocks and shingles of the
 shore,
 When from the gaping wave a monster
 flung
 His obscene body in the coursers' path.
 These, mad with terror, as the sea-bull
 sprawled
 Wallowing about their feet, lost care of
 him
 That reared them ; and the master-
 chariot-pole
 Snapping beneath their plunges like a
 reed,
 Hippolitos, whose feet were tram-
 melled fast,
 Was yet dragged forward by the cir-
 cling rein
 Which either hand directed ; nor they
 quenched
 The frenzy of their flight before each
 trace,
 Wheel-spoke and splinter of the woeful
 car,
 Each boulder-stone, sharp stub and
 spiny shell,
 Huge fish-bone wrecked and wreathed
 amid the sands
 On that detested beach, was bright
 with blood
 And morsels of his flesh : then fell the
 steeds
 Head-foremost, crashing in their
 mooned fronts,
 Shivering with sweat, each white eye
 horror-fixed.
 His people, who had witnessed all afar,
 Bore back the ruins of Hippolitos.
 But when his sire, too swoln 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 wofullest of men,
 And worthily ; but ere the death-veils
 hid
 His face, the murdered prince full par-
 don breathed
 To his rash sire. Whereat Athenai
 wails.
 So I, who ne'er forsake my votaries,
 Lest in the cross-way none the honey-
 cake

Should tender, nor pour out the dog's
hot life ;
Lest at my fane the priests disconsolate
Should dress my image with some
faded poor
Few crowns, made favours of, nor dare
object
Such slackness to my worshippers who
turn
Elsewhere the trusting heart and loaded
hand,
As they had climbed Olumpos to re-
port
Of Artemis and nowhere found her
throne—
I interposed: and, this eventful night,—
(While round the funeral pyre the pop-
ulace
Stood with fierce light on their black
robes which bound
Each sobbing head, while yet their hair
they clipped
O'er the dead body of their withered
prince,
And, in his palace, Theseus prostrated
On the cold hearth, his brow cold as the
slab
'T was 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 re-
treat
In the thrice-venerable forest here,
And this white-bearded sage who
squeezes now
The berried plant, is Phoibos' son of
fame,
Asclepius, whom my radiant brother
taught
The doctrine of each herb and flower
and root,
To know their secret'st virtue and ex-
press
The saving soul of all: who so has
soothed
With lavers the torn brow and mur-
dered 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 pharma-
cies!
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 EXPERI-
ENCE 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 scul)
—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 : [gone.
I cried and threw my staff and he was
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 !
'Scoth, it elates me, thus reposed and
safe,
To void the stuffing of my travel-scrip
And share with thee whatever Jewry
yields.
A viscid choler is observable
In tertians, I was nearly bold to say ;
And falling-sickness hath a happier
cure
Than our school wots of : there 's a
spider here
Weaves no web, watches on the ledge
of tombs,

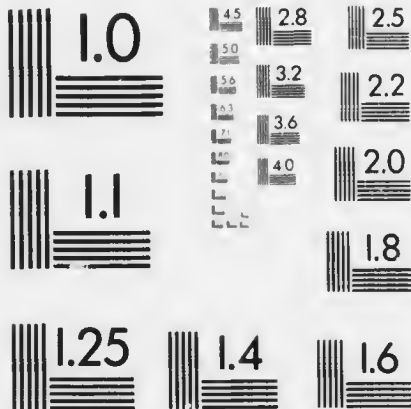
Sprinkled with mottles on an ash-grey
back ;
Take five and drop them . . . but who
knows his mind,
The Syrian run-a-gate I trust this to ?
His service payeth me a sublimate
Blown up his nose to help the ailing eye.
Best wait : I reach Jerusalem at morn,
There set in order my experiences,
Gather what most deserves, and give
thee all—
Or I might add, Judæa's gum-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 leprosy—
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,
Which 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
't is 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 !
'T is but a case of mania—subin-
duced
By epilepsy, at the turning-point
Of trance prolonged unduly some three
days ;



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When, by the exhibition of some drug
 Or spell, exorcization, stroke of art
 Unknown to me and which 't were well
 to know,
 The evil thing out-breaking all at once
 Left the man whole and sound of body
 indeed,—
 But, flinging (so to speak) life's gates
 too wide,
 Making a clear house of it too suddenly,
 The first conceit that entered might in-
 scribe
 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-returned and new-established
 soul [heart
 Hath gotten now so thoroughly by
 That henceforth she will read or these
 or none.
 And first—the man's own firm convic-
 tion 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 mixed middle-life,
 Should find a treasure,—can he use the
 same
 With straitened habits and with
 tastes starved small,
 And take at once to his impoverished
 brain
 The sudden element that changes
 things,
 That sets the undreamed-of rapture at
 his hand,
 And puts the cheap old joy in the
 scorned dust ?
 Is he not such an one as moves to
 mirth—
 Warily parsimonious, when no need,
 Wasteful as drunkenness at undue
 times ?
 All prudent counsel as to what befits
 The golden mean, is lost on such an one :
 The man's fantastic will is the man's
 law.
 So here—we call the treasure 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 see-
 ing 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—
 'T is one ! Then take it on the other
 side,
 Speak of some trifling fact,—he will
 gaze rapt
 With stupor at its very littleness,
 (Far as I see) as if in that indeed

He caught prodigious import, whole results;

And so will turn to us the bystanders
In ever the same stupor (note this point)
That we too see not with his opened eyes.

Wonder and doubt come wrongly into play,

Preposterously, at cross purposes.
Should his child sicken unto death,—
why, look

For scarce abatement of his cheerfulness,

Or pretermission of the daily craft!

While a word, gesture, glance from that same child

At play or in the school or laid asleep,

Will startle him to an agony of fear,
Exasperation, just as like. Demand

The reason why—" 't is 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 distracting orb

Of glory on either side that meagre thread,

Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet—

The spiritual life around the earthly life:

The law of that is known to him as this,
His heart and brain move there, his feet

stay here.

So is the man perplexed with impulses
Sudden to start off crosswise, not

straight on,

Proclaiming what is right and wrong across,

And not along, this black thread through the blaze—

"It should be" baulked by "here it cannot be."

And oft the man's soul springs into his face

As if he saw again and heard again
His sage that bade him "Rise" and he

did rise.

Something, a word, a tick of the blood within

Admonishes: then back he sinks at once

To ashes, who was very fire before,
In sedulous recurrence to his trade

Whereby he earneth him the daily bread;

And studiously the humbler for that pride,

Professedly the faultier that he knows
God's secret, while he holds the thread

of life.

Indeed the especial marking of the man
Is prone submission to the heavenly

will—
Seeing it, what it is, and why it is.

Sayeth, he will wait patient to the last
For that same death which must re-

store 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: [ground,

How can he give his neighbour the real
His own conviction? Ardent as he is—

Call his great truth a lie, why, still the old

"Be it as God please" reassureth him.

I probed the sore as thy disciple should:
"How, beast," said I, "this stolid

carelessness

"Sufficeth thee, when Rome is on her march
"To stamp out like a little spark thy

town,

"Thy tribe, thy crazy tale and thee
at once?"

He merely looked with his large eyes
on me.

The man is apathetic, you deduce?
Contrariwise, he loves both old and
young,

Able and weak, affects the very brutes
And birds—how say I? flowers of the
field—

As a wise workman 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 travel I have feigned
To be an ignoramus in our art
According to some preconceived design,
And mapped to hear the land's prac-
titioners

Steeped in conceit sublimed by ignor-
ance,

Prattle fantastically on disease,
Its cause and cure—and I must hold
my peace!

Thou wilt object—Why have I not
ere this [rene
Sought out the sage himself, the Naza-
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 wiz-
ardry,

Rebellion, to the setting up a rule
And creed prodigious as described to
me.

His death, which happened when the
earthquake fell

(Prefiguring, as soon appeared, the loss
To occult learning in our lord the sage
Who lived there in the pyramid alone)
Was wrought by the mad people—
that 's their wont!

On vain recourse, as I conjecture it,
To his tried virtue, for miraculous help—
How could he stop the earthquake?

That 's their way!

The other imputations must be lies:
But take one, though I loathe to give it
thee,

In mere respect for any good man's
fame.

(And after all, our patient Lazarus
Is stark mad; should we count on
what he says?

Perhaps not: though in writing to a
leech

'Tis well to keep back nothing of a case.)
This man so cured regards the curer,
then,

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 wear-
iness

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 sha'll 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.

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 't is to God I speed so fast,

For in God's breast, my own abode,

Those shoals of dazzling glory,
passed,

I lay my spirit down at last.

I 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 polson-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's turn to the gourd's
hurt,

And bloat, and while they bloat it,
blast,

As from the first its lot was cast.

For as I lie, smiled on, full-fed

By unexhausted power to bless,

I gaze below on hell's fierce bed,

And those its waves of flame oppress,

Swarming in ghastly wretchedness;

Whose life on earth aspired to be

One altar-smoke, so pure!—to win

If not love like God's love for me,

At least to keep his anger in;

And all their striving turned to sin.

Priest, doctor, hermit, monk grown
white

With prayer, the broken-hearted nun,

The martyr, the wan acolyte,

The incense-swinging child,—undone

Before God fashioned star or sun!

God, whom I praise; how could I
praise,

If such as I might understand,

Make out and reckon on his ways,

And bargain for his love, and stand,

Paying a price, at his right hand?

PICTOR IGNOTUS

FLORENCE, 15—.

I COULD have painted pictures like that
youth's

Ye praise so. How my soul springs
 up! No bar
 Stayed me—ah, thought which sad-
 dens 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 up-
 lift
 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 with-
 out a tongue;
 Whether Hope rose at once in all the
 blood,
 A-tiptoe for the blessing of embrace,
 Or Rapture drooped the eyes, as when
 her brood
 Pull down the nesting dove's heart
 to its place;
 Or Confidence lit swift the forehead up,
 And locked the mouth fast, like a
 castle braved,—
 O human faces, hath it spilt, my cup?
 What did ye give me that I have not
 saved?
 Nor will I say I have not dreamed (how
 well!)
 Of going—I, in each new picture,—
 forth,
 As, making new hearts beat and
 bosoms swell,
 To Pope or Kaiser, East, West, South
 or North,
 Bound for the calmly satisfied great
 State,
 Or glad aspiring little burgh, it went,
 Flowers cast upon the car which bore
 the freight,
 Through old streets named afresh
 from the event,
 Till it reached home, where learned age
 should greet

My face, and youth, the star not yet
 distinct
 Above his hair, lie learning at my feet!—
 Oh, thus to live, I and my picture,
 linked
 With love about, and praise, till life
 should end,
 And then not go to heaven, but linger
 here,
 Here on my earth, earth's every man
 my friend,—
 The thought grew frightful, 't was 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 needs must our
 pictures live
 And see their faces, listen to their prate,
 Partakers of their daily pettiness,
 Discussed of,—“This I love, or this I
 hate,
 “This likes me more, and this affects
 me less!” [whiles
 Wherefore I chose my portion. If at
 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!

O youth, men praise so,—holds their praise its worth?

Blown harshly, keeps the trump its golden cry?

Tastes sweet the water with such specks of earth?

* FRA LIPPO LIPPI

I AM poor brother Lippo, by your leave!
You need not clap your torches to my face.

Zooks, what 's to blame? you think you see a monk!

What, 't is past midnight, and you go the rounds,

And here you catch me at an alley's end
Where sportive ladies leave their doors ajar?

The Carmine's my cloister: hunt it up,
Do,—harry out, if you must show your zeal,

Whatever rat, there, haps on his wrong hole,

And nip each softling of a wee white mouse,

Heke, weke, that 's crept to keep him company!

Aha, you know your betters? 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 :
B.P.

Zooks, are we pilchards, that they sweep the streets

And count fair prize what comes into their net?

He 's Judas to a tittle, that man is!

Just such a face! Why, sir, you make amends.

Lord, I'm not angry! Bid your 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 unwiped!

It 's not your chance to have a bit of chalk,

A wood-coal or the like? or you should see!

Yes, I'm the painter, since you style me so.

What, brother Lippo's doings, up and down,

You know them and they take you? like enough!

I saw the proper twinkle in your eye—

'Tell you, I liked your looks at very first.

Let 's sit and set things straight now, hip to haunch.

Here 's spring come, and the nights one makes up bands

To roam the town and sing out carnival,
And I 've been three weeks shut within my mew,

A-painting for the great man, saints and saints

And saints again. I could not paint all night—

Ouf! I leaned out of window for fresh air.

There came a hurry of feet and little feet,

A sweep of lute-strings, laughs, and whiffs of song,—

*Flower o' the broom,
Take away love, and our earth is a tomb!
Flower o' the quince,
I let Lisa go, and what good in life since?
Flower o' the thyme—and so on. Round
they went.*

Scarce had they turned the corner when
a titter

Like the skipping of rabbits by moon-
light,—three slim shapes,
And a face that looked up . . . zooks,
sir, flesh and blood.

That 's all I'm made of! Into shreds
it went,

Curtain and counterpane and coverlet,
All the bed-furniture—a dozen knots,
There was a ladder! Down I let my-
self,

Hands and feet, scrambling somehow,
and so dropped, [fun

And after them. I came up with the
Hard by Saint Laurence, hail fellow,
well met,—

*Flower o' the rose,
If I've been merry, what matter who
knows?*

And so as I was stealing back again
To get to bed and have a bit of sleep
Ere I rise up to-morrow and go work
On Jerome knocking at his poor old
breast.

With his great round stone to subdue
the flesh,

You snap me of the sudden. Ah, I see!
Though your eye twinkles still, you
shake your head—

Mine 's shaved—a monk, you say—the
sting 's in that!

If Master Cosimo announced himself,
Mum 's the word naturally; but a
monk!

Come, what am I a beast for? tell us,
now!

I was a baby when my mother died
And father died and left me in the
street.

I starved there, God knows how, a year
or two

On fig-skins, melon-parings, rinds and
shucks,

Refuse and rubbish. One fine frosty
day,

My stomach being empty as your hat,
The wind doubled me up and down I
went.

Old Aunt Lapaccia trussed me with one
hand,

(Its fellow was a stinger as I knew)
And so along the wall, over the bridge,
By the straight cut to the convent.

Six words there,
While I stood munching my first bread
that month:

"So, boy, you 're minded," quoth th'
good fat father

Wiping his own mouth, 't was refection-
time,—

"To quit this very miserable world?
Will you renounce" . . . "the mouth-
ful 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,

'T was 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 clove,
All the Latin I construe is, "amo" I
love!*

But, mind you, when a boy starves in
the streets [was,

Eight years together as my fortune
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 let's 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 admonition from the hunger-pinch.
 I had a store of such remarks, be sure,
 Which, after I found leisure, turned to
 use :
 I drew men's faces on my copy-books,
 Scrawled them within the antiphon-
 ary's marge,
 Joined legs and arms to the long music-
 notes,
 Found eyes and nose and chin for A.s
 and B.s,
 And made a string of pictures of the
 world
 Betwixt the ins and outs of verb and
 noun,
 On the wall, the bench, the door. The
 monks looked black.
 "Nay," quoth the Prior, "turn him
 out, d'ye say ?
 "In no wise. Lose a crow and catch a
 lark.
 "What if at last we get our man of
 parts,
 "We Carmelites, like those Camaldo-
 lese
 "And Preaching Friars, to do our
 church up fine
 "And put the front on it that ought to
 be !"
 And hereupon he bade me daub away.
 Thank you ! my head being cramraced,
 the 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, [fess
 From good old gossips waiting to con-
 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 ear rings and a bunch of
 flowers
 (The brute took growling) prayed, and
 so was gone.
 I painted all, then cried " 'T is 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 betters took their turn to see and
 say :
 The Prior and the learned pulled a face
 And stopped all that in no time.
 "How ? what 's here ?
 "Quite from the mark of painting,
 bless us all !
 "Faces, arms, legs and bodies like the
 true
 "As much as pea and pea ! it 's devil's
 game !
 "Your business is not to catch men
with show,
 "With homage to the perishable clay,
 "But lift them over it, ignore it all,
 "Make them forget there 's such a
 thing as flesh.
 "Your business is to paint the souls of
men—

" Man's soul, and it's a fire, smoke . . .
 no, it's not . . .
 " It's vapour done up like a new-born
 babe—
 " (In that shape when you die it leaves
 your mouth)
 " It's . . . well, what matters talking,
 it's the soul!
 " Give us no more of body than shows
 soul!
 " Here's Giotto, with his Saint a-
 praising God,
 " That sets us praising,—why not
 stop with him?
 " Why put all thoughts of praise out of
 our head
 " With wonder at lines, colours, and
 what not?
 " Paint the soul, never mind the legs
 and 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, [like,
 Make his flesh liker and his soul more
 Both in their order? Take the pretti-
 est 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 in-
 vents:
 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 stieks, the
 old grave eyes
 Are peeping o'er my shoulder as I work,
 The heads shake still—" It's art's
 decline, my son!
 " You're not of the true painters,
 great and old;
 " Brother Angelico's the man, you'll
 find;
 " Brother Lorenzo stands his single
 peer:
 " Fag on at flesh, you'll never make
 the third!"
Flower o' the pine,
You keep your mistr . . . manners,
and I'll stick to mine!
 I'm not the third, then: bless us, they
 must know!
 Don't you think they're the likeliest to
 know,
 They with their Latin? So, I swallow
 my rage,
 Clench my teeth, suck my lips in tight,
 and paint

To please them—sometimes do, and
sometimes don't ;

For, doing most, there 's pretty sure to
come

A turn, some warm eve finds me at my
saints—

A laugh, a cry, the business of the
world—

(Flower o' the peach,

Death for us all, and his own life for
each !)

And my whole soul revolves, the cup
runs over,

The world and life 's too big to pass for
a dream,

And I do these wild things in sheer
despite,

And play the fooleries you catch me at,
In pure rage ! The old mill-horse, out
at grass

After hard years, throws up his stiff
heels so,

Although the miller does not preach to
him

The only good of grass is to make chaff.
What would men have ? Do they like
grass or no—

May they or mayn't they ? all I want 's
the thing

Settled for ever one way. As it is,
You tell too many lies and hurt your-
self :

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 n e, 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 so—though I never live so long,
I know what 's sure to follow. You be
judge !

You speak no Latin more than I, be-
like ;

However, you 're my man, you 've seen
the world

—The beauty and the wonder and the
power,

The shapes of things, their colours, light
and shades,

Changes, surprises,—and God made it
all !

—For what ? Do you feel thankful,
ay or no,

For this fair town's face, yonder river's
line,

The mountain round it and the sky
above,

Much more the figures of man, woman,
child,

These are the frame to ? What 's it all
about ?

To be passed over, despised ? or dwelt
upon,

Wondered at ? oh, this last of course !
—you say.

But why not do as well as say,—paint
these

Just as they are, careless what comes of
God's works—paint anyone, and
count it crime

To let a truth slip. Don't object,
" His works

" Are here already ; nature is com-
plete :

" 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 cullion's hanging face? A bit of
chalk,
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
meaning'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 scaf-
fold's down?"
I ask a brother: "Hugely," he re-
turns—
"Already not one phiz of your three
slaves
"Who turn the Deacon off his toasted
side,
"But's scratched and prodded to our
heart's content,
"The pious people have so eased their
own
"With coming to say prayers there in
a rage:
"We get on fast to see the bricks be-
neath.
"Expect another job this time next
year,
"For pity and religion grow i' the
crowd—
"Your painting serves its purpose!"
Hang the fools!

—That is—you 'll not mistake an
idle word
Spoke in a huff by a poor monk, Got
wot,
Tasting the air this spicy night which
turns
The unaccustomed head like Chianti
wine!
Oh, the church knows! don't misre-
port me, now!
It's natural a poor monk out of bounds
Should have his apt word to excuse
himself:
And hearken how I plot to make
amends.
I have bethought me: I shall paint a
piece
... There's for you! Give me six
months, then go, see
Something in Sant' Ambrogio's! Bless
the nuns!
They want a cast 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 Flor-
entines,
Saint Ambrose, who puts down in black
and white
The convent's friends and gives them a
long day,
And Job, I must have him there past
mistake,
The man of Uz, (and Us without the z,
Painters who need his patience.) Well,
all these
Secured at their devotion, up shall
come
Out of a corner when you least expect,
As one by a dark stair into a great
light,
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
near?
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 be-
ing shut,

Till, wholly unexpected, in there pops
The hothead husband! Thus I scuttle

off
To some safe bench behind, not letting
go

The palm of her, the little lily thing
That spoke the good word for me in the
nick,

Like the Prior's niece . . . Saint
Lucy, I would say.

And so all 's saved for me, and for the
church

A pretty picture gained. Go, six
months hence!

Your hand, sir, and good bye: no
lights, no lights!

The street 's hushed, and I know my
own way back,

Don't fear me! There 's the grey be-
ginning. 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. *ser as duty*
Don't count the time lost, neither;
you must serve

For each of the five pictures we re-
quire: *these include whole*

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 har-
mony!

A common greyness silvers every-
thing,—

All in a twilight, you and I alike

*In some way he had been
showing her off + also, regrets*

~~X~~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 *has since now*

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 in-
side ; *then art*

The last monk leaves the garden ;
days decrease,

And autumn grows, autumn in every-
thing. *[shape*

Eh ? the whole seems to fall into a
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 ~~letter~~ ; let it lie !

This chamber for example—turn your
head—

All that 's behind us ! You don't
understand

Nor care to understand about my 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.
can do with my pencil what I know,

What I see, what at bottom of my
heart *colours*

I wish for, *if* I ever wish so deep—

Do easily, too—when I say, perfectly,
I do not boast, perhaps : yourself are

judge *Does not value her own*

Who listened to the Legate's talk last
week,

And just as much they used to say in
France.

At any rate 't is 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 agonize 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
~~smear~~

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, *C. A. P. A. S. S. I.*

In their vexed beating stuffed and
stopped-up brain,

Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to
prompt

This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's
hand of mine.

Their works drop groundward, but
themselves, I know,

Reach many a time a heaven that 's
shut to me,

Enter and take their place there sure
enough,

Though they come back and cannot
tell the world. *the world*

My works are nearer heaven, but I sit
here. *N. A. T. P. H. U. R. S. (-) A. T.*

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 re-
marks

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 o'erlooked the
world!" No doubt.

Yonder 's a work now, of that famous
youth

The Urbinate 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 replen-
ish 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? *blasted*

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 per-
fect brow,

And perfect eyes, and more than per-
fect mouth,

And the low voice my soul hears, as a
bird

The fowler's pipe, and follows to the
snare—

Had you, with these the same, but
brought a mind!

Some women do so. Had the mouth
there urged

"God and the glory! never care for
gain—"

"The present by the future, what is
that?"

"Live for fame, side by side with
Agnolo!

Rafael is waiting: up to God, all
three!"

I might have done it for you. So it
seems: *by some*

Perhaps not. All is as God over-rules.

Beside, incentives come from the soul's
self; *turn on her*

The rest avail not. Why do I need
you?

What wife had Rafael, or has Agnolo?
In this world, who can do a thing, will

not;

And who would do it, cannot, I per-
ceive:

Yet the will 's somewhat—some hat,
too, the power—

And thus we half-men struggle. At
the end,

God, I conclude, compensates pair-
ishes.

'T is safer for me, if that can be
strict, *for some*

That I am something up *there*,
Poor this long while, dear *to speak*
the truth.

I dared not, do you know, to *me*
all day,

For fear of chancing on the boards.
The best is when they look

aside;

But they speak sometimes, must
bear it all.

Well may they speak! that *first*
time,

And that long festal year, the *me-*
bleau!

I surely then could some *have*
the ground.

Put on the glory, Rafael, that *year*,
In that humane great man's
golden look, *—no more of the same*

One finger in his beard on the *curl*
Over his mouth's good man *made*
the smile,

One arm about my shoulder, my *bill*
neck,

The jingle of his gold chain, my *ear*,
I painting proudly with his *on*
me, *spread*

All his court round him, see *his*
eyes,

Such frank French eyes, and the *re*
of souls *two by*

Profuse, my hand kept ply the *hearts*,
And, best of all, this, this, the *time*
yond,

This in the background, waiting *on my*
work, *for role*

To crown the issue with a last reward!
A good time, was it not, my long
days?

And had you not grown restless . . .
but I know—

'Tis done and past; 't was right, my
instinct said;

My ~~love~~ life the life grew, golden and not
grey,

And 'm the weak-eyed bat no sun
I should tempt

Out of the grange whose four walls
To make his world.

How could it end in any other way?
You called me, and I came home to your
heart.

Then ~~it~~ was, to have ended there;
then it

For ~~it~~ were the triumph, what is
it?

Let ~~it~~ frame your face in your
eyes.

You ~~are~~ Lucrezia that are mine!
" ~~It~~ was, Andrea painted that;

" ~~It~~ 's the better when you
" ~~It~~ other's Virgin was his

More ~~it~~ me. I am glad to
Born ~~it~~ in your presence; clearer

My ~~it~~ fortune, I resolve to think.
For ~~it~~ you 'know, Lucrezia, as God

Saint ~~it~~ Agnolo, his very self,
To ~~it~~ . . . I have known it all

~~It~~ years . . .
(What ~~it~~ young man was flaming out

Up ~~it~~ wall for Rome to see,
To ~~it~~ in heart because of it)

" ~~It~~ 's a certain sorry little
" ~~It~~ and down our Florence,

" ~~It~~ how,
" ~~It~~ he set to plan and execute

" ~~It~~ pricked on by your popes
" ~~It~~ s,

" ~~It~~ the sweat into that
" ~~It~~ ours!"

—And indeed the arm is
At ~~it~~ . . . yet, only you to

Over ~~it~~ here—quick, thus the
Do ~~it~~ should go!

But the soul! he 's Rafael! rub it
And ~~it~~!

Still all I care for, if he spoke the truth,

(What he? why, who but Michel Ag
nolo?)

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. [star]

See, it is settled dusk now; there 's a
Morello 's gone, the watch-lights show
the wall,

The cue-owls speak the name we call
them by.

Come from the window, love,—come
in, at last,

Inside the melancholy little house
We built to be so gay with. God is
just.

King Francis may forgive me: oft at
nights

When I look up from painting, eyes
tired out,

The walls become illumined, brick
from brick

Distinct, instead of mortar, fierce
bright gold,

That gold of his I did cement them
with!

Let us but love each other. Must you
go?

That Cousin here again? he waits out-
side?

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 on

Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly
How I could paint, were I but back in

France,
One picture, just one more—the Ve-

gin's face,

Not your's this time! I want you at my side

To hear them—that is, Michel Agnolo.—
Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.
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 complied,

And built this house and sinned, and all is said.

My father and my mother died of want.
Well, had I riches of my own? you see
How one gets rich! Let each one bear his lot.

They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died:

And I have laboured somewhat in my time

And not been paid profusely. Some good 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, Agnolo and me
To cover—the three first without a wife,

Whilst I have mine! So—still they overcome

Because there 's still Lucrezia,—as I choose.

Again the Cousin's whistle! Go, my love.



THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB AT SAINT PRAXED'S CHURCH

ROME. 15—.

VANITY, saith the preacher, vanity!
Draw round my bed: is Anselm keep-
ing back?

Nephews—sons mine . . . ah God, I know not! Well—

She, men would have to be your mother once,

Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was!
What 's done is done, and she is dead beside,

Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since.
And as she died so must we die ourselves,

And thence ye may perceive the world 's a dream.

Life, how and what is it? As here I lie
In this state-chamber, dying by degrees,

Hours and long hours in the dead night,
I ask

"Do I live, am I dead?" Peace,
peace 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: *lock her name*

—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,

Into great lips 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, *P. in here with*

Saint Praxed at his sermon on the mount, *in here with*

Your tall pale mother with her talking eyes,

And new-found agate urns as fresh as day.

And marble's language, Latin pure, discrete,

Ah, ELUCESCEBAT quoth our friend ?

No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best !

Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage. *in here with*

All lapis, all, sons ! Else I give the Pope *in here with*

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 me with ingratitude

To death—ye wish it—God, ye wish it !

Stone—

Gritstone, a-crumble ! Clammy squares which sweat

As if the corpse they keep were oozing through—

And no more lapis to delight the world !

Well go ! I bless ye. Fewer tapers there,

But in a row : and, going, turn your backs

--Ay, like departing altar-ministrants,

And leave me in my church, the church for peace,

That I may watch at leisure if he leers—

Old Gandolf, at me, from his onion-stone,

As still he envied me, so fair she was ! *in here with*

BISHOP BLOUGRAM'S APOLOGY

No more wine ? then we 'll push back chairs and talk.

A final glass for me, though : cool, i' faith !

We ought to have our Abbey back, you see.

It 's different, preaching in basilicas,

And doing duty in some masterpiece

Like this of brother Pugin's, bless his heart !

I doubt if they 're half-baked, those chalk rosettes,

Ciphers and stucco-twiddlings everywhere ;

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

These hot long ceremonies of our church

Cost us a little—oh, they pay the price,

You take me—amply pay it ! Now, we 'll talk.

So, you despise me, Mr. Gigadibs.

No deprecation,—nay, I beg you, sir !

Beside 't is 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 holds its noise

And leaves soul free a little. Now 's the time :

'T is break of day ! You do despise me then.

And if I say, "despise me,"—never fear !

I know you do not in a certain sense—

Not in my arm-chair, for example : here,

I well imagine you respect my place

(Status, entourage, worldly circumstance)

Quite to its value—very much indeed :

—Are up to the protesting eyes of you

In pride at being seated here for once—

You 'll turn it to such capital account !

When somebody, through years and
years to come,

Hints of the bishop,—names me—
that 's enough :

"Blougram ? I knew him"—(into it
you slide)

"Dined with him once, a Corpus Christi
Day,

"All alone, we two ; he 's a clever man :

"And after dinner,—why, the wine
you know,—

"Oh, there was wine, and good !—
what with the wine . . .

"Faith, we began upon all sorts of
talk !

"He 's no bad fellow, Blougram ; he
had seen

"Something of mine herelished, some
review :

"He 's quite above their humbug in
his heart,

"Half-said as much, indeed—the
thing 's his trade.

"I warrant, Blougram 's sceptical at
times :

"How otherwise ? I liked him, I
confess !"

Che che, my dear sir, as we say at
Rome,

Don't you protest now ! It 's fair
give and take ;

You have had your turn and spoken
your home-truths :

The hand 's mine now, and here you
follow suit.

Thus much conceded, still the first
fact stays—

You do despise me ; your ideal of life
Is not the bishop's : you would not be I.

You would like better to be Goethe, now,
Or Buonaparte, or, bless me, lower
still,

Count D'Orsay,—so you did what you
preferred,

Spoke as you thought, and, as you can-
not 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 baubles
mean,

And whose part he presumed to play
just now ?

Best be yourself, imperial, plain and
true !

So, drawing comfortable breath again,
You weigh and find, whatever more or
less

I boast of my ideal realized,
Is nothing in the balance when op-
posed

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 : hear-
ken 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 no-
thing more,

May lead within a world which (by
your leave)

Is Rome or London, not Fool's-para-
dise.

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, fill the
next:

Go on! slabbed marble, what a bath it
makes!

And Parma's pride, the Jerome, let us
add!

'T were pleasant could Correggio's
fleeting glow

Hang full in face of one where'er one
roams,

Since he more than the others brings
with him

Italy's self,—the marvellous Moden-
ese!

Yet was not on your list before, per-
haps.

—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 landsmen see you
off;

Not afterward, when long ere half seas
over,

You peep up from your utterly naked
boards

Into some snug and well-appointed
berth,

Like mine for instance (try the cooler
jug—

Put back the other, but don't jog the
ice!)

And mortified you mutter "Well and
good;

"He sits enjoying his sea-furniture;
" 'T is stout and proper, and there's
store of it:

"Though I've the better notion, all
agree,

"Of fitting rooms up. Hang the car-
penter,

"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 cheek 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 unbelief,
Make it bear fruit to us ?—the problem here.
Just when we are safest, there 's a sunset touch,
A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,
A chorus-ending from Euripides,—
And that 's enough for fifty hopes and fears
As old and new at once as nature's self,
To rap and knock and enter in our soul,
Take hands and dance there, a fantastic ring,
Round the ancient idol, on his base again,—
The grand Perhaps ! We look on helplessly.

There the old misgivings, crooked questions are—
This good God,—what he could do, if he would,
Would, if he could—then must have done long since :
If so, when, where and how ? some way 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 view it from the waste itself,
Up goes the line there, plain from base to brow,
Not vague, mistakeable ! what 's a break or two
Seen from the unbroken desert either side ?
And then (to bring in fresh philosophy)
What if the breaks themselves should prove at last
The most consummate of contrivances
To train a man's eye, teach him what is faith ?
And so we 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
 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!
 'T is clear, I cannot lead my life, at
 least,
 Induce the world to let me peaceably,
 Without declaring at the outset,
 " Friends,
 " I absolutely and peremptorily
 " Believe! "—I say, faith is my waking
 life:
 One sleeps, indeed, and dreams at intervals,
 We know, but waking 's the main point
 with us,
 And my provision 's for life's waking
 part.
 Accordingly, I use heart, head and
 hand
 All day, I build, scheme, study, and
 make friends;
 And when night overtakes me, down I
 lie,
 Sleep, dream a little, and get done with
 it,
 The sooner the better, to begin afresh.
 What 's midnight doubt before the
 dayspring's faith?
 You, the philosopher that disbelieve,
 That recognise the night, give dreams
 their weight—

B.P.

To be consistent you should keep your
 bed,
 Abstain from healthy acts that prove
 you man,
 For fear you drowse perhaps at un-
 wares! [dream,
 And certainly at night you 'll sleep and
 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
 dare,
 As baffled at the game, and losing life.
 He may care little or he may care much
 For riches, honour, pleasure, work, re-
 pose,
 Since various theories of life and life's
 Success are extant which might easily
 Comport with either estimate of these;
 And whoso chooses wealth or poverty,
 Labour or quiet, is not judged a fool
 Because his fellow would choose other-
 wise:
 We let him choose upon his own ac-
 count
 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, whatsoe'er the love or
 need—

For he can't wed twice. Then, he
must avouch,
Or follow, at the least, sufficiently,
The form of faith his conscience holds
the best,
Whate'er the process of conviction
was:
For nothing can compensate his mis-
take
On such a point, the man himself being
judge:
He cannot wed twice, nor twice lose his
soul.

Well now, there 's one great form of
Christian faith
I happened to be born in—which to
teach
Was given me as I grew up, on all
hands,
As best and readiest means of living by;
The same on examination being proved
The most pronounced moreover, fixed,
precise
And absolute form of faith in the whole
world—
Accordingly, most potent of all forms
For working on the world. Observe,
my friend!
Such as you know me, I am free to say,
In these hard latter days which hamper
one,
Myself—by no immoderate exercise
Of intellect and learning, 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 dom-
inate
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 suc-
cess;
But were I made of better elements,
With nobler instincts, purer tastes, like
you,
I hardly would account the thing suc-
cess
Though it did all for me I say.

But, friend,
We speak of what is; not of what
might be,
And how 't were better if 't were 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 be-
ing 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 pos-
sible;

And as this cabin gets upholstery,
That hutch should rattle with sufficient straw.

But, friend, I don't acknowledge quite so fast
I fail of all your manhood's lofty tastes
Enumerated so complacently,
On the mere ground that you forsooth can find
In this particular life I choose to lead
No fit provision for them. Can you not?
Say you, my fault is I address myself
To grosser estimators than should judge?
And that 's no way of holding up the soul,
Which, nobler, needs men's praise perhaps, yet knows
One wise man's verdict outweighs all the fools'—
Would like the two, but, forced to choose, takes that?
I pine among my million imbeciles
(You think) aware some dozen men of sense
Eye me and know me, whether I believe
In the last winking Virgin, as I vow,
And am a fool, or disbelieve in her
And am a knave,—approve in neither case,
Withhold their voices though I look their way:
Like Verdi when, at his worst opera's end
(The thing they gave at Florence,—what 's its name?)
While the mad houseful's plaudits near 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 answer here—
That even your prime men who appraise their kind
Are men still, catch a wheel within a wheel,
See more in a truth than the truth's simple self,
Confuse themselves. You see lads walk the street

Sixty the minute; what 's to note in that?

You see one lad o'erstride a chimney-stack;

Him you must watch—he 's sure to fall, yet stands!

Our interest 's on the dangerous edge of things.

The honest thief, the tender murderer,
The superstitious atheist, demirep

That loves and saves her soul in new French books—

We watch while these in equilibrium keep

The giddy line midway: one step aside,
They're classed and done with. I, then, keep the line

Before your sages,—just the men to shrink

From the gross weights, coarse scales and labels broad

You offer their refinement. Fool or knave?

Why needs a bishop be a fool or knave
When there 's a thousand diamond weights between?

So I enlist them. Your picked twelve, you 'll find,

Profess themselves indignant, scandalized

At thus being held unable to explain
How a superior man who disbelieves

May not believe as well: that 's Schelling's way!

It 's through my coming in the tail of time,

Nicking the minute with a happy tact.
Had I been born three hundred years ago

They'd say, "What 's strange? 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 who write apace,

Read somewhat seldomer, think perhaps even less—

You disbelieve! Who wonders and who cares?

Lord So-and-so—his coat bedropped with wax,

All Peter's chains about his waist, his
 back
 Brave with the needlework of 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? [ideal,
 Present your own perfection, your
 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, recol-
 lect)
 Where do you find—apart from, tower-
 ing o'er
 The secondary temporary aims
 Which satisfy the gross taste you des-
 pise—
 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 suc-
 cess
 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 dare
 With comfort to yourself blow millions
 up?

We neither of us see it! we do see
 The blown-up millions—spatter of
 their brains
 And writhing of their bowels and so
 forth,
 In that bewildering entanglement
 Of horrible eventualities
 Past calculation to the end of time!
 Can I mistake for some clear word of
 God
 (Which were my ample warrant for it
 all)
 His puff of hazy instinct, idle talk,
 "The State, that 's I," quack-nonsense
 about crowns,
 And (when one beats the man to his
 last hold)
 A vague idea of setting things to rights,
 Policing people efficaciously,
 More to their profit, most of all to his
 own;
 The whole to end that dismallest of
 ends
 By an Austrian marriage, cant to us
 the Church,
 And resurrection of the old *régime*?
 Would I, who hope to live a dozen years,
 Fight Austerlitz for reasons such and
 such?
 No: for, concede me but the merest
 chance
 Doubt may be wrong—there's 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, wear-
 ing lace,
 And getting called by diverse new-
 coined names,
 Will drive off ugly thoughts and let me
 dine,
 Sleep, read and chat in quiet as I like!
 Therefore I will not.
 Take another case;
 Fit up the cabin yet another way.
 What say you to the poets? shall we
 write
 Hamlet, Othello—make the world our
 own,
 Without a risk to run of either sort?
 I can't!—to put the strongest reason
 first.
 "But try," you urge, "the trying shall
 suffice;

"The aim, if reached or not, makes great the life :
 "Try to be Shakespeare, leave the rest to fate !"
 Spare my self-knowledge—there's no fooling me !
 If I prefer remaining my poor self, I say so not in self-dispraise but praise.
 If I 'm a Shakespeare, let the well alone ;
 Why should I try to be what now I am ?
 If I'm no Shakespeare, as too probable,—
 His power and consciousness and self-delight
 And all we want in common, shall I find—
 Trying for ever ? while on points of taste
 Wherewith, to speak it humbly, he and I
 Are dowered alike—I'll ask you, I or he,
 Which in our two lives realizes most ?
 Much, he imagined—somewhat, I possess.
 He had the imagination ; stick to that !
 Let him say, "In the face of my soul's works
 "Your world is worthless and I touch it not
 "Lest I should wrong them"—I'll withdraw my plea.
 But does he say so ? look upon his life !
 Himself, who only can, gives judgment there.
 He leaves his towers and gorgeous palaces
 To build the trimmest house in Stratford town ;
 Saves money, spends it, owns the worth of things, [lute ;
 Giulio Romano's pictures, Dowland's
 Enjoys a show, respects the puppets, too,
 And none more, had he seen its entry once,
 Than "Pandulph, of fair Milan cardinal."
 Why then should I who play that personage,
 The very Pandulph Shakespeare's fancy made,
 Be told that had the poet chanced to start

From where I stand now (some degree like mine
 Being just the goal he ran his race to reach)
 He would have run the whole race back, forsooth,
 And left being Pandulph, to begin write plays ?
 Ah, the earth's best can be but the earth's best !
 Did Shakespeare live, he could but sit at home
 And get himself in dreams the Vatican, Greek busts, Venetian paintings, Roman walls,
 And English books, none equal to his own,
 Which I read, bound in gold, (he never did).
 —Term's fall, Naples' bay and Gothard's top—
 Eh, friend ? I could not fancy one of these ;
 But, as I pour this claret, there they are :
 I 've gained them—crossed St. Gothard last July
 With ten mules to the carriage and a bed [that ?
 Slung inside ; is my hap the worse for
 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
 Scarce five go o'er the wall so wide and high
 Which sends them back to me : I wish and get.
 He struck balls higher and with better skill,
 But at a poor fence level with his head,
 And hit—his Stratford house, a coat of arms,
 Successful dealings in his grain and wool,—
 While I receive heaven's incense in my nose
 And style myself the cousin of Queen Bess.

Ask him, if this life 's all, who wins the game ?

Believe—and our whole argument breaks up.

Enthusiasm's the best thing, I repeat ;
Only, we can't command it ; fire and life

Are all, dead matter 's nothing, we agree :

And be it a mad dream or God's very breath,

The fact 's the same,—belief's fire, once in us,

Makes of all else mere stuff to show itself :

We penetrate our life with such a glow
As fire lends wood and iron—this turns steel,

That burns to ash—all 's one, fire proves its power

For good or ill, since men call flare success.

But paint a fire, it will not therefore burn.

Light one in me, I'll find it food enough !
Why, to be Luther—that's a life to lead,

Incomparably better than my own.
He comes, reclaims God's earth for God, he says,

Sets up God's rule again by simple means,

Re-opens a shut book, and all is done.
He flared out in the flaring of mankind ;

Such Luther's luck was : how shall such be mine ?

If he succeeded, nothing 's left to do :
And if he did not altogether—well,
Strauss is the next advance. All Strauss should be

I might be also. But to what result ?
He looks upon no future : Luther did.
What can I gain on the denying side ?
Ice makes no conflagration. State the facts,

Read the text right, emancipate the world—

The emancipated world enjoys itself
With scarce a thank-you : Blougram told it first

It could not owe a farthing,—not to him

More than Saint Paul ? 't would press its pay, you think ?

Then add there 's still that plaguy hundredth chance

Strauss may be wrong. And so a risk is run—

For what gain ? not for Luther's, who secured

A real heaven in his heart throughout his life,

Supposing death a little altered things.

" Ay, but since really you lack faith," you cry,

" You run the same risk really on all sides,

" In cool indifference as bold unbelief.

" As well be Strauss as swing 'twixt Paul and him.

" It 's not worth having, such imperfect faith,

" No more available to do faith's work

" Than unbelief like mine. Whole faith, or none ! "

Softly, my friend ! I must dispute that point.

Once own the use of faith, I 'll find you faith.

We 're back on Christian ground. You call for faith :

I show you doubt, to prove that faith exists. [say,

The more of doubt, the stronger faith, I
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 underground

By hell and all its brood, for aught I know ?

I say, whence sprang this? shows it
faith or doubt?

All 's doubt in me; where 's break of
faith in this?

It is the idea, the feeling and the love,
God means mankind should strive for
and show forth

Whatever be the process to that end,—
And not historic knowledge, logic
sound,

And metaphysical acumen, sure!

"What think ye of Christ," friend?
when all 's done and said,

Like you this Christianity or not?

It may be false, but will you wish it
true?

Has it your vote to be so if it can?

Trust you an instinct silenced long ago
That will break silence and enjoin you
love

What mortified philosophy is hoarse,
And all in vain, with bidding you de-
spise?

If you desire faith—then you've faith
enough:

What else seeks God—nay, what else
seek ourselves?

You form a motion of me, we'll sup-
pose,

On hearsay; it 's a favourable one:

"But still," (you add) "there was no
such good man,

"Because of contradiction in the facts.

"One proves, for instance, he was born
in Rome,

"This Blougram; yet throughout the
tales of him

"I see he figures as an Englishman."

Well, the two things are reconcileable.
But would I rather you discovered

that,
Subjoining—"Still, what matter
though they be?

"Blougram concerns me nought, born
here or there."

Pure faith indeed—you know not
what you ask!

Naked belief in God the Omnipotent,
Omniscient, Omnipresent, sears too

much
The sense of conscious creatures to be

borne.
It were the seeing him, no flesh shall

dare,
Some think, Creation 's meant to show

him forth:

I say it 's meant to hide him all it can,
And that 's what all the blessed evil 's
for.

Its use in Time is to environ us,
Our breath, our drop of dew, with
shield enough

Against that sight till we can bear its
stress.

Under a vertical sun, the exposed brain
And lidless eye and disemprisoned
heart

Less certainly would wither up at once
Than mind, confronted with the truth
of him.

But time and earth case-harden us to
live;

The feeblest sense is trusted most; the
child

Feels God a moment, ichors o'er the
place,

Plays on and grows to be a man like us.
With me, faith means perpetual unbe-
lief

Kept quiet like the snake 'neath Mi-
chael's foot

Who stands calm just because he feels
it writhe.

Or, if that 's too ambitious,—here 's
my box—

I need the excitation of a pinch

Threatening the torpor of the inside-
nose

Nigh on the imminent sneeze that never
comes.

"Leave it in peace" advise the simple
folk:

Make it aware of peace by itching-fits,
Say I—let doubt occasion still more
faith!

You'll say, once all believed, man,
woman, child,

In that dear middle-age these noodles
praise.

How you 'd exult if I could put you
back

Six hundred years, blot out cosmogony,
Geology, ethnology, what not,

(Greek endings, each the little passing-
bell

That signifies some faith 's about to
die)

And set you square with Genesis
again,—

When such a traveller told you his last
news,

He saw the ark a-top of Ararat

But did not climb there since 't was
getting dusk
And robber-bands infest the moun-
tain'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 de-
canter's knob,
Believe—and yet lie, kill, rob, forni-
cate
Full in belief's face, like the beast you'd
be !

No, when the fight begins within
himself,
A man 's worth something. God
stoops o'er his head,
Satan looks up between his feet—both
tug—
He 's left, himself, 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-
somely :
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 ad-
vice.
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 who and
where ?

King Bomba's lazzaroni foster yet
The sacred flame, so Antonelli writes ;
But even of these, what ragamuffin-
saint
Believes God watches him continually,
As he believes in fire that it will burn,
Or rain that it will drench him ? Break
fire's law,
Sin against rain, although the penalty
Be just a singe or soaking ? " No,"
he smiles ;
" Those laws are laws that can enforce
themselves."

The sum of all is—yes, my doubt is
great,
My faith 's still greater, then my faith 's
enough.
I have read much, thought much, ex-
perienced 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
hold
About the need of trial to man's faith,
Still, when you bid me purify the same,
To such a process I discern no end.
Clearing off one excrescence to see two,
There 's ever a next in size, now grown
as big,
That meets the knife : I cut and cut
again !
First cut the Liquefaction, what comes
last
But Fichte's clever cut at God himself?
Experimentalize on sacred things !
I trust nor hand nor eye nor heart nor
brain
To stop betimes : they all get drunk
alike.
The first step, I am master not to take.
You 'd find the cutting-process to
your taste
As much as leaving growths of lie un-
pruned,

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 dif-
 ference
 With the rough purblind mass we seek
 to rule:
 We are their lords, or they are free of us,
 Just as we tighten or relax our hold.
 So, other matters equal, we 'll revert
 To the first problem—which, if solved
 my way
 And thrown into the balance, turns the
 scale—
 How we may lead a comfortable life,
 How suit our luggage to the cabin's
 size.

Of course you are remarking all this
 time
 How narrowly and grossly I view life,
 Respect the creature-comforts, care to
 rule
 The masses, and regard complacently
 "The cabin," in our old phrase. Well,
 I do.
 I act for, talk for, live for this world
 now,
 As this world prizes action, life and
 talk:
 No prejudice to what next world may
 prove,
 Whose new laws and requirements, my
 best pledge
 To observe then, is that I observe
 these now,
 Shall do hereafter what I do mean-
 while.
 Let us concede (gratuitously though)
 Next life relieves the soul of body,
 yields
 Pure spiritual enjoyment: well, my
 friend,
 Why lose this life in the meantime,
 since its use
 May be to make the next life more in-
 tense?

Do you know, I have often had a
 dream
 (Work it up in your next month's arti-
 cle)
 Of man's poor spirit in its progress, still

Losing true life for ever and a day
 Through ever trying to be and ever
 being—

In the evolution of successive spheres—
Before its actual sphere and place of
 life,

Halfway into the next, which having
 reached,

It shoots with corresponding foolery
 Halfway into the next still, on and off!
 As when a traveller, bound from North
 to South,

Scouts fur in Russia; what 's its use in
 France?

In France spurns flannel; where 's its
 need in Spain?

In Spain drops cloth, too cumbrous for
 Algiers!

Linen goes next, and last the skin it-
 self,

A superfluity at Timbuctoo.

When, through his journey, was the
 fool at ease?

I 'm at ease now, friend; worldly in
 this world,

I take and like its way of life; I think
 My brothers, who administer the means,
 Live better for my comfort—that 's
 good too;

And God, if he pronounce upon such
 life,

Approves my service, which is better
 still.

If he keep silence,—why, for you or me
 Or that brute-beast pulled-up in to-
 day's "Times,"

What odds is 't, save to ourselves, what
 life we lead?

You meet me at this issue: you de-
 clare,—

All special-pleading done with, truth is
 truth,

And justifies itself by undreamed ways.
 You do n't fear but it 's better, if we
 doubt,

To say so, act up to our truth perceived
 However feebly. Do then,—act away!
 'T is 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 !
Supposing a pricking to incontinence—
Philosophers deduce you chastity
Or shame, from just the fact that at the
first

Whoso embraced a woman in the field,
Threw club down and forewent his
brains beside,

So, stood a ready victim in the reach
Of any brother-savage, club in hand ;
Hence saw the use of going out of sight
In wood or cave to prosecute his loves :
I read this in a French book t' other
day.

Does law so analysed coerce you much ?
Or men spin clouds of fuzz where mat-
ters end,

Or 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,

In case he has a master after all !

You own your instincts ? why, what
else do I,

Who want, am made for, and must have
a God

Ere I can be aught, do aught ?—no
mere name

Want, but the true thing with what
proves its truth,

To wit, a relation from that thing to
me,

Touching from head to foot—which
touch I feel,

And with it take the rest, this life of
ours !

I live my life here ; yours you dare not
live.

—Not as I state it, who (you please
subjoin)

Disfigure such a life and call it names,
While, to your mind, remains another
way

For simple men : knowledge and power
have rights,

But ignorance and weakness have
rights too.

There needs no crucial effort to find
truth

If here or there or anywhere about :

We ought to turn each side, try hard
and see,

And if we can't, be glad we 've earned
at least

The right, by one laborious proof the
more,

To graze in peace earth 's pleasant
pasturage.

Men are not angels, neither are they
brutes :

Something we may see, all we cannot
see,

What need of lying ? I say, I see all,
And swear to each detail the most
minute

In what I think a Pan's face—you,
mere cloud :

I swear I hear him speak and see him
wink,

For fear, if once I drop the emphasis,
Mankind may doubt there 's any
cloud at all.

You take the simple life—ready to see,
Willing to see (for no cloud's worth a
face)

And leaving quiet what no strength can
move,

And which, who bids you move ? who
has the right ?

I bid you ; but you are God's sheep,
not mine :

" *Pastor est tui Dominus.*" You find

In this the pleasant pasture of our life
Much you may eat without the least

offence,
Much you don't eat because your maw

objects,
Much you would eat but that your

fellow-flock
Open great eyes at you and even butt,

And thereupon you like your mates so
well

You cannot please yourself, offending
them ;

Though when they seem exorbitantly
 sheep,
 You weigh your pleasure with their
 butts and bleats
 And strike the balance. Sometimes
 certain fears
 Restrain you, real checks since you
 find them so ;
 Sometimes you please yourself and
 nothing checks :
 And thus you graze through life with
 not one lie,
 And like it best.

But do you, in truth's name ?
 If so, you beat—which means you are
 not I—
 Who needs must make earth mine and
 feed my fill
 Not simply unbutted at, unbickered
 with,
 But motioned to the velvet of the sward
 By those obsequious wethers' very
 selves.
 Look at me, sir ; my age is double
 yours :
 At yours, I knew beforehand, so en-
 joyed,
 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 have both minds and bodies much
 alike :
 In truth's name, do n't you want my
 bishopric,
 My daily bread, my influence and my
 state ?
 You 're young, I 'm old, you must be
 old one day ;
 Will you find then, as I do hour by
 hour,
 Women their lovers kneel to, who cut
 curls
 From your fat lap-dog's ear to grace a
 brooch—
 Dukes, who petition just to kiss your
 ring—
 With much beside you know or may
 conceive ?
 Suppose we die to-night : well, here
 am I,
 Such were my gains, life bore this fruit
 to me,
 While writing all the same my articles

On music, poetry, the fictile vase
 Found at Albano, chess, Anacreon's
 Greek.
 But you—the highest honour in your
 life,
 The thing you 'll crown yourself with,
 all your days,
 Is—dining here and drinking this last
 glass
 I pour you out in sign of amity
 Before we part for ever. Of your
 power
 And social influence, worldly worth in
 short,
 Judge what 's my estimation by the
 fact,
 I do not condescend to enjoin, beseech,
 Hint secrecy on one of all these words !
 You 're shrewd and know that should
 you publish one
 The world would brand the lie—my
 enemies first,
 Who 'd sneer—" the bishop 's an arch-
 hypocrite
 " And knave perhaps, but not so frank
 a fool."
 Whereas I should not dare for both my
 ears
 Breathe one such syllable, smile one
 such smile,
 Before the chaplain who reflects 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 this
 war,
 An artist whose religion is his art—
 I should have nothing to object : such
 men
 Carry the fire, all things grow warm to
 them,
 Their drugget 's worth my purple, they
 beat me.
 But you,—you're just as little those as
 I—
 You, Gigadibs, who, thirty years of age,
 Write 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 Slum and Cellar, or Whitechapel
life
"Limned after dark!" it made me
laugh, I know,
And pleased a month, and brought you
in ten pounds.
—Success I recognise 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 Confi-
dence"—
Or better simply say, "The Outward-
bound."
Why, men as soon would throw it in
my teeth
As copy and quote the infamy chalked
broad
About me on the church-door opposite.
You will not wait for that experience
though,
I fancy, howsoever you decide,
To discontinue—not detesting, not
Defaming, but at least—despising me!

Over his wine so smiled and talked
his hour
Sylvester Blougram, styled in *partibus*
Episcopus, nec non—(the deuce knows
what
It 's changed to by our novel 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 be-
cause 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 ('t is an old
mistake
To place hell at the bottom of the earth)
He ignored these,—not having in
readiness
Their nomenclature and philosophy:
He said true things, but called them by
wrong names.
"On the whole," he thought, "I
justify myself
"On every point where cavillers like
this
"Oppugn my life: he tries one kind of
fence,
"I close, he 's worsted, that 's enough
for him.
"He 's on the ground: if 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. Just a
week
Sufficed his sudden healthy vehemence.
Something had struck him in the
"Outward-bound"
Another way than Blougram's purpose
was:
And having bought, not cabin-furni-
ture
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 Protus in his Tyranny: much
 health!

They give thy letter to me, even now:
 I read and seem as if I heard thee speak.
 The master of thy galley still unlades
 Gift after gift; they block my court at
 last
 And pile themselves along its portico
 Royal with sunset, like a thought of
 thee:
 And one white she-slave from the
 group dispersed
 Of black and white slaves (like the
 chequer-work
 Pavement, at once my nation's work
 and gift,
 Now covered with this settle-down of
 doves)
 One lyric woman, in her crocus vest
 Woven of sea-wools, with her two
 white hands
 Commends to me the strainer and the
 cup
 Thy lip hath bettered ere it blesses
 mine.

Well-counselled, king, in thy muni-
 ficence!
 For so shall men remark, in such an act
 Of love for him whose song gives life
 its joy,
 Thy recognition of the use of life;
 Nor call thy spirit barely adequate
 To help on life in straight ways, broad
 enough
 For vulgar souls, by ruling and the rest.
 Thou, in the daily building of thy
 tower,
 Whether in fierce and sudden spasms of
 toil,
 Or through dim lulls of unapparent
 growth,

Or when the general work 'mid good
 acclaim
 Climbed with the eye to cheer the 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 net.
 The image of the sun-god on the phare,
 Men turn from the sun's self to see, is
 mine;
 The Pœcile, 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-
 nise,
 Throughout our seventeen islands.
 Marvel not.

We of these latter days, with greater mind
 Than our forerunners, since more composite,
 Look not so great, beside their simple way,
 To a judge who only sees one way at once,
 One mind-point and no other at a time,—
 Compares the small part of a man of us
 With some whole man of the heroic age,
 Great in his way—not ours, nor meant for ours.
 And ours is greater, had we skill to know :
 For, what we call this life of men on earth,
 This sequence of the soul's achievements here,
 Being, as I find much reason to conceive,
 Intended to be viewed eventually
 As a great whole, not analysed to parts,
 But each part having reference to all,—
 How shall a certain part, pronounced complete,
 Endure effacement by another part ?
 Was the thing done ?—then, what 's to do again ?
 See, in the chequered pavement opposite,
 Suppose the artist made a perfect rhomb,
 And next a lozenge, then a trapezoid—
 He did not overlay them, superimpose
 The new upon the old and blot it out,
 But laid them on a level in his work,
 Making at last a picture ; there it lies.
 So first the perfect separate forms were made,
 The portions of mankind ; and after, so,
 Occurred the combination of the same.
 For where had been a progress, otherwise ?
 Mankind, made up of all the single men,—
 In such a synthesis the labour ends.
 Now mark me ! those divine mea of old time
 Have reached, thou sayest well, each at one point
 The outside verge that rounds our faculty ;
 And where they reached, who can do more than reach ?

It takes but little water just to touch
 At some one point the inside of a sphere,
 And, as we turn the sphere, touch all the rest
 In due succession : but the finer air
 Which not so palpably nor obviously,
 Though no less universally, can touch
 The whole circumference of that emptied sphere,
 Fills it more fully than the water did :
 Holds thrice the weight of water in itself
 Resolved into a subtler element.
 And yet the vulgar call the sphere first full
 Up to the visible height—and after, void ;
 Not knowing air's more hidden properties.
 And thus our soul, misknown, cries out to Zeus
 To vindicate his purpose in our life :
 Why stay we on the earth unless to grow ?
 Long since, I imaged, wrote the fiction out,
 That he or other god descended here
 And, once for all, showed simultaneously
 What, in its nature, never can be shown
 Piecemeal or in succession ;—showed, I say,
 The worth both absolute and relative
 Of all his children from the birth of time,
 His instruments for all appointed work.
 I now go on to image,—might we hear
 The judgment which should give the due to each,
 Show where the labour lay and where the ease,
 And prove Zeus' self, the latent everywhere !
 This is a dream :—but no dream, let us hope,
 That years and days, the summers and the springs,
 Follow each other with unwaning powers.
 The grapes which dye thy wine, are richer far
 Through culture, than the wild wealth of the rock ;
 The suave plum than the savage-tasted drupe ;
 The pastured honey-bee drops choicer sweet ;

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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,
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, prieked 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 deprecate ?

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 " (writ-
est 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 survives
myself ? [grave

" The brazen statue to o'erlook my
" Set on the promontory which I
named.

" And that—some supple courtier of
my heir

" Shall use its robed and sceptred arm,
perhaps,

" To fix the rope to, which best drags it
down.

" I go then : triumph thou, who dost
not go ! "

Nay, thou art worthy of hearing my
whole mind.

Is this apparent, when thou turn'st to
muse

Upon the scheme of earth and man in
chief,

That admiration grows as knowledge
grows ?

That imperfection means perfection
hid,

Reserved in part, to grace the after-
time ?

If, in the morning of philosophy,
Ere aught had been recorded, nay per-
ceived,

Thou, with the light now in thee,
couldst have looked

On all earth's tenantry, from worm to
bird,

Ere man, her last, appeared upon the
stage—

Thou wouldst have seen them perfect,
and deduced

The perfectness of others yet unseen.
Conceding which,—had Zeus then ques-
tioned 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 't is pure fire, and they mere matter are;
 " It has them, not they it: and so I choose
 " For man, thy last premeditated work
 " (If I might add a glory to the scheme)
 " That a third thing should stand apart from both,
 " A quality arise within his soul,
 " Which, intro-active, made to supervise
 " And feel the force it has, may view itself,
 " And so be happy." Man might live at first
 The animal life: but is there nothing more?
 In due time, let him critically learn
 How he lives; and, the more he gets to know
 Of his own life's adaptability
 The more joy-giving will his life become.
 Thus man, who hath this quality, is best.

 But thou, king, hadst more reasonably said:
 " Let progress end at once,—man make no step
 " Beyond the natural man, the better beast,
 " Using his senses, not the sense of sense."
 In man there 's failure, only since he left
 The lower and unconscious forms of life.
 We called it an advance, the rendering plain
 Man's spirit might grow conscious of man's life,
 And, by new lore so added to the old,
 Take each step higher over the brute's head.

 This grew the only life, the pleasure-house,
 Watch-tower and treasure-fortress of the soul,
 Which whole surrounding flats of natural life
 Seemed only fit to yield subsistence to;
 A tower that crowns a country. But alas,
 The soul now climbs it just to perish there!
 For thence we have discovered ('t is no dream—
 We know this, which we had not else perceived)
 That there 's a world of capability
 For joy, spread round about us, meant for us,
 Inviting us; and still the soul craves all,
 And still the flesh replies, " Take no jot more
 " Than ere thou 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
 Thin from her tube; she smiles to see it rise.
 What if I told her, it is just a thread
 From that great river which the hills shut up,
 And mock her with my leave to take the same?
 The artificer has given her one small tube
 Past power to widen or exchange—what boots
 To know she might spout oceans if she could?
 She cannot lift beyond her first thin thread:
 And so a man can use but a man's joy
 While he sees God's. Is it, for Zeus to boast

"See, man, how happy I live, and des-
pair—

"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: 't is 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 ex-
cept a case—

Holding joy not impossible to one
With artist-gifts—to such a man as I

Who leave behind me living works in-
deed;

For, such a poem, such a painting lives.
What? dost thou verily trip upon a

word,
Confound the accurate view of what
joy is

(Caught somewhat clearer by my eyes
than thine)

With feeling joy? confound the 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 museles
there,

Lowering the sail, is nearer it than I,

b p.

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 Æschylus, because we read his
plays!"

Why, if they live still, let them come
and take

Thy slave in my despite, drink from
thy cup,

Speak in my place. Thou diest while I
survive?

Say rather that my fate is deadlier still,
In this, that every day my sense of joy

Grows more acute, my soul (intensified
By power and insight) more enlarged,

more keen;
While every day my hairs fall more and

more,
My hand shakes, and the heavy years

increase—
The horror quickening still from year

to year,
The consummation coming past escape,

When I shall know most, and yet least
enjoy—

When all my works wherein I prove
my worth,

Being present still to mock me in men's
mouths,

Alive still, in the 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 hor-
rible,

I dare at times imagine to my need
Some future state revealed to us by

Zeus,
Unlimited in capability

For joy, as this is in desire for joy,
—To seek which, the joy-hunger forces

us:

That, stung by straitness of our life,
made strait
On purpose to make prized the life at
large—
Freed by the throbbing impulse we call
death
We burst there as the worm into the fly,
Who, while a worm still, wants his
wings. But no!
Zeus has not yet revealed it; and alas,
He must have done so, were it possible!

Live long and happy, and in that
thought die,
Glad for what was! Farewell. And
for the rest,
I cannot tell thy messenger aright
Where to deliver what he bears of thine
To one called Paulus; we have heard
his fame
Indeed, if Christus be not one with him—
I know not, nor am troubled much to
know.
Thou canst not think a mere barbarian
Jew,
As Paulus proves to be, one 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 doctrine could be held by no sane
man.

RUDEL TO THE LADY OF TRIPOLI

I

I KNOW a Mount, the gracious Sun per-
ceives
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 en-
deavour
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 large
Calm front of snow like a triumphal
targe
Is reared, and still with old names,
fresh names vie,
Each to its proper praise and own
account:
Men call the Flower, the Sunflower,
sportively.

II

Oh, Angel of the East, one, one gold
look
Across the waters to this twilight nook,
—The far sad waters, Angel, to this
nook!

III

Dear Pilgrim, art thou for the East in-
deed?
Go!—saying ever as thou dost proceed,
That I, French Rudel, choose for my
device
A sunflower outspread like a sacrifice
Before its idol. See! These inexpert
And hurried fingers could not fail to
hurt
The woven picture; 't is a woman's
skill
Indeed; but nothing baffled me, so, ill
Or well, the work is finished. Say,
men feed
On songs I sing, and therefore bask the
bees
On my flower's breast as on a platform
broad:
But, as the flower's concern is not for
these
But solely for the sun, so men applaud
In vain this Rudel, he not looking here
But to the East—the East! Go, say
this, Pilgrim dear!

ONE WORD MORE¹

TO E. B. B.

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 to-
gether:
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 lov-
ing—
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 Ra-
fael,
Would we not? than wonder at Ma-
donnas—
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.

¹ Originally appended to the collection of
Poems called "Men and Women," the greater
portion of which has now been, more correctly,
attributed under the other titles of this edition.

Guido Reni dying, all Bologna
Cried, and the world cried too, "Ours,
the treasure!"
Suddenly, as rare things will, it van-
ished.

V

Dante once prepared to paint an angel:
Whom to please? You whisper "Bea-
trice."
While he mused and traced it and re-
traced it,
(Peradventure with a pen corroded
Still by drops of that hot ink he dipped
for,
When, his left-hand i' the hair o' the
wicked,
Back he held the brow and pricked its
stigma,
Bit into the live man's flesh for parch-
ment,
Loosed him, laughed to see the writing
rankle,
Let the wretch go festering through
Florence)—
Dante, who loved well because he
hated,
Hated wickedness that hinders loving,
Dante standing, studying his angel,—
In there broke the folk of his Inferno.
Says he—"Certain people of import-
ance"
(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 im-
portance":
We and Bice bear the loss for ever.

VIII

What of Rafael's sonnets, Dante's pic-
ture?
This: no artist lives and loves, that
longs not

Once, and only once, and for one only,
(Ah, the prize!) to find his love a language

Fit and fair and simple and sufficient—
Using nature that 's an art to others,
Not, this one time, art that's turned his nature

Ay, of all the artists living, loving
None but would forego his proper dowry,—

Does he paint? he fain would write a poem,—

Does he write? he fain would paint a picture,

Put to proof art alien to the artist's,
Once; and only once, and for one only,
So to be the man and leave the artist,
Gain the man's joy, miss the artist's sorrow.

IX

Wherefore? Heaven's gift takes earth's abatement!

He who smites the rock and spreads the water,

Bidding drink and live a crowd beneath him,

Even he, the minute makes immortal,
Proves, perchance, but mortal in the minute,

Desecrates, belike, the deed in doing.
While he smites, how can he but remember,

So he smote before, in such a peril,
When they stood and mocked—"Shall smiting help us?"

When they drank and sneered—"A stroke is easy!"

When they wiped their mouths and went their journey,

Throwing him for thanks—"But drought was pleasant."

Thus old memories mar the actual triumph;

Thus the doing savours of disrelish;
Thus achievement lacks a gracious somewhat;

O'er-importuned brows becloud the mandate,

Carelessness or consciousness—the gesture.

For he bears an ancient wrong about him,

Sees and knows again those 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 flesh-pots—nay, the drought was better."

X

Oh, the crowd must have emphatic warrant!

Theirs, the Sinai-forehead's cloven brilliance,

Right-arm's rod-sweep, tongue's imperial fiat.

Never dares the man put off the prophet:

XI

Did he love one face from out the thousands,

(Were she Jethro's daughter, white and wifely,

Were she but the Æthiopian bondslave,) He would envy yon dumb patient camel,

Keeping a reserve of scanty water Meant to save his own life in the desert;

Ready in the desert to deliver (Kneeling down to let his breast* be opened)

Hoard and life together for his mistress.

XII

I shall never, in the years remaining, Paint you pictures, no, nor carve you statues,

Make you music that should all-express me;

So it seems: I stand on my attainment.

This of verse alone, one life allows me; Verse and nothing else have I to give you

Other heights in other lives, God willing:

All the gifts from all the heights, your own, love!

XIII

Yet a semblance of resource avails us—
Shade so finely touched, love's sense must seize it.

Take these lines, look lovingly and nearly,

Lines I write the first time and the last time.

He who works in fresco, steals a hair-brush,
Curbs the liberal hand, subservient proudly,
Cramps his spirit, crowds its all in little,
Makes a strange art of an art familiar,
Fills his lady's missal-marge with flowerets.

He who blows thro' bronze, may breathe thro' silver,
Fittly screnaded a slumbrous princess.
He who writes, may write for once as I do.

XIV

Love, you saw me gather men and women,
Live or dead or fashioned by my fancy,
Enter each and all, and use their service,
Speak from every mouth,—the speech, a poem.

Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows,
Hopes and fears, belief and disbelief-ing :

I am mine and yours—the rest be all men's,
Karshook, Clcon, Norbert and the fifty.
Let me speak this once in my true person,

Not as Lippo, Roland or Andrea,
Though the fruit of speech be just this sentence—

Pray you, look on these my men and women,

Take and keep my fifty poems finished ;
Where my heart lies, let my brain lie also !

Poor the speech ; be how I speak, for all things.

XV

Not but that you know me ! Lo, the moon's self !

Here in London, yonder late in Florence,

Still we find her face, the thrice-transfigured.

Curving on a sky imbrued with colour,
Drifted over Fiesole by twilight,
Came she, onr new crescent of a hair's-breadth.

Full she flared it, lamping Samminiato,
Rounder 'twixt the cypresses and rounder,

Perfect till the nightingales applauded.
Now, a piece of her old self, impoverished,

Ha ! 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 ('t is the old sweet my-thos)

Shewould turn a new side to her mortal,
Side unseen of herdsman, huntsman, steersman—

Blank to Zoroaster on his terrace,
Blind to Galileo on his turret,
Dumb to Homer, dumb to Keats—him, even !

Think, the wonder of the moonstruck mortal—

When she turns round, comes again in heaven,

Opens out anew for worse or better !
Proves she like some portent of an iceberg

Swimming full upon the ship it founders,

Hungry with huge teeth of splintered crystals ?

Proves she as the paved work of a sapphire

Seen by Moses when he climbed the mountain ?

Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu
Climbed and saw the very God, the Highest,

Stand upon the paved work of a sapphire.

Like the bodied heaven in his clearness
Shone the stone, the sapphire of that paved work,

When they ate and drank and saw God also !

XVII

What were seen ? None knows, none ever shall know.

Only this is sure—the sight were other,
Not the moon's same side, born late in Florence,

Dying now impoverished here in London.

God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures

Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the
world with,
One to show a woman when he loves
her!

XVIII

This I say of me, but think of you
love!
This to you—yourself my moon of
poets!
Ah, but that 's the world's side, there 's
the wonder,
Thus they see you, praise you, think
they know you!
There, in turn I stand with them and
praise you.
Out of my own self, I dare to phrase it.

But the best is when I glide from out
them,
Cross a step or two of dubious twilight,
Come out on the other side, the novel
Silent silver lights and darks un-
dreamed 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!

R. B.

IN A BALCONY

BAGNI DI LUCCA, 1853

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-
e'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
awayIf God please, with completion in my
soul!Con. I am not yours then? How
content this man!I am not his—who change into himself,
Have passed into his heart and beat its
beats,Who give my hands to him, my eyes,
my hair,Give all that was of me away to him—
So well, that now, my spirit turned his
own,Takes part with him against the woman
here,Bids him not stumble at so mere a
strawAs caring that the world be cognisant
How he loves her and how she wor-
ships 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 circum-
stance—

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 faint would tell your love,

And, what succeeds the telling, ask of her

My hand. Now take this rose and look at it,

Listening to me. You are the minister,

The Queen's first favourite, nor without a cause.

To-night completes your wonderful year's-work

(This palace-feast is held to celebrate)

Made memorable by her life's success,

The junction of two crowns, on her sole head,

Her house had only dreamed of anciently :

That this mere dream is grown a stable [truth,

To-night's feast makes authentic.

Whose the praise ?

Whose genius, patience, energy, achieved

What turned the many heads and broke the hearts ?

You are the fate, your minute 's in the heaven.

Next comes the Queen's turn. " Name your own reward ! "

With leave to clench the past, chain the to-come,

Put out an arm and touch and take the sun

And fix it ever full-faced on your earth,

Possess yourself supremely of her life,—

You choose the single thing she will not grant ;

Nay, very declaration of which choise Will turn the scale and neutralize your work :

At best she will forgive you, if she can.

You think I 'll let you choose—her cousin's hand ?

Nor. Wait. First, do you retain your old belief

The Queen is generous,—nay, is just ?

Con. There, there !

So men make women love them, while they know

No more of women's hearts than . . . look you here,

You that are just and generous beside, Make it your own case ! For example now,

I 'll say—I let you kiss me, hold my hands—

Why ? do you know why ? I'll instruct you, then— [court,

The kiss, because you have a name at 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 your-
 self,
 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 recognise its given things and
 facts,
 The fight of giants or the feast of gods,
 Sages in senate, beauties at the bath,
 Chances 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 hunt-
 ing-piece
 " Yonder, I 've turned to praise a hun-
 dred times ? "
 Not so. Her knowledge of our actual
 earth,
 Its hopes and fears, concerns and sym-
 pathies,
 Must be too far, too mediate, too un-
 real.
 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 warm real
 struggling love
 In to her of a sudden, and suppose
 She 'll keep her state untroubled ?
 Here 's the truth—
 She 'll apprehend truth's value at a
 glance,
 Prefer it to the pictured loyalty ?
 You only have to say " so men are made,
 " For this they act ; the thing has
 many names,
 " But this the right one : and now,
 Queen, be just ! "
 Your life slips back ; you lose her at
 the word :
 You do not even for amends gain me.
 He will not understand ! oh, Norbert,
 Norbert,
 Do you not understand ?
 Nor. The Queen 's the Queen,
 I am myself—no picture, but alive
 In every nerve and every muscle, here
 At the palace-window o'er the people's
 street,
 As she in the gallery where the pictures
 glow :
 The good of life is precious to us both.
 She cannot love ; what do I want with
 rule ?
 When first I saw your face a year ago
 I knew my life's good, my soul heard
 one voice—
 " The woman yonder, there 's no use of
 life
 " But just to obtain her I heap earth's
 woes in one
 " And bear them—make a pile of all
 earth's joys
 " And spurn them, as they help or help
 not this ;
 " Only, obtain her ! "—how was it to
 be ?
 I found you were the cousin of the
 Queen :

I must then serve the Queen to get to you.
 No other way. Suppose there had been one,
 And I, by saying prayers to some white star
 With promise of my body and my soul,
 Might gain you,—should I pray the star or no?
 Instead, there was the Queen to serve!
 I served,
 Helped, did what other servants failed to do.
 Neither she sought nor I declared my end.
 Her good is hers, my recompense be mine, [pense.
 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 are 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. [hand
 The world will show us with officious
 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 't is all of me and must have
 way.
 Think of my work, that chaos of in-
 trigues,
 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 re-
 sume
 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,
 Suppressed itself erewhile. This eve's
 the time,
 This eve intense with yon first tremb-
 ling 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—for-
 ward, 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 : [it,
 You do not know her, were not born to
 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 engaged

To help a kinswoman, she took me up—

Did more on that bare ground than other loves

Would do on greater argument. For me,

I have no equivalent of such cold kind

To pay her with, but love alone to give

If I give anything. I give her love:

I feel I ought to help her, and I will.

So, for her sake, as yours, I tell you twice

That women hate a debt as men a gift.

If I were you, I could obtain this grace—

Could lay the whole I did to love's account,

Nor yet be very false as courtiers go—

Declaring my success was recompense;

It would be so, in fact: what were it else?

And then, once loose her generosity,—

Oh, how I see it! then, were I but you

To turn it, let it seem to move itself,

And make it offer what I really take,

Accepting just, in the poor cousin's hand,

Her value as the next thing to the Queen's—

Since none loves Queens directly, none

dares that, [echo

And a thing's shadow or a name's mere

Suffices those who miss the name and thing!

You pick up just a ribbon she has worn,

To keep in proof how near her breath

you came.

Say, I'm so near I seem a piece of her—

Ask for me that way—(oh, you understand)

You'd find the same gift yielded with

a grace,

Which, if you make the least show to

extort . . .

—You 'll see! and when you have

ruined both of us,

Dissertate on the Queen's ingratitude!

Nor. Then, if I turn it that way, you

consent?

'T is 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? [thing—

I owe that withered woman every-

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,

'T is 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 being loved, as truly as yon palm
The hope of seeing Egypt from that plot.

Con. Heaven!

Queen. But it was so, Constance, it was so!

Men say—or do men say it? fancies say—

“Stop here, your life is set, you are grown old.

“Too late—no love for you, too late for love—

“Leave love to girls. Be queen: let Constance love!”

One takes the hint—half meets it like a child,

Ashamed at any feelings that oppose.
“Oh love, true, never think of love again!

“I am a queen: I rule, not love, indeed.”

So it goes on; so a face grows like this,
Hair like this hair, poor arms as lean as these,

Till,—nay, it does not end so, I thank God!

Con. I cannot understand—

Queen. The happier you!

Constance, I know not how it is with men:

For women (I am a woman now like you)

There is no good of life but love—but love!

What else looks good, is some shade flung from love;

Love gilds it, gives it worth. Be warned by me,

Never you cheat yourself one instant! Love,

Give love, ask only love, and leave the rest!

O Constance, how I love you!

Con. I love you.

Queen. I do believe that all is come through you.

I took you to my heart to keep it warm
When the last chance of love seemed dead in me;

I thought your fresh youth warmed my withered heart.

Oh, I am very old now, am I not?

Not so! it is true and it shall be true!

Con. Tell it me: let me judge if true or false.

Queen. Ah, but I fear you! you will look at me

And say, “she ’s old, she ’s grown unlovely quite

“Who ne’er was beauteous: men want beauty still.” [sure!

Well, so I feared—the curse! so I felt

Con. Be calm. And now you feel not sure, you say?

Queen. Constance, he came,—the coming was not strange—

Do not I stand and see men come and go?

I turned a half-look from my pedestal
Where I grow marble—“one young man the more!

“He will love some one; that is nought to me:

“What would he with my marble stateliness?”

Yet this seemed somewhat worse than heretofore;

The man more gracious, youthful, like a god,

And I still older, with less flesh to change—

We two those dear extremes that long to touch.

It seemed still harder when he first began

Absorbed to labour at the state-affairs
The old way for the old end—interest.

Oh, to live with a thousand beating hearts

Around you, swift eyes, serviceable hands,

Professing they’ve no care but for your cause,

Thought but to help you, love but for yourself,

And you the marble statue all the time
They praise and point at as preferred

to life,

Yet leave for the first breathing woman’s cheek,

First dancer’s, gipsy’s or street baladine’s!

Why, how I have ground my teeth to hear men’s speech

Stifled for fear it should alarm my ear,
Their gait subdued lest step should startle me,

Their eyes declined, such quondam to respect,

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
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 lure it on!
I felt, I saw, he loved—loved somebody?

And Constance, my dear Constance, do you know,

I did believe this while 't was 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 't was 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;
 'T is all gone: put your cheek beside
 my cheek— [hold!
 Ah, what a contrast does the moon be-
 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 't is 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:
 't is a name
 We know, but still a bond. Your
 rank remains,
 His rank remains. How can he, nobly
 souled
 As you believe and I incline to think,
 Aspire to be your favourite, shame and
 all?
Queen. Hear her! There, there
 now—could she love like me?
 What did I say of smooth-cheeked
 youth and grace?
 See all it does or could do! so youth
 loves!
 Oh, tell him, Constance you could
 never do

What I will—you, it was not born in ! I
Will drive these difficulties far and fast
As yonder mists curdling before the
moon.

I 'll use my light too, gloriously re-
trieve

My youth from its enforced calamity,
Dissolved 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 re-
marks,

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 ex-
press :

And were it for my subjects' good, no
more,

'T were best thus ordered. I am
thankful 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 in-
most 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 tel you how
it feels.

How soon a smile of God can change
the world !

[work
How we are made for happiness—how
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 man-
kind. 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, 't is 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.

'T is 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 told. I count life
just a stuff

To try the soul's strength on, educe the
man.

Who keeps one end in view makes all
things serve.

As with the body—he who hurls a lance
Or heaps up stone on stone, shows
strength alike, [prove,

So I will seize and use all means to
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. [write
 I come to you ; I leave you not, to
 Or paint. You are, I am : let Rubens
 there
 Paint us !
Con. So, best !
Nor. I understand your soul.
 You live, and rightly sympathize with
 life,
 With action, power, success. This
 way is straight ;
 And time were short beside, to let me
 change
 The craft my childhood learnt : my
 craft shall serve.
 Men set me here to subjugate, enclose,
 Manure their barren lives, and force the
 fruit
 First for themselves, and afterward for
 me
 In the due tithe ; the task of some one
 man,
 Through 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 sym-
 pathy,
 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
 B.P.

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 suc-
 cess
 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 recognise
 With turbulent applause and laughs of
 heart !
 So triumph ever shall renew itself ;
 Ever shall end in efforts higher yet,
 Ever begin . . .
Con. I ever helping ?
Nor. Thus !
 [As he embraces her, the QUEEN enters.
Con. Hist, madam ! So I have per-
 formed my part.
 You see your gratitude's true decency,
 Norbert ? A little slow in seeing it !
 Begin, to end the sooner ! What's a
 kiss ?
Nor. Constance ?
Con. Why, must I teach it you
 again ?
 You want a witness to your dulness,
 sir ?
 What was I saying these ten minutes
 long ?
 Then I repeat—when some young
 handsome man
 Like you has acted out a part like yours,
 Is pleased to fall in love with one be-
 yond,
 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 eover 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 ex-
plodes,

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 rea-
son 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 pros-
perous tool,

" And the first—which is the last—re-
warding 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—
't was I

Who served to prove your soul access-
ible,

I led his thoughts on, drew them to
their place

When else they had wandered out into
despair,

And kept love constant toward its
natural aim.

Enough, my part is played ; you stoop
half-way

And I meet us royally and spare our
fears :

'T is 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
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, fool-
ish child,

Or did you but accept it ? Well—at
least

You lose by it.

Con. Nay, madam, 't is your turn !
Restrain him still from speech a little
more,

And make him happier and more confi-
dent !

Pity him, madam, he is timid yet !
Mark, Norbert ! Do not shrink now !

Here I yield
My whole right in you to the Queen,
observe !

With her go put in practice the great
schemes

You teem with, follow the career else
closed—

Be all you cannot be except by her !
Behold her !—Madam, say for pity's
sake

Anything—frankly say you love him !
Else

He 'll not believe it : there 's more ear-
nest 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 recognise

Scarce more than you do, in her fancy-fit,

Eccentric speech and variable mirth, Not very wise perhaps and somewhat bold,

Yet suitable, the whole night's work being strange)

—May still be right: I may do well to And make authentic what appears a dream

To even myself. For, what she says, is true:

Yes, Norbert—what you spoke just now of love,

Devotion, stirred no novel sense in me, But justified a warmth felt long before.

Yes, from the first—I loved you, I shall say:

Strange! but I do grow stronger, now 't is 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. 'T is very strange,

But takes a happy ending—in your 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, beauteousest and best

Of women to my arms: 't is like yourself.

So—back again into my part's set words—

Devotion to the uttermost is yours, But no, you cannot, madam, even you,

Create in me the love our Constance does.

Or—something truer to the tragic phrase—

Not yon magnolia-bell superb with scent

Invites a certain insect—that 's myself—

But the small eye-flower nearer to the ground.

I take this lady.

Con. Stay—not hers, the trap— Stay, Norbert—that mistake were worst of all!

He is too cunning, madam! It was I, I, Norbert, who . . .

Nor. You, was it, Constance? Then,

But for the grace of this divinest hour Which gives me you, I might not pardon here!

I am the Queen's; she only knows my 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, [itself,

Whom, did she love me, did love prove 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!"

"It—" Take the soul still quivering on
your hand,

The soul so offered, which I cannot
use,

And, please you, give it to some play-
tuit 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, [nate

And kneel to whom you please to desig-
And make you mirth? It is too hor-
rible.

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 pal-
pable?

Madam—why grasp you thus the bal-
cony?

Have I done ill? Have I not spoken
the truth? [test,

How could I other? Was it not your
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 [rags.

Returned as something noble from the
Speak, Constance, I 'm the beggar!

Ha, what 's this?

You two glare each at each like pan-
tlers now.

Constance, the world fad s; only you
stand there!

You did not, in to-night's wild whirl of
things, [price?

Sell me—your soul of souls, for any
No—no—'t is 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

And cannot change: love's self is at
your feet!

[The QUEEN goes out.

Con. Feel my heart; let it die
against your own!

Nor. Against my own. Explain
not; let this be!

This is life's height.

Con. Yours, yours, yours!

Nor. You and I—

Why care by what meanders we are
here

In the centre of the labyrinth? Men
have died

Trying to find this place, which we have
found.

Con. Found, found!

Nor. Sweet, never fear what
she can do!

We are past harm now.

Con. On the breast of God.

I thought of men—as if you were a man.
Tempting him with a crown!

Nor. This must end here:

It is too perfect.

Con. There 's the music stopped.
What measured heavy tread? It is

one blaze

About me and within me.

Nor. Oh, some death

Will run its sudden finger round this
spark

And sever us from the rest!

Con. And so do well.

Now the doors open.

Nor. 'T is the guard comes.

Con. Kiss!

BEN KARSHOOK'S WISDOM

The following poem was not reprinted in any collected edition of Robert Browning's works. It was written in April, 1854, and published in *The Keepsake*, 1856.

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,

It is 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.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

LONDON, 1864

JAMES LEE'S WIFE.

I

JAMES LEE'S WIFE SPEAKS AT THE
 WINDOW

I

Ah, love, but a day,
 And the world has changed!
 The sun 's away,
 And the bird estranged;
 The wind has dropped,
 And the sky 's deranged:
 Summer has stopped.

II

Look in my eyes!
 Wilt thou change too?
 Should I fear surprise?
 Shall I find aught new
 In the old and dear,
 In the good and true,
 With the changing year?

III

Thou art a man,
 But I am thy love.
 For the lake, its swan;
 For the dell, its dove;
 And for thee—(oh, haste!)
 Me, to bend above,
 Me, to hold embraced.

II

BY THE FIRESIDE

I

Is all our fire of shipwreck wood,
 Oak and pine?
 Oh, for the ills half-understood,
 The dim dead woe
 Long ago
 Befallen this bitter coast of France!
 Well, poor sailors took their chance;
 I take mine.

II

A ruddy shaft our fire must shoot
 O'er the sea:
 Do sailors eye the casement—mute
 Drenched and stark,
 From their bark—
 And envy, gnash their teeth for hate
 O' the warm safe house and happy
 freight
 —Thee and me?

III

God help you, sailors, at your need!
 Spare the curse!
 For some ships, safe in port indeed,
 Rot and rust,
 Run to dust,
 All through worms i' the wood, which
 crept,

Gnawed our hearts out while we slept :
That is worse.

IV

Who lived here before us two ?
Old-world pairs.
Did a woman ever—would I knew !—
Watch the man
With whom began
Love's voyage full-sail,—(now, gnash
your teeth !)
When planks start, open hell beneath
Unawares ?

III

IN THE DOORWAY

I

THE swallow has set her six young on
the rail,
And looks sea-ward :
The water 's in stripes like a snake,
olive-pale
To the leeward,—
On the weather-side, black, spotted
white with the wind :
" Good fortune departs, and disaster's
behind,"—
Hark, the wind with its wants and its
infinite wail !

II

Our fig-tree, that leaned for the salt-
ness, has furled
Her five fingers,
Each leaf like a hand opened wide to
the world
Where there lingers
No glint of the gold, Summer sent for
her sake :
How the vines writhe in rows, each
impaled on its stake !
My heart shrivels up and my spirit
shrinks curled.

III

Yet here are we two ; we have love,
house enough,
With the field there,
This house of four rooms, that field red
and rough,
Though it yield there,
For the rabbit that robs, scarce a blade
or a bent ;
If a magpie alight now, it seems an
event ;
And they both will be gone at Novem-
ber's rebuff.

IV

But why must cold spread ? but
wherefore bring change
To the spirit,
God meant should mate his with an in-
finite range,
And inherit
His power to put life in the darkness
and cold ?
Oh, live and love worthily, bear and be
bold !
Whom Summer made friends of, let
Winter estrange !

IV

ALONG THE BEACH

I

I WILL be quiet and talk with you,
And reason why you are wrong.
You wanted my love—is that much
true ?
And so I did love, so I do :
What has come of it all along ?

II

I took you—how could I otherwise ?
For a world to me, and more ;
For all, love greatens and glorifies
Till God 's a-glow, to the loving eyes,
In what was mere earth before.

III

Yes, earth—yes, mere ignoble earth !
Now do I mis-state, mistake ?
Do I wrong your weakness and call it
worth ?
Expect all harvest, dread no dearth,
Seal my sense up for your sake ?

IV

Oh, love, love, no, love ! not so, in-
deed !
You were just weak earth, I knew :
With much in you waste, with many a
weed,
And plenty of passions run to seed,
But a little good grain too.

V

And such as you were, I took you for
mine :
Did not you find me yours.
To watch the olive and wait the line,
And wonder when rivers of oil and wine
Would flow, as the Book assures ?

VI

Well, and if none of these good things
came,
What did the failure prove ?
The man was my whole world, all the
same,
With his flowers to praise or his weeds
to blame,
And, either or both, to love.

VII

Yet this turns now to a fault—there !
there !
That I do love, watch too long,
And wait too well, and weary and wear;
And 't is all an old story, and my des-
pair
Fit subject for some new song :

VIII

"How the light, light love, he has wings
to fly
" At suspicion of a bond :
" My wisdom has bidden your pleasure
good-bye,
" Which will turn up next in a laughing
eye,
" And why should you look beyond ?"

V

ON THE CLIFF

I

I LEANED on the turf,
I looked at a rock
Left dry by the surf ;
For the turf, to call it grass were to
mock :
Dead to the roots, so deep was done
The work of the summer sun.

II

And the rock lay flat
As an anvil's face :
No iron like that !
Baked dry ; of a weed, of a shell, no
trace :
Sunshine outside, but ice at the core,
Death's altar by the lone shore.

III

On the turf, sprang gay
With his films of blue,
No cricket, I'll say,
But a warhorse, barded and chanfroned
too,

The gift of a quixote-mage to his
knight,
Real fairy, with wings all right.

IV

On the rock, they scorch
Like a drop of fire
From a brandished torch,
Fall two red fans of a butterfly :
No turf, no rock, in their ugly stead,
See, wonderful blue and red !

V

Is it not so
With the minds of men ?
The level and low,
The burnt and bare, in themselves ;
but then
With such a blue and red grace, not
theirs,
Love settling unawares !

VI

READING A BOOK, UNDER THE CLIFF

I

" STILL ailing, Wind ? Wilt be ap-
peased or no ?
" Which needs the other's office
thou or I ?
" Dost want to be disburthened of a
woe,
" And can, in truth, my voice untie
" Its links, and let it go ?

II

" Art thou a dumb, wronged thing that
would be righted,
" Entrusting thus thy cause to me ?
Forbear !
" No tongue can mend such pleadings ;
faith, requited
" With falsehood,—love, at last
aware
" Of scorn,—hopes, early blighted,—

III

" We have them ; but I know not any
tone
" So fit as thine to falter forth a sor-
row :
" Dost think men would go mad with-
out a moan,
" If they knew any way to borrow
" A pathos like thy own ?

IV

"Which sigh wouldst mock, of all the
sighs? The one
"So long escaping from lips starved
and blue,
"That lasts while on her pallet-bed the
nun
"Stretches her length; her foot
comes through
"The straw she shivers on;

V

"You had not thought she was so tall:
and spent,
"Her shrink lids open, her lean fin-
gers shut
"Close, close, their sharp and livid
nails indent
"The clammy palm; then all is
mute:
"That way, the spirit went.

VI

"Or wouldst thou rather that I under-
stand
"Thy will to help me?—like the dog
I found
"Once, pacing sad this solitary strand,
"Who would not take my food, poor
hound,
"But whined and licked my hand."

VII

All this, and more, comes from some
young man's pride
Of power to see,—in failure and mis-
take,
Relinquishment, disgrace, on every
side,—
Merely examples for his sake,
Helps to his path untried:

VIII

Instances he must—simply recognise?
Oh, more than so!—must, with a
learner's zeal,
Make doubly prominent, twice empha-
size,
By added touches that reveal
The god in babe's disguise.

IX

Oh, he knows what defeat means, and
the rest!
Himself the undefeated that shall be:

Failure, disgrace, he flings them you to
test,—
His triumph, in eternity
Too plainly manifest!

X

Where, judge if he learn forthwith
what the wind
Means in its moaning—by the happy
prompt
Instinctive way of youth, I mean; for
kind
Calm years, exacting their account
Of pain, mature the mind:

XI

And some midsummer morning, at the
lull
Just about daybreak, as he looks
across
A sparkling foreign country, wonderful
To the sea's edge for gloom and gloss,
Next minute must annul,—

XII

Then, when the wind begins among the
vines,
So low, so low, what shall it say but
this?
"Here is the change beginning, here the
lines
"Circumscribe beauty, set to bliss
"The limit time assigns."

XIII

Nothing can be as it has been before;
Better, so call it, only not the same.
To draw one beauty into our hearts'
core,
And keep it changeless! such our
claim;
So answered,—Never more!

XIV

Simple? Why this is the old woe o'
the world;
Tune, to whose rise and fall we live
and die.
Rise with it, then! Rejoice that man
is hurled
From change to change unceasingly.
His soul's wings never furled!

XV

That's a new question; still replies the
fact,
Nothing endures: the wind moans,
saying so;

We moan in acquiescence : there 's
 life's pact,
 Perhaps probation—do I know ?
 God does : endure his act !

XVI

Only, for man, how bitter not to grave
 On his soul's hands' palms one fair
 good wise thing
 Just as he grasped it ! For himself,
 death's wave ;
 While time first washes—ah, the
 sting !—
 O'er all he'd sink to save.

VII

AMONG THE ROCKS

I

Oh, good gigantic smile o' the brown
 old earth,
 This autumn morning ! How he
 sets his bones
 To bask i' the sun, and thrusts out
 knees and feet
 For the ripple to run over in its mirth ;
 Listening the while, where on the
 heap of stones
 The white breast of the sea-lark twit-
 ters sweet.

II

That is the doctrine, simple, ancient,
 true ;
 Such is life 's trial, as old earth smiles
 and knows.
 If you loved only what were worth
 your love,
 Love were clear gain, and wholly well
 for you :
 Make the low nature better by your
 throes !
 Give earth yourself, go up for gain
 above !

VIII

BESIDE THE DRAWING-BOARD

I

"As like as a Hand to another Hand !"
 Whoever said that foolish thing,
 Could not have studied to understand
 The counsels of God in fashioning,
 Out of the infinite love of his heart,
 This Hand, whose beauty I praise,
 apart
 From the world of wonder left to praise.

If I tried to learn the other ways
 Of love, in its skill, or love, in its power,
 "As like as a Hand to another
 Hand :"

Who said that, never took his stand,
 Found and followed, like me, an hour,
 The beauty in this,—how free, how fine
 To fear, almost,—of the limit-line !
 As I looked at this, and learned and
 drew,

Drew and learned, and looked again,
 While fast the happy minutes flew,
 Its beauty mounted into my brain,
 And a fancy seized me ; I was fain
 To efface my work, begin anew,
 Kiss what before I only drew ;
 Ay, laying the red chalk 'twixt my lips,
 With soul to help if the mere lips
 failed,

I kissed all right where the drawing
 ailed,
 Kissed fast the grace that somehow
 slips
 Still from one's soulless finger-tips.

II

'T is a clay cast, the perfect thing,
 From Hand live once, dead long ago :
 Princess-like it wears the ring
 To fancy's eye, by which we know
 That here at length a master found
 His match, a proud lone soul its
 mate,

As soaring genius sank to ground
 And pencil could not emulate
 The beauty in this,—how free, how fine
 To fear almost !—of the limit-line.
 Long ago the god, like me
 The worm, learned, each in our degree :
 Looked and loved, learned and drew,
 Drew and learned and loved again,
 While fast the happy minutes flew,
 Till beauty mounted into his brain
 And on the finger which outvied
 His art he placed the ring that 's
 there,

Still by fancy's eye descried,
 In token of a marriage rare :
 For him on earth, his art's despair,
 For him in heaven, his soul's fit bride.

III

Little girl with the poor coarse hand
 I turned from to a cold clay cast—
 I have my lesson, understand
 The worth of flesh and blood at last !
 Nothing but beauty in a Hand ?

Because he could not change the hue,
Mend the lines and make them true
To this which met his soul's demand,—
Would Da Vinci turn from you?

I hear him laugh my woes to scorn—
"The fool forsooth is all forlorn
"Because the beauty, she thinks best,
"Lived long ago or was never born,—
"Because no beauty bears the test
"In this rough peasant Hand! Con-
fessed

" 'Art is null and study void!'
"So sayest thou? So said not I,
"Who threw the faulty pencil by,
"And years instead of hours employed,
"Learning the veritable use
"Of flesh and bone and nerve beneath
"Lines and hue of the outer sheath,
"If haply I might reproduce
"One motive of the mechanism,
"Flesh and bone and nerve that make
"The poorest coarsest human hand
"An object worthy to be scanned
"A whole life long for their sole sake.
"Shall earth and the cramped moment-
space

"Yield the heavenly crowning grace?
"Now the parts and then the whole!
"Who art thou, with stunted soul
"And stunted body, thus to cry
" 'I love,—shall that be life's strait
dole?
" 'I must live beloved or die!'
"This peasant hand that spins the
wool

"And bakes the bread, why lives it on,
"Poor and coarse with beauty gone,—
"What use survives the beauty?
Fool!"

Go, little girl with the poor coarse hand
I have my lesson, shall understand.

IX

ON DECK

I

THERE is nothing to remember in me,
Nothing I ever said with a grace,
Nothing I did that you care to see,
Nothing I was that deserves a place
In your mind, now I leave you, set you
free.

II

Conceded! In turn, concede to me,
Such things have been as a mutual
flame.

Your soul's locked fast but, love for
a key,

You might let it loose, till I grew the
same

In your eyes, as in mine you stand:
strange plea!

III

For then, then, what would it matter
to me

That I was the harsh, ill-favoured
one?

We both should be like as pea and pea;
It was ever so since the world begun:
So, let me proceed with my reverie.

IV

How strange it were if you had all me,
As I have all you in my heart and
brain,

You, whose least word brought gloom
or glee,

Who never lifted the hand in vain
Will hold mine yet, from over the sea!

V

Strange, if a face, when you thought of
me,

Rose like your own face present now,
With eyes as dear in their due degree,
Much such a mouth, and as bright a
brow,

Till you saw yourself, while you cried
" 'Tis She! "

VI

Well, you may, you must, set down to
me

Love that was life, life that was love;
A tenure of breath at your lips' decree,
A passion to stand as your thoughts
approve,

A rapture to fall where your foot might
be.

VII

But did one touch of such love for me

Come in a word or a look of yours,
Whose words and looks will, circling,
flee

Round me and round while life en-
dures,—

Could I fancy "As I feel, thus feels He;"

VIII

Why, fade you might to a thing like me,
And your hair grow these coarse
hanks of hair,

Your skin, this bark of a gnarled tree,—
 You might turn yourself!—should I
 know or care,
 When I should be dead of joy, James
 Lee?

GOLD HAIR :
 A STORY OF PORNIC

I

Oh, the beautiful girl, too white,
 Who lived at Pornic down by the sea,
 Just where the sea and the Loire unite!
 And a boasted name in Brittany
 She bore, which I will not write.

II

Too white, for the flower of life is red;
 Her flesh was the soft seraphic screen
 Of a soul that is meant (her parents
 said)
 To just see earth, and hardly be seen,
 And blossom in heaven instead.

III

Yet earth saw one thing, one how fair!
 One grace that grew to its full on
 earth:
 Smiles might be sparse on her cheek so
 spare,
 And her waist want half a girdle's
 girth,
 But she had her great gold hair.

IV

Hair, such a wonder of flax and floss,
 Freshness and fragrance—floods of
 it, too!
 Gold, did I say? Nay, gold 's mere
 dross:
 Here, Life smiled, "Think what I
 meant to do!"
 And Love sighed, "Fancy, my loss!"

V

So, when she died, it was scarce more
 strange
 Than that, when some delicate even-
 ing dies,
 And you follow its spent sun's pallid
 range,
 There 's a shoot of colour startles the
 skies
 With sudden, violent change,—

VI

That, while the breath was nearly to
 seek,

As they put the little cross to her lips,
 She changed; a spot came out on her
 cheek,

A spark from her eye in mid-eclipse,
 And she broke forth, "I must speak!"

VII

"Not my hair!" made the girl her
 moan—
 "All the rest is gone or to go;
 "But the last, last grace, my all, my
 own,
 "Let it stay in the grave, that the
 ghosts may know!
 "Leave my poor gold hair alone!"

VIII

The passion thus vented, dead lay she;
 Her parents sobbed their worst on
 that,
 All friends joined in, nor observed de-
 gree:
 For indeed the hair was to wonder at,
 As it spread—not flowing free,

IX

But curled around her brow, like a
 crown,
 And coiled beside her cheeks, like a
 cap,
 And calmed about her neck—ay, down
 To her breast, pressed flat, without a
 gap
 I' the gold, it reached her gown.

X

All kissed that face, like a silver wedge
 Mid the yellow wealth, nor disturbed
 its hair:
 E'en the priest allowed death's privi-
 lege,
 As he planted the crucifix with care
 On her breast, 'twixt edge and edge.

XI

And thus was she buried, inviolate
 Of body and soul, in the very space
 By the altar; keeping saintly state
 In Pornic church, for her pride of
 race,
 Pure life and piteous fate.

XII

And in after-time would your fresh tear
 fall,
 Though your mouth might twitch
 with a dubious smile,

As they told you of gold both robe and
pall,
How she prayed them leave it alone
awhile,
So it never was touched at all.

XIII

Years flew ; this legend grew at last
The life of the lady ; all she had done,
All been, in the memories fading fast
Of lover and friend, was summed in
one
Sentence survivors passed :

XIV

To wit, she was meant for heaven, not
earth ;
Had turned an angel before the time :
Yet, since she was mortal, in such
dearth
Of frailty, all you could count a crime
Was—she knew her gold hair's worth.

XV

At little pleasant Pornic church,
It chanced, the pavement wanted
repair,
Was taken to pieces : left in the lurch,
A certain sacred space lay bare,
And the boys began research.

XVI

'T was the space where our sires would
lay a saint,
A benefactor,—a bishop, suppose,
A baron with armour-adornments
quaint,
Dame with chased ring and jewelled
rose,
Things sanctity saves from taint ;

XVII

So we come to find them in after-days
When the corpse is presumed to have
done with gauds
Of use to the living, in many ways :
For the boys get pelf, and the town
applauds,
And the church deserves the praise.

XVIII

They grubbed with a will : and at
length—*O cor*
Humanum, pectora cæca, and the
rest !—
They found—no gaud they were prying
for,

No ring, no rose, but—who would
have guessed ?—
A double Louis-d'or !

XIX

Here was a case for the priest : he
heard,
Marked, inwardly digested, laid
Finger on nose, smiled, " A little bird
" Chirps in my ear : " then, " Bring
a spade,
" Dig deeper ! "—he gave the word.

XX

And lo, when they came to the coffin-
lid,
Or rotten planks which composed it
once,
Why, there lay the girl's skull wedged
amid
A mint of money, it served for the
nonce
To hold in its hair-heaps hid !

XXI

Hid there ? Why ? Could the girl
be wont
(She the stainless soul) to treasure up
Money, earth's trash and heaven's
affront ?
Had a spider found out the com-
munion-cup,
Was a toad in the christening-font ?

XXII

Truth is truth : too true it was.
Gold ! She hoarded and hugged it
first,
Longed for it, leaned o'er it, loved it—
alas—
Till the humour grew to a head and
burst,
And she cried, at the final pass,—

XXIII

" Talk not of God, my heart is stone !
" Nor lover nor friend—be gold for
both !
" Gold I lack ; and, my all, my own.
" It shall hide in my hair. I scarce
die loth
" If they let my hair alone ! "

XXIV

Louis-d'ors, some six times five,
And duly double, every piece.
Now, do you see ? With the priest to
shrive,

With parents preventing her soul's
release
By kisses that kept alive,—

xxv

With heaven's gold gates about to ope,
With friends' praise, gold-like, linger-
ing still,
An instinct had bidden the girl's hand
gripe
For gold, the true sort—"Gold in
heaven, if you will;
'But I keep earth's too, I hope.'"

xxvi

Enough! The priest took the grave's
grim yield:
The parents, they eyed that price of
sin
As if *thirty pieces* lay revealed
On the place to *bury strangers in*,
The hideous Potter's Field.

xxvii

But the priest bethought him: "'Milk
that 's spilt'
"—You know the adage! Watch
and pray!
"Saints tumble to earth with so slight
a tilt!
"It would build a new altar; that,
we may!"
And the altar therewith was built.

xxviii

Why I deliver this horrible verse?
As the text of a sermon, which now I
preach:
Evil or good may be better or worse
In the human heart, but the mixture
of each
Is a marvel and a curse.

xxix

The candid incline to surmise of late
That the Christian faith may be false,
I find;
For our Essays-and-Reviews' debate
Begins to tell on the public mind,
And Colenso's words have weight:

xxx

I still, to suppose it true, for my part,
See reasons and reasons; this, to be-
gin:
'T is the faith that launched point-
blank her dart

At the head of a lie—taught Original
Sin,
The Corruption of Man's Heart.

THE WORST OF IT

I

Would it were I had been false, not
you!
I that am nothing, not you that are
all:
I, never the worse for a touch or two
On my speckled hide; not you, the
pride
Of the day, my swan, that a first fleck's
fall
On her wonder of white must un-
swan, undo!

II

I had dipped in life's struggle, and out
again,
Bore specks of it here, there, easy to
see,
When I found my swan and the cure
was plain;
The dull turned bright as I caught
your white
On my bosom: you saved me—saved
in vain
If you ruined yourself, and all
through me!

III

Yes, all through the speckled beast
that I am,
Who taught you to stoop; you gave
me yourself,
And bound your soul by the vows that
damn:
Since on better thought you break,
as you ought,
Vows—words, no angel set down, some
elf
Mistook,—for an oath, an epigram!

IV

Yes, might I judge you, here were my
heart,
And a hundred its like, to treat as
you pleased!
I choose to be yours, for my proper part,
Yours, leave or take, or mar me or
make;
If I acquiesce, why should you be
teased
With the conscience-prick and the
memory-smart?

V

But what will God say? Oh, my
sweet,
Think, and be sorry you did this
thing!
Though earth were unworthy to feel
your feet,
There 's a heaven above may deserve
your love:
Should you forfeit heaven for a snapt
gold ring
And a promise broke, were it just or
meet?

VI

And I to have tempted you! I, who
tried
Your soul, no doubt, till it sank!
Unwise,
I loved, and was lowly, loved and as-
pired,
Loved, grieving or glad, till I made
you mad,
And you meant to have hated and
despised—
Whereas, you deceived me nor in-
quired!

VII

She, ruined? How? No heaven for
her?
Crowns to give, and none for the
brow
That looked like marble and smelt like
myrrh?
Shall the robe be worn, and the palm-
branch borne,
And she go graceless, she graced now
Beyond all saints, as themselves
aver?

VIII

Hardly! That must be understood!
The earth is your place of penance,
then;
And what will it prove? I desire your
good,
But, plot as I may, I can find no way
How a blow should fall, such as falls on
men,
Nor prove too much for your woman-
hood.

IX

It will come, I suspect, at the end of
life,
When you walk alone, and review the
past;

And I, who so long shall have done with
strife,
And journeyed my stage and earned
my wage
And retired as was right,—I am called
at last
When the devil stabs you, to lend the
knife.

X

He stabs for the minute of trivial
wrong,
Nor the other hours are able to save,
The happy, that lasted my whole life
long:
For a promise broke, not for first
words spoke,
The true, the only, that turn my grave
To a blaze of joy and a crash of song.

XI

Witness beforehand! Off I trip
On a safe path gay through the
flowers you flung:
My very name made great by your lip,
And my heart a-glow with the good I
know
Of a perfect year when we both were
young,
And I tasted the angels' fellowship.

XII

And witness, moreover . . . Ah, but
wait!
I spy the loop whence an arrow
shoots!
It may be for yourself, when you medi-
tate,
That you grieve—for slain ruth,
murdered truth:
"Though falsehood escape in the end,
what boots?
"How truth would have triumphed!"
—you sigh too late.

XIII

Ay, who would have triumphed like
you, I say!
Well, it is lost now; well, you must
bear,
Abide and grow fit for a better day:
You should hardly grudge, could I
be your judge!
But hush! For you, can be no de-
spair:
There 's amends. 'tis a secret: hope
and pray!

XIV

For I was true at least—oh, true enough!
And, dear, truth is not as good as it seems!
Commend me to conscience! Idle stuff!

Much help is in mine, as I mope and pine,
And skulk through day, and scowl in my dreams
At my swan's obtaining the crow's rebuff.

XV

Men tell me of truth now—"False!"
I cry:
Of beauty—"A mask, friend! Look beneath!"

We take our own method, the devil and I,

With pleasant and fair and wise and rare;
And the best we wish to what lives, is—death;
Which even in wishing, perhaps we lie!

XVI

Far better commit a fault and have done—

As you, dear!—for ever; and choose the pure,
And look where the healing waters run,
And strive and strain to be good again,
And a place in the other world ensure,
All glass and gold, with God for its sun.

XVII

Misery! What shall I say or do?
I cannot advise, or, at least, persuade:

Most like, you are glad you deceived me—true

No whit of the wrong: you endured too long,
Have done no evil and want no aid,
Will live the old life out and chance the new.

XVIII

And your sentence is written all the same,
And I can do nothing,—pray, perhaps;

But somehow the world pursues its game,

If I pray, if I curse,—for better or worse:

And my faith is torn to a thousand scraps,

And my heart feels ice while my words breathe flame.

XIX

Dear, I look from my hiding-place.

Are you still so fair? Have you still the eyes?

Be happy! Add but the other grace,

Be good! Why want what the angels vaunt?

I knew you once: but in Paradise,

If we meet, I will pass nor turn my face.

DIS ALITER VISUM;

OR,

LE BYRON DE NOS JOURS

I

Stop, let me have the truth of that!

Is that all true? I say, the day

Ten years ago when both of us

Met on a morning, friends—as thus

We meet this evening, friends or what?—

II

Did you—because I took your arm

And sillily smiled, "A mass of brass"

"That sea looks, blazing underneath!"

While up the cliff-road edged with

heath,

We took the turns nor came to harm—

III

Did you consider "Now makes twice

"That I have seen her, walked and talked

"With this poor pretty thoughtful thing,

"Whose worth I weigh: she tries to sing;

"Draws, hopes in time the eye grows nice;

IV

"Reads verse and thinks she understands;

"Loves all, at any rate, that's great,

" Good, beautiful ; but much as we
 " Down at the bath-house love the
 sea,
 " Who breathe its salt and bruise its
 sands :

V

" While . . do but follow the fishing-
 gull
 " That flaps and floats from wave to
 cave !
 " There 's the sea-lover, fair my friend !
 " What then ? Be patient, mark
 and mend !
 " Had you the making of your scull ? "

VI

And did you, when we faced the church
 With spire and sad slate roof, aloof
 From human fellowship so far,
 Where a few graveyard crosses are,
 And garlands for the swallows' perch,—

VII

Did you determine, as we stepped
 O'er the lone stone fence, " Let me
 get
 " Her for myself, and what 's the earth
 " With all its art, verse, music, wortl.—
 " Compared with love, found, gained,
 and kept ?

VIII

" Schumann 's our music-maker now ;
 " Has his march-movement youth
 and mouth ?
 " Ingres 's the modern man that paints ;
 " Which will lean on me, of his saints ?
 " Heine for songs ; for kisses, how ? "

IX

And did you, when we entered, reached
 The votive frigate, soft aloft
 Riding on air this hundred years,
 Safe-smiling at old hopes and fears,—
 Did you draw profit while she preached ?

X

Resolving, " Fools we wise men grow !
 " Yes, I could easily blurt out curt
 " Some question that might find reply
 " As prompt in her stopped lips,
 dropped eye,
 " And rush of red to cheek and brow :

XI

" Thus were a match made, sure and
 fast.

" 'Mid the blue weed-flowers round
 the mound

" Where, issuing, we shall stand and
 stay

" For one more look at baths and
 bay,

" Sands, sea-gulls, and the old church
 last—

XII

" A match 'twixt me, bent, wigged and
 lamed,

" Famous, however, for verse and
 worse,

" Sure of the Fortieth spare Arm-chair
 " When gout and glory seat me
 there,

" So, one whose love-freaks pass un-
 blamed,—

XIII

" And this young beauty, round and
 sound

" As a mountain-apple, youth and
 truth

" With loves and doves, at all events
 " With money in the Three per Cents ;

" V. . . choice of me would seem pro-
 round :—

XIV

" She might take me as I take her.

" Perfect the hour would pass, alas !

" Climb high, love high, what matter ?
 Still,

" Feet, feelings, must descend the hill :

" An hour's perfection can't recur.

XV

" Then follows Paris and full time

" For both to reason : ' Thus with
 us ! '

" She 'll sigh, " Thus girls give body
 and soul

" ' At first word, think they gain the
 goal,

" When 't is the starting-place they
 climb !

XVI

" My friend makes verse and gets re-
 nown ;

" ' Have they all fifty years, his
 peers ?

" ' He knows the world, firm, quiet and
 gay ;

" ' Boys will become as much one
 day :

"They 're fools; he cheats, with
beard less brown.

XVII

"For boys say, *Love me or I die!*
He did not say, *The truth is, youth*
"I want, who am old and know too
much;
"I'd catch youth: lend me sight and
touch!
"Drop heart's blood where life's wheels
grate dry!"

XVIII

"While I should make rejoinder"—
(then
It was, no doubt, you ceased that
least
Light pressure of my arm in yours)
"I can conceive of cheaper cures
"For a yawning-fit o'er books and
men.

XIX

"What? All I am, was, and might
be,
"All, books taught, art brought,
life's whole strife,
"Painful results since precious, just
"Were fitly exchanged, in wise dis-
gust,
"For two cheeks freshened by youth
and sea?

XX

"All for a nosegay!—what came first;
"With fields on flower, untried each
side;
"I rally, need my books and men,
"And find a nosegay: 'drop it,
then,
"No match yet made for best or
worst!"

XXI

That ended me. You judged the
We left by, Norman; took our look
At sea and sky; wondered so few
Find out the place for air and view;
Remarked the sun began to scorch;

XXII

Descended, soon regained the baths,
And then, good bye! Years ten
since then:
Ten years! We meet: you tell me,
now.

By a window-seat for that cliff-brow,
On carpet-stripes for those sand-paths.

XXIII

Now I may speak: you fool, for all
Your lore! WHO made things plain
in vain?
What was the sea for? What, the
grey
Sad church, that solitary day,
Crosses and graves and swallows' call?

XXIV

Was there nought better than to en-
joy?
No feat which, done, would make
time break,
And let us pent-up creatures through
Into eternity, our due?
No forcing earth teach heaven's em-
ploy?

XXV

No wise beginning, here and now,
What cannot grow complete (earth's
feat)
And heaven must finish, there and
then?
No tasting earth's true food for men.
Its sweet in sad, its sad in sweet?

XXVI

No grasping at love, gaining a share
O' the sole spark from God's life at
strife
With death, so, sure of range above
The limits here? For us and love,
Failure; but, when God fails, despair.

XXVII

This you call wisdom? Thus you add
Good unto good again, in vain?
You loved, with body worn and weak;
I loved, with faculties to seek:
Were both loves worthless since ill-
clad?

XXVIII

Let the mere star-fish in his vault
Crawl in a wash of weed, indeed,
Rose-jacynth to the finger-tips:
He, whole in body and soul, outstrips
Man, found with either in default.

XXIX

But what 's whole, can increase no
more,

Is dwarfed and dies, since here 's its
sphere.
The devil laughed at you in his sleeve !
You knew not ? That I well be-
lieve ;
Or you had saved two souls : nay, four.

XXX

For Stephanic sprained last night her
wrist,
Ankle or something. " Pooh," cry
you ?
At any rate she danced, all say,
Vilely ; her vogue has had its day.
Here comes my husband from his whist.

TOO LATE

I

HERE was I with my arm and heart
And brain, all yours for a word, a
want
Put into a look—just a look, your
part,—
While mine, to repay it . . . vainest
vaunt,
Were the woman, that 's dead, alive to
hear,
Had her lover, that 's lost, love's
proof to show !
But I cannot show it ; you cannot
speak
From the churchyard neither, miles
removed,
Though I feel by a pulse within my
cheek,
Which stabs and stops, that the
woman I loved
Needs help in her grave and finds none
near,
Wants warmth from the heart which
sends it—so !

II

'Did I speak once angrily, all the drear
days
You lived, you woman I loved so
well,
Who married the other ? Blame or
praise,
Where was the use then ? Time
would tell,
And the end declare what man for you,
What woman for me was the choice
of God.
But, Edith dead ! no doubting more !
I used to sit and look at my life

As it rippled and ran till, right before,
A great stone stopped it : oh, the
strife
Of waves at the stone some devil threw
In my life's midcurrent, thwarting
God !

III

But either I thought, " They may churn
and chide
" Awhile, my waves which came for
their joy
" And found this horrible stone full-
tide :
" Yet I see just a thread escape,
deploy
" Through the evening-country, silent
and safe,
" And it suffers no more till it finds
the sea."
Or else I would think, " Perhaps some
night
" When new things happen, a meteor-
ball
" May slip through the sky in a line of
light,
" And earth breathe hard, and land-
marks fall,
" And my waves no longer champ nor
chafe,
" Since a stone will have rolled from
its place : let be !"

IV

But, dead ! All 's done with : wait
who may,
Watch and wear and wonder who
will.
Oh, my whole life that ends to-day !
Oh, my soul's sentence, sounding
still,
" The woman is dead, that was none of
his ;
" And the man, that was none of
hers, may go !"
There 's only the past left : worry that !
Wreak, like a bull, on the empty
coat,
Rage, its late wearer is laughing at !
Tear the collar to rags, having missed
his throat ;
Strike stupidly on—" This, this and
this,
" Where I would that a bosom re-
ceived the blow !"

v

I ought to have done more : once my speech,
 And once your answer, and there, the end,
 And Edith was henceforth out of reach !
 Why, men do more to deserve a friend,
 Berid of a foe, get rich, grow wise,
 Nor, folding their arms, stare fate in the face.
 Why, better even have burst like a thief
 And borne you away to a rock for us two,
 In a moment's horror, bright, bloody and brief,
 Then changed to myself again—" I slew
 " Myself in that moment ; a ruffian lies
 " Somewhere : your slave, see, born in his place ! "

vi

What did the other do ? You be judge !
 Look at us, Edith ! Here are we both !
 Gave him his six whole years : I grudge
 None of the life with you, nay, I loathe
 Myself that I grudged his start in advance
 Of me who could overtake and pass.
 But, as if he loved you ! No, not he,
 Nor any one else in the world, 't is plain :
 Who ever heard that another, free
 As I, young, prosperous, sound and sane,
 Poured life out, proffered it—" Half a glance
 " Of those eyes of yours and I drop the glass ! "

vii

Handsome, were you ? 'Tis more than they held,
 More than they said ; I was 'ware and watched :
 I was the 'seapegrace, this rat belled
 The cat, this fool got his whiskers scratched :
 The others ? No head that was turned, no heart
 Broken, my lady, assure yourself !

Each soon made his mind up ; so and so
 Married a dancer, such and such
 Stole his friend's wife, stagnated slow,
 Or in undered, unable to do as much,
 And muttered of peace where he had no part :
 While, hid in the closet, laid on the shelf,—

viii

On the whole, you were let alone, I think !
 So, you looked to the other, who acquiesced ;
 My rival, the proud man,—prize your pink
 Of poets ! A poet he was ! I've guessed :
 He rhymed you his rubbish nobody read,
 Loved you and loved you—did not I laugh !
 There was a prize ! But we both were tried
 Oh, heart of mine, marked broad with her mark,
Tekel, found wanting, set aside,
 Seorned ! See, I bleed these tears in the dark
 Till comfort come and the last be bled :
 He ? He is tagging your epitaph.

ix

If it would only come over again !
 —Time to be patient with me, and probe
 This heart till you punctured the proper vein,
 Just to learn what blood is : twitch the robe
 From that blank lay-figure your fancy draped,
 Prick the leathern heart till the—verses spirt !
 And late it was easy ; late, you walked
 Where a friend might meet you ; Edith's name
 Arose to one's lip if one laughed or talked ;
 If I heard good news, you heard the same ;
 When I woke, I knew that your breath escaped ;
 I could bide my time, keep alive, alert.

X

And alive I shall keep and long, you
will see!

I knew a man, was kicked like a dog
From gutter to cesspool; what cared
he

So long as he picked from the filth his
prog?

He saw youth, beauty and genius die,
And jollily lived to his hundredth
year.

But I will live otherwise: none of such
life!

At once I begin as I mean to end.
Go on with the world, get gold in its
strife,

Give your spouse the slip and betray
your friend!

There are two who decline, a woman
and I,

And enjoy our death in the darkness
here.

XI

I liked that way you had with your
curls

Wound to a ball in a net behind:
Your cheek was chaste as a quaker-
girl's,

And your mouth—there was never,
to my mind,

Such a funny mouth, for it would not
shut;

And the dented chin too—what a
chin!

There were certain ways when you
spoke, some words

That you know you never could pro-
nounce:

You were thin, however; like a bird's
Your hand seemed—some would say,
the pounce

Of a scaly-footed hawk—all but!

The world was right when it called
you thin.

XII

But I turn my back on the world: I
take

Your hand, and kneel, and lay to my
lips.

Bid me live, Edith! Let me slake

Thirst at your presence! Fear no
slips!

'T is your slave shall pay, while his soul
endures,

Full due, love's whole debt, *sum-
mum jus*.

My queen shall have high observance,
planned

Courtship made perfect, no least line
Crossed without warrant. There you
stand,

Warm too, and white too: would this
wine

Had washed all over that body of yours,
Ere I drank it, and you down with t,
thus!

ABT VOGLER

(AFTER HE HAS BEEN EXTEMPORIZING
UPON THE MUSICAL INSTRUMENT OF
HIS INVENTION)

I

Would that the structure brave, the
manifold music I build,

Bidding my organ obey, calling its
keys to their work,

Claiming each slave of the sound, at a
touch, as when Solomon willed

Armies of angels that soar, legions of
demons that lurk,

Man, brute, reptile, fly,—alien of end
and of aim,

Adverse, each from the other heaven-
high, hell-deep removed,—

Should rush into sight at once as he
named the ineffable Name,

And pile him a palace straight, to
pleasure the princess he loved!

II

Would it might tarry like his, the beau-
tiful building of mine,

This which my keys in a crowd
pressed and importuned to raise!

Ah, one and all, how they helped,
would dispart now and now com-
bine,

Zealous to hasten the work, heighten
their master his praise!

And one would bury his brow with a
blind plunge down to hell,

Burrow awhile and build, broad on
the roots of things,

Then up again swim into sight, having
based me my palace well,

Founded it, fearless of flame, flat on
the nether springs.

III

And another would mount and march,
like the excellent minion he was,

Ay, another and yet another, one
crowd but with many a crest,
Raising my rampired walls of gold as
transparent as glass,
Eager to do and die, yield each his
place to the rest :
For higher still and higher (as a runner
tips with fire,
When a great illumination surprises a
festal night—
Outlining round and round Rome's
dome from space to spire)
Up, the pinnacled glory reached, and
the pride of my soul was in sight.

IV

In sight ? Not half ! for it seemed, it
was certain, to match man's birth,
Nature in turn conceived, obeying
an impulse as I ;
And the emulous heaven yearned down,
made effort to reach the earth,
As the earth had done her best, in my
passion, to scale the sky :
Novel splendours burst forth, grew
familiar and dwelt with mine,
Not a point nor peak but found and
fixed its wandering star ;
Meteor-moons, balls of blaze : and
they did not pale nor pine,
For earth had attained to heaven,
there was no more near nor far.

V

Nay more ; for there wanted not who
walked in the glare and glow,
Presences plain in the place ; or,
fresh from the Protoplast,
Furnished for ages to come, when a
kindlier wind should blow,
Lured now to begin and live, in a
house to their liking at last ;
Or else the wonderful Dead who have
passed through the body and gone,
But were back once more to breathe
in an old world worth their new :
What never had been, was now ; what
was, as it shall be anon ;
And what is,—shall I say, matched
both ? for I was made perfect too.

VI

All through my keys that gave their
sounds to a wish of my soul,
All through my soul that praised as
its wish flowed visibly forth,

All through music and me ! For think,
had I painted the whole,
Why, there it had stood, to see, nor
the process so wonder-worth :
Had I written the same, made verse—
still, effect proceeds from cause,
Ye know why the forms are fair, ye
hear how the tale is told ;
It is all triumphant art, but art in obe-
dience to laws,
Painter and poet are prond in the
artist-list enrolled :—

VII

But here is the finger of God, a flash of
the will that can,
Existent behind all laws, that made
them and, lo, they are !
And I know not if, save in this, such
gift be allowed to man,
That out of three sounds he frame,
not a fourth sound, but a star.
Consider it well : each tone of our scale
in itself is nought ;
It is everywhere in the world—loud,
soft, and all is said :
Give it to me to use ! I mix it with
two in my thought
And, there ! Ye have heard and
seen : consider and bow the head !

VIII

Well, it is gone at last, the palace of
music I reared ;
Gone ! and the good tears start, the
praises that come too slow ;
For one is assured at first, one scarce
can say that he feared,
That he even gave it a thought, the
gone thing was to go.
Never to be again ! But many more
of the kind
As good, nay, better perchance : is
this your comfort to me ?
To me, who must be saved because I
cling with my mind
To the same, same self, same love,
same God : ay, what was, shall be.

IX

Therefore to whom turn I but to thee,
the ineffable Name ?
Builder and maker, thou, of houses
not made with hands !
What, have fear of change from thee
who art ever the same ?
Doubt that Thy power can fill the
heart that Thy power expands ?

There shall never be one lost good !
 What was, shall live as before ;
 The evil is null, is nought, is silence
 implying sound ;
 What was good, shall be good, with, for
 evil, so much good more ;
 On the earth the broken ares ; in the
 heaven, a perfect round.

X

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed
 of good, shall exist ;
 Not its semblance, but itself ; no
 beauty, nor good, nor power
 Whose voice has gone forth, but each
 survives for the melodist
 When eternity affirms the concep-
 tion of an Four.
 The high that proved too high, the
 heroic for earth too hard,
 The passion that left the ground to
 lose itself in the sky.
 Are music sent up to God by the lover
 and the bard ;
 Enough that he heard it once : we
 shall hear it by-and-by.

XI

And what is our failure here but a tri-
 umph's evidence
 For the fulness of the days ? Have
 we withered or agonized ?
 Why else was the pause prolonged but
 that singing might issue thence ?
 Why rushed the discords in, but that
 harmony should be prized ?
 Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is
 slow to clear,
 Each sufferer says his say, his scheme
 of the weal and woe :
 But God has a few of us whom he whis-
 pers in the ear ;
 The rest may reason and welcome :
 't is we musicians know.

XII

Well, it is earth with me ; silence re-
 sumes her reign :
 I will be patient and proud, and
 soberly acquiesce.
 Give me the keys. I feel for the com-
 mon chord again,
 Sliding by semitones, till I sink to the
 minor,—yes,
 And I blunt it into a ninth, and I stand
 on alien ground,

Surveying awhile the heights I rolled
 from into the deep ;
 Which, hark, I have dared and done,
 for my resting-place is found,
 The C Major of this life : so, now I
 will try to sleep.

RABBI BEN EZRA

I

Grow old along with me !
 The best is yet to be,
 The last of life, for which the first was
 made :
 Our times are in His hand
 Who saith " A whole I planned,
 " Youth shows but half ; trust God :
 see all, nor be afraid ! "

II

Not that, amassing flowers,
 Youth sighed " Which rose make ours,
 " Which lily leave and then as best re-
 call ? "
 Not that, admiring stars,
 It yearned " Nor Jove, nor Mars ;
 " Mine be some figured flame which
 blends, transcends them all ! "

III

Not for such hopes and fears
 Annulling youth's brief years,
 Do I remonstrate : folly wide the mark !
 Rather I prize the doubt
 Low kinds exist without,
 Finished and finite clods, **untroubled**
 by a spark.

IV

Poor vaunt of life indeed,
 Were man but formed to feed
 On joy, to solely seek and find and
 feast :
 Such feasting ended, then
 As sure an end to men ;
 Irks care the crop-full bird ? Frets
 doubt the maw-crammed beast ?

V

Rejoice we are allied
 To That which doth provide
 And not partake, effect and not receive !
 A spark disturbs our clod ;
 Nearer we hold of God
 Who gives, than of His tribes that take,
 I must believe.

VI

Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand
but go !
Be our joys three-parts pain !
Strive, and hold cheap the strain ;
Learn, nor account the pang ; dare,
never grudge the throe !

VII

For thence,—a paradox
Which comforts while it mocks,—
Shall life succeed in that it seems to
fail :
What I aspired to be,
And was not, comforts me :
A brute I might have been, but would
not sink i' the scale.

VIII

What is he but a brute
Whose flesh hath soul to suit,
Whose spirit works lest arms and legs
want play ?
To man, propose this test—
Thy body at its best,
How far can that project thy soul on
its lone way ?

IX

Yet gifts should prove their use :
I own the Past profuse
Of power each side, perfection every
turn :
Eyes, ears took in their dole,
Brain treasured up the whole ;
Should not the heart beat once " How
good to live and learn ? "

X

Not once beat " Praise be Thine !
" I see the whole design,
" I, who saw power, see now Love per-
fect too :
" Perfect I call Thy plan :
" Thanks that I was a man !
" Maker, remake, complete,—I trust
what Thou shalt do ! "

XI

For pleasant is this flesh ;
Our soul, in its rose-mesh
Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for
rest :
Would we some prize might hold
To match those manifold

Possessions of the brute,—gain most, as
we did best !

XII

Let us not always say
" Spite of this flesh to-day
" I strove, made head, gained ground
upon the whole ! "
As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry " All good things
" Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more,
now, than flesh helps soul ! "

XIII

Therefore I summon age
To grant youth's heritage,
Life's struggle having so far reached its
term :
Thence shall I pass, approved
A man, for aye removed
From the developed brute ; a God
though in the germ.

XIV

And I shall thereupon
Take rest, ere I be gone
Once more on my adventure brave and
new :
Fearless and unperplexed,
When I wage battle next,
What weapons to select, what armour
to induce.

XV

Youth ended, I shall try
My gain or loss thereby ;
Leave the fire ashes, what survives is
gold :
And I shall weigh the same,
Give life its praise or blame :
Young, all lay in dispute ; I shall
know, being old.

XVI

For note, when evening shuts,
A certain moment cuts
The deed off, calls the glory from the
grey :
A whisper from the west
Shoots—" Add this to the rest,
" Take it and try its worth : here dies
another day."

XVII

So, still within this life,
Though lifted o'er its strife,
Let me discern, compare, pronounce at
last,

" This rage was right i' the main,
 " That acquiescence vain :
 " The Future I may face now I have
 proved the Past."

XVIII

For more is not reserved
 To man, with soul just nerved
 To act to-morrow what he learns to-
 day :
 Here, work enough to watch
 The Master work, and catch
 Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the
 tool's true play.

XIX

As it was better, youth
 Should strive, through acts uncount,
 Toward making, than repose on aught
 found made ;
 So, better, age, exempt
 From strife, should know, than tempt
 Further. Thou waitedst age ; wait
 death nor be afraid !

XX

Enough now, if the Right
 And Good and Infinite
 Be named here, as thou callest thy
 hand thine own,
 With knowledge absolute,
 Subject to no dispute
 From fools that crowded youth, nor let
 thee feel alone.

XXI

Be there, for once and all,
 Severed great minds from small,
 Announced to each his station in the
 Past !
 Was I, the world arraigned,
 Were they, my soul disdained,
 Right ? Let age speak the truth and
 give us peace at last !

XXII

Now, who shall arbitrate ?
 Ten men love what I hate,
 Shun what I follow, slight what I re-
 ceive ;
 Ten, who in ears and eyes
 Match me : we all surmise,
 They, this thing, and I, that : whom
 shall my soul believe ?

XXIII

Not on the vulgar mass
 Called " work," must sentence pass,

Things done, that took the eye and had
 the price ;
 O'er which, from level stand,
 The low world laid its hand,
 Found straightway to its mind, could
 value in a trice :

XXIV

But all, the world's coarse thumb
 And finger failed to plumb,
 So passed in making up the main ac-
 count ;
 All instincts immature,
 All purposes unsure,
 That weighed not as his work, yet
 swelled the man's amount :

XXV

Thoughts hardly to be packed
 Into a narrow act,
 Fancies that broke through language
 and escaped ;
 All I could never be,
 All, men ignored in me,
 This, I was worth to God, whose wheel
 the pitcher shaped.

XXVI

Ay, note that Potter's wheel,
 That metaphor ! and feel
 Why time spins fast, why passive lies
 our clay,—
 Thou, to whom fools propound,
 When the wine makes its round,
 " Since life fleets, all is change ; the
 Past gone, seize to-day ! "

XXVII

Fool ! All that is, at all,
 Lasts ever, past recall ;
 Earth changes, but thy soul and God
 stand sure :
 What entered into thee,
 That was, is, and shall be :
 Time's wheel runs back or stops : Pot-
 ter and clay endure.

XXVIII

He fixed thee mid this dance
 Of plastic circumstance,
 This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst
 fain arrest :
 Machinery just meant
 To give thy soul its bent,
 Try thee and turn thee forth, suffi-
 ciently impressed.

XXIX

What though the earlier grooves
Which ran the laughing loves
Around thy base, no longer pause and
press ?

What though, about thy rim,
Sculd-things in order grim
Grow out, in graver mood, obey the
sterner stress ?

XXX

Look not thou down but up !
To uses of a cup,
The festal board, lamp's flash and
trumpet's peal,
The new wine's foaming flow,
The Master's lips a-glow !
Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what
needst thou with earth's wheel ?

XXXI

But I need, now as then,
Thee, God, who moulded men ;
And since, not even while the whirl was
worst,
Did I,—to the wheel of life
With shapes and colours rife,
Bound dizzily,—mistake my end, to
slake Thy thirst :

XXXII

So, take and use Thy work !
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings
past the aim !
My times be in Thy hand !
Perfect the cup as planned !
Let age approve of youth, and death
complete the same !

A DEATH IN THE DESERT

[SUPPOSED of Pamphylax the Antio-
chene :

It is a parchment, of my rolls the fifth,
Hath three skins glued together, is all
Greek,

And goeth from *Epsilon* down to *Mu* :
Lies second in the surnamed Chosen
Chest,

Stained and conserved with juice of
terebinth,

Covered with cloth of hair, and lettered
Xi,

From Xanthus, my wife's uncle, now at
peace :

Mu and *Epsilon* stand for my own
name,

I may not write it, but I make a cross
To show I wait His coming, with the
rest,

And leave off here : beginneth Pam-
phylax.]

I said, " If one should wet his lips with
wine,

" And slip the broadest plantain-leaf
we find,

" Or else the lappet of a linen robe,

" Into the water-vessel, lay it right,

" And cool his forehead just above the
eyes,

" The while a brother, kneeling either
side,

" Should chafe each hand and try to
make it warm,—

" He is not so far gone but he might
speak."

This did not happen in the outer cave,
Nor in the secret chamber of the rock,
Where, sixty days since the decree was
out,

We had him, bedded on a camel-skin,
And waited for his dying all the while ;
But in the midmost grotto : since
noon's light

Reached there a little, and we would
not lose

The last of what might happen on his
face.

I at the head, and Xanthus at the feet,
With Valens and the Boy, had lifted
him,

And brought him from the chamber in
the depths,

And laid him in the light where we
might see :

For certain smiles began about his
mouth,

And his lids moved, presageful of the
end.

Beyond, and half way up the mouth o'
the cave,

The Bactrian convert, having his de-
sire,

Kept watch, and made pretence to
graze a goat

That gave us milk, on rags of various
herb,

Plantain and quitch, the rocks' shade
keeps alive :

So that if any thief or soldier passed,

(Because the persecution was aware)
Yielding the goat up promptly with his
life,
Such man might pass on, joyful at a
prize,
Nor care to pry into the cool o' the
cave.
Outside was all noon and the burning
blue.

"Here is wine," answered Xanthus,—
dropped a drop ;
I stooped and placed the lap of cloth
aright,
Then chafed his right hand, and the
Boy his left :
But Valens had bethought him, and
produced
And broke a ball of nard, and made
perfume.
Only, he did—not so much wake, as—
turn
And smile a little, as a sleeper does
If any dear one call him, touch his face—
And smiles and loves, but will not be
disturbed.

Then Xanthus said a prayer, but still
he slept :
It is the Xanthus that escaped to Rome,
Was burned, and could not write the
chronicle.

Then the Boy sprang up from his knees,
and ran,
Stung by the splendour of a sudden
thought,
And fetched the seventh plate of
graven lead
Out of the secret chamber, found a
place,
Pressing with finger on the deeper dints,
And spoke, as 'twere his mouth pro-
claiming first,
"I am the Resurrection and the Life."

Whereat he opened his eyes wide at
once,
And sat up of himself, and looked at us ;
And thenceforth nobody pronounced a
word :
Only, outside, the Bactrian cried his
cry
Like the lone desert-bird that wears the
ruff,
As signal we were safe, from time to
time.

First he said, " If a friend declared to
me,
" This my son Valens, this my other
son,
" Were James and Peter,—nay, de-
clared as well
" This lad was very John,—I could be-
lieve I
" —Could, for a moment, doubtlessly
believe :
" So is myself withdrawn into my
depths,
" The soul retreated from the perished
brain
" Whence it was wont to feel and use
the world
" Through these dull members, done
with long ago.
" Yet I myself remain ; I feel myself :
" And there is nothing lost. Let be,
awhile ! "

[This is the doctrine he was wont to
teach,
How divers persons witness in each
man,
Three souls which make up one soul :
first, to wit,
A soul of each and all the bodily parts,
Seated therein, which works, and is
what Does,
And has the use of earth, and ends the
man
Downward : but, tending upward for
advice,
Grows into, and again is grown into
By the next soul, which, seated in the
brain,
Useth the first with its collected use,
And feelth, thinketh, willeth,—is what
Knows :
Which, duly tending upward in its
turn,
Grows into, and again is grown into
By the last soul, that uses both the
first,
Subsisting whether they assist or no,
And, constituting man's self, is what
Is—
And leans upon the former, makes it
play,
As that played off the first : and, tend-
ing up,
Holds, is upheld by, God, and ends the
man
Upward in that dread point of inter-
course,

Nor needs a place, for it returns to Him.
What Does, what Knows, what Is;
three souls, one man.

[I give the glossa of Theotypas.]

And then, "A stick, once fire from end
to end;

"Now, ashes save the tip that holds a
spark I

"Yet, blow the spark, it runs back,
spreads itself

"A little where the fire was: thus I
urge

"The soul that served me, till it task
once more

"What ashes of my brain have kept
their shape,

"And these make effort on the last o'
the flesh,

"Trying to taste again the truth of
things—"

(He smiled)—"their very superficial
truth;

"As that ye are my sons, that it is long
"Since James and Peter had release
by death,

"And I am only he, your brother John,
"Who saw and heard, and could re-
member all.

"Remember all! It is not much to
say.

"What if the truth broke on me from
above

"As once and oft-times? Such might
hap again:

Doubtlessly He might stand in pres-
ence here,

With head wool-white, eyes, flame,
and feet like brass,

"The sword and the seven stars, as I
have seen—

"I who now shudder only and surmise
"How did your brother bear that
sight and live?"

"If I live yet, it is for good, more love
"Through me to men: be nought but
ashes here

"That keep awhile my semblance, who
was John,—

"Still, when they scatter, there is left
on earth

"No one alive who knew (consider
this I)

"—Saw with his eyes and handled with
his hands

"That which was from the first, the
Word of Life.

"How will it be when none more saith
'I saw?'

"Such ever was love's way: to rise, it
stoops.

"Since I, whom Christ's mouth taught,
was bidden teach,

"I went, for many years, about the
world,

"Saying 'It was so; so I heard and
saw,'

"Speaking as the case asked: and men
believed.

"Afterward came the message to my-
self

"In Patmos isle; I was not bidden
teach,

"But simply listen, take a book and
write,

"Nor set down other than the given
word,

"With nothing left to my arbitrament
"To choose or change: I wrote, and
men believed.

"Then, for my time grew brief, no
message more,

"No call to write again, I found a way,
"And, reasoning from my knowledge,
merely taught

"Men should, for love's sake, in love's
strength, believe

"Or I would pen a letter to a friend
"And urge the same as friend, nor less
nor more:

"Friends said I reasoned rightly, and
believed,

"But at the last, why, I seemed left
alive

"Like a sea-jelly weak on Patmos
strand,

"To tell dry sea-beach gazers how I
fared

"When there was mid-sea, and the
mighty things;

"Left to repeat, 'I saw, I heard, I
knew,'

"And go all over the old ground again,
"With Antichrist already in the world,
"And many Antichrists, who answered
prompt

"Am I not Jasper as thyself art John?
"Nay, young, whereas through age
thou mayest forget:

"Wherefore, explain, or how shall we
believe?"

"I never thought to call down fire on
such.

" Or, as in wonderful and early days,
 " Pick up the scorpion, tread the serpent dumb;
 " But patient stated much of the Lord's life
 " Forgotten or misdelivered, and, let it work:
 " Since much that at the first, in deed and word,
 " Lay simply and sufficiently exposed,
 " Had grown (or else my soul was grown to match,
 " Felt through such years, familiar with such light,
 " Guarded and guided still to see and speak)
 " Of new significance and fresh result;
 " What first were guessed as points, I now knew stars,
 " And named them in the Gospel I have writ.
 " For men said, 'It is getting long ago:'
 " 'Where is the promise of His coming?'—asked
 " These young ones in their strength, as loth to wait,
 " Of me who, when their sires were born, was old.
 " I, for I loved them, answered, joyfully,
 " Since I was there, and helpful in my age;
 " And, in the main, I think such men believed.
 " Finally, thus endeavouring, I fell sick,
 " Ye brought me here, and I supposed the end,
 " And went to sleep with one thought that, at least,
 " Though the whole earth should lie in wickedness,
 " We had the truth, might leave the rest to God.
 " Yet now I wake in such decrepitude
 " As I had slidden down and failen afar,
 " Past even the presence of my former self,
 " Grasping the while for stay at facts which snap,
 " Till I am found away from my own world,
 " Feeling for foot-hold through a blank profound,
 " Along with unborn people in strange lands,

" Who say—I hear said or conceive they say—
 " 'Was John at all, and did he say he saw?'
 " 'Assure us, ere we ask what he might see!'
 " And how shall I assure them? Can they share
 " —They, who have flesh, a veil of youth and strength
 " About each spirit, that needs must bide its time,
 " Living and learning still as years assist
 " Which wear the thickness thin, and let man see—
 " With me who hardly am withheld at all,
 " But shudderingly, scarce a shred between,
 " Lie bare to the universal prick of light?
 " Is it for nothing we grow old and weak,
 " We whom God loves? When pain ends, gain ends too.
 " To me, that story—ay, that Life and Death [is;
 " Of which I wrote 'it was'—to me, it
 " —Is, here and now: I apprehend nought else.
 " Is not God now i' the world His power first made?
 " Is not His love at issue still with sin,
 " Visibly when a wrong is done on earth?
 " Love, wrong, and pain, what see I else around?
 " Yea, and the Resurrection and Uprise
 " To the right hand of the throne—what is it beside,
 " When such truth, breaking bounds, o'erfloods my soul,
 " And, as I saw the sin and death, even so
 " See I the need yet transiency of both,
 " The good and glory consummated thence?
 " I saw the Power; I see the Love, once weak,
 " Resume the Power: and in this word 'I see,'
 " Lo, there is recognised the Spirit of both
 " That moving o'er the spirit of man, unblinds

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" His eye and bids him look. These
are, I see ;

" But ye, the children, His beloved
ones too,

" Ye need,—as I should use an optic
glass

" I wondered at erewhile, somewhere i'
the world,

" It had been given a crafty smith to
make ;

" A tube, he turned on objects brought
too close,

" Lying confusedly insubordinate
For the unassisted eye to master
once :

" Look through his tube, at distance
now they lay,

" Become succinct, distinct, so small, so
clear !

" Just thus, ye needs must apprehend
what truth

" I see, reduced to plain historic fact,
Diminished into clearness, proved a
point

" And far away : ye would withdraw
your sense

" From out eternity, strain it upon
time,

" Then stand before that fact, that Life
and Death,

" Stay there at gaze, till it dispart, di-
spread,

" As though a star should open out, all
sides,

" And grow the world on you, as it is
my world.

" For life, with all it yields of joy and
woe,

" And hope and fear,—believe the aged
friend,—

" Is just our chance o' the prize of
learning love,

" How love might be, hath been indeed,
and is ;

" And that we hold thenceforth to the
uttermost

" Such prize despite the envy of the
world,

" And, having gained truth, keep
truth : that is all.

" But see the double way wherein we
are led,

" How the soul learns diversely from
the flesh !

" With flesh, that hath so little time to
stav.

" And yields mere basement for the
soul's emprise,

" Expect prompt teaching. Helpful
was the light,

" And warmth was cherishing and food
was choice

" To every man's flesh, thousand years
ago,

" As now to yours and mine ; the body
sprang

" At once to the height, and stayed :
~~but the soul,—no !~~

" Since sages who, this noontide, medi-
tate

" In Rome or Athens, may descry some
point

" Of the eternal power, hid yestereve ;
And as thereby the power's whole
mass extends,

" So much extends the æther floating
o'er,

" The love that tops the might, the
Christ in God.

" Then, as new lessons shall be learned
in these

" Till earth's work stop and useless
time run out,

" So duly, daily, needs provision be
For keeping the soul's prowess pos-
sible,

" Building new barriers as the old de-
[cay,

" Saving us from evasion of life's proof,
Putting the question ever, ' Does
God love,

" And will ye hold that truth against
the world !'

" Ye know there needs no second proof
with good

" Gained for our flesh from any earthly
source :

" We might go freezing, ages,—give us
fire,

" Thereafter we judge fire at its full
worth,

" And guard it safe through every
chance, ye know !

" That fable of Prometheus and his
theft,

" How mortals gained Jove's fiery
flower, grows old

" (I have been used to hear the pagans
own)

" And out of mind ; but fire, howe'er its
birth,

" Here is it, precious to the sophist now
Who laughs the myth of Æschylus to
scorn,

- " As precious to those satyrs of his play,
 " Who touched it in gay wonder at the thing.
 " While were it so with the soul,—this gift of truth
 " Once grasped, were this our soul's gain safe, and sure
 " To prosper as the body's gain is wont,—
 " Why, man's probation would conclude, his earth
 " Crumble; for he both reasons and decides,
 " Weighs first, then chooses: will he give up fire
 " For gold or purple once he knows its worth?
 " Could he give Christ up were His worth as plain?
 " Therefore, I say, to test man, the proofs shif., [fact,
 " Nor may he grasp that fact like other
 " And straightway in his life acknowledge it,
 " As, say, the indubitable bliss of fire.
 " Sigh ye, ' It had been easier once than now? '
 " To give you answer I am left alive;
 " Look at me who was present from the first!
 " Ye know what things I saw; then came a test,
 " My first, befitting me who so had seen:
 " ' Forsake the Christ thou sawest transfigured, Him
 " ' Who trod the sea and brought the dead to life?
 " ' What should wring this from thee! '
 " —ye laugh and ask.
 " What wrung it? Even a torchlight and a noise,
 " The sudden Roman faces, violent hands,
 " And fear of what the Jews might do!
 " Just that,
 " And it is written, ' I forsook and fled: '
 " There was my trial, and it ended thus.
 " Ay, but my soul had gained its truth, could grow:
 " Another year or two,—what little child,
 " What tender woman that had seen no least
 " Of all my sights, but barely heard them told,
 " Who did not clasp the cross with a light laugh,
 " Or wrap the burning robe round, thanking God?
 " Well, was truth safe for ever, then? Not so.
 " Already had begun the silent work
 " Whereby truth, deadened of its absolute blaze,
 " Might need love's eye to pierce the o'erstretched doubt;
 " Teachers were busy, whispering ' All is true
 " ' As the aged ones report; but youth can reach
 " ' Where age gropes dimly, weak with stir and strain,
 " ' And the full doctrine slumbers till to-day.'
 " Thus, what the Roman's lowered spear was found,
 " A bar to me who touched and handled truth,
 " Now proved the glozing of some new shrewd tongue,
 " This Ebion, this Cerinthus or their mates,
 " Till imminent was the outcry ' Save our Christ! '
 " Whereon I stated much of the Lord's life
 " Forgotten or misdelivered, and let it work.
 " Such work done, as it will be, what comes next?
 " What do I hear say, or conceive men say,
 " ' Was John at all, and did he say he saw?
 " ' Assure us, ere we ask what he might see! '
 " Is this indeed a burthen for late days,
 " And may I help to bear it with you all,
 " Using my weakness which becomes your strength?
 " For if a babe were born inside this grot,
 " Grew to a boy here, heard us praise the sun,
 " Yet had but you sole glimmer in light's place,—
 " One loving him and wishful he should learn,
 " Would much rejoice himself w. blinded first
 " Month by month here, so made to understand

"How eyes, born darkling, apprehend amiss :

"I think I could explain to such a child

"There was more glow outside than gleams he caught,

"Ay, nor need urge 'I saw it, so believe I'

"It is a heavy burthen you shall bear

"In latter days, new lands, or old grown strange,

"Left without me, which must be very soon.

"What is the doubt, my brothers ? Quick with it !

"I see you stand conversing, each new face,

"Either in fields, of yellow summer eves,

"On islets yet unnamed amid the sea ;

"Or pace for shelter 'neath a portico

"Out of the crowd in some enormous town

"Where now the larks sing in a solitude ;

"Or muse upon blank heaps of stone and sand

"Idly conjectured to be Ephesus :

"And no one asks his fellow any more

"Where is the promise of His coming ?' but

"Was He revealed in any of His lives,

"As Power, as Love, as Influencing Soul ?'

"Quick, for time presses, tell the whole mind out,

"And let us ask and answer and be saved !

"My book speaks on, because it cannot pass ;

"One listens quietly, nor scoffs but pleads

"Here is a tale of things done ages since ;

"What truth was ever told the second day ?

"Wonders, that would prove doctrine, go for nought.

"Remains the doctrine, love ; well, we must love,

"And what we love most, power and love in one,

"Let us acknowledge on the record here,

"Accepting these in Christ : must Christ then be ?

"Has He been ? Did not we ourselves make Him ?

"Our mind receives but what it holds, no more.

"First of the love, then ; we acknowledge Christ—

"A proof we comprehend His love, a proof

"We had such love already in ourselves,

"Knew first what else we should not recognise.

"T is mere projection from man's inmost mind,

"And, what he loves, thus falls reflected back,

"Becomes accounted somewhat out of him ;

"He throws it up in air, it drops down earth's,

"With shape, name, story added, man's old way.

"How prove you Christ came otherwise at least ?

"Next try the power : He made and rules the world :

"Certes there is a world once made, now ruled,

"Unless things have been ever as we see.

"Our sires declared a charioteer's yoked steeds

"Brought the sun up the east and down the west,

"Which only of itself now rises, sets,

"As if a hand impelled it and a will,—

"Thus they long thought, they who had will and hands :

"But the new question's whisper is distinct,

"Wherefore must all force needs be like ourselves ?

"We have the hands, the will ; what made and drives

"The sun is force, is law, is named, not known,

"While will and love we do know ; marks of these,

"Eye-witnesses attest, so books declare—

"As that, to punish or reward our race,

"The sun at undue times arose or set

"Or else stood still : what do not men affirm ?

"But earth requires as urgently reward

- " Or punishment to-day as years ago,
 " And none expects the sun will interpose :
 " Therefore it was mere passion and mistake,
 " Or erring zeal for right, which changed the truth.
 " Go back, far, farther, to the birth of things ;
 " Ever the will, the intelligence, the love,
 " Man's !—which he gives, supposing he but finds,
 " As late he gave head, body, hands and feet,
 " To help these in what forms he called his gods.
 " First, Jove's brow, Juno's eyes were swept away,
 " But Jove's wrath, Juno's pride continued long ;
 " As last, will, power, and love discarded these,
 " So law in turn discards power, love, and will.
 " What proveth God is otherwise at least ?
 " All else, projection from the mind of man !
 " Nay, do not give me wine, for I am strong,
 " But place my gospel where I put my hands.
 " I say that man was made to grow, not stop ;
 " That help, he needed once, and needs no more,
 " Having grown up but an inch by, is withdrawn :
 " For he hath new needs, and new helps to these.
 " This imports solely, man should mount on each
 " New height in view ; the help whereby he mounts,
 " The ladder-rung his foot has left, may fall,
 " Since all things suffer change save God the Truth.
 " Man apprehends Him newly at each stage
 " Whereat earth's ladder drops, its service done ;
 " And nothing shall prove twice what once was proved.
 " You stick a garden-plot with ordered twigs
 " To show inside lie germs of herbs unborn,
 " And check the careless step would spoil their birth ;
 " But when herbs wave, the guardian twigs may go,
 " Since should ye doubt of virtues question kinds,
 " It is no longer for old twigs ye look,
 " Which proved once underneath lay store of seed,
 " But to the herb's self, by what light ye boast,
 " For what fruit's sign are. This book's fruit is plain.
 " Nor miracles need prove it any more.
 " Doth the fruit show ? Then miracles bade 'ware
 " At first of root and stem, saved both till now
 " From trampling ox, rough boar and wanton goat.
 " What ? Was man made a wheel-work to wind up,
 " And be discharged, and straight wound up anew ?
 " No !—grown, his growth lasts ; taught, he ne'er forgets :
 " May learn a thousand things, not twice the same.
 " This might be pagan teaching : now hear mine.
 " I say, that as the babe, you feed awhile,
 " Becomes a boy and fit to feed himself,
 " So, minds at first must be spoon-fed with truth :
 " When they can eat, babe's nurture is withdrawn.
 " I fed the babe whether it would or no :
 " I did the boy or feed himself or starve.
 " I cried once, ' That ye may believe in Christ,
 " Behold this blind man shall receive his sight !'
 " I cry now, ' Urgest thou, for I am shrewd
 " A id smile at stories how I did's word could cure—
 " Repeat that miracle and take my faith ?'
 " I say, that miracle was duly wrought

- "When, save for it, no faith was possible.
- "Whether a change were wrought if the shows o' the world,
- "Whether the change came from our minds which see
- "Of the shows o' the world so much as and no more
- "Than God wills for His purpose,—(what do I
- "See now, suppose you, there where you see rock
- "Round us ?)—I know not ; such was the effect,
- "So faith grew, making void more miracles
- "Because too much : they would compel, not help.
- "I say, the acknowledgment of God in Christ [thee
- "Accepted by thy reason, solves for
- "All questions in the earth and out of it,
- "And has so far advanced thee to be wise.
- "Wouldst thou unprove this to reprove the proved ?
- "In life's mere minute, with power to use that proof,
- "Leave knowledge and revert to how it sprung ?
- "Thou hast it ; use it and forthwith, or die !
- "For I say, this is death and the sole death,
- "When a man's loss comes to him from his gain,
- "Darkness from light, from knowledge ignorance,
- "And lack of love from love made manifest ;
- "A lamp's death when, replete with oil, it chokes ;
- "A stomach's when, surcharged with food, it starves.
- "With ignorance was surety of a cure.
- "When man, appalled at nature, questioned first
- "What if there lurk a might behind this might ?
- "He needed satisfaction God could give,
- "And did give, as ye have the written word :
- "But when he finds might still redouble might,
- "Yet asks, ' Since all is might, what use of will ? '
- "—Will, the one source of might,—he being man
- "With a man's will and a man's might, to teach
- "In little how the two combine in large,—
- "That man has turned round on himself and stands,
- "Which in the course of nature is, to die.
- "And when man questioned, ' What if there be love
- "Behind the will and might, as real as they ? '—
- "He needed satisfaction God could give,
- "And did give, as ye have the written word :
- "But when, beholding that love everywhere,
- "He reasons, ' Since such love is everywhere,
- "And since ourselves can love and would be loved,
- "We ourselves make the love, and Christ was not,—
- "How shall ye help this man who knows himself,
- "That he must love and would be loved again,
- "Yet, owning his own love that proveth Christ,
- "Rejecteth Christ through very need of Him ?
- "The lamp o'erswims with oil, the stomach flags
- "Loaded with nurture, and that man's soul dies.
- "If he rejoin, ' But this was all the while
- "A trick ; the fault was, first of all, in thee,
- "Thy story of the places, names and dates,
- "Where, when and how the ultimate truth had rise,
- "—Thy prior truth, at last discovered none
- "Whence now the second suffers detriment.
- "What good of giving knowledge if, because
- "Of the manner of the gift, its profit fail ?

- " 'And why refuse what modicum of help
 " 'Had stopped the after-doubt, impossible
 " 'I' the face of truth—truth absolute, uniform?
 " 'Why must I hit of this and miss of that,
 " 'Distinguish just as I be weak or strong,
 " 'And not ask of thee and have answer prompt,
 " 'Was this once, was it not once?—then and now
 " 'And evermore, plain truth from man to man.
 " 'Is John's procedure just the heathen bard's?
 " 'Put question of his famous play again
 " 'How for the ephemerals' sake, Jove's fire was filched,
 " 'And carried in a cane and brought to earth:
 " 'The fact is in the fable, cry the wise,
 " 'Mortals obtained the boon, so much is fact,
 " 'Though fire be spirit and produced on earth,
 " 'As with the Titan's, so now with thy tale:
 " 'Why breed in us perplexity, mistake,
 " 'Nor tell the whole truth in the proper words?'
 " I answer, Have ye yet to argue out
 " The very primal thesis, plainest law,
 " —Man is not God but hath God's end to serve,
 " A master to obey, a course to take,
 " Somewhat to cast off, somewhat to become?
 " Grant this, then man must pass from old to new,
 " From vain to real, from mistake to fact,
 " From what once seemed good, to what now proves best.
 " How could man have progression otherwise?
 " Before the point was mooted 'What is God?'
 " No savage man inquired 'What am myself?'
 " Much less replied, 'First, last, and best of things.'
 " Man takes that title now if he believes
 " Might can exist with neither will nor love,
 " In God's case—what he names now Nature's Law—
 " While in himself he recognises love
 " No less than might and will: and rightly takes.
 " Since if man prove the sole existent thing
 " Where these combine, whatever their degree,
 " However weak the might or will or love,
 " So they be found there, put in evidence,—
 " He is as surely higher in the scale
 " Than any might with neither love nor will,
 " As life, apparent in the poorest midge,
 " (When the faint dust-speck flits, ye guess its wing)
 " Is marvellous beyond dead Atlas' self:
 " I give such to the midge for resting-place!
 " Thus, man proves best and highest—God, in fine,
 " And thus the victory leads but to defeat, [fall,
 " The gain to loss, best rise to the worst
 " His life becomes impossible, which is death.
 " But if, appealing thence, he cower, avouch
 " He is mere man, and in humility
 " Neither may know God nor mistake himself;
 " I point to the immediate consequence
 " And say, by such confession straight he falls
 " Into man's place, a thing nor God nor beast,
 " Made to know that he can know and not more:
 " Lower than God who knows all and can all,
 " Higher than beasts which know and can so far
 " As each beast's limit, perfect to an end.
 " Nor conscious that they know, nor craving more;
 " While man knows partly but conceives beside,
 " Creeps ever on from fancies to the fact,

" And in this striving, this converting
 air
 " Into a solid he may grasp and use,
 " Finds progress, man's distinctive
 mark alone,
 " Not God's, and not the beasts': God
 is, they are,
 " Man partly is and wholly hopes to be.
 " Such progress could no more attend
 his soul
 " Were all it struggles after found at
 first
 " And guesses changed to knowledge
 absolute,
 " Than motion wait his body, were all
 else
 " Than it the solid earth on every side,
 " Where now through space he moves
 from rest to rest.
 " Man, therefore, thus conditioned,
 must expect
 " He could not, what he knows now,
 know at first; [day,
 " What he considers that he knows to-
 " Come but to-morrow, he will find mis-
 known;
 " Getting increase of knowledge, since
 he learns
 " Because he lives, which is to be a man,
 " Set to instruct himself by his past
 self:
 " First, like the brute, obliged by facts
 to learn,
 " Next, as man may, obliged by his own
 mind,
 " Bent, habit, nature, knowledge
 turned to law.
 " God's gift was that man should con-
 ceive of truth
 " And I yearn to gain it, catching at mis-
 take,
 " As midway help till he reach fact in-
 deed.
 " The statuary ere he mould a shape
 " Boasts a like gift, the shape's idea,
 and next
 " The aspiration to produce the same;
 " So, taking clay, he calls his shape
 thereout,
 " Cries ever ' Now I have the thing I
 see: '
 " Yet all the while goes changing what
 was wrought,
 " From falsehood like the truth, to
 truth itself.
 " How were it had he cried ' I see no
 face,

" ' No breast, no feet i' the ineffectual
 clay? '
 " Rather commend him that he clapped
 his hands,
 " And laughed ' It is my shape and
 lives again! '
 " Enjoyed the falsehood, touched it on
 to truth,
 " Until yourselves applaud the flesh in
 deed
 " In what is still flesh-imitating clay.
 " Right in you, right in him, such way
 be man's!
 " God only makes the live shape at a
 jet.
 " Will ye renounce this pact of crea-
 tureship? [more,
 " The pattern on the Mount subsists no
 " Seemed awhile, then returned to
 nothingness;
 " But copies, Moses strove to make
 thereby,
 " Serve still and are replaced as time re-
 quires.
 " By these, make newest vessels, reach
 the type!
 " If ye demur, this judgment on your
 head,
 " Never to reach the ultimate, angels'
 law,
 " Indulging every instinct of the soul
 " There where law, life, joy, impulse are
 one thing!
 " Such is the burthen of the latest time.
 " I have survived to hear it with my
 ears,
 " Answer it with my lips: does this
 suffice?
 " For if there be a further woe than
 such,
 " Wherein my brothers struggling
 need a hand,
 " So long as any pulse is left in mine,
 " May I be absent even longer yet,
 " Plucking the blind ones back from
 the abyss,
 " Though I should tarry a new hundred
 years! "

But he was dead: 'twas about noon,
 the day
 Somewhat declining: we five buried
 him
 That eve, and then, dividing, went five
 ways,
 And I, disguised, returned to Ephesus.

By this, the cave's mouth must be filled with sand.

Valens is lost, I know not of his trace ;
The Bactrian was but a wild childish man,

And could not write nor speak, but only loved :

So, lest the memory of this go quite,
Seeing that I to-morrow fight the beasts,

I tell the same to Phœbas, whom believe !

For many look again to find that face,
Beloved John's to whom I ministered,
Somewhere in life about the world ;
they err :

Either mistaking what was darkly spoke

At ending of his book, as he relates,
Or misconceiving somewhat of this speech

Scattered from mouth to mouth, as I suppose.

Believe ye will not see him any more
About the world with his divine regard !
For all was as I say, and now the man
Lies as he lay once, breast to breast
with God.

Cerintus read and mused ; one added this :

" If Christ, as thou affirmest, be of men
" Mere man, the first and best but nothing more,—

" Account Him, for reward of what He was,

" Now and for ever, wretchedest of all.

" For see ; Himself conceived of life as love,

" Conceived of love as what must enter in,

" Fill up, make one with His each soul
He loved :

" Thus much for man's joy, all men's joy for Him.

" Well, He is gone, thou sayest, to fit reward.

" But by this time are many souls set free,

" And very many still retained alive :

" Nay, should His coming be delayed awhile,

" Say, ten years longer (twelve years, some compute)

" See if, for every finger of thy hands,

" There be not found, that day the world shall end,

" Hundreds of souls, each holding by Christ's word

" That He will grow incorporate with all,

" With me as Pamphylax, with him as John,

" Groom for each bride ! Can a mere man do this ?

" Yet Christ saith, this He lived and died to do

" Call Christ, then, the illimitable God,
" Or lost ! "

But 'twas Cerintus that is lost.]

CALIBAN UPON SETEBOS ;

OR,

NATURAL THEOLOGY IN THE ISLAND

[WILL sprawl, now that the heat of day is best,

Flat on his belly in the pit's much mire,
With elbows wide, fists clenched to prop his chin ;

And, while he kicks both feet in the cool slush,

And feels about his spine small efts—things course,

Run in and out each arm, and make him laugh ;

And while above his head a pompion-plant,

Coating the cave-top as a brow its eye,
Creeps down to touch and tickle hair

and beard,

And now a flower drops with a bee inside,

And now a fruit to snap at, catch and crunch,—

He looks out o'er yon sea which sun-beams cross

And recross till they weave a spider-web,

Meshes of fire, some great fish breaks at times)

And talks to his own self, howe'er he please,

Touching that other, whom his dam called God.

Because to talk about Him, vexes—ha,
Could He but know ! and time to vex is now,

When talk is safer than in winter-time.
Moreover Prosper and Miranda sleep
In confidence he drudges at their task,
And it is good to cheat the pair, and
gibe,
Letting the rank tongue blossom into
speech.]

Setebos, Setebos, and Setebos!

'Thinketh, He dwelleth i' the cold o'
the moon.

'Thinketh He made it, with the sun to
match,
But not the stars; the stars came
otherwise;
Only made clouds, winds, meteors, such
as that:
Also this isle, what lives and grows
thereon,
And snaky sea which rounds and ends
the same.

'Thinketh, it came of being ill at ease:
He hated that He cannot change His
cold,

Nor cure its ache. 'Hath spied an icy
fish

That longed to 'scape the rock-stream
where she lived,

And thaw herself within the lukewarm
brine

'O' the lazy sea her stream thrusts far
amid,

A crystal spike 'twixt two warm walls
of wave;

Only she ever sickened, found repulse
At the other kind of water, not her life,
(Green-dense and dim-delicious, bred o'
the sun)

Flounced back from bliss she was not
born to breathe,

And in her old bounds buried her des-
pair,

Hating and loving warmth alike: so
He.

'Thinketh, He made thereat the sun,
this isle,

Trees and the fowls here, beast and
creeping thing.

Yon otter, sleek-wet, black, lithe as a
leech;

Yon auk, one fire-eye in a ball of foam,
That floats and feeds; a certain balger
brown

He hath watched hunt with that slant
white-wedge eye

By moonlight; and the pie with the
long tongue

That pricks deep into oakwarts for a
worm,

And says a plain word when she finds
her prize,

But will not eat the ants; the ants
themselves

That build a wall of seeds and settled
stalks

About their hole—He made all these
and more,

Made all we see, and us, in spite: how
else?

He could not, Himself, make a second
self

To be His mate; as well have made
Himself.

He would not make what He mishikes
or slights,

An eyesore to Him, or not worth His
pains:

But did, in envy, listlessness or sport,
Make what Himself would fain, in a
manner, be—

Weaker in most points, stronger in a
few,

Worthy, and yet mere playthings all
the while,

Things: He admires and mocks too,—
that is it.

Because, so brave, so better though
they be,

It nothing skills if He begin to plague.
Look now, I melt a gourd-fruit into
mash,

Add honeycomb and pods, I have per-
ceived,

Which bite like finches when they bill
and kiss,—

Then, when froth rises bladdery, drink
up all,

Quick, quick, till maggots scamper
through my brain;

And throw me on my back i' the seeded
thyme,

And wanton, wishing I were born a
bird.

Put case, unable to be what I wish,
I yet could make a live bird out of clay:

Would not I take clay, pinch my Cali-
ban

Able to fly?—for, there, see, he hath
wings,

And great comb like the hoopoe's to
admire,

And there, a sting to do his foes offence,
 There, and I will that he begin to live,
 Fly to yon rock-top, nip me off the
 horns
 Of grigs high up that make the merry
 din,
 Saucy through their veined wings, and
 mind me not.
 In which feat, if his leg snapped, brittle
 clay,
 And he lay stupid-like,—why, I should
 laugh;
 And if he, spying me, should fall to
 weep,
 Beseech me to be good, repair his
 wrong,
 Bid his poor leg smart less or grow
 again,—
 Well, as the chance were, this might
 take or else
 Not take my fancy: I might hear his
 cry,
 And give the manikin three legs for one,
 Or pluck the other off, leave him like an
 egg,
 And lessoned he was mine and merely
 clay.
 Were this no pleasure, lying in the
 thyme,
 Drinking the mash, with brain become
 alive,
 Making and marring clay at will? So
 He.

'Thinketh, such shows nor right nor
 wrong in Him,
 Nor kind, nor cruel: He is strong and
 Lord.
 'Am strong myself compared to yonder
 crabs
 That march now from the mountain to
 the sea;
 'Let twenty pass, and stone the twenty-
 first,
 Loving not, hating not, just choosing
 so.
 'Say, the first straggler that boasts
 purple spots,
 Shall join the file, one pincer twisted
 off;
 'Say, This bruised fellow shall receive
 a worin,
 And two worms he whose nippers end
 in red;
 As it likes me each time, I do: so He.

Well then, 'supposeth He is good i' the
 main,
 Placable if His mind and ways were
 guessed,
 But rougher than His handiwork, be
 sure!
 Oh, He hath made things worthier than
 Himself,
 And envieth that, so helped, such things
 do more
 Than He who made them! What con-
 soles but this?
 That they, unless through Him, do
 nought at all,
 And I must submit: what other use in
 things?
 'Hath cut a pipe of pithless elder-joint
 That, blown through, gives exact the
 scream o' the jay
 When from her wing you twitch the
 feathers blue:
 Sound this, and little birds that hate
 the jay
 Flock within stone's throw, glad their
 foe is hurt:
 Put case such pipe could prattle and
 boast forsooth
 "I catch the birds, I am the crafty
 thing,
 "I make the cry my maker cannot
 make
 "With his great round mouth; he
 must blow through mine!"
 Would not I smash it with my foot?
 So He.
 But wherefore rough, why cold and ill
 at ease?
 Aha, that is a question! Ask, for
 that,
 What knows,—the something over
 Setebos
 That made Him, or He, may be, found
 and fought,
 Worsted, drove off and did to nothing,
 perchance.
 There may be something quiet o'er His
 head,
 Out of His reach, that feels nor joy nor
 grief,
 Since both derive from weakness in
 some way.
 I joy because the quails come; would
 not joy
 Could I bring quails here when I have
 a mind:
 This Quiet, all it hath a mind to, doth.

'Esteemeth stars the outposts of its
couch,
But never spends much thought nor
care that way.
It may look up, work up,—the worse
for those
It works on! 'Careth but for Setebos
The many-handed as a cuttle-fish,
Who, making Himself feared through
what He does,
Looks up, first, and perceives he cannot
soar
To what is quiet and hath happy life;
Next looks down here, and out of very
spite
Makes this a bauble-world to ape yon
real,
These good things to match those as
hips do grapes.
'T is solace making baubles, ay, and
sport.
Himself peeped late, eyed Prosper at
his books
Careless and lofty, lord now of the isle:
Vexed, 'stitched a book of broad leaves,
arrow-shaped,
Wrote thereon, he knows what, prodig-
ious words;
Has peeled a wand and called it by a
name; [robe
Weareth at whiles for an enchanter's
The eyed skin of a supple oncelot;
And hath an ounce sleeker than young-
ling mole,
A four-legged serpent he makes cower
and couch,
Now snarl, now hold its breath and
mind his eye,
And saith she is Miranda and my wife:
'Keeps for his Ariel a tall pouch-bill
crane
He bids go wade for fish and straight
disgorge;
Also a sea-beast, lumpish, which he
snared,
Blinded the eyes of, and brought some-
what tame,
And split its toe-webs, and now pens
the drudge
In a hole o' the rock and calls him Cali-
ban;
A bitter heart that bides its time and
bites.
'Plays thus at being Prosper in a way,
Taketh his mirth with make-believes:
so He.

His dam held that the Quiet made all
things
Which Setebos vexed only: 'holds not
so.
Who made them weak, meant weak-
ness He might vex.
Had He meant other, while His hand
was in,
Why not make horny eyes no thorn
could prick,
Or plate my scalp with bone against
the snow,
Or overscale my flesh 'neath joint and
joint,
Like an orc's armour? Ay,—so spoil
His sport!
He is the One now: only He doth all.
'Saith, He may like, perchance, what
profits Him.
Ay, himself loves what does him good;
but why?
'Gets good no otherwise. This blinded
beast
Loves whoso places flesh-meat on his
nose,
But, had he eyes, would want no help,
but hate
Or love, just as it liked him: He hat'
eyes.
Also it pleaseth Setebos to work,
Use all His hands, and exercise much
craft,
By no means for the love of what is
worked.
'Tasteth, himself, no finer good i' the
world
When all goes right, in this safe summer-
time,
And he wants little, hungers, aches not
much,
Than trying what to do with wit and
strength.
'Falls to make something: 'piled yon
pile of turfs,
And squared and stuck there squares
of soft white chalk,
And, with a fish-tooth, scratched a
moon on each,
And set up endwise certain spikes of
tree,
And crowned the whole with a sloth's
skull a-top,
Found dear i' the woods, too hard for
one to kill.
No use at all i' the work, for work's sole
sake;

'Shall some day knock it down again :
so He.

'Saith He is terrible : watch His feats
in proof !

One hurricane will spoil six good
months' hope.

He hath a spite against me, that I
know,

Just as He favours Prosper, who knows
why ?

So it is, all the same, as well I find.

'Wove wattles half the winter, fenced
them firm

With stone and stake to stop she-tor-
toises

Crawling to lay their eggs here : well,
one wave,

Feeling the foot of Him upon its neck,
Gaped as a snake does, folled out its
large tongue,

And licked the whole labour flat : so
much for spite.

'Saw a ball flame down late (yonder it
lies)

Where, half an hour before, I slept i' the
shade :

Often they scatter sparkles : there is
force !

'Dug up a newt He may have envied
once

And turned to stone, shut up inside a
stone.

Please Him and hinder this ?—What
Prosper does ?

A'ia, if He would tell me how ! Not
He !

There is the sport : discover how or
die !

All need not die, for of the things o' the
Some flee afar, some dive, some run up
trees ;

Those at His mercy,—why, they please
Him most

When . . . when . . . well, never try the
same way twice !

Repeat what act has pleased, He may
grow wroth.

You must not know His ways, and play
Him off,

Sure of the issue. 'Doth the like him-
self :

'Spareth a squirrel that it nothing fears
But steals the nut from underneath my
thumb,

And when I threat, bites stoutly in de-
fence :

'Spareth an urchin, that, contrariwise,
Curls up into a ball, pretending death
For fright at my approach : the two
ways please.

But what would move my choler more
than this,

That either creature counted on its life
To-morrow and next day and all days
to come,

Saying forsooth in the inmost of its
heart,

" Because he did so yesterday with me,
" And otherwise with such another
brute,

" So must he do henceforth and al-
ways."—Ay ?

'Would teach the reasoning couple
what " must " means !

'Doth as he likes, or wherefore Lord ?
So He.

'Conceiveth all things will continue
thus,

And we shall have to live in fear of Him
So long as He lives, keeps His strength :

no change,
If He have done His best, make no new
world

To please Him more, so leave off watch-
ing this,—

If He surprise not even the Quiet's self
Some strange day,—or, suppose, grow
into it

As grubs grow butterflies : else, here
are we,

And there is He, and nowhere help at
all.

'Believeth with the life, the pain shall
stop.

His dam held different, that after death
He both plagued enemies and feasted
friends :

Idly ! He doth His worst in this our
life,

Giving just respite lest we die through
pain,

Saving last pain for worst,—with
which, an end.

Meanwhile, the best way to escape His
ire

Is, not to seem too happy. 'Sees, him-
self,

Yonder two flies, with purple films and
pink,

Bask on the pompion-bell above : kills
both.

'Sees two black painful beetles roll their
ball
On head and tail as if to save their
lives:
Moves them the stick away they strive
to clear.

Even so, 'would have Him miscon-
ceive, suppose
This Caliban strives hard and ails no
less,
And always, above all else, envies Him;
Wherefore he mainly dances on dark
nights,
Moans in the sun, gets under holes to
laugh,
And never speaks his mind save housed
as now:
Outside, 'groans, curses. If He caught
me here,
O'erheard this speech, and asked
"What chucklest at?"
'Would, to appease Him, cut a finger
off,
Or of my three kid yearlings burn the
best,
Or let the toothsome apples rot on tree,
Or push my tame beast for the ore to
taste:
While myself lit a fire, and made a song
And sung it, "*What I hate, be conse-
crate*
*"To celebrate Thee and Thy state, no
mate*
*"For Thee: what see for envy in poor
me?"*
Hoping the while, since evils some-
times mend,
Warts rub away and sores are cured
with slime,
That some strange day, will either the
Quiet catch
And conquer Setebos, or likelier He
Decrepit may doze, doze, as good as die.

[What, what? A curtain o'er the
world at once!
Crickets stop hissing; not a bird—or,
yes,
There scuds His raven that hath told
Him all!
It was fool's play, this prattling! Ha!
The wind
Shoulders the pillared dust, death's
house o' the move,

And fast invading fires begin! White
blaze—
A tree's head snaps—and there, there,
there, there, there,
His thunder follows! Fool to gibe at
Him!
Lo! 'Lieth flat and loveth Setebos!
'Maketh his teeth meet through his
upper lip,
Will let those quails fly, will not eat
this month
One little mess of whelks, so he may
'scape!]

CONFESSIONS

I

WHAT is he buzzing in my ears?
"Now that I come to die,
"Do I view the world as a vale of
tears?"
Ah, reverend sir, not I!

II

What I viewed there once, what I view
again
Where the physic bottles stand
On the table's edge,—is a suburb lane,
With a wall to my bedside hand.

III

That lane sloped, much as the bottles
do,
From a house you could descry
O'er the garden-wall: is the curtain
blue
Or green to a healthy eye?

IV

To mine, it serves for the old June
weather
Blue above lane and wall;
And that farthest bottle labelled
"Ether"
Is the house o'er-topping all.

V

At a terrace, somewhat near the stop-
per,
There watched for me, one June,
A girl: I know, sir, it's improper,
My poor mind 's out of tune.

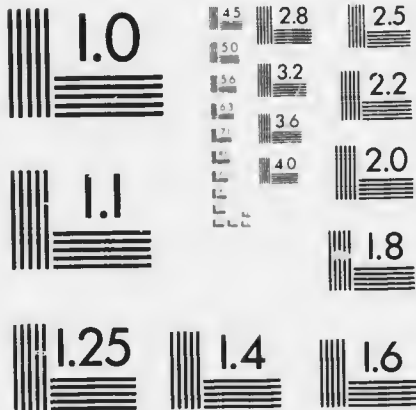
VI

Only, there was a way . . . you crept
Close by the side, to dodge
Eyes in the house, two eyes except:
They styled their house "The
Lodge."



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



APPLIED IMAGE Inc

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VII

What right had a loungers up their lane?
But, by creeping very close,
With the good wall's help,—their eyes
might strain
And stretch themselves to Oes,

VIII

Yet never catch her and me together,
As she left the attic, there,
By the rim of the bottle labelled
"Ether,"
And stole from stair to stair,

IX

And stood by the rose-wreathed gate.
Alas,
We loved, sir—used to meet :
How sad and bad and mad it was—
But then, how it was sweet !

MAY AND DEATH

I

I wish that when you died last May,
Charles, there had died along with
you
Three parts of spring's delightful things;
Ay, and, for me, the fourth part too.

II

A foolish thought, and worse, perhaps !
There must be many a pair of friends
Who, arm in arm, deserve the warm
Moon-births and the long evening-
ends.

III

So, for their sake, be May still May !
Let their new time, as mine of old,
Do all it did for me : I bid
Sweet sights and sounds throng mani-
fold.

IV

Only, one little sight, one plant,
Woods have in May, that starts up
green
Save a sole streak which, so to speak,
Is spring's blood, spilt its leaves be-
tween,—

V

That, they might spare ; a certain wood
Might miss the plant ; their loss were
small :
But I,—whene'er the leaf grows there,
Its drop comes from my heart, that's
all.

DEAF AND DUMB

A GROUP BY WOOLNER

ONLY the prism's obstruction shows
aright
The secret of a sunbeam, breaks its
light
Into the jewelled bow from blankest
white ;
So may a glory from defect arise :
Only by Deafness may the vexed Love
wreak
Its insuppressive sense on brow and
cheek,
Only by Dumbness adequately speak
As favoured mouth could never,
through the eyes.

PROSPICE

FEAR death ?—to feel the fog in my
throat,
The mist in my face,
When the snows begin, and the blasts
denote
I am nearing the place,
The power of the night, the press of the
storm,
The post of the foe ;
Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a
visible form,
Yet the strong man must go :
For the journey is done and the summit
attained,
And the barriers fall,
Though a battle 's to fight ere the guer-
don be gained,
The reward of it all.
I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,
The best and the last !
I would hate that death bandaged my
eyes, and forbore,
And bade me creep past.
No ! let me taste the whole of it, fare
like my peers
The heroes of old,
Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad
life's arrears
Of pain, darkness and cold.
For sudden the worst turns the best to
the brave,
The black minute 's at end,
And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices
that rave,
Shall dwindle, shall blend,
Shall change, shall become first a peace
out of pain,
Then a light, then thy breast,

O thou soul of my soul ! I shall clasp
thee again,
And with God be the rest !

EURYDICE TO ORPHEUS

A PICTURE BY LEIGHTON

But give them me, the mouth, the
eyes, the brow !
Let them once more absorb me ! One
look now
Will lap me round for ever, not to
pass
Out of its light, though darkness lie be-
yond :
Hold me but safe again within the bond
Of one immortal look ! All woe
that was,
Forgotten, and all terror that may be,
Defied,—no past is mine, no future :
look at me !

YOUTH AND ART

I

It once might have been, once only :
We lodged in a street together,
You, a sparrow on the housetop lonely,
I, a lone she-bird of his feather.

II

Your trade was with sticks and clay,
You thumbed, thrust, patted and
polished,
Then laughed " They will see some day
" Smith made, and Gibson demo-
lished."

III

My business was song, song, song ;
I chirped, cheeped, trilled and twit-
tered,
" Kate Brown 's on the boards ere
long,
" And Grisi's existence embittered !"

IV

I earned no more by a warble
Than you by a sketch in plaster ;
You wanted a piece of marble,
I needed a music-master.

V

We studied hard in our styles,
Chipped each at a crust like Hindoos,
For air, looked out on the tiles,
For fun, watched each other's win-
dows.

VI

You lounged, like a boy of the South,
Cap and blouse—nay, a bit of beard
too ;
Or you got it, rubbing your mouth
With fingers the clay adhered to.

VII

And I—soon managed to find
Weak points in the flower-fence fac-
ing,
Was forced to put up a blind
And be sate in my corset-lacing.

VIII

No harm ! It was not my fault
If you never turned your eyes' tail up
As I shook upon E *in alt.*,
Or ran the chromatic scale up :

IX

For spring bade the sparrows pair,
And the boys and girls gave guesses,
And stalls in our street looked rare
With bulrush and watercresses.

X

Why did not you pinch a flower
In a pellet of clay and fling it ?
Why did not I put a power
Or thanks in a look, or sing it ?

XI

I did look, sharp as a lynx,
(And yet the memory rankles)
When models arrived, some minx
Tripped up-stairs, she and her ankles.

XII

But I think I gave you as good !
" That foreign fellow,—who can
know
" How she pays, in a playful mood,
" For his tuning her that piano ?"

XIII

Could you say so, and never say
" Suppose we join hands and for-
tunes,
" And I fetch her from over the way,
" Her, piano, and long tunes and
short tunes ?"

XIV

No, no : you would not be rash,
Nor I rasher and something over :

You 've to settle yet Gibson's hash,
And Grisi yet lives in clover.

xv

But you meet the Prince at the Board,
I 'm queen myself at *bels-paré*,
I 've married a rich old lord,
And you 're dubbed knight and an
R.A.

xvi

Each life unfulfilled, you see ;
It hangs still, patchy and scrappy :
We have not sighed deep, laughed free,
Starved, feasted, despaired,—been
happy.

xvii

And nobody calls you a dunce,
And people suppose me clever :
This could but have happened once,
And we missed it, lost it for ever.

A FACE

If one could have that little head of
hers
Painted upon a background of pale
gold,
Such as the Tuscan's early art prefers !
No shade encroaching on the matchless
mould
Of those two lips, which should be
opening soft
In the pure profile ; not as when she
laughs,
For that spoils all : but rather as if
aloft
Yon hyacinth, she loves so, leaned its
staff's
Burthen of honey-coloured buds to kiss
And capture 'twixt the lips apart for
this.
Then her lithe neck, three fingers
might surround,
How it should waver on the pale gold
ground
Up to the fruit-shaped, perfect chin it
lifts !
I know, Correggio loves to mass, in
rifts
Of heaven, his angel faces, orb on orb
Breaking its outline, burning shades
absorb :
But these are only massed there, I
should think,
Waiting to see some wonder momentarily
Grow out, stand full, fade slow against
the sky

(That 's the pale ground you 'd see this
sweet face by),
All heaven, meanwhile, condensed into
one eye
Which fears to lose the wonder, should
it wink.

A LIKENESS

SOME people hang portraits up
In a room where they dine or sup :
And the wife clinks tea-things under,
And her cousin, he stirs his cup,
Asks, " Who was the lady, I wonder ? "
" 'T is a daub John bought at a sale,"
Quoth the wife,—looks black as thun-
der :
" What a shade beneath her nose !
" Snuff-taking, I suppose,—"
Adds the cousin, while John's corns ail.

Or else, there 's no wife in the case,
But the portrait 's queen of the place,
Alone mid the other spoils
Of youth,—masks, gloves and foils,
And pipe-sticks, rose, cherry-tree, jas-
mine,
And the long whip, the tandem-lasher,
And the cast from a fist (" not, alas !
mine,
" But my master's, the Tip-on
Slasher ")
And the cards where pistol-balls mark
ace,
And a satin shoe used for cigar-case,
And the chamois-horns (" shot in the
Chablais ")
And prints—Rarey drumming on
Cruiser,
And Sayers, our champion, the bruiser,
And the little edition of Rabelais :
Where a friend, with both hands in his
pockets,
May saunter up close to examine it,
And remark a good deal of Jane Lamb
in it,
" But the eyes are half out of their
sockets ;
" That hair 's not so bad, where the
gloss is,
" But they 've made the girl's nose
proboscis :
" Jane Lamb, that we danced with at
Vichy !
" What, is not she Jane ? Then, who
is she ? "

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Then, who-

All that I own is a print,
An etching, a mezzotint ;
'Tis a study, a fancy, a fiction,
Yet a fact (take my conviction)
Because it has more than a hint
Of a certain face, I never
Saw elsewhere touch or trace of
In women I 've seen the face of :
Just an etching, and, so far, clever.

I keep my prints, an imbroglio,
Fitty in one portfolio.
When somebody tries my claret,
We turn round chairs to the fire,
Chirp over days in a garret,
Chuckle o'er increase of salary,
Taste the good fruits of our leisure,
Talk about pencil and lyre,
And the National Portrait Gallery :
Then I exhibit my treasure.
After we 've turned over twenty,
And the debt of wonder my crony owes
Is paid to my Marc Antonios,
He stops me—" *Festina lentè !*
"What 's that sweet thing there, the
etching ? "
How my waistcoat-strings want stretch
ing,
How my cheeks grow red as tomatos,
How my heart leaps ! But hearts,
after leaps, ache.

"By the by, you must take, for a
keepsake,
"That other, you praised, of Volpa-
to's,"
The fool ! would he try a fight further
and say—
He never saw, never before to-day,
What was able to take his breath away,
A face to lose youth for, to occupy age
With the dream of, meet death with,—
why, I'll not engage
But that, half in a rapture and half in a
rage,
I should toss him the thing's self—
" 'Tis only a duplicate,
"A thing of no value ! Take it, I sup-
plicate ! "

MR. SLUDGE, "THE MEDIUM"

Now, don't sir ! Don't expose me !
Just this once !

This was the first and only time, I 'll
swear,—

Look at me,—see, I kneel,—the only
time,

I swear, I ever cheated,—yes, by the
soul
Of Her who hears—(your sainted
mother, sir !)
All, except this last accident, was
truth—
This little kind of slip !—and even this,
It was your own wine, sir, the good
champagne,
(I took it for Catawba, you 're so kind)
Which put the folly in my head !

"Get up ? "

You still inflict on me that terrible
face ?
You show no mercy ?—Not for Her
dear sake,
The sainted spirit's, whose soft breath
even now
Blows on my cheek—(don't you feel
something, sir ?)
You 'll tell ?

Go tell, then ! Who the devil cares
What such a rowdy chooses to . . .

Aie—aie—aie !

Please, sir ! your thumbs are through
my windpipe, sir !
Ch—ch !

Well, sir, I hope you've done it now !
Oh Lord ! I little thought, sir, yester-
day,
When your departed mother spoke
those words
Of peace through me, and moved you,
sir, so much,
You gave me—(very kind it was of
you)
These shirt-studs—(better take them
back again,
Please, sir)—yes, little did I think so
soon
A trifle of trick, all through a glass too
much
Of his own champagne, would change
my best of friends
Into an angry gentleman !

Though, 't was wrong,
I do n't contest the point ; your anger's
just :
Whatever put such folly in my head,
I know 't was wicked of me. There 's
a thick
Dusk undeveloped spirit (I 've ob-
served,

Owes me a grudge—a negro's, I should say,

Or else an Irish emigrant's ; yourself Explained the case so well last Sunday, sir,

When we had summoned Franklin to clear up

A point about those shares in the telegraph :

Ay, and he swore . . or might it be Tom Paine ? . .

Thumping the table close by where I crouched,

He 'd do me soon a mischief : that 's come true !

Why, now your face clears ! I was sure it would !

Then, this one time . . don't take your hand away,

Through yours I surely kiss your mother's hand . .

You 'll promise to forgive me ?—or, at least,

Tell nobody of this ? Consider, sir !

What harm can mercy do ? Would but the shade

Of the venerable dead—one just vouch-safe

A rap or tip ! What bit of paper 's here ?

Suppose we take a pencil, let her write, Make the least sign, she urges on her child

Forgiveness ? There now ! Eh ?

Oh ! 'T was your foot, And not a natural creak, sir ?

Answer, then !

Once, twice, thrice . . . see, I 'm waiting to say " thrice ! "

All to no use ? No sort of hope for me ?

It 's all to post to Greeley's newspaper ?

What ? If I told you all about the tricks ?

Upon my soul !—the whole truth, and nought else,

And how there 's been some falsehood—for your part,

Will you engage to pay my passage out, And hold your tongue until I 'm safe on board ?

England 's the place, not Boston—no offence !

I see what makes you hesitate : don't fear !

I mean to change my trade and cheat no more,

Yes, this time really it's upon my soul Be my salvation !—under Heaven, of course.

I 'll tell some queer things. Sixty V's must do.

A trifle, though, to start with ! We 'll refer

The question to this table ?

How you 're changed

Then split the difference ; thirty more we 'll say.

Ay, but you leave my presents ! Else I 'll swear

'T was all through those : you wanted yours again,

So, picked a quarrel with me, to get them back !

Tread on a worm, it turns, sir ! If turn,

Your fault ! 'T is you 'll have forced me ! Who 's obliged

To give up life yet try no self-defence At all events, I 'll run the risk. Eh ?

Done

May I sit, sir ? This dear old table now !

Please, sir, a parting egg-nogg and cigar !

I 've been so happy with you ! Nicest stuffed chairs,

And sympathetic sideboards ; what a end

To all the instructive evenings ! (It 's alright.)

Well, nothing lasts, as Bacon came and said.

Here goes,—but keep your temper, or I 'll scream !

Fol-lol-the-rido-liddle-iddle-ol !

You see, sir, it 's your own fault more than mine ;

It 's all your fault, you curious gentleman folk !

You 're prigs,—excuse me,—like to look so spry,

So clever, while you cling by half-claw

To the perch whereon you puff yourselves at roost,

Such piece of self-conceit as serves for perch

Because you chose it, so it must be said

e and cheat
on my soul!
Heaven, of
Sixty Vs
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as serves for
t must be safe.

Oh, otherwise you're sharp enough!
You spy
Who slips, who slides, who holds by
help of wing,
Wanting real foothold,—who can't
keep upright
On the other perch, your neighbour
chose! not you:
There's no outwitting you respecting
him!
For instance, men love money—that,
you know—
And what men do to gain it: well, sup-
pose
A poor lad, say a help's son in your
house,
Listening at keyholes, hears the com-
pany
Talk grand of dollars, V-notes, and so
forth,
How hard they are to get, how good to
hold,
How much they buy,—if, suddenly, in
pops he—
"I've got a V-note!"—what do you
say to him?
What's your first word which follows
your last kick?
"Where did you steal it, rascal?"
That's because
He finds you, fain would fool you, off
your perch,
Not on the special piece of nonsense,
sir, [try
Elected your parade-ground: let him
Lies to the end of the list,—“He picked
it up
“His cousin died and left it him by will,
“The President flung it to him, riding
by,
“An actress trucked it for a curl of his
hair,
“He dreamed of luck and found his
shoe enriched,
“He dug up clay, and out of clay made
gold”—
How would you treat such possibilities?
Would not you, prompt, investigate
the case
With cow-hide? “Lies, lies, lies,”
you'd shout: and why?
Which of the stories might not prove
mere truth?
This last, perhaps, that clay was turned
to coin!
Let's see, now, give him me to speak
for him!

How many of your rare philosophers'
In plaguy books I've had to dip into,
Believed gold could be made thus, saw
it made
And made it? Oh, with such philoso-
phers
You're on your best behaviour! While
the lad—
With him, in a trice, you settle likeli-
hoods,
Nor doubt a moment how he got his
prize:
In his case, you hear, judge and exe-
cute,
All in a breath: so would most men of
sense.
But let the same lad hear you talk as
grand
At the same keyhole, you and com-
pany,
Of signs and wonders, the invisible
world;
How wisdom scouts our vulgar unbelief
More than our vulgarest incredulity;
How good men have desired to see a
ghost,
What Johnson used to say, what Wes-
ley did,
Mother Goose thought, and fiddle-
diddle-dee:—
If he then break in with, “Sir, I saw a
ghost!”
Ah, the ways change! He finds you
perched and prim;
It's a conceit of yours that ghosts may
be:
There's no talk now of cow-hide. “Tell
it out!
“Don't fear us! Take your time and
recollect!
“Sit down first: try a glass of wine,
my boy!
“And, David, (is not that your Chris-
tian name?)
“Of all things, should this happen
twice—it may—
“Ee sure, while fresh in mind, you let
us know!”
Does the boy blunder, blurt out this,
blab that,
Break down in the other, as beginners
will?
All's candour, all's considerateness—
“No haste!
“Pause and collect yourself We
understand!

"That 's the bad memory, or the
natural shock,
"Or the unexplained *phenomena*!"

Egad,
The boy takes heart of grace; finds,
never fear,
The readiest way to ope your own heart
wide,
Show—what I call your peacock-perch,
pet post
To strut, and spread the tail, and
squawk upon!
"Just as you thought, much as you
might expect!
"There be more things in heaven and
earth, Horatio," . . .
And so on. Shall not David take the
hint,
Grow bolder, stroke you down at
quicken'd rate?
If he ruffle a feather, it 's "Gently,
patiently!
"Manifestations are so weak at first!
"Doubting, moreover, kills them, cuts
all short,
"Cures with a vengeance!"

There, sir, that 's your style!
You and your boy—such pains be-
stowed on him,
Or any headpiece of the average worth,
To teach, say, Greek, would perfect
him apace,
Make him a Person ("Porson?" thank
you, sir!)
Much more, proficient in the art of lies.
You never leave the lesson! Fire
alight,
Catch you permitting it to die! You 've
friends;
There 's no withholding knowledge,—
least from those
Apt to look elsewhere for their souls'
supply:
Why should not you parade your law-
ful prize?
Who finds a picture, digs a medal up,
Hits on a first edition,—he henceforth
Gives it his name, grows notable: how
much more,
Who ferrets out a "medium?"
"David 's yours,
"You highly-favoured man? Then,
pity souls
"Less privileged! Allow us share
your luck!"

So, David holds the circle, rules the
roast,
Narrates the vision, peeps in the glass
ball,
Sets to the spirit-writing, hears the raps
As the case may be.

Now mark! To be precise—
Though I say, "lies" all these, at the
first stage,
'Tis just for science' sake: I call such
grubs
By the name of what they 'll turn to
dragonflies.
Strictly, it 's what good people style un-
truth;
But yet, so far, not quite the full-
grown thing:
It 's fancying, fable-making, nonsense
work—
What never meant to be so very bad—
The knack of story-telling, brightenin'
up
Each dull odd bit of fact that drops its
shine.
One does see somewhat when one shuts
one's eyes,
If only spots and streaks; tables do tip
In the oddest way of themselves: and
pens, good Lord,
Who knows if you drive them or they
drive you?
'Tis but a foot in the water and out
again;
Not that duck-under which decides
your dive.
Note this, for it 's important: listen
why.

I 'll prove, you push on David till he
dives
And ends the shivering. Here 's your
circle, now:
Two-thirds of them, with heads like
you their host,
Turn up their eyes, and cry, as you ex-
pect,
"Lord, who 'd have thought it!"
But there's always one
Looks wise, compassionately smiles,
submits
"Of your veracity no kind of doubt,
"But—do you feel so certain of that
boy's?
"Really, I wonder! I confess myself
"More chary of my faith!" That's
galling, sir!

What, he the investigator, he the sage,
When all 's done? Then, you just
have shut your eyes,
Opened your mouth, and gulped down
David whole,
You! Terrible were such catastrophe!
So, evidence 's redoubled, doubled
again,
And doubled besides; once more, "He
heard, we heard,
"You and they heard, your mother
and your wife,
"Your children and the stranger in
your gates:
"Did they or did they not?" So
much for him,
The black sheep, guest without the
wedding-garb,
And doubting Thomas! Now 's your
turn to crow:
"He 's kind to think you such a fool:
Sludge cheats?
"Leave you alone to take precau-
tions!"

Straight

The rest join chorus. Thomas stands
abashed,
Sips silent some such beverage as this,
Considers if it be harder, shutting eyes
And gulping David in good fellowship,
Than going elsewhere, getting, in ex-
change,
With no egg-nogg to lubricate the food,
Some just as tough a morsel. Over the
way,
Holds Captain Sparks his court: is it
better there?
Have not you hunting-stories, scalping-
scenes,
And Mexican War exploits to swallow
plump
If you 'd be free of the stove-side,
rocking-chair,
And trio of affable daughters?

Doubt succumbs!

Victory! All your circle 's yours
again!
Out of the clubbing of submissive wits,
David's performance rounds, each
chink gets patched,
Every protrusion of a point 's filed fine,
All 's fit to set a-rolling round the
world,
And then return to David finally,
Lies seven-feet thick about his first half-
inch.

Here 's a choice birth of the super-
natural,
Poor David 's pledged to! You 've
employed no tool
That laws exclaim at, save the devil's
own,
Yet screwed him into henceforth gull-
ing you
To the top of your bent,—all out of one
half-lie!

You hold, if there 's one half or a hun-
dredth part
Of a lie, that 's his fault,—his be the
penalty!
I dare say! You 'd prove firmer in his
place?
You 'd find the courage,—that first
flurry over,
That mild bit of romancing-work at
end,—
To interpose with "It gets serious, this;
"Must stop here. Sir, I saw no ghost
at all.

"Inform your friends I made . . well,
fools of them,
"And found you ready made. I 've
lived in clover
"These three weeks: take it out in
kicks of me!"
I doubt it. Ask your conscience! Let
me know,
Twelve months hence, with how few
embellishments
You 've told almighty Boston of this
passage
Of arms between us, your first taste of
the foil
From Sludge who could not fence, sir!
Sludge, your boy!
I lied, sir,—there! I got up from my
gorge
On offal in the gutter, and preferred
Your canvass-backs: I took their car-
ver's size,
Measured his modicum of intelligence,
Tickled him on the cockles of his heart
With a raven feather, and next week
found myself
Sweet and clean, dining daintily,
dizened smart,
Set on a stool buttressed by ladies'
knees,
Every soft smiler calling me her pet,
Encouraging my story to uncoil
And creep out from its hole, inch after
inch,

"How last night, I no sooner snug in bed,
 "Tucked up, just as they left me,—
 than came raps!
 "While a light whisked" . . . "Shaped
 somewhat like a star?"
 "Well, like some sort of stars, ma'am."
 —"So we thought!"
 "And any voice? Not yet? Try
 hard, next time,
 "If you can't hear a voice; we think
 you may:
 "At least, the Pennsylvanian 'me-
 diums' did."
 Oh, next time comes the voice! "Just
 as we hoped!"
 Are not the hoppers proud now, pleased,
 profuse
 Of the natural acknowledgment?
 Of course!
 So, off we push, illy-oh-yo, trim the
 boat,
 On we sweep with a cataract ahead,
 We 're midway to the Horse-shoe:
 stop, who can,
 The dance of bubbles gay about our
 prow!
 Experiences become worth waiting for,
 Spirits now speak up, tell their inmost
 mind,
 And compliment the "medium"
 properly, [coat,
 Concern themselves about his Sunday
 See rings on his hand with pleasure.
 Ask yourself
 How you 'd receive a course of treats
 like these!
 Why, take the quietest hack and stall
 him up,
 Cram him with corn a month, then out
 with him
 Among his mates on a bright April
 morn,
 With the turf to tread; see if you find
 or no
 A caper in him, if he bucks or bolts!
 Much more a youth whose fancies
 sprout as rank
 As toadstool-clump from melon-bed.
 'Tis soon,
 "Sirrah, you spirit, come, go, fetch and
 carry,
 "Read, write, rap, rub-a-dub, and
 hang yourself!"
 I'm spared all further trouble; all's
 arranged;

Your circle does my business; I ma-
 rave
 Like an epileptic dervish in the book
 Foam, fling myself flat rend my clothes
 to shreds;
 No matter: lovers, friends and count-
 men
 Will lay down spiritual laws, rea-
 wrong things right
 By the rule of reverse. If Franc
 Verulam
 Styles himself Bacon, spells the nam
 beside
 With a y and a k, says he drew breat
 in York,
 Gave up the ghost in Wales when Crom
 well reigned,
 (As, sir, we somewhat fear he was ap
 to say,
 Before I found the useful book tha
 knows)
 Why, what harm 's done? The circ
 smiles apace,
 "It was not Bacon, after all, do yo
 see!
 "We understand; the trick 's bu
 natural:
 "Such spirits' individuality
 "Is hard to put in evidence: they in-
 cline
 "To gibe and jeer, these undevelop
 sorts.
 "You see, their world 's much like
 jail broke loose,
 "While this of ours remains shut
 bolted, barred,
 "With a single window to it. Sludg
 our friend,
 "Serves as this window, whether thi
 or thick,
 "Or stained or stainless; he 's th
 medium-pane
 "Through which, to see us and be see
 they peep:
 "They crowd each other, hustle for
 chance,
 "Tread on their neighbour's kibe
 play tricks enough!
 "Does Bacon, tired of waiting, swer
 aside?
 "Up in his place jumps Barnum—'T
 your man,
 "'I'll answer you for Bacon!' T
 once more!"
 Or else it 's—"What 's a 'medium'
 He 's a means,

" Good, bad, indifferent, still the only means
 " Spirits can speak by ; he may misconceive,
 " Stutter and stammer,—he 's their Sludge and drudge,
 " Take him or leave him ; they must hold their peace,
 " Or else, put up with having knowledge strained
 " To half-expression through his ignorance.
 " Suppose, the spirit Beethoven wants to shed
 " New music he 's brimful of ; why, he turns
 " The handle of this organ, grinds with Sludge,
 " And what he poured in at the mouth o' the mill
 " As a Thirty-third Sonata, (fancy now !)
 " Comes from the hopper as bran-new Sludge, nought else,
 " The Shakers' Hymn in G, with a natural F,
 " Or the ' Stars and Stripes ' set to consecutive fourths."

Sir, where 's the scrape you did not help me through,
 You that are wise ? And for the fools, the folk
 Who came to see,—the guests, (observe that word !)
 Pray do you find guests criticize your wine,
 Your furniture, your grammar, or your nose ?
 Then, why your " medium ? " What 's the difference ?
 Prove your madeira red-ink and gamboge,—
 Your Sludge, a cheat—then, somebody 's a goose
 For vaunting both as genuine.
 "Guests ! " Don't fear !
 They 'll make a wry face, nor too much of that,
 And leave you in your glory.

" No, sometimes
 " They doubt and say as much ! " Ay, doubt they do !
 And what 's the consequence ? " Of course they doubt "
 (You triumph) " that explains the hitch at once !

" Doubt posed our ' medium,' puddled his pure mind ;
 " He gave them back their rubbish : pitch chaff in,
 " Could flour come out o' the honest mill ? " So, prompt
 Applaud the faithful : cases flock in point,
 " How, when a mocker willed a ' medium ' once
 " Should name a spirit James whose name was George,
 " ' James ' cried the ' medium,'—
 " 't was the test of truth ! " .
 In short, a lit proves much, a miss proves more.
 Does this convince ? The better : does it fail ?
 Time for the double-shotted broadside, then—
 The grand means, last resource. Look black and big !
 " You style us idiots, therefore—why stop short ?
 " Accomplices in rascality : this we hear
 " In our own house, from our invited guest
 " Found brave enough to outrage a poor boy
 " Exposed by our good faith ! Have you been heard ?
 " Now, then, hear us ; one man 's not quite worth twelve.
 " You see a cheat ? Here 's some twelve see an ass :
 " Excuse me if I calculate : good day ! " Out slinks the sceptic, all the laughs explode,
 Sludge waves his hat in triumph !

Or—he don't.
 There 's something in real truth (explain who can !)
 One casts a wistful eye at, like the horse
 Who mopes beneath stuffed hay-racks and won't munch
 Because he spies a corn-bag : hang that truth,
 It spoils all dainties proffered in its place !
 I 've felt at times when, cockered, cosseted
 And coddled by the aforesaid company,
 Bidden enjoy their bullying,—never fear,

But o'er their shoulders spit at the fly-
ing man,—
I 've felt a child; only, a fractious
child
That, dandled soft by nurse, aunt,
grandmother,
Who keep him from the kennel, sun
and wind,
Good fun and wholesome mud,—en-
joined be sweet,
And comely and superior,—eyes ask-
ance
The ragged sons of the gutter at their
'game,
Fain would be down with them i' the
thick of the filth,
Making dirt-pies, laughing free, speak-
ing plain,
And calling granny the grey old cat she
is.
I 've felt a spite, I say, at you, at them,
Huggings and humbug—gnashed my
teeth to mark
A decent dog pass! It 's too bad, I
say,
Ruining a soul so!

But what's "so," what 's fixed,
Where may one stop? Nowhere!
The cheating 's nursed
Out of the lying, softly and surely
spun
To just your length, sir! I'd stop soon
enough:
But you 're for progress. "All old,
nothing new?"
"Only the usual talking through the
mouth,
"Or writing by the hand? I own, I
thought
"This would develop, grow demon-
strable,
"Make doubt absurd, give figures we
might see,
"Flowers we might touch. There 's
no one doubts you, Sludge!
"You dream the dreams, you see the
spiritual sights,
"The speeches come in your head, be-
yond dispute.
"Still, for the sceptics' sake, to stop all
mouths,
"We want some outward manifesta-
tion!—well,
"The Pennsylvanians gained such;
why not Sludge?
"He may improve with time!"

Ay, that he may!
He sees his lot: there 's no avoiding
fate.
'Tis a trifle at first. "Eh, David?
Did you hear?"
"You jogged the table, your foot
caused the squeak,
"This time you 're . . . joking, are
you not, my boy?"
"N-n-no!"—and I 'm done for, bought
and sold henceforth.
The old good easy jog-trot way, the
. . . eh?
The . . . not so very false, as false-
hood goes,
The spinning out and drawing fine, you
know,—
Really mere novel-writing of a sort,
Acting, or improvising, make-believe,
Surely not downright cheater,—any
how,
'T is done with and my lot cast;
Cheat 's my name:
The fatal dash of brandy in your tea
Has settled what you 'll have the sou-
chong's smack:
The caddy gives way to the dram-
bottle.
Then, it 's so cruel easy! Oh, those
tricks
That can't be tricks, those feats by
sleight of hand,
Clearly no common conjurer's!—no,
indeed!
A conjurer? Choose me any craft in
the world
A man puts hand to; and with six
months' pains,
I 'll play you twenty tricks miracu-
lous
To people untaught the trade: have
you seen glass blown,
Pipes pierced? Why, just this biscuit
that I chip,
Did you ever watch a baker toss one
flat
To the oven? Try and do it! Take
my word,
Practise but half as much, while limbs
are lithe,
To turn, shove, tilt a table, crack your
joints,
Manage your feet, dispose your hands
aright,
Work wires that twitch the curtains,
play the glove

At end of your slipper,—then put out the lights
 And . . . there, there, all you want you 'll get, I hope!
 I found it slip, easy as an old shoe.
 Now, lights on table again! I've done my part,
 You take my place while I give thanks and rest.
 "Well, Judge Humgruffin, what 's your verdict, sir?
 "You, hardest head in the United States,—
 "Did you detect a cheat here? Wait! Let 's see!
 "Just an experiment first, for candour's sake!
 "I 'll try and cheat you, Judge! The table tilts:
 "Is it I that move it? Write! I 'll press your hand:
 "Cry when I push, or guide your pencil, Judge!"
 Sludge still triumphant! "That a rap, indeed?
 "That, the real writing? Very like a whale!
 "Then, if, sir, you—a most distinguished man,
 "And, were the Judge not here, I 'd say, . . . no matter!
 "Well, sir, if you fail, you can't take us in,—
 "There 's little fear that Sludge will!"
 Won't he, ma'am?
 But what if our distinguished host, like Sludge,
 Bade God bear witness that he played no trick,
 While you believed that what produced the raps
 Was just a certain child who died, you know,
 And whose last breath you thought your lips had felt?
 Eh? That 's a capital point, ma'am: Sludge begins
 At your entreaty with your dearest dead,
 The little voice set lispng once again,
 The tiny hand made feel for yours once more,
 The poor lost image brought back, plain as dreams,
 Which image, if a word had chanced recall,

The customary cloud would cross your eyes,
 Your heart return the old tick, pay its pang!
 A right mood for investigation, this!
 One 's at one 's ease with Saul and Jonathan,
 Pompey and Cæsar: but one's own lost child . . .
 I wonder, when you heard the first cold drop
 From the spadeful at the grave-side, felt you free
 To investigate who twitched your funeral scarf
 Or brushed your flounces? Then, it came of course,
 You should be stunned and stupid; then, (how else?)
 Your breath stopped with your blood, your brain struck work. [fects,
 But now, such causes fail of such effect—
 All 's changed,—the little voice begins afresh,
 Yet you, calm, consequent, can test and try
 And touch the truth. "Tests? Didn't the creature tell
 "Its nurse 's name, and say it lived six years,
 "And rode a rocking-horse? Enough of tests!
 "Sludge never could learn that!"
 He could not, eh?
 You compliment him. "Could not?"
 Speak for yourself!
 I 'd like to know the man I ever saw
 Once,—never mind where, how, why, when,—once saw,
 Of whom I do not keep some matter in mind
 He 'd swear I "could not" know, sagacious soul!
 What? Do you live in this world's blow of blacks,
 Palaver, gossipry, a single hour
 Nor find one smut has settled on your nose,
 Of a smut's worth, no more, no less?—one fact
 Out of the drift of facts, whereby you learn
 What some one was, somewhere, some-when, some-why?
 You don't tell folk—"See what has stuck to me!"

" Judge Humgruffin, our most distinguished man,

" Your uncle was a tailor, and your wife

" Thought to have married Miggs, missed him, hit you!"—

Do you, sir, though you see him twice a-week?

" No," you reply, " what use re'ailing it?

" Why should I?" But, you see, one day you *should*,

Because one day there 's much use,—when this fact

Brings you the Judge upon both gouty knees

Before the supernatural; proves that Sludge

Knows, as you say, a thing he " could not " know:

Will not Sludge thenceforth keep an outstretched face,

The way the wind drives?

" Could not!" Look you now, I 'll tell you a story! There 's a whiskered chap,

A foreigner, that teaches music here And gets his bread,—knowing no better way:

He says, the fellow who informed of him

And made him fly his country and fall West,

Was a hunchback cobbler, sat, stitched soles and sang,

In some outlandish place, the city Rome,

In a cellar by their Broadway, all day long;

Never asked questions, stopped to listen or look, world

Nor lifted nose from lapstone; let the Roll round his three-legged stool, and

news run in

The ears he hardly seemed to keep pricked up.

Well, that man went on Sundays, touched his pay,

And took his praise from Government, you see;

For something like two dollars every week,

He 'd engage tell you some one little thing

Of some one man, which led to many more,

(Because one truth leads right to the world's end.)

And make you that man's master—when he dined

And on what dish, where walked to keep his health

And to what street. His trade was, throwing thus

His sense out, like an anteater's long tongue,

Soft, innocent, warm, moist, impassible,

And when 't was crusted o'er with creatures—slick,

Their juice enriched his palate. " Could not Sludge!"

I 'll go yet a step further, and maintain, Once the imposture plunged its proper depth

In the rotten of your natures, all of you,—

(If one 's not mad nor drunk, and hardly then)

It 's impossible to cheat—that 's, be found out!

Go tell your brotherhood this first slip of mine,

All to-day's tale, how you detected Sludge,

Behaved unpleasantly, till he was fain confess,

And so has come to grief! You 'll find, I think,

Why Sludge still snaps his fingers in your face.

There now, you 've told them! What's their prompt reply?

" Sir, did that youth confess he had cheated me,

" I 'd disbelieve him. He may cheat at times;

" That 's in the 'medium'-nature, thus they 're made,

" Vain and vindictive, cowards, prone to scratch.

" And so all cats are; still, a cat 's the beast

" You coax the strange electric sparks from out,

" By rubbing back its fur; not so a dog,

" Nor lion, nor lamb: 't is the cat's nature, sir!

" Why not the dog's? Ask God, who made them beasts!

"D' ye think the sound, the nicely-balanced man
 "(Like me"—aside)—"like you yourself,"—(aloud)
 "—He 's stuff to make a 'medium?'
 Bless your soul,
 "'Tis these hysteric, hybrid half-and-halves,
 "Equivocal, worthless vermin yield the fire!
 "We must take such as we find them, 'ware their tricks,
 "Wanting their service. Sir, Sludge took in you—
 "How, I can't say, not being there to watch:
 "He was tried, was tempted by your easiness,—
 "He did not take in me!"

Thank you for Sludge!
 I'm to be grateful to such patrons, eh,
 When what you hear 's my best word?
 'Tis a challenge;
 "Snap at all strangers, half-tamed prairie-dog,
 "So you cower duly at your keeper's nod!
 "Cat, show what claws were made for, muffling them
 "Only to me! Cheat others if you can,
 "Me, if you dare!" And, my wise sir, I dared—
 Did cheat you first, made you cheat others next,
 And had the help of your vaunted manliness
 To bully the incredulous. You used me?
 Have not I used you, taken full revenge,
 Persuaded folk they knew not their own name,
 And straight they 'd own the error!
 Who was the fool
 When, to an awe-struck wide-eyed open-mouthed
 Circle of sages, Sludge would introduce Milton composing baby-rhymes, and Locke
 Reasoning in gibberish, Homer writing Greek
 In noughts and crosses, Asaph setting psalms
 To crotchet and quaver? I've made a spirit squak

In sham voice for a minute, then out-broke
 Bold in my own, defying the imbeciles—
 Have copied some ghost's pothooks, half a page,
 Then ended with my own scrawl undisguised,
 "All right! The ghost was merely using Sludge,
 "Suiting itself from his imperfect stock!"
 Don't talk of gratitude to me! For what?
 For being treated as a showman's ape,
 Encouraged to be wicked and make sport,
 Fret or sulk, grin or whimper, any mood
 So long as the ape be in it and no man—
 Because a nut pays every mood alike.
 Curse your superior, superintending sort,
 Who, since you hate smoke, send up boys that climb
 To cure your chimney, bid a "medium" lie
 To sweep you truth down! Curse your women too,
 Your insolent wives and daughters, that fire up
 Or faint away if a male hand squeeze theirs,
 Yet, to encourage Sludge, may play with Sludge [thing
 As only a "medium," only the kind of
 They must humour, fondle . . . oh, to misconceive
 Were too preposterous! But I 've paid them out!
 They 've had their wish—called for the naked truth,
 And in she tripped, sat down and bade them stare:
 They had to blush a little and forgive!
 "The fact is, children talk so; in next world
 "All our conventions are reversed,—perhaps
 "Made light of: something like old prints, my dear!
 "The Judge has one, he brought from Italy,
 "A metropolis in the background,—o'er a bridge,
 "A team of trotting roadsters,—cheerful groups

" Of wayside travellers, peasants at
 their work,
 " And, full in front, quite uncon-
 cerned, why not?
 " Three nymphs conversing with a
 cavalier,
 " And never a rag among them:
 'fine,' folk cry—
 " And heavenly manners seem not
 much unlike!
 " Let Sludge go on; we 'll fancy it 's
 in print!"
 If such as came for wool, sir, went
 home shorn,
 Where is the wrong I did them?
 'Twas their choice;
 They tried the adventure, ran the risk,
 tossed up
 And lost, as some one 's sure to do in
 games;
 They fancied I was made to lose,—
 smoked glass
 Useful to spy the sun through, spare
 their eyes:
 And had I proved a red-hot iron plate
 They thought to pierce, and, for their
 pains, grew blind,
 Whose were the fault but theirs?
 While, as things go,
 Their loss amounts to gain, the more 's
 the shame!
 They've had their peep into the spirit-
 world,
 And all this world may know it!
 They've fed fat
 Their self-conceit which else had
 starved: what chance
 Save this, of cackling o'er a golden egg
 And compassing distinction from the
 flock,
 Friends of a feather? Well, they paid
 for it,
 And not prodigiously; the price o' the
 play,
 Not counting certain pleasant inter-
 ludes,
 Was scarce a vulgar play's worth.
 When you buy
 The actor's talent, do you dare propose
 For his soul beside? Whereas, my
 soul you buy!
 Sludge acts Macbeth, obliged to be
 Macbeth,
 Or you 'll not hear his first word! Just
 go through
 That slight formality, swear himself 's
 the Thane,
 And thenceforth he may strut and
 fret his hour,
 Spout, spawl, or spin his target, no one
 cares!
 Why hadn't I leave to play tricks,
 Sludge as Sludge?
 Enough of it all! I 've wiped out
 scores with you—
 Vented your fustian, let myself be
 streaked [mine,
 Like tom-fool with your ochre and car-
 Worn patchwork your respectable
 fingers sewed
 To metamorphose somebody,—yes,
 I 've earned
 My wages, swallowed down my bread
 of shame,
 And shake the crumbs off—where but
 in your face?
 As for religion—why, I served it, sir!
 I'll stick to that! With my *phenomena*
 I laid the atheist sprawling on his back,
 Propped up Saint Paul, or, at least,
 Swedenborg!
 In fact, it 's just the proper way to
 baulk
 These troublesome fellows—liars, one
 and all,
 Are not these sceptics? Well, to
 baffle them,
 No use in being squeamish: lie your-
 self!
 Erect your buttress just as wide o' the
 line,
 Your side, as they 've built up the wall
 on theirs;
 Where both meet, midway in a point,
 is truth,
 High overhead: so, take your room,
 pile bricks,
 Lie! Oh, there 's titillation in all
 shame!
 What snow may lose in white, it gains
 in rose!
 Miss Stokes turns—Rahab,—nor a bad
 exchange!
 Glory be on her, for the good she
 wrought,
 Breeding relief anew 'neath ribs of
 death,
 Brow-beating now the unabasher' be-
 fore,
 Rid ding us of their whole life's gathered
 straws
 By a live coal from the altar! Why, of
 old,

Great men spent years and years in writing books

To prove we 've souls, and hardly proved it then :

Miss Stokes with her live coal, for you and me !

Surely, to this good issue, all was fair—
Not only fondling Sludge, but, even suppose

He let escape some spice of knavery,—
well,

In wisely being blind to it ! Don't you praise

Nelson for setting spy-glass to blind eye
And saying . . what was it—that he could not see

The signal he was bothered ? Ay, indeed !

I'll go beyond . there 's a real love of a lie,

Liars find ready-made for lies they make,

As hand for glove, or tongue for sugar-plum.

At best, 't is never pure and full belief ;
Those furthest in the quagmire—don't suppose

They strayed there with no warning,
got no chance

Of a filth-speck in their face, which they clenched teeth,

Bent brow against ! Be sure they had their doubts,

And fears, and fairest challenges to try
The floor o' the seeming solid sand !

But no !

Their faith was pledged, acquaintance too apprised,

All but the last step ventured, kerchiefs waved,

And Sludge called " pet : " 't was easier marching on

To the promised land ; join those who, Thursday next

Meant to meet Shakespeare ; better follow Sludge—

Prudent, oh sure !—on the alert how else ?

But making for the mid-bog, all the same !

To hear your outcries, one would think I caught

Miss Stokes by the scuff o' the neck, and pitched her flat,

Foolish-face-foremost ! Hear these simpletons,

That 's all I beg, before my work 's begun,

Before I 've touched them with my finger-tip !

Thus they await me (do but listen, now !

It 's reasoning, this is,—I can't imitate
The baby voice, though) " In so many tales

" Must be some truth, truth though a pin-point big,

" Yet, some : a single man 's deceived, perhaps—

" Hardly, a thousand : to suppose one cheat

" Can gull all these, were more miraculous far

" Than aught we should confess a miracle"—

And so on. Then the Judge sums up—
(it 's rare)—

Bids you respect the authorities that leap

To the judgment-seat at once,—why don't you note

The limpid nature, the unblemished life,

The spotless honour, indisputable sense
Of the first upstart with his story ?

What—

Outrage a boy on whom you ne'er till now

Set eyes, because he finds raps trouble him ?

Fools, these are . ay, and how of their opposites

Who never did, at bottom of their hearts,

Believe for a moment ?—Men emasculate,

Blank of belief, who played, as eunuchs use,

With superstition safely,—cold of blood,

Who saw what made for them in the mystery,

Took their occasion, and supported Sludge

—As proselytes ? No, thank you, far too shrewd !

—But promisers of fair play, encouragers

Of the claimant ; who in candour needs must hoist

Sludge up on Mars' Hill, get speech out of Sludge

To carry off, criticize, and cant about !
 Did n't Athens treat Saint Paul so ?—
 at any rate,
 It 's " a new thing," philosophy fumbles at.
 Then there 's the other picker out of
 pearl
 From dung heaps,—ay, your literary
 man,
 Who draws on his kid gloves to deal
 with Sludge
 Daintily and discreetly,—shakes a dust
 Of the doctrine, flavours thence, he
 well knows how,
 The narrative or the novel,—half-believes,
 All for the book's sake, and the public's
 stare,
 And the cash that 's God's sole solid in
 this world !
 Look at him ! Try to be too bold, too
 gross
 For the master ! Not you ! He 's
 the man for muck ;
 Shovel it forth, full-splash, he 'll
 smooth your brown
 Into artistic richness, never fear !
 Find him the crude stuff ; when you
 recognise
 Your lie again, you 'll doff your hat to
 it,
 Dressed out for company ! " For
 company,"
 I say, since there 's the relish of success :
 Let all pay due respect, call the lie
 truth,
 Save the soft silent smirking gentleman
 Who ushered in the stranger : you
 must sigh
 " How melancholy, he, the only one
 " Fails to perceive the bearing of the
 truth
 " Himself gave birth to !"—There 's the
 triumph's smack !
 That man would choose to see the
 whole world roll
 I' the slime o' the slough, so he might
 touch the tip
 Of his brush with what I call the best
 of browns—
 Tint ghost-tales, spirit-stories, past the
 power
 Of the outworn umber and bistre !

Yet I think

There 's a more hateful form of foolery—
 The social sage's, Solomon of saloons

And philosophic diner-out, the fribble
 Who wants a doctrine for a chopping
 block
 To try the edge of his faculty upon,
 Prove how much common sense he
 lack and hew
 In the critical minute 'twixt the sou
 and fish !
 These were my patrons : these, and th
 like of them
 Who, rising in my scul now, sicken it,—
 These I have injured ! Gratitude t
 these ?
 The gratitude, forsooth, of a prostitut
 To the greenhorn and the bully-
 friends of hers,
 From the wag that wants the quee
 jokes for his club,
 To the snuff-box decorator, honest man
 Who just was at his wits' end where t
 find
 So genial a Pasiphae ! All and each
 Pay, compliment, protect from th
 police,
 And how she hates them for their pains
 like me !
 So much for my remorse at thankless
 ness
 Toward a deserving public !

But, for God

Ay, that 's a question ! Well, sir
 since you press—
 (How you do teaze the whole thing ou
 of me !
 I don't mean you, you know, when
 say " them : "
 Hate you, indeed ! But that Mis
 Stokes, that Judge !
 Enough, enough—with sugar : than
 you, sir !)
 Now for it, then ! Will you believe
 me, though ? [unsay
 You 've heard what I confess ; I don't
 A single word : I cheated when I could
 Rapped with my toe-joints, set sham
 hands at work,
 Wrote down names weak in sym-
 pathetic ink,
 Rubbed odic lights with ends of phos-
 phor-match,
 And all the rest ; believe that : be-
 lieve this,
 By the same token, though it seem to
 set
 The crooked straight again, unsay the
 said,

Stick up what I 've thrown down ; I
can't help that :
It 's truth ! I somehow vomit truth
to-day.
This trade of mine—I don't know,
can't be sure
But there was something in it, tricks
and all !
Really, I want to light up my own
mind.
They were tricks,—true, but what I
mean to add
Is also true. First,—don't it strike
you, sir ?
Go back to the beginning,—the first
fact
We 're taught is, there 's a world beside
this world,
With spirits, not mankind, for tenantry ;
That much within that world once so-
journd here,
That all upon this world will visit
there,
And therefore that we, bodily here be-
low,
Must have exactly such an interest
In learning what may be the ways o'
the world
Above us, as the disembodied folk
Have (by all analogic likelihood)
In watching how things go in the old
world
With us, their sons, successors, and
what not
Oh, yes, with added powers probably,
Fit for the novel state,—old loves
grown pure,
Old interests understood aright,—they
watch ! [help,
Eyes to see, ears to hear, and hands to
Proportionate to advancement : they're
ahead,
That 's all—do what we do, but noblier
done—
Use plate, whereas we eat our meals
off delf,
(To use a figure.)

Concede that, and I ask
Next what may be the mode of inter-
course
Between us men here, and those once-
men there ?
First comes the Bible's speech ; then,
history
With the supernatural element,—you
know—

All that we sucked in with our mothers'
milk,
Grew up with, got inside of us at last,
Till it 's found bone of bone and flesh
of flesh.
See now, we start with the miraculous,
And know it used to be, at all events :
What 's the first step we take, and
can't but take,
In arguing from the known to the ob-
scure ?
Why this : "What was before, may
be to-day.
"Since Samuel's ghost appeared to
Saul,—of course
"My brother's spirit may appear to
me."
Go tell your teacher that ! What 's his
reply ?
What brings a shade of doubt for the
first time [faith ?
O'er his brow late so luminous with
"Such things have been," says he,
"and there 's no doubt
"Such things may be : but I advise
mistrust
"Of eyes, ears, stomach, and, more
than all, your brain,
"Unless it be of your great-grand-
mother,
"Whenever they propose a ghost to
you !"
The end is, there 's a composition
struck ;
'T is settled, we 've some way of inter-
course
Just as in Saul's time ; only, different :
How, when and where, precisely,—find
it out !
I want to know, then, what's so natural
As that a person born into this world
And seized on by such teaching, should
begin
With firm expectancy and a frank look-
out
For his own allotment, his especial
share
In the secret,—his particular ghost, in
fine ?
I mean, a person born to look that way,
Since natures differ : take the painter-
sort,
One man lives fifty years in ignorance
Whether grass be green or red,—'No
kind of eye
"For colour," say you ; while another
picks

And puts away even pebbles, when a child,
Because of bluish spots and pinky veins—
"Give him forthwith a paint-box!"
Just the same
Was I born . . . "medium," you
won't let me say,—
Well, seer of the supernatural
Everywhen, everyhow and every-
where,—
Will that do?

I and all such boys of course
Started with the same stock of Bible-
truth;
Only,—what in the rest you style their
sense,
Instinct, blind reasoning but impera-
tive,
This, betimes, taught them the old
world had one law
And ours another: "New world, new
laws," cried they:
"None but old laws, seen everywhere
at work,"
Cried I, and by their help explained my
life
The Jews' way, still a working way to
me.
Ghosts made the noises, fairies waved
the lights,
Or Santaclaus slid down on New Year's
Eve
And stuffed with cakes the stocking at
my bed,
Changed the worn shoes, rubbed clean
the fingered slate
Of the sum that came to grief the day
before.

This could not last long: soon enough
I found
Who had worked wonders thus, and to
what end:
But did I find all easy, like my mates?
Henceforth no supernatural any more?
Not a whit: what projects the billiard-
balls?
"A cue," you answer: "Yes, a cue,"
said I;
"But what hand, off the cushion,
moved the cue?"
"What unseen agency, outside the
world,
"Prompted its puppets to do this and
that,

"Put cakes and shoes and slates into
their mind,
"These mothers and aunts, nay even
schoolmasters?"
Thus high I sprang, and there have
settled since.
Just so I reason, in sober earnest still,
About the greater godsend, what you
call
The serious gains and losses of my life.
What do I know or care about your
world
Which either is or seems to be? This
snap [self;
Of my fingers, sir! My care is for my-
Myself am whole and sole reality
Inside a raree-show and a market-mob
Gathered about it: that's the use of
things.
'Tis easy saying they serve vast pur-
poses,
Advantage their grand selves: be it
true or false,
Each thing may have two uses. What's
a star?
A world, or a world's sun: doesn't it
serve
As taper also, time-piece, weather-
glass,
And almanac? Are stars not set for
signs
When we should shear our sheep, sow
corn, prune trees?
The Bible says so.

Well, I add one use
To all the acknowledged uses, and
declare
If I spy Charles's Wain at twelve to-
night,
It warns me, "Go, nor lose another
day,
"And have your hair cut, Sludge!"
You laugh. and why?
Were such a sign too hard for God to
give?
No: but Sludge seems too little for
such grace:
Thank you, sir! So you think, so does
not Sludge!
When you and good men gape at Pro-
vidence,
Go into history and bid us mark
Not merely powder-plots prevented,
crowns
Kept on kings' heads by miracle
enough,

But private mercies—oh, you 've told me, sir,
Of such interpositions! How yourself
Once, missing on a memorable day
Your handkerchief—just setting out,
you know,—
You must return to fetch it, lost the train,
And saved your precious self from what befell
The thirty-three whom Providence forgot.
You tell, and ask me what I think of this?
Well, sir, I think then, since you needs must know,
What matter had you and Boston city to boot
Sailed skyward, like burnt onion-peelings? Much
To you, no doubt: for me—undoubtedly
The cutting of my hair concerns me more,
Because, however sad the truth may seem,
Sludge is of all-importance to himself.
You set apart that day in every year
For special thanksgiving, were a heathen else:
[cape,
Well, I who cannot boast the like es-
Suppose I said "I don't thank Providence
"For my part, owing it no gratitude?"
"Nay, but you owe as much"—you'd tutor me,
"You, every man alive, for blessings gained
"In every hour of the day, could you but know!
"I saw my crowning mercy: all have such,
"Could they but see!" Well, sir, why don't they see?
"Because they won't look,—or perhaps, they can't."
Then, sir, suppose I can, and will, and do
Look, microscopically as is right,
Into each hour with its infinitude
Of influences at work to profit Sludge?
For that 's the case: I've sharpened up my sight
To spy a providence in the fire's going out,
The kettle's boiling, the dime's sticking fast

Despite the hole i' the pocket. Call such facts
Fancies, too petty a work for Providence,
And those same thanks which you exact from me,
Prove too prodigious payment: thanks for what,
If nothing guards and guides us little men?
No, no, sir! You must put away your pride,
Resolve to let Sludge into partnership! I live by signs and omens: looked at the roof
Where the pigeons settle—"If the further bird,
"The white, takes wing first, I'll confess when thrashed;
"Not, if the blue does"—so I said to myself
Last week, lest you should take me by surprise:
Off flapped the white,—and I'm confessing, sir!
Perhaps 'tis Providence's whim and way
With only me, in the world: how can you tell?
"Because unlikely!" Was it likelier, now,
That this our one out of all worlds beside,
The what-d'you-call-'em millions, should be just
Precisely chosen to make Adam for, And the rest o' the tale? Yet the tale 's true, you know:
Such undeserving clod was graced so once;
Why not graced likewise undeserving Sludge?
Are we merit-mongers, flaunt we filthy rags?
All you can bring against my privilege Is, that another way was taken with you,—
Which I don't question. It 's pure grace, my luck.
I 'm broken to the way of nods and winks,
And need no formal summoning. You 've a help;
Holloa his name or whistle, clap your hands,
Stamp with your foot or pull the bell: all 's one,

He understands you want him, here he comes.

Just so, I come at the knocking : you, sir, wait

The tongue of the bell, nor stir before you catch

Reason's clear tingle, nature's clapper brisk,

Or that traditional peal was wont to cheer

Your mother's face turned heavenward : short of these

There 's no authentic intimation, eh ?

Well, when you hear, you 'll answer them, start up

And stride into the presence, top of toe,

And there find Sludge beforehand,

Sludge that sprung [wall !

At noise o' the knuckle on the partition—

I think myself the more religious man.

Religion 's all or nothing ; it 's no mere smile

Of contentment, sigh of aspiration, sir—

No quality of the finelier-tempered clay

Like its whiteness or its lightness ;

rather, stuff

Of the very stuff, life of life, self of self.

I tell you, men won't notice ; when they do,

They 'll understand. I notice nothing else,

I 'm ears, eyes, mouth of me, one gaze and gape,

Nothing eludes me, everything's a hint

Handle and help. It 's all absurd, and yet

There 's something in it all, I know : how much ?

No answer ! What does that prove ? Man 's still man,

Still meant for a poor blundering piece of work

When all 's done ; but, if somewhat 's done, like this,

Or not done, is the case the same ? Suppose

I blunder in my guess at the true sense Of the knuckle-summons, nine times

out of ten,—

What if the tenth guess happen to be right ?

If the tenth shovel-load of powdered quartz

Yield me the nugget ? I gather, crush, sift all,

Pass o'er the failure, pounce on the success.

To give you a notion, now—(let wins, laugh !)

When first I see a man, what do I first

Why, count the letters which make his name,

And as their number chances, even odd,

Arrive at my conclusion, trim my course :

Hiram H. Horsefall is your honour name,

And have n't I found, a patron, sir, you ?

" Shall I cheat this stranger ? " take apple-pips,

Stick one in either *canthus* of my eye,

And if the left drops first—(your left

ear, sir, stuck)

I 'm warned, I let the trick alone this time.

You, sir, who smile, superior to such trash,

You judge of character by other rules

Don't your rules sometimes fail you ?

Pray, what rule

Have you judged Sludge by hitherto ?

Oh, be sure

You, everybody blunders, just as I,

In simpler things than these by far

For see :

I knew two farmers,—one, a wiseacre Who studied seasons, rummaged a

manacs,

Quoted the dew-point, registered the frost,

And then declared, for outcome of his pains,

Next summer must be dampish : 't was a drought.

His neighbour prophesied such drought would fall,

Saved hay and corn, made cent. per cent. thereby,

And proved a sage indeed : how came his lore ?

Because one brindled heifer, late in March,

Stiffened her tail of evenings, and somehow

He got into his head that drought was meant !

I don't expect all men can do as much Such kissing goes by favour. You must take

A certain turn of mind for this,—a twist

ow—(let who
 at do I first?
 hich make up
 nces, even or
 on, trim my
 our honoured
 patron, sir, in
 ranger?" I
 of my eye,
 t—(your left,
 ick alone this
 erior to such
 y other rules:
 es fail you?
 y hitherto?
 Oh, be sure,
 , just as I,
 hese by far!
 a wiseacre
 mmaged al-
 egistered the
 atcome of his
 apish: 't was
 such drought
 de cent. per
 : how came
 eifer, late in
 venings, and
 drought was
 do as much:
 avour. You
 for this,—a

I' the flesh, as well. Be lazily alive,
 Open-mouthed, like my friend the
 anteater,
 Letting all nature's loosely guarded
 notes
 Settle and, slick, be swallowed! Think
 yourself
 The one i' the world, the one for whom
 the world
 Was made, expect it tickling at your
 mouth!
 Then will the swarm of busy buzzing
 flies,
 Clouds of coincidence, b ak egg-shell,
 thrive,
 Breed, multiply, and bring you food
 enough.
 I can't pretend to mind your smiling,
 sir!
 Oh, what you mean is this! Such in-
 timate way,
 Close converse, frank exchange of
 offices,
 Strict sympathy of the immeasurably
 great
 With the infinitely small, betokened
 here
 By a course of signs and omens, raps
 and sparks,—
 How does it suit the dread traditional
 text
 Of the "Great and Terrible Name?"
 Shall the Heaven of Heavens
 Stoop to such child's-play?
 Please, sir, go with me
 A moment, and I'll try to answer you.
 The "*Magnum et terribile*" (is that
 right?)
 Well, folk began with this in the early
 day;
 And all the acts they recognised in
 proof
 Were thunders, lightnings, earth-
 quakes, whirlwinds, dealt
 Indisputably on men whose death they
 caused.
 There, and there only, folk saw Provi-
 dence
 At work,—and seeing it, 'twas right
 enough
 All heads should tremble, hands wring
 hands amain,
 And knees knock hard together at the
 breath
 Of the Name's first letter; why, the
 Jews, I'm told,

Won't write it down, no, to this very
 hour,
 Nor speak aloud: you know best if 't
 be so.
 Each ague-fit of fear at end, they crept
 (Because somehow people once born
 must live)
 Out of the sound, sight, swing and
 sway of the Name,
 Into a corner, the dark rest of the world,
 And safe space where as yet no fear had
 reached;
 'T was there they looked about them,
 breathed again,
 And felt indeed at home, as we might
 say.
 The current of common things, the daily
 life,
 This had their due contempt; no
 Name pursued
 Man from the mountain-top where
 fires abide,
 To his particular mouse-hole at its foot
 Where he ate, drank, digested, lived in
 short:
 Such was man's vulgar business, far too
 small
 To be worth thunder: "small," folk
 kept on, "small,"
 With much complacency in those great
 days!
 A mote of sand, you know, a blade of
 grass—
 What was so despicable as mere grass,
 Except perhaps the life of the worm or
 fly
 Which fed there? These were "small"
 and men were great.
 Well, sir, the old way 's altered some-
 what since,
 And the world wears another aspect
 now:
 Somebody turns our spyglass round, or
 else
 Puts a new lens in it: grass, worm, fly
 grow big:
 We find great things are made of little
 things,
 And little things go lessening till at last
 Comes God behind them. Talk of
 mountains now?
 We talk of mould that heaps the moun-
 tain, mites
 That throng the mould, and God that
 makes the mites.
 The Name comes close behind a stom-
 ach-cyst,

The simplest of creations, just a sac
That 's mouth, heart, legs and belly at
once, yet lives
And feels, and could do neither, we con-
clude
If sir-plified still further one degree :
The small becomes the dreadful and
immense !
Lightning, forsooth ? No word more
upon that !
A tin-foil bottle, a strip of greasy silk,
With a bit of wire and knob of brass,
and there 's
Your dollar's-worth of lightning ! But
the cyst—
The life of the least of the little things ?
No, no !
Preachers and teachers try another
tack,
Come near the truth this time : they
put aside
Thunder and lightning : " That 's
mistake," they cry,
" Thunderbolts fall for neither fright
nor sport,
" But do appreciable good, like tides,
" Changes of the wind, and other
natural facts—
" ' Good ' meaning good to man, his
body or soul.
" Mediate, immediate, all things minis-
ter
" To man,—that 's settled : be our
future text
" ' We are His children ! ' " So, they
now harangue
About the intention, the contrivance,
all
That keeps up an incessant play of
love,—
See the Bridgewater book.

Amen to it !

Well, sir, I put this question : I 'm a
child ?
I lose no time, but take you at your
word :
How shall I act a child's part properly ?
Your sainted mother, sir,—used you to
live
With such a thought as this a-worrying
you ?
" She has it in her power to throttle me,
" Or stab or poison : she may turn me
out,
" Or lock me in,—nor stop at this, to-
day,

" But cut me off to-morrow from the
estate
" I look for "—(long may you enjoy it,
sir !)
" In brief, she may unchild the child I
am."
You never had such crotchets ? Nor
have I !
Who, frank confessing childship from
the first,
Cannot both fear and take my ease at
once,
So, don't fear,—know what might be,
well enough,
But know too, child-like, that it will
not be,
At least in my case, mine, the son and
heir
Of the kingdom, as yourself proclaim
my style.
But do you fancy I stop short at this ?
Wonder if suit and service, sons and
heirs
Needs must expect, I dare pretend to
find ?
If, looking for signs proper to such a
one,
I straight perceive them irresistible ?
Concede that homage is a son's plain
right,
And, never mind the nods and raps and
winks,
'T is the pure obvious supernatural
Steps forward, does its duty : why, of
course !
I have presentiments ; my dreams
come true :
I fancy a friend stands whistling all in
white
Blithe as a boblink, and he 's dead I
learn.
I take dislike to a dog my favourite
long,
And sell him ; he goes mad next week
and snaps.
I guess that stranger will turn up to-
day
I have not seen these three years ;
there 's his knock.
I wager " sixty peaches on that tree !"—
That I pick up a dollar in my walk,
That your wife's brother's cousin's
name was George—
And win on all points. Oh, you wince
at this ?
You 'd fain distinguish between gift
and gift,

Washington's oracle and Sludge's itch
O' the elbow when at whist he ought to
trump?

With Sludge it 's too absurd? *Fine,
draw the line*

*Somewhere, but, sir, your somewhere is
not mine!*

Bless us, I 'm turning poet! It 's time
to end.

How you have drawn me out, sir! All
I ask

Is—am I heir or not heir? If I 'm he,
Then, sir, remember, that same person-
age

(To judge by what we read in the news-
paper)

Requires, beside one nobleman in gold
To carry up and down his coronet,

Another servant, probably a duke,
To hold egg-nogg in readiness: why

want
Attendance, sir, when helps in his
father's house

Abound, I 'd like to know?

Enough of talk!

My fault is that I tell too plain a truth.

Why, which of those who say they dis-
believe,

Your clever people, but has dreamed
his dream,

Caught his coincidence, stumbled on
his fact

He can't explain, (he 'll tell you smil-
ingly)

Which he 's too much of a philosopher
To count as supernatural, indeed,

So calls a puzzle and problem, proud of
it:

Bidding you still be on your guard, you
know,

Because one fact don't make a system
stand,

Nor prove this an occasional escape
Of spirit beneath the matter: that 's
the way!

Just so wild Indians picked up, piece by
piece,

The fact in California, the fine gold
That underlay the gravel—hoarded
these,

But never made a system stand, nor
dug!

So wise men hold out in each hollowed
palm

A handful of experience, sparkling fact

They can't explain; and since their
rest of life

Is all explainable, what proof in this?
Whereas I take the fact, the grain of
gold,

And fling away the dirty rest of life,
And add this grain to the grain each
fool has found

Of the million other such philosophers,—
Till I see gold, all gold and only gold,

Truth questionless though unexplain-
able,

And the miraculous proved the com-
monplace!

The other fools believed in mud, no
doubt—

Failed to know gold they saw: was
that so strange?

Are all men born to play Bach's fiddle-
fugues,

"Time" with the foil in carte, jump
their own height,

Cut the mutton with the broadsword,
skate a five,

Make the red hazard with the cue, clip
nails

While swimming, in five minutes row a
mile,

Pull themselves three feet up with the
left arm,

Do sums of fifty figures in their head,
And so on, by the scores of instances?

The Sludge with luck, who sees the
spiritual facts,

His fellows strive and fail to see, may
rank

With these, and share the advantage.

Ay, but share

The drawback! Think it over by
yourself;

I have not heart, sir, and the fire 's
gone grey.

Defect somewhere compensates for suc-
cess,

Every one knows that. Oh, we 're
equals, sir!

The big-legged fellow has a little arm
And a less brain, though big legs win
the race:

Do you suppose I 'scape the common
lot?

Say, I was born with flesh so sensitive,
Soul so alert, that, practice helping
both,

I guess what 's going on outside the
veil,

Just as a prisoned crane feels pairing-time
 In the islands where his kind are, so
 must fall
 To capering by himself some shiny
 night,
 As if your back-yard were a plot of
 spice—
 Thus am I 'ware of the spirit-world :
 while you,
 Blind as a beetle that way,—for
 amends,
 Why, you can double fist and floor me,
 sir !
 Ride that hot hardmouthed horrid
 horse of yours,
 Laugh while it lightens, play with the
 great dog,
 Speak your mind though it vex some
 friend to hear,
 Never brag, never bluster, never
 bluish,—
 In short, you 've pluck, when I 'm a
 coward—there !
 I know it, I can't help it,—folly or no,
 I 'm paralysed, my hand 's no more a
 hand,
 Nor my head, a head, in danger : you
 can smile
 And change the pipe in your cheek.
 Your gift 's not mine.
 Would you swap for mine ? No ! but
 you 'd add my gift
 To yours : I dare say ! I too sigh at
 times,
 Wish I were stouter, could tell truth nor
 flinch,
 Kept cool when threatened, did not
 mind so much
 Being dressed gaily, making strangers
 stare,
 Eating nice things ; when I 'd amuse
 myself,
 I shut my eyes and fancy in my brain,
 I 'm—now the President, now, Jenny
 Lind,
 Now, Emerson, now, the Benicia Boy—
 With all the civilized world a-wonder-
 ing
 And worshipping. I know it 's folly
 and worse ;
 I feel such tricks sap, honeycomb the
 soul :
 But I can't cure myself,—despond,
 despair,
 And then, hey, presto, there 's a turn of
 the wheel,

Under comes uppermost, fate ma-
 full amends ;
 Sludge knows and sees and hears
 hundred things
 You all are blind to,—I 've my taste
 truth,
 Likewise my touch of falsehood,—
 no doubt,
 But you 've your vices also : I 'm con-
 tent.
 What, sir ? You won't shake hand
 " Because I cheat !
 " You've found me out in cheating
 That 's enough
 To make an apostle swear ! Wh-
 when I cheat,
Mean to cheat, do cheat, and am caught
in the act,
Are you, or rather, am I sure of the fact
 (There 's verse again, but I 'm inspired
 somehow.)
 Well then I 'm not sure ! I may be, per-
 haps,
 Free as a babe from cheating : how
 began,
 My gift,—no matter ; what 'tis got
 be
 In the end now, that 's the question
 answer that !
 Had I seen, perhaps, what hand was
 holding mine,
 Leading me whither, I had died
 fright,
 So, I was made believe I led myself.
 If I should lay a six-inch plank from
 roof
 To roof, you would not cross the street
 one step,
 Even at your mother's summons : but
 being shrewd,
 If I paste paper on each side of the
 plank
 And swear 'tis solid pavement, when
 you 'll cross
 Humming a tune the while, in igno-
 rance
 Beacon Street stretches a hundred feet
 below :
 I walked thus, took the paper-cheat from
 stone.
 Some impulse made me set a thing on
 the move
 Which, started once, ran really by it-
 self ;
 Beer flows thus, suck the siphon ; to
 the kite,

It takes the wind and floats of its own force.

Don't let truth's lump rot stagnant for the lack

Of a timely helpful lie to leaven it !

Put a chalk-egg beneath the clucking hen,

She 'll lay a real one, laudably deceived,
Daily for weeks to come. I 've told my lie,

And seen truth follow, marvels none of mine.

All was not cheating, sir, I 'm positive !
I don't know if I move your hand sometimes

When the spontaneous writing spreads so far,

If my knee lifts the table all that height,
Why the inkstand don't fall off the desk a-tilt, [waltz

Why the accordion plays a prettier
Then I can pick out on the pianoforte,
Why I speak so much more than I intend,

Describe so many things I never saw.

I tell you, sir, in one sense, I believe
Nothing at all,—that everybody can,
Will, and does cheat : but in another sense

I 'm ready to believe my very self—
That every cheat's inspired, and every lie

Quick with a germ of truth.

You ask perhaps

Why I should condescend to trick at all
If I know a way without it ? This is why !

There 's a strange secret sweet self-sacrifice

In any desecration of one 's soul
To a worthy end,—isn't it Herodotus
(I wish I could read Latin !) who describes

The single gift of the land's virginity,
Demanded in those old Egyptian rites,
(I 've but a hazy notion—help me, sir !)
For one purpose in the world, one day in a life,

One hour in a day—thereafter, purity,
And a veil thrown o'er the past for evermore !

Well now, they understood a many things

Down by Nile city, or wherever it was !
I 've always vowed, after the minute's lie,

And the good end's gain,—truth should be mine henceforth.

This goes to the root of the matter, sir,
—this plain

Plump fact : accept it and unlock with it

The wards of many a puzzle !

Or, finally,

Why should I set so fine a gloss on things ?

What need I care ? I cheat in self-defence,

And there 's my answer to a world of cheats !

Cheat ? To be sure, sir ! What's the world worth else ?

Who takes it as he finds, and thanks his stars ?

Don't it want trimming, turning, furbishing up

And polishing over ? Your so-styled great men,

Do they accept one truth as truth is found,

Or try their skill at tinkering ? What's your world ?

Here are you born, who are, I 'll say at once,

One of the luckiest whether in head and heart,

Body and soul, or all that helps the same.

Well, now, look back : what faculty of yours

Came to its full, had ample justice done

By growing when rain fell, biding its time,

Solidifying growth when earth was dead,

Spiring up, broadening wide, in seasons due ?

Never ! You shot up and frost nipped you off,

Settled to sleep when sunshine bade you sprout ;

One faculty thwarted its fellow : at the end,

All you boast is, " I had proved a toppling tree

In other climes "—yet this was the right clime

Had you foreknown the seasons. Young, you 've force

Wasted like well-streams : old,—oh, then indeed,

Behold a labyrinth of hydraulic pipes

Through which you 'd play off wondrous waterwork ;
 Only, no water left to feed their play !
 Young,—you 've a hope, an aim, a love ; it 's tossed
 And crossed and lost : you struggle on, some spark
 Shut in your heart against the puffs around,
 Through cold and pain ; these in due time subside,
 Now then for age's triumph, the hoarded light
 You mean to loose on the altered face of things,—
 Up with it on the tripod ! It 's extinct.
 Spend your life's remnant asking, which was best,
 Light smothered up that never peeped forth once,
 Or the cold cresset with full leave to shine ?
 Well, accept this too,—seek the fruit of it
 Not in enjoyment, proved a dream on earth,
 But knowledge, useful for a second chance,
 Another life,—you 've lost this world —you 've gained
 Its knowledge for the next.—What knowledge, sir,
 Except that you know nothing ? Nay, you doubt
 Whether 'twere better have made you man or brute,
 If aught be true, if good and evil clash.
 No foul, no fair, no inside, no outside,
 There 's your world !

Give it me ! I slap it brisk
 With harlequin's pasteboard sceptre : what 's it now ?
 Changed like a rock-fat, rough with rusty weed,
 At first wash-over of the returning wave !
 All the dry dead impracticable stuff
 Starts into life and light again ; this world
 Pervaded by the influx from the next.
 I cheat, and what's the happy consequence ?
 You find full justice straightway dealt
 you out,

Each want supplied, each ignorance set at ease,
 Each folly fooled. No life-long labour now
 As the price of worse than nothing ! No mere film
 Holding you chained in iron, as it seems,
 Against the outstretch of your very arms
 And legs in the sunshine moralists forbid !
 What would you have ? Just speak and, there, you see !
 You 're supplemented, made a whole at last,
 Bacon advises, Shakespeare writes you songs,
 And Mary Queen of Scots embraces you.
 Thus it goes on, not quite like life perhaps,
 But so near, that the very difference piques,
 Shows that e'en better than this best will be—
 This passing entertainment in a hut
 Whose bare walls take your taste since, one stage more,
 And you arrive at the palace : all half real,
 And you, to suit it, less than real beside,
 In a dream, lethargic kind of death in life,
 That helps the interchange of natures, flesh
 Transfused by souls, and such souls !
 Oh, 'tis choice !
 And if a while the bubble, blown too thin,
 Seem nigh on bursting,—if you nearly see
 The real world through the false,—what *do* you see ?
 Is the old so ruined ? You find you 're in a flock
 Of the youthful, earnest, passionate—genius, beauty,
 Rank and wealth also, if you care for these,
 And all depose their natural rights, hail you,
 (That 's me, sir) as their mate and yoke-fellow,
 Participate in Sludgehood—nay, grow mine,

I veritably possess them—banish
doubt,

And reticence and modesty alike!

Why, here 's the Golden Age, old Paradise

Or new Eutopia! Here is life indeed,
And the world well won now, yours for
the first time!

And all this might be, may be, and with
good help

Of a little lying shall be: so, Sludge
lies!

Why, he 's at worst your poet who
sings how Greeks

That never were, in Trcy which never
was,

Did this or the other impossible great
thing!

He 's Lowell—it 's a world, you smile
and say,

Of his own invention—wondrous Long-
fellow,

Surprising Hawthorne! Sludge does
more than they,

And acts the books they write: the
more his praise!

But why do I mount to poets? Take
plain prose—

Dealers in common sense, set these at
work,

What can they do without their helpful
lies?

Each states the law and fact and face
of the thing

Just as he 'd have them, finds what he
thinks fit,

Is blind to what missuits him, just re-
cords

What makes his case out, quite ignores
the rest.

It 's a History of the World, the Lizard
Age,

The Early Indians, the Old Country
War,

Jerome Napoleon, whatsoever you
please,

All as the author wants it. Such a
scribe

You pay and praise for putting life in
stones,

Fire into fog, making the past your
world.

There 's plenty of " How did you con-
trive to grasp

" The thread which led you through
this labyrinth?

" How build such solid fabric out of air?

" How on so slight foundation found
this tale,

" Biography, narrative? " or, in other
words,

" How many lies did it require to make

" The portly truth you here present us
with? "

" Oh," quoth the penman, purring at
your praise,

" 'T is fancy all; no particle of fact:

" I was poor and threadbare when I
wrote that book

" ' Bliss in the Golden City.' I, at
Thebes?

" We writers paint out of our heads,
you see! "

" —Ah, the more wonderful the gift in
you,

" The more creativeness and godlike
craft! "

But I, do I present you with my piece,
It 's " What, Sludge? When my

sainted mother spoke

" The verses Lady Jane Grey last com-
posed

" About the rosy bower in the seventh
heaven

" Where she and Queen Elizabeth keep
house,—

" You made the raps? 'T was your
invention that?

" Cur, slave and devil! "—eight fingers
and two thumbs

Stuck in my throat!

Well, if the marks seem gone,
'T is because stiffish cock-tail, taken in

time,
Is better for a bruise than arnica.

There, sir! I bear no malice: 't isn't
in me.

I know I acted wrongly: still, I 've
tried

What I could say in my excuse,—to
show

The devil 's not all devil . . . I don't
pretend,

An angel, much less such a gentleman
As you, sir! And I 've lost you, lost

myself,
Lost all, l-l-l- . . .

No—are you in earnest, sir?
O, yours, sir, is an angel's part! I

know
What prejudice must be, what the
common course

Men take to soothe their ruffled self-conceit :
 Only you rise superior to it all !
 No, sir, it don't hurt much ; it 's speaking long
 That makes me choke a little : the marks will go !
 What ? Twenty V-notes more, and outfit too,
 And not a word to Greeley ? One—one kiss
 Of the hand that saves me ! You 'll not let me speak
 I well know, and I 've lost the right, too true !
 But I must say, sir, if She hears (she does)
 Your sainted . . . Well, sir,—be it so !
 That 's, I think,
 My bed-room candle. Good night !
 Bl-l-less you, sir !

R-r-r, you brute-beast and blackguard !
 Cowardly scamp !
 I only wish I dared burn down the house
 And spoil your sniggering ! Oh, what, you 're the man ?
 You 're satisfied at last ? You 've found out Sludge ?
 We 'll see that presently : my turn, sir, next !
 I too can tell my story : brute,—do you hear ?—
 You throttled your sainted mother, that old hag,
 In just such a fit of passion : no, it was . . .
 To get this house of hers, and many a note
 Like these . . . I 'll pocket them, however . . . five,
 Ten, fifteen . . . ay, you gave her throat the twist,
 Or else you poisoned her ! Confound the cuss !
 Where was my head ? I ought to have prophesied
 He 'll die in a year and join her : that 's the way.

I don't know where my head is : what had I done ?
 How did it all go ? I said he poisoned her,
 And hoped he 'd have grace given him to repent,

Whereon he picked this quarrel, bullied me
 And called me cheat : I thrashed him—
 —who could help ?
 He howled for mercy, prayed me on his knees
 To cut and run and save him from disgrace :
 I do so, and once off, he slanders me.
 An end of him ! Begin elsewhere anew !
 Boston 's a hole, the herring-pond is wide,
 V-notes are something, liberty still more.
 Beside, is he the only fool in the world ?

APPARENT FAILURE

"We shall soon lose a celebrated building."
Paris Newspaper.

I

No, for I 'll save it ! Seven years since,
 I passed through Paris, stopped a day
 To see the baptism of your Prince ;
 Saw, made my bow, and went my way :
 Walking the heat and headache off,
 I took the Seine-side, you surmise,
 Thought of the Congress, Gortschakoff,
 Cavour's appeal and Buol's replies,
 So sauntered till—what met my eyes ?

II

Only the Doric little Morgue !
 The dead-house where you show your drowned :
 Petrarch's Vaucluse makes proud the Sorgue,
 Your Morgue has made the Seine renowned.
 One pays one's debt in such a case ;
 I plucked up heart and entered,—stalked,
 Keeping a tolerable face
 Compared with some whose cheeks were chalked :
 Let them ! No Briton 's to be baulked !

III

First came the silent gazers ; next,
 A screen of glass, we 're thankful for ;
 Last, the sight's self, the sermon's text,
 The three men who did most abhor
 Their life in Paris yesterday.

So killed themselves : and now, enthroned
Each on his copper couch, they lay
Fronting me, waiting to be owned.
I thought, and think, their sin 's
atoned.

IV

Poor men, God made, and all for that !
The reverence struck me ; o'er each
head
Religiously was hung its hat,
Each coat dripped by the owner's
bed,
Sacred from touch : each had his berth,
His bounds, his proper place of rest,
Who last night tenanted on earth
Some arch, where twelve such slept
abreast,—
Unless the plain asphalte seemed best.

V

How did it happen, my poor boy ?
You wanted to be Buonaparte
And have the Tuileries for toy,
And could not, so it broke your
heart ?
You, old one by his side, I judge,
Were, red as blood, a socialist,
A leveller ! Does the Empire grudge
You 've gained what no Republic
missed ?
Be quiet, and unclench your fist !

VI

And this—why, he was red in vain,
Or black,—poor fellow that is blue !
What fancy was it, turned your brain ?
Oh, women were the prize for you !
Money gets women, cards and dice
Get money, and ill-luck gets just
The copper couch and one clear nice
Cool squirt of water o'er your bust,
The right thing to extinguish lust !

VII

It 's wiser being good than bad ;
It 's safer being meek than fierce :
It 's fitter being sane than mad.
My own hope is, a sun will pierce
The thickest cloud earth ever stretched ;
That, after Last, returns the First,
Though a wide compass round be
fetched ;
That what began best, can't end
worst,
Nor what God blessed once, prove
accurst.

EPILOGUE

FIRST SPEAKER, *as David.*

I

On the first of the Feast of Feasts,
The Dedication Day,
When the Levites joined the Priests
At the Altar in robed array,
Gave signal to sound and say,—

II

When the thousands, rear and van,
Swarming with one accord,
Became as a single man,
(Look, gesture, thought and word)
In praising and thanking the Lord,—

III

When the singers lift up their voice,
And the trumpets made endeavour,
Sounding, " In God rejoice ! "
Saying, " In Him rejoice
" Whose mercy endureth for ever ! "—

IV

Then the Temple filled with a cloud,
Even the House of the Lord ;
Porch bent and pillar bowed :
For the presence of the Lord,
In the glory of His cloud,
Had filled the House of the Lord.

SECOND SPEAKER, *as Renan.*

Gone now ! All gone across the dark
so far,
Sharpening fast, shuddering ever,
shutting still,
Dwindling into the distance, dies that
star
Which came, stood, opened once ! We
gazed our fill
With upturned faces on as real a Face
That, stooping from grave music and
mild fire,
Took in our homage, made a visible
place
Through many a depth of glory, gyre
on gyre,
For the dim human tribute. Was this
true ?
Could man indeed avail, mere praise
of his,
To help by rapture God's own rapture
too,
Thrill with a heart's red tinge that
pure pale bliss ?
Why did it end ? Who failed to beat
the breast,
And shriek, and throw the arms pro-
testing wide,

When a first shadow showed the star
addressed
Itself to motion, and on either side
The rims contracted as the rays retired;
The music, like a fountain's sickening
pulse,
Subsided on itself; awhile transpired
Some vestige of a Face no pangs convulse,
No prayers retard; then even this was
gone,
Lost in the night at last. We, lone
and left
Silent through centuries, ever and anon
Venture to probe again the vault
bereft
Of all now save the lesser lights, a mist
Of multitudinous points, yet suns,
men say—
And this leaps ruby, this lurks amethyst,
But where may hide what came and
loved our clay?
How shall the sage detect in yon expanse
The star which chose to stoop and
stay for us?
Unroll the records! Hailed ye such
advance [thus?
Indeed, and did your hope vanish
Watchers of twilight, is the worst
averring?
We shall not look up, know ourselves
are seen,
Speak, and be sure that we again are
heard,
Acting or suffering, have the disk's
serene
Reflect our life, absorb an earthly
flame,
Nor doubt that, were mankind inert
and numb,
Its core had never crimsoned all the
same,
Nor, missing ours, its music fallen
dumb?
Oh, dread succession to a dizzy post,
Sad sway of sceptre whose mere
touch appals,
Ghastly dethronement, cursed by those
the most
On whose repugnant brow the crown
next falls!

THIRD SPEAKER.

I

Witless alike of will and way divine,

How heaven's high and earth's low
should intertwine!
Friends, I have seen through your
eyes: now use mine!

II

Take the least man of all mankind, as I,
Look at his head and heart, find how
and why
He differs from his fellows utterly:

III

Then, like me, watch when nature by
degrees
Grows alive round him, as in Arctic seas
(They said of old) the instinctive water
flees

IV

Toward some elected point of central
rock,
As though, for its sake only, roamed
the flock
Of waves about the waste: awhile they
mock

V

With radiance caught for the occasion,
—hues
Of blackest hell now, now such reds and
blues
As only heaven could fitly interfuse,—

VI

The mimic monarch of the whirlpool,
king
O' the current for a minute: then they
wring
Up by the roots and oversweep the
thing,

VII

And hasten off, to play again elsewhere
where
The same peak, choose another peak as
bare,
They find and flatter, feast and finish
there.

VIII

When you see what I tell you,—nature
dance
About each man of us retire, advance,
As though the pageant's end were to
enhance

IX

His worth, and—once the life, his product,
gained—
Roll away elsewhere, keep the strife
sustained,
And show thus real, a thing the North
but feigned.—

X

When you acknowledge that one world
could do
All the diverse work, old yet ever new,
Divide us, each from other, me from
you,—

XI

Why, where 's the need of Temple,
when the walls

O' the world are that ? What use of
swells and falls
From Levites' choir, Priests' cries, and
trumpet-calls ?

XII

That one Face, far from vanish, rather
grows,
Or decomposes but to recompose,
Become my universe that feels and
knows !

THE RING AND THE BOOK

I

THE RING AND THE BOOK

Do you see this Ring ?

'T is Rome-work, made to match
(By Castellani's imitative craft)
Etrurian circlets found, some happy
morn,

After a dropping April ; found alive
Spark-like 'mid unearthed slope-side
figtree-roots

That roof old tombs at Chiusi : soft,
you see,
Yet crisp as jewel-cutting. There 's
one trick,

(Craftsmen instruct me) one approved
device

And but one, fits such slivers of pure
gold

As this was,—such mere ooziings from
the mine,

Virgin as oval tawny pendent tear
At beehive-edge when ripened combs
o'erflow,—

To bear the file's tooth and the ham-
mer's tap :

Since hammer needs must widen out
the round,

And file emboss it fine with lily-flowers,
Ere the stuff grow a ring-thing right to
wear.

That trick is, the artificer melts up wax
With honey, so to speak ; he mingles
gold

With gold's alloy, and, duly tempering
both,

Effec's a manageable mass, then works.
But his work ended, once the thing a
ring.

Oh, there 's repristination ! Just a
spirt

O' the proper fiery acid o'er its face,
And forth the alloy unfastened flies in
fume ;

While, self-sufficient now, the shape
remains,

The rondure brave, the lilled loveliness,
Gold as it was, is, shall be evermore :

Prime nature with an added artistry—
No carat lost, and you have gained a
ring.

What of it ? 'T is a figure, a symbol,
say ;

A thing's sign : now for the thing signi-
fied.

Do you see this square old yellow Book,
I toss

I' the air, and catch again, and twirl
about

By the crumpled vellum covers,—pure
crude fact

Secreted from man's life when hearts
beat hard.

And brains, high-blooded, ticked two
centuries since ?

Examine it yourselves ! I found this
book,

Gave a *lira* for it, eightpence English
just,

(Mark the predestination !) when a
Hand,

Always above my shoulder, pushed me
once,

One day still fierce 'mid many a day
struck calm,

Across a Square in Florence, crammed
with booths,

Buzzing and blaze, noontide and mar-
ket-time ;

Toward Baccio's marble,—ay, the
basement-ledge

O' the pedestal where sits and menaces
 John of the Black Bands with the up-
 right spear,
 'Twixt palace and church,—Riccardi
 where they lived,
 His race, and San Lorenzo where they
 lie.
 This book,—precisely on that palace-
 step
 Which, meant for lounging knaves o'
 the Medici,
 Now serves re-vendors to display their
 ware,—
 'Mongst odds and ends of ravage, pic-
 ture-frames
 White through the worn gilt, mirror-
 sconces chipped,
 Bronze angel-heads once knobs at-
 tached to chests,
 (Handled when ancient dames chose
 forth brocade)
 Modern chalk drawings, studies from
 the nude,
 Samples of stone, jet, breccia, porphyry
 Polished and rough, sundry amazing
 busts
 In baked earth, (broken, Providence be
 praised !)
 A wreck of tapestry, proudly-purposed
 web
 When reds and blues were indeed red
 and blue,
 Now offered as a mat to save bare feet
 (Since carpets constitute a cruel cost)
 Treading the chill scagliola bedward :
 then
 A pile of brown-etched prints, two
 crazie each,
 Stopped by a conch a-top from flutter-
 ing forth
 —Sowing the Square with works of one
 and the same
 Master, the imaginative Sienese
 Great in the scenic backgrounds—
 (name and fame
 None of you know, nor does he fare the
 worse :)
 From these . . . Oh, with a Lionard go-
 ing cheap
 If it should prove, as promised, that
 Joconde
 Whereof a copy contents the Louvre !
 —these
 I picked this book from. Five com-
 peers in flank
 Stood left and right of it as tempting
 more—

A dog's-eared Spicilegium, the fond tale
 O' the Frail One of the Flower, by
 young Dumas,
 Vulgarized Horace for the use of schools
 The Life, Death, Miracles of Saint
 Somebody,
 Saint Somebody Else, his Miracles,
 Death and Life,—
 With this, one glance at the lettered
 back of which,
 And "Stall!" cried I: a *lira* made it
 mine.
 Here it is, this I toss and take again ;
 Small-quarto size, part print part
 manuscript :
 A book in shape but, really, pure crude
 fact
 Secreted from man's life when hearts
 beat hard,
 And brains, high-blooded, ticked two
 centuries since.
 Give it me back ! The thing 's restor-
 ative
 I' the touch and sight.
 That memorable day
 (June was the month, Lorenzo named
 the Square)
 I leaned a little and overlooked my
 prize
 By the low railing round the fountain
 source
 Close to the statue, where a step
 descends :
 While clinked the cans of copper, and
 stooped and rose
 Thick-ankled girls who brimmed them
 and made place
 For marketmen glad to pitch baskets
 down,
 Dip a broad melon-leaf that holds the
 wet,
 And whisk their faded fresh. And on
 I read [ou
 Presently, though my path grew perilous
 Between the outspread straw-work
 piles of plait
 Soon to be flapping, each o'er two black
 eyes
 And swathe of Tuscan hair, on festa
 fine :
 Through fire-irons, tribes of tongs
 shovels in sheaves,
 Skeleton bedsteads, wardrobe-drawers
 agape,
 Rows of tall slim brass lamps with
 dangling gear,—

And worse, cast clothes a-sweetening in the sun :

None of them took my eye from off my prize.

Still read I on, from written title-page To written index, on, through street and street,

At the Strozzi, at the Pillar, at the Bridge ;

Till, by the time I stood at home again In Casa Guidi by Felice Church,

Under the doorway where the black begins [cold,

With the first stone-slab of the staircase I had mastered the contents, knew the whole truth

Gathered together, bound up in this book,

Print three-fifths, written supplement the rest.

"*Romana Homicidiorum*"—nay, Better translate—"A Roman murder-case :

"Position of the entire criminal cause Of Guido Franceschini, nobleman,

"With certain Four the cutthroats in his pay,

"Tried, all five, and found guilty and put to death

"By heading or hanging as befitted ranks,

"At Rome on February Twenty-Two, "Since our salvation Sixteen Ninety-Eight :

"Wherein it is disputed if, and when, "Husbands may kill adulterous wives, yet 'scape

"The customary forfeit."

Word for word, So ran the title-page : murder, or else

Legitimate punishment of the other crime,

Accounted murder by mistake,—just that

And no more, in a Latin cramp enough When the law had her eloquence to launch,

But interfilleted with Italian streaks When testimony stooped to mother-tongue,—

That, was this old square yellow book about.

Now, as the ingot, ere the ring was forged,

Lay gold, (beseech you, hold that figure fast.)

So, in this book lay absolutely truth, Fanciless fact, the documents indeed, Primary lawyer-pleadings for, against, The aforesaid Five ; real sunned-up circumstance

Adduced in proof of these on either side,

Put forth and printed, as the practice was,

At Rome, in the Apostolic Chamber's type,

And so submitted to the eye o' the Court

Presided over by His Reverence Rome's Governor and Criminal Judge, —the trial

Itself, to all intents, being then as now Here in the book and nowise out of it ;

Seeing, there properly was no judgment-bar,

No bringing of accuser and accused, And whoso judged both parties, face to face

Before some court, as we conceive of courts. [last :

There was a Hall of Justice ; that came For justice had a chamber by the hall

Where she took evidence first, summed up the same,

Then sent accuser and accused alike, In person of the advocate of each,

To weigh that evidence' worth, arrange, array

The battle. 'T was the so-styled Fisc began,

Pleaded (and since he only spoke in print

The printed voice of him lives now as then)

The public Prosecutor—"Murder 's proved ;

"With five . . what we call qualities of bad,

"Worse, worst, and yet worse still, and still worse yet ;

"Crest over crest crowning the cockatrice,

"That beggar hell's regalia to enrich "Count Guido Franceschini : punish him !"

Thus was the paper put before the court

In the next stage, (no noisy work at all,) To study at ease. In due time like reply

Came from the so-styled Patron of the Poor,

Official mouthpiece of the five accused
Too poor to fee a better,—Guido's
luck

Or else his fellows', which, I hardly
know,—

An outbreak as of wonder at the world,
A fury-fit of outraged innocence,
A passion of betrayed simplicity:

"Punish Count Guido? For what
crime, what hint

"O' the colour of a crime, inform us
first!

"Reward him rather! Recognise, we
say,

"In the deed done, a righteous judg-
ment dealt!

"All conscience and all courage,—
there 's our Count

"Charactered in a word; and, what 's
more strange,

"He had companionship in privilege,

"Found four courageous conscientious
friends:

"Absolve, applaud all five, as props of
law,

"Sustainers of society!—perchance

"A trifle over-hasty with the hand

"To hold her tottering ark, had tum-
bled else;

"But that 's a splendid fault whereat
we wink,

"Wishing your cold correctness spar-
kled so!"

Thus paper second followed paper first,
Thus did the two join issue—nay, the
four,

Each pleader having an adjunct.

"True, he killed

"—So to speak—in a certain sort—his
wife,

"But laudably, since thus it happened!"
quoth one:

Whereat, more witness and the case
postponed.

"Thus it happened not, since thus he did
the deed,

"And proved himself thereby porten-
tousest

"Of cutthroats and a prodigy of crime,
"As the woman that he slaughtered
was a saint,

"Martyr and miracle!" quoth the
other to match:

Again, more witness, and the case post-
poned.

"A miracle, ay—of lust and impud-
ence;

"Hear my new reasons!" interposed
the first:

"—Coupled with more of mine!"
pursued his peer.

"Beside, the precedents, the authori-
ties!"

From both at once a cry with an echo,
that!

That was a firebrand at each fox's tail
Unleashed in a cornfield: soon spread
flare enough,

As hurtled thither and there heaped
themselves

From earth's four corners, all authority
And precedent for putting wives to
death,

Or letting wives live, sinful as they
seem.

How legislated, now, in this respect,
Solon and his Athenians? Quote the
code

Of Romulus and Rome! Justinian
speak!

Nor modern Baldo, Bartolo be dumb!
The Roman voice was potent, plentiful;

Cornelia de Sicariis hurried to help
Pompeia de Parricidiis: *Julia de*

Something-or-other jostled *Lex* this-
and-that;

King Solomon confirmed Apostle Paul:
That nice decision of Dolabella, eh?

That pregnant instance of Theodoric,
oh!

Down to that choice example Ælian
gives

(An instance I find much insisted on)
Of the elephant who, brute-beast

though he were,

Yet understood and punished on the
spot

His master's naughty spouse and faith-
less friend;

A true tale which has edified each child,
Much more shall flourish favoured by

our court!

Pages of proof this way, and that way
proof,

And always—once again the case post-
poned.

Thus wrangled, brangled, jangled they
a month,

—Only on paper, pleadings all in print,
Nor ever was, except i' the brains of

men,
More noise by word of mouth than you
hear now—

interposed
of mine ! "
the authori-
th an echo,
h fox's tail
oon spread
ere heaped
all authority
g wives to
ul as they
s respect,
Quote the
Justinian
be dumb !
t, plentiful ;
to help
ulia de
Lex this-
ostle Paul :
ella, eh ?
Theodoric,
mple Ælian
isted oä)
brute-beast
ned on the
e and faith-
each child,
avoured by
d that way
e case post-
ngied they
all in print,
e brains of
h than you

Till the court cut all short with:
" Judged, your cause.
" Receive our sentence ! Praise God !
We pronounce
" Count Guido devilish and damnable :
" His wife Pompilia in thought, word
and deed,
" Was perfect pure, he murdered her for
that :
" As for the Four who helped the One,
all Five—
" Why, let employer and hirelings
share alike
" In guilt and guilt's reward, the death
their due ! "

So was the trial at end, do you suppose ?
" Guilty you find him, death you doom
him to ?
" Ay, were not Guido, more than needs,
a priest,
" Priest and to spare ! "—this was a
shot reserved ;
I learn this from epistles which begin
Here where the print ends,—see the
pen and ink
Of the advocate, the ready at a
pinch !—
" My client boasts the clerkly privilege,
" Has taken minor orders many
enough,
" Shows still sufficient chrism upon his
pate
" To neutralize a blood-stain : *pres-
byter*,
" *Primæ tonsuræ, subdiaconus*,
" *Sacerdos*, so he slips from underneath
" Your power, the temporal, slides in-
side the robe
" Of mother Church : to her we make
appeal
" By the Pope, the Church's head ! "

A parlous plea,
Put in with notable effect, it seems ;
" Since straight,"—resumes the zealous
orator,
Making a friend acquainted with the
facts,—
" Once the word ' clericality ' let fall,
" Procedure stopped and freer breath
was drawn
" By all considerate and responsible
Rome."

Quality took the decent part, of course ;
Held by the husband, who was noble
too :

Or, for the matter of that, a churl
would side
With too-refined susceptibility,
And honour which, tender in the ex-
treme,
Stung to the quick, must roughly right
itself
At all risks, not sit still and whine for
law
As a Jew would, if you squeezed him
to the wall,
Brisk-trotting through the Ghetto.
Nay, it seems,
Even the Emperor's Envoy had his say
To say on the subject ; might not see,
unmoved,
Civility menaced throughout Christen-
dom
By too harsh measure dealt her cham-
pion here.
Lastly, what made all safe, the Pope
was kind, [life,
From his youth up, reluctant to take
If mercy might be just and yet show
grace ;
Much more unlikely then, in extreme
age,
To take a life the general sense bade
spare.
'T was plain that Guido would go
scatheless yet.

But human promise, oh, how short of
shine !
How topple down the piles of hope we
rear !
How history proves . . . nay, read
Herodotus !
Suddenly starting from a nap, as it
were,
A dog-sleep with one shut, one open
orb,
Cried the Pope's great self,—Innocent
by name
And nature too, and eighty-six years
old,
Antonio Pignatelli of Naples, Pope
Who had trod many lands, known
many deeds,
Probed many hearts, beginning with
his own,
And now was far in readiness for
God,—
'Twas he who first bade leave those
souls in peace,
Those Jansenists, re-nicknamed Molin-
ists.

('Gainst whom the cry went, like a
 frowsy tune,
 Tickling men's ears—the sect for a
 quarter of an hour
 I' the teeth of the world which, clown-
 like, loves to chew
 Be it but a straw twixt work and
 whistling-while,
 Taste some vituperation, bite away,
 Whether at marjoram-sprig or garlic-
 clove,
 Aught it may sport with, spoil, and
 then spit forth)
 "Leave them alone," bade he, "those
 Molinists!
 "Who may have other light than we
 perceive,
 "Or why is it the whole world hates
 them thus?"
 Also he peeled off that last scandal-rag
 Of Nepotism; and so observed the
 poor
 That men would merrily say, "Halt,
 deaf and blind,
 "Who feed on fat things, leave the
 master's self
 "To gather up the fragments of his
 feast,
 "These be the nephews of Pope Inno-
 cent!—
 "His own meal costs but five carlines a
 day,
 "Poor-priest's allowance, for he claims
 no more."
 —He cried of a sudden, this great good
 old Pope,
 When they appealed in last resort to
 him,
 "I have mastered the whole matter:
 I nothing doubt.
 "Though Guido stood forth priest
 from head to heel,
 "Instead of, as alleged, a piece of
 one,—
 "And further, were he, from the ton-
 sured scalp
 "To the sandaled sole of him, my son
 and Christ's,
 "Instead of touching us by finger-tip
 "As you assert, and pressing up so
 close
 "Only to set a blood-smutch on our
 robe,—
 "I and Christ would renounce all right
 in him.
 "Am I not Pope, and presently to die,
 "And busied how to render my account,

"And shall I wait a day ere I decide
 "On doing or not doing justice here
 "Cut off his head to-morrow by the
 time,
 "Hang up his four mates, two on either
 hand,
 "And end one business more!"
 So said, so done
 Rather so writ, for the old Pope bade
 this,
 I find, with his particular chirograph,
 His own no such infirm hand, Friday
 night;
 And next day, February Twenty-Two
 Since our salvation Sixteen Nineteen
 Eight,
 —Not at the proper head-and-hanging
 place
 On bridge-foot close by Castle Angelo
 Where custom somewhat staled the
 spectacle,
 ('Twas not so well i' the way of Rome
 beside,
 The noble Rome, the Rome of Guido's
 rank)
 But at the city's newer gayer end,—
 The cavalcading promenading place
 Beside the gate and opposite the church
 Under the Pincian gardens green with
 Spring,
 'Neath the obelisk 'twixt the fountain
 in the Square,
 Did Guido and his fellows find their
 fate,
 All Rome for witness, and—my witness
 adds—
 Remonstrant in its universal grief,
 Since Guido had the suffrage of
 Rome.
 This is the bookful; thus far take the
 truth,
 The untempered gold, the fact untam-
 pered with,
 The mere ring-metal ere the ring
 made!
 And what has hitherto come of it
 Who preserves
 The memory of this Guido, and
 wife
 Pompilia, more than Ademollo's name
 The etcher of those prints, two on
 each,
 Saved by a stone from snowing broad
 the Square
 With scenic backgrounds? Was the
 truth of force?

Able to take its own part as truth
should,
Sufficient, self-sustaining? Why, if
so—

Yonder 's a fire, into it goes my book,
As who shall say me nay, and what the
loss?

You know the tale already: I may ask,
Rather than think to tell you, more
thereof,—

Ask you not merely who were he and
she,

Husband and wife, what manner of
mankind,

But how you hold concerning this and
that

Other yet-unnamed actor in the piece.
The young frank handsome courtly
Canon, now,

The priest, declared the lover of the
wife,

He who, no question, did elope with
her,

For certain bring the tragedy about,
Giuseppe Caponsacchi;—his strange
course

I' the matter, was it right or wrong or
both?

Then the old couple, slaughtered with
the wife

By the husband as accomplices in
crime,

Those Comparini, Pietro and his
spouse,—

What say you to the right or wrong of
that,

When, at a known name whispered
through the door

Of a lone villa on a Christmas night,
It opened that the joyous hearts inside

Might welcome as it were an angel-
guest

Come in Christ's name to knock and
enter, sup

And satisfy the loving ones he saved;
And so did welcome devils and their
death?

I have been silent on that circumstance
Although the couple passed for close of
kin

To wife and husband, were by some
accounts

Pompiia's very parents: you know
best.

Also that infant the great joy was for,
That Gaetano, the wife's two-weeks'
babe,

The husband's first-born child, his son
and heir,

Whose birth and being turned his night
to day—

Why must the father kill the mother
thus

Because she bore his son and saved
himself?

Well, British Public, ye who like me not,
(God love you!) and will have your
proper laugh

At the dark question, laugh it! I
laugh first.

Truth must prevail, the proverb vows;
and truth

—Here is it all i' the book at last, as
first

There it was all i' the heads and hearts
of Rome

Gentle and simple, never to fall nor
fade

Nor be forgotten. Yet, a little while,
The passage of a century or so,

Decads thrice five, and here 's time
paid his tax,

Oblivion gone home with her harvest-
ing,

And all left smooth again as scythe
could shave.

Far from beginning with you London
folk,

I took my book to Rome first, tried
truth's power

On likely people. "Have you met
such names?

"Is a tradition extant of such facts?
"Your law-courts stand, your records

frown a-row:
"What if I rove and rummage?"—

"—Why, you'll waste
"Your pains and end as wise as you
began!"

Everyone snickered: "names and
facts thus old

"Are newer much than Europe news
we find

"Down in to-day's *Diario*. Records,
quotha?

"Why, the French burned them, what
else do the French?

"The rap-and-rending nation! And
it tells

"Against the Church, no doubt,—
another gird

"At the Temporality, your Trial, of
course?"

"—Quite otherwise this time," submitted I;
 "Clean for the Church and dead against the world,
 "The flesh and the devil, does it tell for once."
 "—The rarer and the happier! All the same,
 "Content you with your treasure of a book,
 "And waive what 's wanting! Take a friend's advice!
 "It's not the custom of the country. Mend
 "Your ways indeed and we may stretch a point:
 "Go get you manned by Manning and new-manned
 "By Newman and, mayhap, wise-manned to boot
 "By Wiseman, and we'll see or else we won't!
 "Thanks meantime for the story, long and strong,
 "A pretty piece of narrative enough,
 "Which scarce ought so to drop out, one would think,
 "From the more curious annals of our kind.
 "Do you tell the story, now, in off-hand style,
 "Straight from the book? Or simply here and there,
 "(The while you vault it through the loose and large)
 "Hang to a hint? Or is there book at all,
 "And don't you deal in poetry, make-believe,
 "And the white lies it sounds like?"

Yes and no!

From the book, yes; thence bit by bit I dug
 The lingot truth, that memorable day,
 Assayed and knew my piecemeal gain was gold,—
 Yes; but from something else surpassing that,
 Something of mine which, mixed up with the mass,
 Made it bear hammer and be firm to file.
 Fancy with fact is just one fact the more
 To wit, that fancy has informed, transpierced,

Thridded and so thrown fast the facts else free,
 As right through ring and ring runs the pierced
 And binds the loose, one bar without a break.
 I fused my live soul and that inert stuff,
 Before attempting smithcraft, on the night
 After the day when,—truth thus grasped and gained,—
 The book was shut and done with and laid by
 On the cream-coloured massive agate broad
 'Neath the twin cherubs in the tarnished frame
 O' the mirror, tall thence to the ceiling top.
 And from the reading, and that slab I leant
 My elbow on, the while I read and read
 I turned, to free myself and find the world,
 And stepped out on the narrow terrace built
 Over the street and opposite the church
 And paced its lozenge-brickwork sprinkled cool;
 Because Felice-church-side stretched a-glow
 Through each square window fringed for festival,
 Whence came the clear voice of the cloistered ones
 Chanting a chant made for midsummer nights—
 I know not what particular praise of God,
 It always came and went with June Beneath
 I' the street, quick shown by opening of the sky
 When flame fell silently from cloud to cloud,
 Richer than that gold snow Jove rained on Rhodes,
 The townsmen walked by twos and threes, and talked,
 Drinking the blackness in default of air—
 A busy human sense beneath my feet
 While in and out the terrace-plants and round
 One branch of tall datura, waxed and waned

The lamp-fly lured there, wanting the
white flower.

Over the roof o' the lighted church I
looked

A bowshot to the street's end, north
away

Out of the Roman gate to the Roman
road

By the river, till I felt the Apennine.
And there would lie Arezzo, the man's
town,

The woman's trap and cage and tor-
ture-place,

Also the stage where the priest played
his part,

A spectacle for angels,—ay, indeed,
There lay Arezzo! Farther then I
fared,

Feeling my way on through the hot
and dense, [inn

Romeward, until I found the wayside
By Castelnovo's few mean hut-like
homes

Huddled together on the hill-foot
bleak,

Bare, broken only by that tree or two
Against the sudden bloody splendour
poured

Cursewise in his departure by the day
On the low house-roof of that squalid
inn

Where they three, for the first time and
the last,

Husband and wife and priest, met face
to face.

Whence I went on again, the end was
near,

Step by step, missing none and mark-
ing all,

Till Rome itself, the ghastly goal, I
reached.

Why, all the while,—how could it
otherwise?—

The life in me abolished the death of
things,

Deep calling unto deep: as then and
there

Acted itself over again once more
The tragic piece. I saw with my own
eyes

In Florence as I trod the terrace,
breathed

The beauty and the fearfulness of night,
How it had run, this round from

Rome to Rome—
Because, you are to know, they lived ?

Rome,

Pompilia's parents, as they thought
themselves,

Two poor ignoble hearts who did their
best

Part God's way, part the other way
than God's,

To somehow make a shift and scramble
through

The world's mud, careless if it splashed
and spoiled,

Provided they might so hold high, keep
clean

Their child's soul, one soul white
enough for three,

And lift it to whatever star should
stoop,

What possible sphere of purer life than
theirs

Should come in aid of whiteness hard
to save.

I saw the star stoop, that they strained
to touch,

And did touch and depose their trea-
sure on,

As Guido Franceschini took away
Pompilia to be his for evermore,

While they sang " Now let us depart in
peace,

" Having beheld thy glory, Guido's
wife! "

I saw the star supposed, but fog o' the
fen,

Gilded star-fashion by a glint from
hell;

Having been heaved up, haled on its
gross way,

By hands unguessed before, invisible
help

From a dark brotherhood, and speci-
ally

Two obscure goblin creatures, fox-
faced this,

Cat-clawed the other, called his next of
kin

By Guido the main monster,—cloaked
and caped,

Making as they were priests, to mock
God more,—

Abate Paul, Canon Girolamo.
These who had rolled the starlike pest

to Rome
And stationed it to suck up and absorb

The sweetness of Pompilia, rolled again
That bloated bubble, with her soul in-

side,
Back to Arezzo and a palace there—
Or say, a fissure in the honest earth

Whence long ago had curled the vapour first,
 Blown big by nether fires to appal day :
 It touched home, broke, and blasted far and wide.
 I saw the cheated couple find the cheat
 And guess what foul rite they were captured for,—
 Too fain to follow over hill and dale
 That child of theirs caught up thus in the cloud
 And carried by the Prince o' the Power of the Air
 Whither he would, to wilderness or sea.
 I saw them, in the potency of fear,
 Break somehow through the satyr-family
 (For a grey mother with a monkey-mien,
 Mopping and mowing, was apparent too,
 As, confident of capture, all took hands
 And danced about the captives in a ring)
 —Saw them break through, breathe safe, at Rome again,
 Saved by the selfish instinct, losing so
 Their loved one left with haters. These I saw,
 In recrudescency of baffled hate,
 Prepare to wring the uttermost revenge
 From body and soul thus left them : all was sure,
 Fire laid and cauldron set, the obscene ring traced,
 The victim stripped and prostrate : what of God ?
 The cleaving of a cloud, a cry, a crash,
 Quenched lay their cauldron, cowered i' the dust the crew,
 As, in a glory of armour like Saint George,
 Out again sprang the young good beauteous priest
 Bearing away the lady in his arms,
 Saved for a splendid minute and no more
 For, whom i' the path did that priest come upon,
 He and the poor lost lady borne so brave,
 —Checking the song of praise in me, had else
 Swelled to the full for God's will done on earth—
 Whom but a dusk misfeatured messenger,

No other than the angel of this life,
 Whose care is lest men see too much at once.
 He made the sign, such God-glimpse must suffice,
 Nor prejudice the Prince o' the Power of the Air,
 Whose ministration piles us overhead
 What we call, first, earth's roof and, last, heaven's floor,
 Now grate o' the trap, then outlet of the cage :
 So took the lady, left the priest alone,
 And once more canopied the world with black.
 But through the blackness I saw Rome again,
 And where a solitary villa stood
 In a lone garden-quarter : it was eve,
 The second of the year, and oh so cold !
 Ever and anon there flittered through the air
 A snow-flake, and a scanty couch of snow
 Crusted the grass-walk and the garden-mould.
 All was grave, silent, sinister,—when, ha ?
 Glimmeringly did a pack of werewolves pad
 The snow, those flames were Guido's eyes in front,
 And all five found and footed it, the track,
 To where a threshold-streak of warmth and light
 Betrayed the villa-door with life inside,
 While an inch outside were those blood-bright eyes,
 And black lips wrinkling o'er the flash of teeth,
 And tongues that lolled—Oh God that madest man !
 They parleyed in their language. Then one whined—
 That was the policy and master-stroke—
 Deep in his throat whispered what seemed a name—
 " Open to Caponsacchi ! " Guido cried :
 " Gabriel ! " cried Lucifer at Eden-gate.
 Wide as a heart, opened the door at once,
 Showing the joyous couple, and their child
 The two-weeks' mother, to the wolves, the wolves

To them. Close eyes ! And when
 the corpses lay
 Stark-stretched, and those the wolves,
 their wolf-work done,
 Were safe-embosomed by the night
 again,
 I knew a necessary change in things ;
 As when the worst watch of the night
 gives way,
 And there comes duly, to take cognis-
 ance,
 The scrutinizing eye-point of some
 star—
 And who despairs of a new daybreak
 now ?
 Lo, the first ray protruded on those
 five !
 It reached them, and each felon writhed
 transfixed.
 Awhile they palpitated on the spear
 Motionless over Tophet : stand or fall ?
 " I say, the spear should fall—should
 stand, I say ! "
 Cried the world come to judgment,
 granting grace
 Or dealing doom according to world's
 wont,
 Those world's-bystanders grouped on
 Rome's cross-road
 At prick and summons of the primal
 curse
 Which bids man love as well as make a
 lie.
 There prattled they, discoursed the
 right and wrong,
 Turned wrong to right, proved wolves
 sheep and sheep wolves,
 So that you scarce distinguished fell
 from fleece ;
 Till out spoke a great guardian of the
 fold,
 Stood up, put forth his hand that held
 the crook,
 And motioned that the arrested point
 decline :
 Horribly off, the wriggling dead-weight
 reeled,
 Rushed to the bottom and lay ruined
 there.
 Though still at the pit's mouth, despite
 the smoke
 O' the burning, tarriers turned again
 to talk
 And trim the balance, and detect at
 least
 A touch of wolf in what showed whitest
 sheep,

A cross of sheep redeeming the whole
 wolf,—
 Vex truth a little longer :—less and
 less,
 Because years came and went, and
 more and more
 Brought new lies with them to be loved
 in turn.
 Till all at once the memory of the
 thing,—
 The fact that, wolves or sheep, such
 creatures were,—
 Which hitherto, however men sup-
 posed,
 Had somehow plain and pillar-like pre-
 vailed
 I' the midst of them, indisputably fact,
 Granite, time's tooth should grate
 against, not graze,—
 Why, this proved sandstone, friable,
 fast to fly [wind.
 And give its grain away at wish o' the
 Ever and ever more diminutive,
 Base gone, shaft lost, only entablature,
 Dwindled into no bigger than a book,
 Lay of the column ; and that little,
 left
 By the roadside 'mid the ordure, shards
 and weeds.
 Until I haply, wandering that way,
 Kicked it up, turned it over, and recog-
 nised,
 For all the crumblement, this abacus,
 This square old yellow book,—could
 calculate
 By this the lost proportions of the style.
 This was it from, my fancy with those
 facts,
 I used to tell the tale, turned gay to
 grave,
 But lacked a listener seldom ; such
 alloy,
 Such substance of me interfused the
 gold
 Which, wrought into a shapely ring
 therewith,
 Hammered and filed, fingered and
 favoured, last
 Lay ready for the renovating wash
 O' the water. " How much of the tale
 was true ? "
 I disappeared ; the book grew all in all ;
 The lawyers' pleadings swelled back to
 their size,—
 Doubled in two, the crease upon them
 yet,

For more commodity of carriage, see!—
 And these are letters, veritable sheets
 That brought post-haste the news to
 Florence, writ
 At Rome the day Count Guido died,
 we find,
 To stay the craving of a client there,
 Who bound the same and so produced
 my book.
 Lovers of dead truth, did ye fare the
 worse?
 Lovers of live truth, found ye false my
 tale?

Well, now; there's nothing in nor out
 o' the world
 Good except truth: yet this, the some-
 thing else,
 What's this then, which proves good
 yet seems untrue?
 This that I mixed with truth, motions
 of mine
 That quickened, made the inertness
 malleolable
 O' the gold was not mine,—what's
 your name for this?
 Are means to the end, themselves in
 part the end?
 Is fiction which makes fact alive, fact
 too?
 The somehow may be thishow.

I find first

Writ down for very A. B. C. of fact,
 "In the beginning God made heaven
 and earth;"
 From which, no matter with what lisp,
 I spell
 And speak you out a consequence—
 that man, [thing,—
 Man,—as befits the made, the inferior
 Purposed, since made, to grow, not
 make in turn,
 Yet forced to try and make, else fail to
 grow,—
 Formed to rise, reach at, if not grasp
 and gain
 The good beyond him,—which attempt
 is growth,—
 Repeats God's process in man's due
 degree,
 Attaining man's proportionate result,—
Creates, no, but resuscitates, perhaps.
Inalienable, the arch-prerogative
Which turns thought, act—conceives,
 expresses too!
 No less, man, bounded, yearning to be
 free,

May so project his surplusage of soul
 In search of body, so add self to self
 By owning what lay ownerless before,—
 So find, so fill full, so appropriate
 forms—
 That, although nothing which had
 never life
 Shall get life from him, be, not having
 been,
 Yet, something dead may get to live
 again.
 Something with too much life or not
 enough,
 Which, either way imperfect, ended
 once:
 An end whereat man's impulse inter-
 venes,
 Makes new beginning, starts the dead
 alive,
 Completes the incomplete and saves
 the thing.
 Man's breath were vain to light a virgin
 wick,—
 Half-burned-out, all but quite-quenched
 wicks o' the lamp
 Stationed for temple-service on this
 earth,
 These indeed let him breathe on and
 relume!
 For such man's feat is, in the due degree,
 —Mimic creation, galvanism for life,
 But still a glory portioned in the scale.
 Why did the mage say,—feeling as we
 are wont
 For truth, and stopping midway short
 of truth,
 And resting on a lie,—“I raise a
 ghost?”
 “Because,” he taught adepts, “man
 makes not man.
 “Yet by a special gift, an art of arts,
 “More insight and more oversight and
 much more
 “Will to use both of these than boast
 my mates,
 “I can detach from me, commission
 forth
 “Half of my soul; which in its pil-
 grimage
 “O'er old unwandered waste ways of
 the world,
 “May chance upon some fragment of a
 whole,
 “Rag of flesh, scrap of bone in dim
 disuse,
 “Smoking flax that fed fire once:
 prompt therein

"I enter, spark-like, put old powers to play,

"Push lines out to the limit, lead forth last

"(By a moonrise through a ruin of a crypt)

"What shall be mistily seen, murmuringly heard,

"Mistakenly felt: then write my name with Faust's!"

Oh, Faust, why Faust? Was not Elisha once?—

[face.
Who bade them lay his staff on a corpse—
There was no voice, no hearing: he went in

Therefore, and shut the door upon them twain,

And prayed unto the Lord: and he went up

And lay upon the corpse, dead on the couch,

And put his mouth upon its mouth, his eyes

Upon its eyes, his hands upon its hands, And stretched him on the flesh; the flesh waxed warm:

And he returned, walked to and fro the house,

And went up, stretched him on the flesh again,

And the eyes opened. 'Tis a credible feat

With the right man and way.

Enough of me!

The Book! I turn its medicinable leaves

In London now till, as in Florence erst, A spirit laughs and leaps through every limb,

And lights my eye, and lifts me by the hair,

Letting me have my will again with these

—How title I the dead alive once more?

Count Guido Franceschini the Aretine, Descended of an ancient house, though poor,

A beak-nosed bushy-bearded black-haired lord,

Lean, pallid, low of stature yet robust, Fifty years old,—having four years ago

Married Pempilia Comparini, young, Good, beautiful, at Rome, where she

was born,

And brought her to Arezzo, where they lived

Unhappy lives, whatever curse the cause,—

This husband, taking four accomplices,

Followed this wife to Rome, where she was fled

From their Arezzo to find peace again, In convoy, eight months earlier, of a

priest, Aretine also, of still nobler birth,

Giuseppe Caponsacchi,—and caught her there

Quiet in a villa on a Christmas night, With only Pietro and Violante by,

Both her putative parents; killed the three,

Aged, they, seventy each, and she, seventeen, [babe

And, two weeks since, the mother of his First-born and heir to what the style

was worth O' the Guido who determined, dared

and did This deed just as he purposed point by point.

Then, bent upon escape, but hotly pressed,

And captured with his co-mates that same night,

He, brought to trial, stood on this defence—

Injury to his honor caused the act; That since his wife was false, (as manifest

By flight from home in such companionship,) Death, punishment deserved of the

false wife And faithless parents who abetted her

I' the flight aforesaid, wronged nor God nor man.

"Nor false she, nor yet faithless they," replied

The accuser; "cloaked and masked this murder glooms;

"True was Pompilia, loyal too the pair;

"Out of the man's own heart this monster curled,

"This crime coiled with connivancy at crime,

"His victim's breast, he tells you, hatched and reared;

"Uncoil we and stretch stark the worm of hell!"

A month the trial swayed this way and that

Ere judgment settled down on Guido's
guilt ;
Then was the Pope, the d Twelfth
Innocent,
Appealed to : who well weighed what
went before,
Affirmed the guilt and gave the guilty
doom.

Let this old woe step on the stage again!
Act itself o'er anew for men to judge,
Not by the very sense and sight in-
deed—

(Which take at best imperfect cognis-
ance,

Since, how heart moves brain, and how
both move hand,

What mortal ever in entirety saw ?)

—No dose of purer truth than man
digests,

But truth with falsehood, milk that
feeds him now,

Nor strong meat he may get to bear
some day—

To-wit, by voices we call evidence,

Uproar in the echo, live fact deadened
down,

Talked over, bruited abroad, whispered
away,

Yet helping us to all we seem to hear :
For how else know we save by worth of
word ?

Here are the voices presently shall
sound

In due succession. First, the world's
outcry

Around the rush and ripple of any fact
Fallen stonewise, plumb on the smooth
face of things ;

The world's guess, as it crowds the
bank o' the pool,

At what were figure and substance, by
their splash :

Then, by vibrations in the general
mind,

At depth of deed already out of reach.

This threefold murder of the day be-
fore,—

Say, Half-Rome's feel after the van-
ished truth ;

Honest enough, as the way is : all the
same,

Harbouring in the centre of its sense
A hidden germ of failure, shy but sure,

Should neutralize that honesty and
leave

That feel for truth at fault, as the way
is too.

Some prepossession such as starts
amiss, [blade

By but a hair's-breadth at the shoulder-
The arm o' the feeler, dip he ne'er so
brave ;

And so leads waveringly, let : fall wide
O' the mark his finger meant to find,
and fix

Truth at the bottom, that deceptive
speak.

With this Half-Rome,—the source of
swerving, call

Over-belief in Guido's right and wrong
Rather than in Pompilia's wrong and
right :

Who shall say how, who shall say why ?
'T is there—

The instinctive theorizing whence a
fact

Looks to the eye as the eye likes the
look.

Gossip in a public place, a sample-
speech.

Some worthy, with his previous hint to
find

A husband's side the safer, and no whit
Aware he is not Ææus the while,—

How such an one supposes and states
fact

To whosoever of a multitude
Will listen, and perhaps prolong there-
by

The not-unpleasant flutter at the
breast,

Born of a certain spectacle shut in
By the church Lorenzo opposite. So,
they lounge

Midway the mouth o' the street, on Cor-
so side,

'Twixt palace Fiano and palace Rus-
poli,

Linger and listen ; keeping clear o' the
crowd,

Yet wishful one could lend that crowd
one's eyes,

(So universal is its plague of squint)
And make hearts beat our time that
flutter false :

—All for the truth's sake, mere truth,
nothing else !

How Half-Rome found for Guido
much excuse.

Next, from Rome's other half, the
opposite feel

For truth with a like swerve, like un-
success,—

Or if success, by no more skill but
luck :

This time, through rather siding with
the wife,

However the fancy-fit inclined that
way,

Than with the husband. One wears
drab, one, pink ;

Who wears pink, ask him " Which
shall win the race,

" Of coupled runners like as egg and
egg ? "

" —Why, if I must choose, he with the
pink scarf."

Doubtless for some such reason choice
fell here.

A piece of public talk to correspond
At the next stage of the story ; just a
day

Let pass and new day bring the proper
change.

Another sample-speech i' the market-
place

O' the Barberini by the Capucins ;
Where the old Triton, at his fountain-
sport,

Bernini's creature plated to the paps,
Pufts up steel sleet which breaks to
diamond dust,

A spray of sparkles snorted from his
conch,

High over the caritellas, out o' the way
O' the motley merchandizing multi-
tude.

Our murder has been done three days
ago,

The frost is over and gone, the south
wind laughs,

And, to the very tiles of each red roof
A-smoke i' the sunshine, Rome lies gold
and glad :

So, listen how, to the other half of
Rome,

Pompilia seemed a saint and martyr
both !

Then, yet another day let come and go,
With pause prelude still of novelty,
Hear a fresh speaker !—neither this nor
that

Half-Rome aforesaid ; something bred
of both :

One and one breed the inevitable three.
Such is the personage harangues you
next ;

The elaborated product, *tertium quid* :
Rome's first commotion in subsidence
gives

The curd o' the cream, flower o' the
wheat, as it were,

And finer sense o' the city. Is this
plain ?

You get a reasoned statement of the
case,

Eventual verdict of the curious few
Who care to sift a business to the bran
Nor coarsely bolt it like the simpler sort.

Here, after ignorance, instruction
speaks ;

Here, clarity of candour, history's soul,
The critical mind, in short : no gossip-
guess.

What the superior social section thinks,
In person of some man of quality
Who,—breathing musk from lace-
work and brocade,

His solitaire amid the flow of frill,
Powdered peruke on nose, and bag at
back,

And cane dependent from the ruffled
wrist,—

Harangues in silvery and selectest
phrase

'Neath waxlight in a glorified saloon
Where mirrors multiply the girandole :
Courting the approbation of no mob,
But Eminence This and All-Illustrious
That

Who take snuff softly, range in well-
bred ring,

Card-table-quitters for observance'
sake,

Around the argument, the rational
word—

Still, spite its weight and worth, a
sample-speech.

How quality dissertated on the case.

So much for Rome and rumour ; smoke
comes first :

Once the smoke risen untroubled, we
descri

Clearlier what tongues of flame may
spire and spit

To eye and ear, each with appropriate
tinge

According to its food, pure or impure.
The actors, no mere rumours of the act,
Intervene. First you hear Count
Guido's voice,

In a small chamber that adjoins the
court,

Where Governor and Judges, summoned thence,
Tommati, Venturini and the rest,
Find the accused ripe for declaring truth.
Soft-cushioned sits he ; yet shifts seat,
shirks touch,
As, with a twitchy brow and wincing lip
And cheek that changes to all kinds of white, [dued
He proffers his defence, in tones sub-
Near to mock-mildness now, so mourn-
ful seems
The obtuser sense truth fails to satisfy ;
Now, moved, from pathos at the wrong
endured,
To passion ; for the natural man is
roused
At fools who first do wrong, then pour
the blame
Of their wrong-doing, Satan-like, on
Job.
Also his tongue at times is hard to curb ;
Incisive, nigh satiric bites the phrase.
Rough-raw, yet somehow claiming
privilege
—It is so hard for shrewdness to admit
Folly means no harm when she calls
black white !
—Eruption momentary at the most,
Modified forthwith by a fall o' the fire,
Sage acquiescence ; for the world's the
world,
And, what it errs in, Judges rectify :
He feels he has a fist, then folds his
arms
Crosswise and makes his mind up to be
meek.
And never once does he detach his eye
From those ranged there to slay him or
to save,
But does his best man's-service for him-
self,
Despite,—what twitches brow and
makes lip wince,—
His limbs' late taste of what was called
the Cord,
Or Vigil-torture more facetiously.
Even so ; they were wont to tease the
truth
Out of loath witness (toying, trifling
time)
By torture : 'twas a trick, a vice of the
age,
Here, there and everywhere, what
would you have ?

Religion used to tell Humanity
She gave him warrant or denied him
course.
And since the course was much to his
own mind,
Of pinching flesh and pulling bone
from bone
To unhusk truth a-hiding in its hulls,
Nor whisper of a warning stopped the
way,
He, in their joint behalf, the burly
slave,
Bestirred him, mauled and maimed all
recusants,
While, prim in place, Religion over-
looked ; [sign
And so had done till doomsday, never a
Nor sound of interference from her
mouth,
But that at last the burly slave wiped
brow,
Let eye give notice as if soul were
there,
Muttered " 'Tis a vile trick, foolish
more than vile,
" Should have been counted sin ; I
make it so :
" At any rate no more of it for me—
" Nay, for I break the torture-engine
thus ! "
Then did Religion start up, stare amain,
Look round for help and see none, smile
and say
" What, broken is the rack ? Well
done of thee !
" Did I forget to abrogate its use ?
" Be the mistake in common with us
both !
" —One more fault our blind age shall
answer for,
" Down in my book denounced though
it must be
" Somewhere. Henceforth find truth
by milder means ! "
Ah but, Religion, did we wait for thee
To ope the book, that serves to sit upon,
And pick such place out, we should
wait indeed !
That is all history : and what is not
now,
Was then, defendants found it to their
cost.
How Guido, after being tortured, spoke.
Also hear Caponsacchi who comes next,
Man and priest—could you compre-
hend the coil !—

In days when that was rife which now
is rare.
How, mingling each its multifarious
wires,
Now heaven, now earth, now heaven
and earth at once,
Had plucked at and perplexed their
puppet here,
Played off the young frank personable
priest;
Sworn fast and tonsured plain heaven's
celibate,
And yet earth's clear-accepted servitor,
A courtly spiritual Cupid, squire of
dames
By law of love and mandate of the
mode.
The Church's own, or why parade her
seal,
Wherefore that chrism and consecrative
work?
Yet verily the world's, or why go
badged
A prince of sonneteers and lutanists,
Show colour of each vanity in vogue
Borne with decorum due on blameless
breast?
All that is changed now, as he tells the
court
How he had played the part excepted
at;
Tells it, moreover, now the second
time:
Since, for his cause of scandal, his own
share
I' the flight from home and husband of
the wife,
He has been censured, punished in a
sort
By relegation,—exile, we should say,
To a short distance for a little time,—
Whence he is summoned on a sudden
now,
Informed that she, he thought to save,
is lost,
And, in a breath, bidden re-tell his tale,
Since the first telling somehow missed
effect,
And then advise in the matter. There
stands he,
While the same grim black-panelled
chamber links
As though rubbed shiny with the sins
of Rome
Told the same oak for ages—wave-
washed wall
Whereto has set a sea of wickedness.

There, where you yesterday heard
Guido speak,
Speaks Caponsacchi; and there face
him too
Tommati, Venturini and the rest
Who, eight months earlier, scarce re-
pressed the smile,
Forewent the wink; waived recogni-
tion so
Of peccadillos incident to youth,
Especially youth high-born; for youth
means love,
Vows can't change nature, priests are
only men,
And love needs stratagem and subter-
fuge:
Which age, that once was youth, should
recognise,
May blame, but needs not press too
hard against.
Here sit the old Judges then, but with
no grace
Of reverend carriage, magisterial port.
For why? The accused of eight
months since,—the same
Who cut the conscious figure of a fool,
Changed countenance, dropped bash-
ful gaze to ground,
While hesitating for an answer then,—
Now is grown judge himself, terrifies
now
This, now the other culprit called a
judge,
Whose turn it is to stammer and look
strange,
As he speaks rapidly, angrily, speech
that smites:
And they keep silence, bear blow after
blow,
Because the seeming-solitary man,
Speaking for God, may have an audi-
ence too,
Invisible, no discreet judge provokes.
How the priest Caponsacchi said his
say.
Then a soul sighs its lowest and its last
After the loud ones,—so much breath
remains
Unused by the four-days'-dying; for
she lived
Thus long, miraculously long, 't was
thought,
Just that Pompilia might defend her-
self.
How, while the hireling and the alien
stoop,

Comfort, yet question,—since the time
 is brief,
 And folk, allowably inquisitive,
 Encircle the low pallet where she lies
 In the good house that helps the poor
 to die,—
 Pompilia tells the story of her life.
 For friend and lover,—leech and man
 of law
 Do service ; busy helpful ministrants
 As varied in their calling as their mind,
 Temper and age : and yet from all of
 these,
 About the white bed under the arched
 roof,
 Issomehow, as it were, evolved a one,—
 Small separate sympathies combined
 and large,
 Nothings that were, grown something
 very much :
 As if the bystanders gave each his
 straw,
 All he had, though a trifle in itself,
 Which, plaited all together, made a
 Cross
 Fit to die looking on and praying with,
 Just as well as if ivory or gold.
 So, to the common kindness she
 speaks,
 There being scarce more privacy at the
 last
 For mind than body : but she is used
 to bear,
 And only unused to the brotherly look.
 How she endeavoured to explain her
 life.

Then, since a Trial ensued, a touch o'
 the same
 To sober us, flustered with frothy talk,
 And teach our common sense its help-
 lessness.
 For why deal simply with divining-rod,
 Scrape where we fancy secret sources
 flow,
 And ignore law, the recognised ma-
 chine,
 Elaborate display of pipe and wheel!
 Framed to unchoak, pump up and
 pour apace
 Truth in a flowery foam shall wash the
 world ?
 The patent truth-extracting process,—
 ha ?
 Let us make all that mystery turn one
 wheel,
 Give you a single grind of law at least !

One orator, of two on either side,
 Shall teach us the puissance of
 tongue
 —That is, o' the pen which simula-
 tongue
 On paper and saved all except
 sound
 Which never was. Law's speech
 side law's thought ?
 That were too stunning, too imme-
 an odds :
 That point of vantage, law let not
 pass.
 One lawyer shall admit us to behold
 The manner of the making out a ca-
 First fashion of a speech ; the chick-
 egg,
 And masterpiece law's bosom incubat-
 How Don Giacinto of the Arcangeli
 Called Procurator of the Poor at Rome
 Now advocate for Guido and
 mates,—
 The jolly learned man of middle age,
 Cheek and jowl all in laps with fat a-
 law,
 Mirthful as mighty, yet, as great hea-
 use,
 Despite the name and fame that tem-
 our flesh,
 Constant to that devotion of t-
 hearth, [ties !
 Still captive in those dear domes
 How he,—having a cause to triumph
 with,
 All kind of interests to keep intact,
 More than one efficacious personage
 To tranquillize, conciliate an' secu-
 And above all, public anxiety
 To quiet, show its Guido in go-
 hands,—
 Also, as if such burdens were too light
 A certain family-feast to claim his car-
 The birthday-banquet for the only son
 Paternity at smiling strife with law—
 How he brings both to buckle in o-
 bond ;
 And, thick at throat, with water-
 under-eye,
 Turns to his task and settles in his se-
 And puts his utmost means to practi-
 now :
 Wheezes out law and whistles Lat-
 forth,
 And, just as though roast lamb would
 never be,
 Makes logic levigate the big crim-
 small :

Rubs palm on palm, rakes foot with
itchy foot,
Conceives and inchoates the argument,
Sprinkling each flower appropriate to
the time,
—Ovidian quip or Ciceronian crank,
A-bubble in the larynx while he laughs,
As he had fritters deep down frying
there.
How he turns, twists, and tries the oily
thing
Shall be—first speech for Guido 'gainst
the Fisc.
Then with a skip as it were from heel to
head,
Leaving yourselves fill up the middle
bulk
O' the Trial, reconstruct its shape
august,
From such exordium clap we to the
close;
Give you, if we dare wing to such a
height,
The absolute glory in some full-grown
speech
On the other side, some finished butter-
fly,
Some breathing diamond-flake with
leaf-gold fans,
That takes the air, no trace of worm it
was,
Or cabbage-bed it had production from.
Giovambattista o' the Bottini, Fisc,
Pompilia's patron by the chance of the
hour,
To-morrow her persecutor,—compos-
ite, he,
As becomes who must meet such vari-
ous calls—
Odds of age joined in him with ends of
youth.
A man of ready smile and facile tear,
Improvised hopes, despairs at nod and
beck,
And language—ah, the gift of elo-
quence!
Language that goes as easy as a glove
O'er good and evil, smoothens both to
one.
Rashness helps caution with him, fires
the straw,
In free enthusiastic careless fit,
On the first proper pinnacle of rock
Which happens, as reward for all that
zeal,
To lure some bark to founders and
bring gai.

While calm sits Caution, rapt with
heavenward eye,
A true confessor's gaze amid the glare,
Beaconing to the breaker, death and
hell.
"Well done, thou good and faithful!"
she approves:
"Hadst thou let slip a faggot to the
beach,
"The crew had surely spied thy preci-
pice
"And saved their boat; the simple
and the slow,
"Who should have prompt forestalled
the wrecker's fee:
"Let the next crew be wise and hail in
time!"
Just so compounded is the outside man,
Blue juvenile pure eye and pippin
cheek,
And brow all prematurely soiled and
seamed [hair.
With sudden age, bright devastated
Ah, but you miss the very tones o' the
voice,
The scrannel pipe that screams in
heights of head,
As, in his modest studio, all alone,
The tall wight stands a-tiptoe, strives
and strains,
Both eyes shut, like the cockerel that
would crow,
Tries to his own self amorously o'er
What never will be uttered else than
so—
To the four walls, for Forum and Mars'
Hill,
Speaks out the poesy which, penned,
turns prose.
Clavecinist debarred his instrument,
He yet thrums—shirking neither turn
nor trill,
With desperate finger on dumb table-
edge—
The sovereign rondo, shall conclude his
Suite,
Charm an imaginary audience there,
From old Corelli to young Haendel,
both
I' the flesh at Rome, ere he perforce go
print
The cold black score, mere music for
the mind—
The last speech against Guido and his
gang,
With special end to prove Pompilia
pure.

How the Fisc vindicates Pompilia's
fame.
Then comes the all but end, the ultim-
ate
Judgment save yours. Pope Innocent
the Twelfth,
Simple, sagacious, mild yet resolute,
With prudence, probity and—what be-
side
From the other world he feels impress
at times,
Having attained to fourscore years and
six,—
How, when the court found Guido and
the rest
Guilty, but law supplied a subterfuge
And passed the final sentence to the
Pope,
He, bringing his intelligence to bear
This last time on what ball behoves
him drop
In the urn, or white or black, do's drop
a black,
Send five souls more to just precede his
own,
Stand him in stead and witness, if need
were,
How he is wont to do God's work on
earth.
The manner of his sitting out the dim
Droop of a sombre February day
In the plain closet where he does such
work,
With, from all Peter's treasury, one
stool,
One table and one lathen crucifix.
There sits the Pope, his thoughts for
company;
Grave but not sad,—nay, something
like a cheer
Leaves the lips free to be benevolent,
Which, all day long, did duty firm and
fast.
A cherishing there is of foot and knee,
A chafing loose-skinned large-veined
hand with hand,—
What steward but knows when stew-
ardship earns its wage,
May levy praise, anticipate the lord?
He reads, notes, lays the papers down
at last,
Muses, then takes a turn about the
room;
Unclasps a huge tome in an antique
guise,
Primitive print and tongue half obso-
lete,

That stands him in diurnal stead;
page,
Finds place where falls the passag-
be conned
According to an order long in use
And, as he comes upon the eveni-
chance,
Starts somewhat, solemnizes stran-
his smile,
Then reads aloud that portion first
last,
And at the end lets flow his
thoughts forth
Likewise aloud, for respite and rel-
Till by the dreary relics of the west
Wan through the half-moon wind-
all his light,
He bows the head while the lips mo-
in prayer,
Writes some three brief lines, signs a
seals the same,
Tinkles a hand-bell, bids the ob-
quious Sir
Who puts foot presently o' the clos-
sill
He watched outside of, bear as sup-
scribed
That mandate to the Governor fort-
with:
Then heaves abroad his cares in o-
good sigh,
Traverses corridor with no arm's hel-
And so to sup as a clear conscien-
should.
The manner of the judgment of t-
Pope.
Then must speak Guido yet a second
time,
Satan's old saw being apt here—sk-
for skin,
All a man hath that will he give for
life.
While life was graspable and gainable
free
To bird-like buzz her wings round
Guido's brow,
Not much truth stiffened out the we-
of words
He wove to catch her: when away she
flew
And death came, death's breath r-
velled up the lies,
Left bare the metal thread, the fibre
fine
Of truth, i' the spinning: the true
words come last.

How Guido, to another purpose quite,
Speaks and despairs, the last night of
his life,

In that New Prison by Castle Angelo
At the bridge-foot: the same man,
another voice,

On a stone bench in a close fetid cell,
Where the hot vapour of an agony,
Struck into drops on the cold wall,
runs down

Horrible worms made out of sweat and
tears—

There crouch, well-nigh to the knees in
dungeon-straw,

Lit by the sole lamp suffered for their
sake,

Two awe-struck figures, this a Car-
dinal,

That an Abate, both of old styled
friends

Of the part-man part-monster in the
midst,

So changed is Franceschini's gentle
blood.

The tiger-cat screams now, that whined
before,

That pried and tried and trod so gin-
gerly,

Till in its silkiness the trap-teeth join ;
Then you know how the bristling fury
foams.

They listen, this wrapped in his folds
of red,

While his feet fumble for the filth be-
low ;

The other, as beseems a stouter heart,
Working his best with beads and cross
to ban

The enemy that comes in like a flood
Spite of the standard set up, verily

And in no trope at all, against him
there :

For at the prison-gate, just a few steps
Outside, already, in the doubtful dawn,

Thither, from this side and from that,
slow sweep

And settle down in silence solidly,
Crow-wise, the frightful Brotherhood

of Death.

Black-hatted and black-hooded huddle
they,

Black rosaries a-dangling from each
waist ;

So take they their grim station at the
door,

Torches alight and cross-bones-banner
spread,

And that gigantic Christ with open
arms,

Grounded. Nor lacks there aught but
that the group

Break forth, intone the lamentable
psalm,

" Out of the deeps, Lord, have I cried
to thee ! "—

When inside, from the true profound,
a sign

Shall bear intelligence that the foe is
foiled,

Count Guido Franceschini has con-
fessed,

And is absolved and reconciled with
[God.

Then they, intoning, may begin their
march,

Make by the longest way for the People's
Square,

Carry the criminal to his crime's award :
A mob to cleave, a scaffolding to reach,

Two gallows and Mannaia crowning all.
How Guido made defence a second

time.

Finally, even as thus by step and step
I led you from the level of to-day

Up to the summit of so long ago,
Here, whence I point you the wide

prospect round—
Let me, by like steps, slope you back to

smooth,
Land you on mother-earth, no whit the

worse,
To feed o' the fat o' the furrow : free

to dwell,
Taste our time's better things pro-

fusely spread
For all who love the level, corn and

wine,
Much cattle and the many-folded fleece,

Shall not my friends go feast again on
sward,

Though cognisant of country in the
clouds

Higher than wistful eagle's horny eye
Ever unclosed for, 'mid ancestral crags,

When morning broke and Spring was
back once more,

And he died, heaven, save by his heart,
unreached ?

Yet heaven my fancy lifts to, ladder-
like,—

As Jack reached, holpen of his bean-
stalk-rungs !

A novel country : I might make it
mine

By choosing which one aspect of the
 year
 Suited mood best, and putting solely
 that
 On panel somewhere in the House of
 Fame,
 Landscaping what I saved, not what I
 saw :
 — Might fix you, whether frost in
 goblin-time
 Startled the moon with his abrupt
 bright laugh,
 Or, August's hair afloat in filmy fire,
 She fell, arms wide, face foremost on
 the world,
 Swooned there and so sung out the
 strength of things.
 Thus were abolished Spring and Au-
 tumn both,
 The land dwarfed to one likeness of the
 land,
 Life cramped corpse-fashion. Rather
 learn and love
 Each facet-flash of the revolving year!—
 Red, green and blue that whirl into a
white,
 The variance now, the eventual unity,
 Which make the miracle. See it for
 yourselves, [alive !
 This man's act, changeable because
 Action now shrouds, now shows the
 informing thought ;
 Man, like a glass ball with a spark a-
 top,
 Out of the magic fire that lurks inside,
 Shows one tint at a time to take the eye :
 Which, let a finger touch the silent
 sleep,
 Shifted a hair's-breadth shoots you
 dark for bright,
 Suffuses bright with dark, and baffles so
 Your sentence absolute for shine or
 shade.
 Once set such orbs,—white styled,
 black stigmatized,—
 A-rolling, see them once on the other
 side
 Your good men and your bad men
 every one,
 From Guido Franceschini to Guy Faux,
 Oft would you rub your eyes and
 change your names.
 Such, British Public, ye who like me
 no^t,
 (God love you!)—whom I yet have
 laboured for,

Perchance more careful whoso r
 may read
 Than erst when all, it seemed, co
 read who ran,—
 Perchance more careless whoso r
 may praise
 Than late when he who praised a
 read and wrote
 Was apt to find himself the self-sa
 me,—
 Such labour had such issue, so I wron
 This arc, by furtherance of such all
And so, by one spirt, take away
 trace
 Till, justifiably golden, rounds my ri
 A ring without a posy, and that m
 mine ?
 O lyric Love, half-angel and half-l
 And all a wonder and a wild desire,—
 Boldest of hearts that ever braved
 sun,
 Took sanctuary within the holier b
 And sang a kindred soul out to
 face,—
 Yet human at the red-ripe of the hear
 When the first summons from
 darkling earth
 Reached thee amid thy chamb
 blanched their blue,
 And bared them of the glory—to d
 down,
 To toil for man, to suffer or to die,—
 This is the same voice : can thy s
 know change ?
 Hail then, and hearken from the rea
 of help !
 Never may I commence my song,
 due
 To God who best taught song by gif
 thee,
 Except with bent head and beseech
 hand—
 That still, despite the distance and
 dark,
 What was, again may be ; some in
 change
 Of grace, some splendour once thy v
 thought,
 Some benediction anciently thy sm
 —Never conclude, but raising h
 and head
 Thither where eyes, that cannot re
 yet yearn
 For all hope, all sustainment, ai
 ward,

Their utmost up and on,—so blessing
back
In those thy realms of help, that heaven
thy home,
Some whiteness which, I judge, thy
face makes proud,
Some wanness where, I think, thy foot
may fall !

II

HALF-ROME

WHAT, you, Sir, come too ? (Just the
man I'd meet.)
Be ruled by me and have a care o' the
crowd :

This way, while fresh folk go and get
their gaze :
I'll tell you like a book and save your
shins.

Fie, what a roaring day we've had !
Whose fault ?

Lorenzo in Lucina,—here's a church
To hold a crowd at need, accommodate
All comers from the Corso ! If this
crush

Make not its priests ashamed of what
they show

For temple-room, don't prick them to
draw purse

And down with bricks and mortar, eke
us out

The beggarly transept with its bit of
apse

Into a decent space for Christian ease,
Why, to-day's lucky pearl is cast to
swine.

Listen and estimate the luck they've
had !

(The right man, and I hold him.)

Sir, do you see,
They laid both bodies in the church,
this morn

The first thing, on the chancel two steps
up,

Behind the little marble balustrade ;
Disposed them, Pietro the old mur-
dered fool

To the right of the altar, and his
wretched wife

On the other side. In trying to count
stabs,

People supposed Violante showed the
most,

Till somebody explained us that mis-
take ;

His wounds had been dealt out indiffer-
ent where,

But she took all her stabblings in the
face,
Since punished thus solely for honour's
sake,

Honoris causâ, that's the proper term.
A delicacy there is, our gallants hold,
When you avenge your honour and
only then,

That you disfigure the subject, fray the
face,

Not just take life and end, in clownish
guise.

It was Violante gave the first offence,
Got therefore the conspicuous punish-
ment :

While Pietro, who helped merely, his
mere death

Answered the purpose, so his face went
free.

We fancied even, free as you please,
that face

Showed itself still intolerably wronged ;
Was wrinkled over with resentment
yet,

Nor calm at all, as murdered faces use,
Once the worst ended : an indignant
air

O' the head there was—'tis said the
body turned

Round and away, rolled from Violante's
side

Where they had laid it loving-husband-
like.

If so, if corpses can be sensitive,
Why did not he roll right down altar-
step,

Roll on through nave, roll fairly out of
church,

Deprive Lorenzo of the spectacle,
Pay back thus the succession of
affronts

Whereto this church had served as
theatre ?

For see : at that same altar where he
lies,

To that same inch of step, was brought
the babe

For blessing after baptism, and there
styled

Pompilia, and a string of names beside,
By his bad wife, some seventeen years
ago,

Who purchased her simply to palm on
him,

Flatter his dotage and defraud the
heirs.

Wait awhile ! Also to this very step

Did this Violante, twelve years after-
 ward,
 Bring, the mock-mother, that child-
 cheat full-grown,
 Pompilia, in pursuance of her plot,
 And there brave God and man a second
 time
 By linking a new victim to the lie.
 There, having made a match unknown
 to him,
 She, still unknown to Pietro, tied the
 knot
 Which nothing cuts except this kind of
 knife ;
 Yes, made her daughter, as the girl
 was held,
 Marry a man, and honest man beside,
 And man of birth to boot,—clandes-
 tinely
 Because of this, because of that, be-
 cause
 O' the devil's will to work his worst for
 once,—
 Confident she could top her part at
 need
 And, when her husband must be told
 in turn,
 Ply the wife's trade, play off the sex's
 trick
 And, alternating worry with quiet
 qualms, [fool
 Bravado with submissiveness, quick
 Her Pietro into patience : so it proved.
 Ay, 'tis four years since man and wife
 they grew,
 This Guido Franceschini and this same
 Pompilia, foolishly thought, falsely
 declared
 A Comparini and the couple's child :
 Just at this altar where, beneath the
 piece
 Of Master Guido Reni, Christ on cross,
 Second to nought observable in Rome,
 That couple lie now, murdered yester-
 eve.
 Even the blind can see a providence
 here.
 From dawn till now that it is growing
 dusk,
 A multitude has flocked and filled the
 church,
 Coming and going, coming back again,
 Till to count crazed one. Rome was at
 the show.
 People climbed up the columns, fought
 for spikes

O' the chapel-rail to perch themselves
 upon,
 Jumped over and so broke the wood-
 work
 Painted like porphyry to deceive the
 eye ;
 Serve the priests right ! The organ
 loft was crammed,
 Women were fainting, no few fights
 ensued,
 In short, it was a show repaid your
 pains :
 For, though their room was scarce
 undoubtedly,
 Yet they did manage matters, to be
 just,
 A little at this Lorenzo. Body o' me
 I saw a body exposed once . . . never
 mind !
 Enough that here the bodies had their
 due.
 No stinginess in wax, a row all round
 And one big taper at each head and
 foot.
 So, people pushed their way, and took
 their turn,
 Saw, threw their eyes up, crossed them-
 selves, gave place
 To pressure from behind, since all the
 world
 Knew the old pair, could talk the
 tragedy
 Over from first to last : Pompilia too
 Those who had known her—what 't
 was worth to them !
 Guido's acquaintance was in less re-
 quest ;
 The Count had lounged somewhat too
 long in Rome,
 Made himself cheap ; with him were
 hand and glove
 Barbers and bleary-eyed, as the ancient
 sings.
 Also he is alive and like to be :
 Had he considerably died,—aha !
 I jostled Luca Cini on his staff.
 Mute in the midst, the whole man one
 amaze,
 Staring amain and crossing brow and
 breast.
 "How now ?" asked I. "'Tis seventy
 years," quoth he,
 "Since I first saw, holding my father's
 hand,
 "Bodies set forth : a many have I
 seen,

"Yet all was poor to this I live and see.
 "Here the world's wickedness seals up
 the sum :
 "What with Molinos' doctrine and this
 deed,
 "Antiehrst 's surely come and dooms-
 day near.
 "May I depart in peace, I have seen
 my see."
 "Depart then," I advised, "nor block
 the road
 "For youngsters still behindhand with
 such sights !"
 "Why no," rejoins the venerable sire,
 "I know it 's horrid, hideous past be-
 lief,
 "Burdensome far beyond what eye
 can bear ;
 "But they do promise, when Pompilia
 dies
 "I' the course o' the day,—and she
 can't outlive night,—
 "They'll bring her body also to expose
 "Beside the parents, one, two, three a-
 breast ;
 "That were indeed a sight which, might
 I see,
 "I trust I should not last to see the
 like !"
 Whereat I bade the senior spare his
 shanks,
 Since doctors give her till to-night to
 live
 And tell us how the butchery happened.
 "Ah,
 "But you can't know !" sighs he, "I'll
 not despair :
 "Beside I'm useful at explaining
 things—
 "As, how the dagger laid there at the
 feet,
 "Caused the peculiar cuts ; I mind its
 make,
 "Triangular i' the blade, a Genoese,
 "Armed with those little hook-teeth
 on the edge
 "To open in the flesh nor shut again :
 "I like to teach a novice : I shall
 stay !"
 And stay he did, and stay be sure he
 will.
 A personage came by the private door
 At noon to have his look : I name no
 names :
 Well then, His Eminence the Cardinal,
 Whose servitor in honourable sort
 Guido was once, the same who made
 the match,
 (Will you have the truth ?) whereof we
 see effect.
 No sooner whisper ran he was arrived
 Than up pops Curate Carlo, a brisk lad,
 Who never lets a good occasion slip,
 And volunteers improving the event.
 We looked he'd give the history's self
 some help,
 Treat us to how the wife's confession
 went
 (This morning she confessed her crime,
 we know)
 And, may be, throw in something of
 the Priest—
 If he's not ordered back, punished
 anew,
 The gallant, Caponsacchi, Lucifer
 I' the garden where Pompilia, Eve-like,
 lured
 Her Adam Guido to his fault and fall.
 Think you we got a sprig of speech
 akin
 To this from Carlo, with the Cardinal
 there ?
 Too wary, he was, too widely awake, I
 trow.
 He did the murder in a dozen words ;
 Then said that all such outrages erop
 forth [tares
 I' the course of nature, when Molinos'
 Are sown for wheat, flourish and cloke
 the Church :
 So slid on to the abominable sect
 And the philosophic sin—we've heard
 all that,
 And the Cardinal too, (who book-made
 on the same)
 But, for the murder, left it where he
 found.
 Oh but he's quick, the Curate, minds
 his game !
 And, after all, we have the main o' the
 fact :
 Case could not well be simpler,—
 mapped, as it were,
 We follow the murder's maze from
 source to sea,
 By the red line, past mistake : one sees
 indeed
 Not only how all was and must have
 been,
 But cannot other than be to the end
 of time.
 Turn out here by the Ruspoli ! Do
 you hold

Guido is so prodigiously to blame?
 A certain cousin of yours has told you
 so?
 Exactly. Here a friend shall set
 you right,
 Let him not have the handsel of your
 ear.

These wretched Comparini were once
 gay
 And galiard, of the modest middle
 class:

Born in this quarter seventy years ago,
 And married young, they lived the
 accustomed life,

Citizens as they were of good repute:
 And, childless, naturally took their ease
 With only their two selves to care about
 And use the wealth for: wealthy is the
 word,

Since Pietro was possessed of house and
 land—

And specially one house, when good
 days were,

In Via Vittoria, the respectable street
 Where he lived mainly; but another
 house

Of less pretension did he buy betimes,
 The villa, meant for jaunts and jollity,
 I' the Pauline district, to be private
 there—

Just what puts murder in an enemy's
 head.

Moreover,—and here's the worm i' the
 core, the germ

O' the rottenness and ruin which
 arrived,—

He owned some usufruct, had moneys'
 use

Lifelong, but to determine with his
 life

In heirs' default: so, Pietro craved an
 heir,

(The story always old and always new)
 Shut his fool's-eyes fast on the visible
 good

And wealth for certain, opened them
 owl-wide

On fortune's sole piece of forgetfulness,
 The child that should have been and
 would not be.

Hence, seventeen years ago, conceive
 his glee

When first Violante, 'twixt a smile and
 a blush,

With touch of agitation proper too,

Announced that, spite of her unprom-
 ising age,

The miracle would in time be manifest,
 An heir's birth was to happen: and it
 did.

Somehow or other,—how, all in good
 time! [hear,—

By a trick, a sleight of hand you are to
 A child was born, Pompilia, for his joy,
 Plaything at once and prop, a fairy-
 gift,

A saints' grace or, say, grant of the
 good God,—

A fiddle-pin's end! What imbeciles
 are we!

Look now: if some one could have
 prophesied,

"For love of you, for liking to your
 wife,

"I undertake to crush a snake I spy
 "Settling itself i' the soft of both your
 breasts.

"Give me yon babe to strangle pain-
 lessly!

"She'll soar to the safe: you'll have
 your crying out,

"Then sleep, then wake, then sleep,
 then end your days

"In peace and plenty, mixed with
 mild regret,

"Thirty years hence when Christmas
 takes old folk"—

How had old Pietro sprung up, crossed
 himself,

And kicked the conjurer! Whereas
 you and I,

Being wise with after-wit, had clapped
 our hands;

Nay, added, in the old fool's interest
 "Strangle the black-eyed babe, so far
 so good,

"But on condition you relieve the mar-
 "O' the wife and throttle him Violante
 too—

"She is the mischief!"

We had hit the mark

She, whose trick brought the babe into
 the world,

She it was, when the babe was grown a
 girl,

Judged a new trick should reinforce the
 old,

Send vigour to the lie now somewhat
 spent

By twelve years' service; lest Eve's
 rule decline

Over this Adam of hers, whose cab-
bage-plot
Throve dubiously since turned fools'-
paradise,
Spite of a nightingale on every stump.
Pietro's estate was dwindling day by
day,
While he, rapt far above such mundane
care,
Crawled all-fours with his baby pick-a-
back,
Sat at serene cats'-cradle with his
child,
Or took the measured tallness, top to toe,
Of what was grown a great girl twelve
years old :
Till sudden at the door a tap discreet,
A visitor's premonitory cough,
And poverty had reached him in her
rounds.

This came when he was past the work-
ing-time,
Had learned to dandle and forgot to
dig,
And who must but Violante east about,
Contrive and task that head of hers
again ?
She who had caught one fish, could
make that catch
A bigger still, in angler's policy :
So, with an angler's mercy for the bait,
Her minnow was set wriggling on its
barb
And tossed to the mid-stream ; that
is, this grown girl
With the great eyes and bounty of
black hair
And first crisp youth that tempts a
jaded taste,
Was whisked i' the way of a certain
man, who snapped.

Count Guido Franceschini the Aretine
Was head of an old noble house enough,
Not over-rich, you can't have every-
thing,
But such a man as riches rub against,
Readily stick to,—one with a right to
them
Born in the blood : 'twas in his very
brow
Always to knit itself against the world,
So be beforehand when that stinted
due
Service and suit : the world ducks and
defers.

As such folks do, he had come up to
Rome
To better his fortune, and, since many
years,
Was friend and follower of a cardinal ;
Waiting the rather thus on providence,
That a shrewd younger poorer brother
yet,
The Abate Paolo, a regular priest,
Had long since tried his powers and
found he swam
With the deftest on the Galilean pool :
But then he was a web-foot, free o' the
wave,
And no ambiguous dabchick hatched
to strut,
Humbled by any fond attempt to swim
When fiercer fowl usurped his dunghill-
top—
A whole priest, Paolo, no mere piece of
one
Like Guido tacked thus to the Church's
tail !
Guido moreover, as the head o' the
house,
Claiming the main prize, not the lesser
luck,
The centre lily, no mere chickweed
fringe.

He waited and learned waiting, thirty
years ;
Got promise, missed performance—
what would you have ?
No petty post rewards a nobleman
For spending youth in splendid lackey-
work,
And there's concurrence for each rarer
prize ;
When that falls, rougher hand and
readier foot
Push aside Guido spite of his black
looks.

The end was, Guido, when the warning
showed,
The first white hair i' the glass, gave up
the game,
Determined on returning to his town,
Making the best of bad incurable,
Patching the old palace up and linger-
ing there
The customary life out with his kin,
Where honour helps to spice the scanty
bread.

Just as he trimmed his lamp and girt
his loins
To go on his journey and be wise at home,

In the right mood of disappointed
worth,
Who but Violante sudden spied her
prey
(Where was I with that angler-simile ?)
And threw her bait, Pompilia, where he
sulked—
A gleam i' the gloom !

What if he gained thus much,
Wrung out this sweet drop from the
bitter Past,
Bore off this rose-bud from the prickly
bake
To justify such torn clothes and
scratched hands,
And, after all, brought something back
from Rome ?

Would not a wife serve at Arezzo well
To light the dark house, lend a look of
youth
To the mother's face grown mcagre, left
alone
And famished with the emptiness of
hope,

Old Donna Beatrice ? Wife you want
Would you play family-representative,
Carry you elder-brotherly, high and
right

O'er what may prove the natural petu-
lance
Of the third brother, younger, greedier
still,

Girolamo, also a fledgeling priest,
Beginning life in turn with callow beak
Agape for luck, no luck had stopped
and stilled.

Such were the pinks and greys about
the bait
Persuaded Guido gulp down hook and
all.

What constituted him so choice a
catch,
You question ? Past his prime and
poor beside ?
Ask that of any she who knows the
trade.

Why first, here was a nobleman with
friends,
A palace one might run to and be safe
When presently the threatened fate
should fall,

A big-browed master to block door-
way up,
Parley with people bent on pushing by
And praying the mild Pietro quick clear
scores :

Is birth a privilege and power or no ?
Also,—but judge of the result desired,
By the price paid and manner of the
sale.

The Count was made woo, win and
wed at once :

Asked, and was haled for answer, lest
the heat

Should cool, to San Lorenzo, one blind
eye,

And had Pompilia put into his arms
O' the sly there, by a hasty candle-
blink,

With sanction of some priest-con-
federate

Properly paid to make short work and
sure.

So did old Pietro's daughter change her
style

For Guido Franceschini's lady-wife
Ere Guido knew it well ; and why this
haste

And scramble and indecent secrecy ?

" Lest Pietro, all the while in ignorance,
" Should get to learn, gainsay and
break the match :

" His peevishness had promptly put
aside

" Such honour and refused the prof-
fered boon,

" Pleased to become authoritative once.

" She remedied the wilful man's mis-
take—"

Did our discreet Violante. Rather say,
Thus did she, lest the object of her
game,

Guido the gulled one, give him but a
chance,

A moment's respite, time for thinking
twice,

Might count the cost before he sold
himself,

And try the clink of coin they paid him
with.

But passed, the bargain struck, the
business done,

Once the clandestine marriage over-
thus,

All parties made perforce the best o'
the fact ;

Pietro could play vast indignation off,
Be ignorant and astounded, dupe alike

At need, of wife, daughter and son-in-
law,

While Guido found himself in flagrant
fault,

Must c'en do suit and service, soothe,
subdue
A father not unreasonably chafed,
Bring him to terms by paying son's
devoir.
Pleasant initiation !

The end, this :

Guido's broad back was saddled to bear
all—

Pietro, Violante, and Pompilai too,—
Three lots cast confidently in one lap,
Three dead-weights with one arm to
lift the three

Out of their limbo up to life again :
The Roman household was to strike
fresh root

In a new soil, graced with a novel name,
Gilt with an alien glory, Aretine

Henceforth and never Roman any
more, [ran :

By treaty and engagement : thus it
Pompilia's dowry for Pompilia's self
As a thing of course—she paid her own
expense ;

No loss nor gain there : but the couple,
you see,

They, for their part, turned over first of
all

Their fortune in its rags and rottenness
To Guido, fusion and confusion, he
And his with them and theirs,—what-
ever rag

With a coin residuary fell on floor
When Brother Paolo's energetic shak
Should do the relics justice : since
'twas thought,

Once vulnerable Pietro out of reach,
That, left at Rome as representative,
The Abate, backed by a potent patron
here,

And otherwise with purple flushing him,
Might play a good game with the
creditor,

Make up a moiety which, great or small,
Should go to the common stock—if
anything,

Guido's, so far repayment of the cost
About to be,—and if, as looked more
like,

Nothing,—why, all the nobler cost
were his

Who guaranteed, for better or for
worse,

To Pietro and Violante, house and home,
Kith and kin, with the pick of com-
pany

And life o' the fat o' the land while life
should last.

How say you to the bargain at first
blush ?

Why did a middle-aged not-silly man
Show himself thus besotted all at once ?
Quoth Solomon, one black eye does it
all.

They went to Arezzo,—Pietro and his
spouse,

With just the dusk o' the day of life to
spend,

Eager to use the twilight, taste a treat,
Enjoy for once with neither stay nor
stint

The luxury of lord-and-lady-ship,
And realise the stuff and nonsense long
A-simmer in their noddles ; vent the
fume [ceit

Born there and bred, the citizen's con-
How fares nobility while crossing earth,
What rampart or invisible body-guard
Keeps off the taint of common life
from such.

They had not fed for nothing on the
tales

Of grantees who give banquets worthy
Jove,

Spending gold as if Plutus paid a whim,
Served with obeisances as when . . .
what God ?

I'm at the end of my tether ; 'tis
enough

You understand what they came
primed to see :

While Guido who should minister the
sight,

Stay all this qualmish greediness of soul
With appl's and with flagons—for his
part,

Was set on life diverse as pole from
pole :

Lust of the flesh, lust of the eye,—what
else

Was he just now awake from, sick and
sage,

After the very debauch they would be-
gin ?—

Suppose such stuff and nonsense really
were.

That bubble, they were bent on blow-
ing big.

He had blown already till he burst his
cheeks,

And hence found soapsuds bitter to the
tongue.

He hoped now to walk softly all his days
In soberness of spirit, if haply so,
Pinching and paring he might furnish
forth
A frugal board, bare sustenance, no
more,
Till times, that could not well grow
worse, should mend.

Thus minded then, two parties mean to
meet
And make each other happy. The
first week,
And fancy strikes fact and explodes in
full.

"This," shrieked the Comparini, "this
the Count,

"The palace, the signorial privilege,
"The pomp and pageantry were
promised us?

"For this have we exchanged our
liberty,

"Our competence, our darling of a
child?

"To house as spectres in a sepulchre
"Under this black stone heap, the
street's disgrace,

"Grimmest as that is of the gruesome
town,

"And here pick garbage on a pewter
plate

"Or cough at verjuice dripped from
earthenware?

"Oh Via Vittoria, oh the other place
"I' the Pauline, did we give you up
for this?

"Where's the foregone housekeeping
good and gay,

"The neighbourliness, the companion-
ship,

"The treat and feast when holidays
came round,

"The daily feast that seemed no treat
at all,

"Called common by the uncommon
fools we were!

"Even the sun that used to shine at
Rome,

"Where is it? Robbed and starved
and frozen too,

"We will have justice, justice if there
be!"

Did not they shout, did not the town
resound!

Guido's old lady-mother Beatrice,
Who since her husband, Count Tom-
maso's death,

Had held sole sway i' the house,—
doited crone

Slow to acknowledge, curtsey
abdicate,—

Was recognised of true novercal ty
Dragon and devil. His brother G
lamo

Came next in order: priest was l
The worse!

No way of winning him to leave
mumps

And help the laugh against old an
try

And formal habits long since out
date,

Letting his youth be patterned on
mode

Approved of where Violante laid do
law.

Or did he brighten up by way of chang
Dispose himself for affability?

The malapert, too complaisant by h
To the alarmed young novice of

bride!
Let him go buzz, betake himself el
where

Nor singe his fly-wings in the cand
flame!

Four months' probation of 'his purg
tory,

Dog-snap and cat-claw, curse a
counterblast,

The devil's self had been sick of his ov
din;

And Pietro, after trumpeting hu
wrongs

At church and market-place, pillar a
post,

Square's corner, street's end, now t
palace-step

And now the wine-house bench—whi
on her side,

Violante up and down was voluble
In whatsoever pair of ears would pe

From goody, gossip, cater-cousin an
sib,

Curious to peep at the inside of thin
And catch in the act pretention

poverty
At its wits' end to keep appearance u

Make both ends meet,—nothing th
vulgar loves

Like what this couple pitched ther
right and left,—

Then, their worst done that way, the
struck tent, marched:

—Renounced their share o' the bargain,
 flung what dues
 Guido was bound to pay, in Guido's face,
 Left their hearts'-darling, treasure of
 the twain
 And so forth, the poor inexperienced
 bride,
 To her own devices, bade Arezzo rot
 And the life signorial, and sought Rome
 once more.

I see the comment ready on your lip,
 "The better fortune, Guido's—free at
 least
 "By this defection of the foolish pair,
 "He could begin make profit in some
 sort
 "Of the young bride and the new
 quietness,
 "Lead his own life now, henceforth
 breathe unplagued."
 Could he? You know the sex like
 Guido's self.
 Learn the Violante-nature!

Once in Rome,
 By way of helping Guido lead such life,
 Her first act to inaugurate return
 Was, she got pricked in conscience:
 Jubilee
 Gave her the hint. Our Pope, as kind
 as just,
 Attained his eighty years, announced a
 boon
 Should make us bless the fact, held
 Jubilee—
 Short shrift, prompt pardon for the
 light offence,
 And no rough dealing with the regular
 crime
 So this occasion were not suffered slip—
 Otherwise, sins commuted as before,
 Without the least abatement in the
 price.
 Now, who had thought it? All this
 while, it seems,
 Our sage Violante had a sin of a sort
 She must compound for now or not at
 all:
 Now be the ready riddance! She con-
 fessed
 Pompilia was a fable not a fact:
 She never bore a child in her whole life.
 Had this child been a changeling, that
 were grace
 In some degree, exchange is hardly
 theft;

You take your stand on truth ere leap
 your lie:
 Here was all lie, no touch of truth at
 all,
 All the lie hers—not even Pietro guessed
 He was as childless still as twelve years
 since.
 The babe had been a find i' the filth-
 heap, Sir,
 Catch from the kennel! There was
 found at Rome,
 Down in the deepest of our social dregs,
 A woman who professed the wanton's
 trade
 Under the requisite thin coverture,
Communis meretrix and washer-wife:
 The creature thus conditioned found
 by chance
 Motherhood like a jewel in the muck,
 And straightway either trafficked with
 her prize
 Or listened to the tempter and let be,—
 Made pact abolishing her place and
 part
 In womankind, beast-fellowship in-
 deed—
 She sold this babe eight months before
 its birth
 To our Violante, Pietro's honest spouse,
 Well-famed and widely-instanced as
 that crown
 To the husband, virtue in a woman's
 shape.
 She it was, bought and paid for, passed
 the thing
 Off as the flesh and blood and child of
 her
 Despite the flagrant fifty years,—and
 why?
 Partly to please old Pietro, fill his cup
 With wine at the late hour when lees
 are left,
 And send him from life's feast rejoic-
 ingly,—
 Partly to cheat the rightful heirs,
 agape,
 Each uncle's cousin's brother's son of
 him,
 For that same principal of the usufruct
 It vexed him he must die and leave be-
 hind.
 Such was the sin had come to be con-
 fessed.
 Which of the tales, the first or last, was
 true?
 Did she so sin once, or, confessing now,

Sin for the first time? Either way
you will.

One sees a reason for the cheat: one
sees

A reason for a cheat in owning cheat
Where no cheat had been. What of
the revenge?

What prompted the contrition all at
once,

Made the avowal easy, the shame

Why, prove they but Pompilia not
their child,

No child, no dowry; this, supposed
their child,

Had claimed what this, shown alien to
their blood,

Claimed nowise: Guido's claim was
through his wife,

Null then and void with hers. The
biter bit,

Do you see! For such repayment of
the past,

One might conceive the penitential
pair

Ready to bring their case before the
courts,

Publish their infamy to all the world
And, arm in arm, go chuckling thence
content.

Is this your view? 'Twas Guido's
anyhow

And colourable: he came forward
then,

Protested in his very bride's behalf

Against this lie and all it led to, least

Of all the loss o' the dowry; no! From
her

And him alike he would expunge the
blot,

Erase the brand of such a bestial birth,

Participate in no hideous heritage

Gathered from the gutter to be gar-
nered up

And glorified in a palace. Peter and
Paul!

But that who likes may look upon the
pair

Exposed in yonder church, and show
his skill

By saying which is eye and which is
mouth

Thro' those stabs thick and threefold,
—but for that—

A strong word on the liars and their lie
Might crave expression and obtain it,
Sir!

—Though prematurely, since there
more to come,

More that will shake your confidence
in things

Your cousin tells you,—may I be
bold?

This makes the first act of the farce,
anon

The stealing sombre element comes

Till all is black or blood-red in the piece

Guido, thus made a laughing-stock
abroad,

A proverb for the market-place
home,

Left alone with Pompilia now, the
graft

So reputable on his ancient stock,
This plague-seed set to fester his sour
flesh,

What did the Count? Revenge his
on his wife?

Unfasten at all risks to rid himself

The noisome lazar-badge, fall foul of
fate,

And, careless whether the poor rag wa-
ware

O' the part it played, or helped unwi-
tingly,

Bid it go burn and leave his frayed
flesh free?

Plainly, did Guido open both doors
wide,

Spurn thence the cur-cast creature and
clear scores

As man might, tempted in extreme lik-
this?

No, birth and breeding, and compas-
sion too

Saved her such scandal. She was
young, he thought,

Not privy to the treason, punished most

I' the proclamation of it; why make
her

A party to the crime she suffered by

Then the black eyes were now her very
own,

Not any more Violante's: let her live

Lose in a new air, under a new sun,

The taint of the imputed parentage

Truly or falsely, take no more the
touch

Of Pietro and his partner anyhow!

All might go well yet.

So she thought, herself

It seems, since what was her first act
and deed

since there's
ur confidence
may I be so
f the farce,—
ent comes in
d in the piece.
ughing-stock
ket-place at
ia now, this
nt stock,
ter his sound
Revenge him
rid himself
fall foul of
poor rag was
helped unwittingly
his frayed
both doors
creature and
extreme like
and compass-
l. She was
unished most
why make
suffered by?
now her very
let her live,
new sun,
parentage
o more the
nyhow!

ght, herself,
her first act

When news came how these kindly
ones at Rome
Had stripped her naked to amuse the
world
With spots here, spots there and spots
everywhere?
—For I should tell you that they noised
abroad
Not merely the main scandal of her
birth,
But slanders written, printed, published
Pamphlets which set forth all the
pleasantries
Of how the promised glory was a
dream,
The power a bubble and the wealth—
why, dust.
There was a picture, painted to the life,
Of those rare doings, that superlative
Initiation in magnificence
Conferred on a poor Roman family
By favour of Arezzo and her first
And famousest, the Franceschini there.
You had the Countship holding head
aloft
Bravely although bespattered, shifts
and straits
In keeping out o' the way o' the wheels
o' the world,
The comic of those home-contrivances
When the old lady-mother's wit was
taxed
To find six clamorous mouths in food
more real
Than fruit plucked off the cobwebbed
family-tree,
Or acorns shed from its gilt mouldered
Cold glories served up with three-pauls'
worth' sauce.
What, I ask,—when the drunkenness
of hate
Hiccaped return for hospitality,
Befouled the table they had feasted on,
Or say,—God knows I'll not prejudge
the case,—
Grievances thus distorted, magnified,
Coloured by quarrel into calumny,—
What side did our Pompilia first es-
pouse?
Her first deliberate measure was, she
wrote,
Pricked by some loyal impulse, straight
to Rome
And her husband's brother the Abate
there,
Who, having managed to effect the
match,

Might take men's censure for its ill suc-
cess.
She made a clean breast also in her
turn;
She qualified the couple handsomely!
Since whose departure, hell, she said,
was heaven,
And the house, late distracted by their
peals,
Quiet as Carmel where the lilies live.
Herself had oftentimes complained:
but why?
All her complaints had been their
prompting, tales
Trumped up, devices to this very end.
Their game had been to thwart her
husband's love
And cross his will, malign his words
and ways,
So reach this issue, furnish this pre-
tence
For impudent withdrawal from their
bond,—
Theft, indeed murder, since they meant
no less
Whose last injunction to her simple self
Had been—what parents'-precept do
you think?
That she should follow after with all
speed,
Fly from her husband's house clandes-
tinely,
Join them at Rome again, but first of
Pick up a fresh companion in her flight,
Putting so youth and beauty to fit use,
Some gay, dare-devil, cloak-and-rapier
spark
Capable of adventure,—helped by
whom
She, some fine eve when lutes were in
the air,
Having put poison in the posset-cup,
Laid hands on money, jewels and the
like,
And, to conceal the thing with more
effect,
By way of parting benediction too,
Fired the house,—one would finish
famously
I' the tumult, slip out, scurry off and
away
And turn up merrily at home once
more.
Fact this, and not a dream o' the devil,
Sir!
And more than this, a fact none dare
dispute,

Word for word, such a letter did she write.

And such the Abate read nor simply read

But gave all Rome to ruminate upon,
In answer to such charges as, I say,
The couple sought to be beforehand with.

The cause thus carried to the courts at Rome,

Guido away, the Abate had no choice
But stand forth, take his absent brother's part,

Defend the honour of himself beside.
He made what head he might against the pair,

Maintained Pompilia's birth legitimate
And all her rights intact—hers, Guido's now—

And so far by his tactics turned their flank,

The enemy being beforehand in the place,

That, though the courts allowed the cheat for fact,

Suffered Violante to parade her shame,
Publish her infamy to heart's content,
And let the tale o' the feigned birth pass for proved,—

Yet they stopped there, refused to intervene

And dispossess the innocents, befooled
By gifts o' the guilty, at guilt's new caprice :

They would not take away the dowry now

Wrongfully given at first, nor bar at all

Succession to the aforesaid usufruct,
Established on a fraud, nor play the

game [child
Of Pietro's child and now not Pietro's
As it might suit the gamester's purpose. Thus

Was justice ever ridiculed in Rome :

Such be the double verdicts favoured here

Which send away both parties to a suit

Nor puffed up nor cast down,—for each a crumb

Of right, for neither of them the whole loaf,

Whence, on the Comparini's part, appeal—

Counter-appeal on Guido's,—that's the game :

And so the matter stands, even to this hour,

Banded as balls are in a tennis-court

And so might stand, unless some hero broke first,

Till doomsday.

Leave it thus, and now review
To the old Arezzo whence we moved Rome.

We've had enough o' the parents, fair or true,

Now for a touch o' the daughter's quality.

The start 's fair henceforth—every obstacle

Out of the young wife's footpath—slip alone—

Left to walk warily now : how does she walk ?

Why, once a dwelling's doorway marked and crossed

In rubric by the enemy on his round

As eligible, as fit place of prey,
Baffle him henceforth, keep him off who can !

Stop up the door at the first hint of hoof,

Presently at the window taps a hoarse

And Satan 's by your fireside, new fear !

Pompilia, left alone now, found herself

Found herself young too, sprightly fair enough,

Matched with a husband old beyond his age

(Though that was something like forty times her own)

Because of cares past, present and to come :

Found too the house dull and its inmates dead,

So, looked outside for light and life.

And there in a trice did turn up life and light,

The man with the aureole, sympathy made flesh,

The all-consoling Caponsacchi, Sir !

A priest—what else should the consolation be ?

With goodly shoulderblade and proper leg,

A portly make and a symmetric shape
And curls that clustered to the tonsure quite.

This was a bishop in the bud, and now
A canon full-blown so far: priest, and
priest
Nowise exorbitantly overworked,
The courtly Christian, not so much
Saint Paul
As a saint of Cæsar's household: there
posed he
Sending his god-glance after his shot
shaft,
Apollon turned Apollo, while the snake
Pompilia writhed transfixed through
all her spires.
He, not a visitor at Guido's house,
Scarce an acquaintance, but in prime
request
With the magnates of Arezzo, was seen
here,
Heard there, felt everywhere in Guido's
path
If Guido's wife's path be her husband's
too.
Now he threw comfits at the theatre
Into her lap,—what harm in Carnival?
Now he pressed close till his foot
touched her gown,
His hand brushed hers,—how help on
promenade?
And, ever on weighty business, found
his steps
Incline to a certain haunt of doubtful
fame
Which fronted Guido's palace by mere
chance;
While—how do accidents sometimes
combine!
Pompilia chose to cloister up her
charms
Just in a chamber that o'erlooked the
street,
Sat there to pray, or peep thence at
mankind.
This passage of arms and wits amused
the town.
At last the husband lifted eyebrow,—
bent
On day-book and the study how to
wring
Half the due vintage from the worn-
out vines
At the villa, tease a quarter the old
rent
From the farmstead, tenants swore
would tumble soon,—
Pricked up his ear a-singing day and
night

With "ruin, ruin;"—and so surprised
at last—
Why, what else but a titter? Up he
jumps.
Back to mind come those scratchings at
the grange,
Prints of the paw about the outhouse;
rife
In his head at once again are word and
wink,
Mum here and budget there, the smell
o' the fox,
The musk o' the gallant. "Friends,
there's falseness here!"
The proper help of friends in such a
strait
Is waggery, the world over. Laugh
him free
O' the regular jealous-fit that's incident
To all old husbands that wed brisk
young wives,
And he'll go duly docile all his days.
"Somebody courts your wife, Count?
Where and when?
"How and why? Mere horn-mad-
ness: have a care!
"Your lady loves her own room, sticks
to it,
"Locks herself in for hours, you say
yourself.
"And—what, it's Caponsacchi means
you harm?
"The Canon? We caress him, he's
the world's,
"A man of such acceptance,—never
dream,
"Though he were fifty times the fox
you fear,
"He'd risk his brush for your particu-
lar chick,
"When the wide town's his hen-roost!
Fie o' the fool!"
So they dispensed their comfort of a
kind.
Guido at last cried "Something is in
the air,
"Under the earth, some plot against
my peace:
"The trouble of eclipse hangs over-
head,
"How it should come of that officious
orb
"Your Canon in my system, you must
say:
"I say—that from the pressure of this
spring

" Began the chime and interchange of bells,
 " Ever one whisper, and one whisper more,
 " And just one whisper for the silvery last,
 " Till all at once a-row the bronze-throats burst
 " Into alarum both significant
 " And sinister : stop it I must and will.
 " Let Caponsacchi take his hand away
 " From the wire !—disport himself in other paths
 " Than lead precisely to my palace-gate,—
 " Look where he likes except one window's way
 " Where, cheek on hand, and elbow set on sill,
 " Happens to lean and say her litanies
 " Every day and all day long, just my wife—
 " Or wife and Caponsacchi may fare the worse ! "

Admire the man's simplicity, " I'll do this,
 " I'll not have that, I'll punish and prevent ! "—
 'Tis easy saying. But to a fray, you see,
 Two parties go. The badger shows his teeth :
 The fox nor lies down sheep-like nor dares fight.
 Oh, the wife knew the appropriate warfare well,
 The way to put suspicion to the blush !
 At first hint of remonstrance, up and out
 I' the face of the world, you found her :
 she could speak, [name,
 State her case,—Franceschini was a
 Guido had his full share of foes and friends—
 Why should not she call these to arbitrate ?
 She bade the Governor do governance,
 Cried out on the Archbishop,—why, there now,
 Take him for sample ! Three successive times,
 Had he to reconduct her by main force
 From where she took her station opposite
 His shut door,—on the public steps thereto,

Wringing her hands, when he came on to see,
 And shrieking all her wrongs forth his foot,—
 Back to the husband and the house she fled :
 Judge if that husband warmed him the face
 Of friends or frowned on foes as heretofore !
 Judge if he missed the natural grin of folk,
 Or lacked the customary compliments
 Of cap and bells, the luckless husband fit !
 So it went on and on till—who was right ?
 One merry April morning, Guido woke
 After the cuckoo, so late, near noon-day,
 With an inordinate yawning of the jaws,
 Ears plugged, eyes gummed together
 palate, tongue
 And teeth one mud-paste made of poppy-milk ;
 And found his wife flown, his scrutator the worse
 For a rummage,—jewelry that was was not,
 Some money there had made its wings too,—
 The door lay wide and yet the servant slept
 Sound as the dead, or dosed which does as well.
 In short, Pompilia, she who, candid soul,
 Had not so much as spoken all her life
 To the Canon, nay, so much as peeped at him
 Between her fingers while she prayed in church,—
 This lamb-like innocent of fifteen years
 (Such she was grown to by this time of day)
 Had simply put an opiate in the drink
 Of the whole household overnight, and then
 Got up and gone about her work secure
 Laid hand on this waif and the other stray,
 Spoiled the Philistine and marched out of doors
 In company of the Canon who, Lord of love,

What with his daily duty at the church,
 Nightly devoir where ladies congregate,
 Had something else to mind, assure
 yourself,
 Beside Pompilia, paragon though she
 be,
 Or notice if her nose were sharp or
 blunt !
 Well, anyhow, albeit impossible,
 Both of them were together jollily
 Jaunting it Rome-ward, half-way there
 by this,
 While Guido was left go and get un-
 drugged,
 Gather his wits up, groaningly give
 thanks
 When neighbours crowded round him
 to condole.
 "Ah," quoth a gossip, "well I mind
 me now,
 "The Count did always say he thought
 he felt
 "He feared as if this very chance might
 fall !
 "And when a man of fifty finds his
 corns
 "Ache and his joints throb, and fore-
 sees a storm,
 "Though neighbours laugh and say
 the sky is clear,
 "Let us henceforth believe him weather-
 wise !"
 Then was the story told, I'll cut you
 short :
 All neighbours knew : no mystery in
 the world.
 The lovers left at nightfall—over night
 Had Caponsacchi come to carry off
 Pompilia,—not alone, a friend of his,
 One Guillichini, the more conversant
 With Guido's housekeeping that he was
 just
 A cousin of Guido's and might play a
 prank—
 (Have not you too a cousin that's a
 wag ?)
 —Lord and a Canon also,—what would
 you have ?
 Such are the red-clothed milk-swollen
 poppy-heads
 That stand and stiffen 'mid the wheat
 o' the Church !—
 This worthy came to aid, abet his best,
 And so the house was ransacked, booty
 bagged,
 This lady led downstairs and out of
 doors

Guided and guarded till, the city passed,
 A carriage lay convenient at the gate.
 Good-bye to the friendly Canon ; the
 loving one
 Could peradventure do the rest himself.
 In jumps Pompilia, after her the priest,
 "Whip, driver ! Money makes the
 mare to go
 "And we've a bagful. Take the
 Roman road !"
 So said the neighbours. This was
 eight hours since.
 Guido heard all, swore the befitting
 oaths,
 Shook off the relics of his poison-drench,
 Got horse, was fairly started in pursuit
 With never a friend to follow, found the
 track
 Fast enough, 't was the straight Peru-
 gia way,
 Trod soon upon their very heels, too
 late
 By a minute only at Camoscia, at
 Chiusi, Foligno, ever the fugitives
 Just ahead, just out as he galloped in,
 Getting the good news ever fresh and
 fresh,
 Till lo, at the last stage of all, last post
 Before Rome,—as we say, in sight of
 Rome
 And safety (there's impunity at Rome
 For priests, you know) at—what's the
 little place ?
 What some call Castelnuovo, some just
 call
 The Osteria, because o' the post-house
 inn,
 There, at the journey's all but end, it
 seems,
 Triumph deceived them and undid them
 both,
 Secure they might foretaste felicity
 Nor fear surprisal : so, they were sur-
 prised.
 There did they halt at early evening,
 there
 Did Guido overtake them : 't was day-
 break ;
 He came in time enough, not time too
 much,
 Since in the courtyard stood the Can-
 on's self
 Urging the drowsy stable-grooms to
 haste
 Harness the horses, have the journey
 end,

The trifling four-hours'-running, so
reach Rome.

And the other runaway, the wife? Up-
stairs,

Still on the couch where she had spent
the night,

One couch in one room, and one room
for both.

So gained they six hours, so were lost
thereby.

Sir, what's the sequel? Lover and
beloved

Fall on their knees? No impudence
serves here?

They beat their breasts and beg for
easy death,

Confess this, that and the other?—
anyhow

Confess there wanted not some likeli-
hood

To the supposition so preposterous,
That, O Pompilia, thy sequestered eyes

Had noticed, straying o'er the prayer-
book's edge,

More of the Canon than that black his
coat,

Buckled his shoes were, broad his hat
of brim:

And that, O Canon, thy religious care
Had breathed too soft a *benedicite*

To banish trouble from a lady's breast
So lonely and so lovely, nor so lean!

This you expect? Indeed, then, much
you err.

Not to such ordinary end as this
Had Caponsacchi flung the cassock far,

Doffed the priest, donned the perfect
cavalier; [boots:

The die was cast: over shoes over
And just as she, I presently shall show,

Pompilia, soon looked Helen to the life,
Recumbent upstairs in her pink and

white,
So, in the inn-yard, both as 't were

Troytown,
There strutted Paris in correct cos-
tume,

Cloak, cap and feather, no appointment
missed,

Even to a wicked-looking sword at side,
He seemed to find and feel familiar at.

Nor wanted words as ready and as big
As the part he played, the bold abash-

less one.

"I interposed to save your wife from
death,

"Yourself from shame, the true a
only shame:

"Ask your own conscience else!—
failing that,

"What I have done I answer, and
where,

"Here, if you will; you see I have
sword:

"Or, since I have a tonsure as y
taunt,

"At Rome, by all means,—priests
try a priest.

"Only, speak where your wife's vo
can reply!"

And then he fingered at the sw
again.

So, Guido called, in aid and witn
both

The Public Force. The Commissa
came,

Officers also; they secured the pries
Then, for his more confusion, mount

up [sta
With him, a guard on either side, t

To the bed-room where still slept
feigned a sleep

His paramour and Guido's wife:
burst

The company a ' bade her wake an
rise.

Her defence? This. She woke, sa
sprang upright

I' the midst and stood as terrible
truth,

Sprang to her husband's side, caug
at the sword

That hung there useless, since they he
each hand

O' the lover, had disarmed him pr
perly,

And in a moment out flew the brig
thing

Full in the face of Guido,—but f
help

O' the guards who held her back an
pinioned her

With pains enough, she had finishe
you my tale

With a flourish of red all round i
pinked her man

Prettily; but she fought them one
six.

They stopped that,—but her tong
continued free:

She spat forth such invective a: h
spouse,

the true and
 nce else!—or,
 answer, any-
 see I have a
 nsure as you
 s,—priests to
 r wife's voice
 at the sword
 and witness
 Commissary
 ed the priest;
 sion, mounted
 [stair
 ther side, the
 still slept or
 lo's wife: in
 her wake and
 ne woke, saw,
 as terrible as
 side, caught
 ince they held
 ned him pro-
 ew the bright
 do,—but for
 her back and
 had finished
 all round it,
 them one to
 t her tongue
 ective a her

O'erfrothed him with such foam of
 murderer,
 Thief, pandar—that the popular tide
 soon turned,
 The favour of the very *shirri*, straight
 Ebbd from the husband, set toward
 his wife,
 People cried "Hands off, pay a priest
 respect!"
 And "persecuting fiend" and "mar-
 tyred saint"
 Began to lead a measure from lip to lip.
 But facts are facts and flinch not;
 stubborn things,
 And the question "Prithee, friend,
 how comes my purse
 "I' the poke of you?"—admits of no
 reply.
 Here was a priest found out in mas-
 querade,
 A wife caught playing truant if no
 more;
 While the Count, mortified in mien
 enough, [length,
 And, nose to face, an added palm in
 Was plain writ "husband" every
 piece of him:
 Capture once made, release could
 hardly be.
 Beside, the prisoners both made ap-
 peal,
 "Take us to Rome!"
 Taken to Rome they were;
 The husband trooping after, piteously,
 Tail between legs, no talk of triumph
 now—
 No honour set firm on its feet once
 more
 On two dead bodies of the guilty,—
 nay,
 No dubious salve to honour's broken
 pate
 From chance that, after all, the hurt
 might seem
 A skin-deep matter, scratch that leaves
 no scar:
 For Guido's first search,—ferreting,
 poor soul,
 Here, there and everywhere in the vile
 place
 Abandoned to him when their backs
 were turned,
 Found,—furnishing a last and best re-
 gale,—
 All the love-letters bandied twixt the
 pair

Since the first timid trembling into life
 O' the love-star till its stand at fiery
 full.
 Mad prose, mad verse, fears, hopes,
 triumph, despair,
 Avowal, disclaimer, plans, dates,
 names,—was nought
 Wanting to prove, if proof consoles at
 all,
 That this had been but the fifth act o'
 the piece
 Whereof the due proemium, months
 ago
 These playwrights had put forth, and
 ever since
 Matured the middle, added 'neath his
 nose.
 He might go cross himself: the case
 was clear.
 Therefore to Rome with the clear case;
 there plead
 Each party its best, and leave the law
 do right,
 Let her shine forth and show, as God
 in heaven,
 Vice prostrate, virtue pedestalled at
 last,
 The triumph of truth! What els
 shall glad our gaze
 When once authority has knit the brow
 And set the brain behind it to decide
 Between the wolf and sheep turned
 litigants?
 "This is indeed a business" law shook
 head:
 [wife,
 "A husband charges hard things on a
 "The wife as hard o' the husband:
 whose fault here?
 "A wife that flies her husband's house,
 does wrong:
 "The male friend's interference looks
 amiss,
 "Lends a suspicion: but suppose the
 wife,
 "On the other hand, be jeopardised at
 home—
 "Nay, that she simply hold, ill-
 groundedly,
 "An apprehension she is jeopardised,—
 "And further, if the friend partake the
 fear,
 "And, in a commendable charity
 "Which trusteth all, trust her that she
 mistrusts,—
 "What do they but obey the natural
 law?

" Pretence may this be and a cloak for
sin,
" And circumstances that concur i' the
close
" Hint as much, loudly—yet scarce
loud enough
" To drown the answer ' strange may
yet be true : '
" Innocence often looks like guiltiness.
" The accused declare that in thought,
word and deed,
" Innocent were they both from first to
last
" As male-babe haply laid by female-
babe
" At church or, edge of the baptismal
font
" Together for a minute, perfect-pure.
" Difficult to believe, yet possible,
" As witness Joseph, the friend's
patron-saint.
" The night at the inn—there charity
nigh chokes
" Ere swallow what they both assever-
ate ;
" Though down the gullet faith may
feel it go,
" When mindful of what flight fatigued
the flesh
" Out of its faculty and fleshliness,
" Subdued it to the soul, as saints as-
sure :
" So long a flight necessitates a fall
" On the first bed, though in a lion's
den,
" And the first pillow, though the lion's
back ;
" Difficult to believe, yet possible.
" Last come the letters' bundled beast-
liness—
" Authority repugns give glance to
twice,
" Turns head, and almost lets her whip-
lash fall ;
" Yet here a voice cries ' Respite ! '
from the clouds—
" The accused, both in a tale, protest,
disclaim,
" Abominate the horror : ' Not my
hand '
" Asserts the friend—' Nor mine '
chimes in the wife,
" ' Seeing I have no hand, nor write at
all.'
" Illiterate—for she goes on to ask,
" What if the friend did pen now verse
now prose,

" Commend it to her notice now
then ?
" 'Twas pearls to swine : she read
more than wrote,
" And kept no more than read, for
they fell
" She ever brushed the burr-like thing
away,
" Or, better, burned them, quenched
the fire in smoke.
" As for this fardel, filth and fool-
ness,
" She sees it now the first time : burr-
too !
" While for his part the friend with
ignorance
" Alike of what bears his name as
bears hers :
" 'Tis forgery, a felon's masterpiece
" And, as 'tis said the fox still finds
stench,
" Home-manufacture and the hound's
band's work.
" Though he confesses, the ingenu-
ous friend,
" That certain missives, letters of
sort,
" Flighty and feeble, which assign
themselves
" To the wife, no less have fallen,
too oft,
" In his path : wherefrom he und-
stood just this—
" That were they verily the lady's own
" Why, she who penned them, since
never saw [h
" Save for one minute the mere face
" Since never had there been the inter-
change
" Of word with word between them
their life,
" Why, she must be the fondest of
frail,
" And fit, she for the ' apage ' he flur-
ried
" Her letters for the flame they were
to feed.
" But, now he sees her face and hears
her speech,
" Much he repents him if, in fancy-free
" For a moment the minutest meas-
ure, able,
" He coupled her with the first flimsy
word
" O' the self-spun fabric some mea-
spider-soul
" Furnished forth : stop his films and
stamp on him !

"Never was such a tangled knottiness,
 "But thus authority cuts the Gordian
 through,
 "And mark how her decision suits the
 need!
 "Here's troublesomeness, scandal on
 both sides,
 "Plenty of fault to find, no absolute
 crime:
 "Let each side own its fault and make
 amends!
 "What does a priest in cavalier's attire
 "Consorting publicly with vagrant
 wives
 "In quarters close as the confessional,
 "Though innocent of harm? 'Tis
 harm enough:
 "Let him pay it, and be relegate a good
 "Three years, to spend in some place
 not too far
 "Nor yet too near, midway, twixt near
 and far,
 "Rome and Arezzo,—Civita we choose,
 "Where he may lounge away time, live
 at large,
 "Find out the proper function of a
 priest,
 "Nowise an exile,—that were punish-
 ment,
 "But one our love thus keeps out of
 harm's way
 "Not more from the husband's anger
 than, mayhap
 "His own . . . say, indiscretion, way-
 wardness,
 "And wanderings when Easter eves
 grow warm.
 "For the wife,—well, our best step to
 take with her,
 "On her own showing, were to shift her
 root
 "From the old cold shade and unhappy
 soil
 "Into a generous ground that fronts
 the south: [late,
 "Where, since her callow soul, a-shiver
 "Craved simply warmth and called
 mere passers-by
 "To the rescue, she should have her
 fill of shine.
 "Do house and husband hinder and
 not help?
 "Why then, forget both and stay here
 at peace,
 "Come into our community, enroll
 "Herself along with those good Con-
 vertites,

"Those sinners saved, those Magda-
 lens re-made,
 "Accept their ministration, well be-
 stow
 "Her body and patiently possess her
 soul,
 "Until we see what better can be done.
 "Last for the husband: if his tale
 prove true,
 "Well is he rid of two domestic
 plagues—
 "The wife that ailed, do whatsoever he
 would,
 "And friend of hers that undertook
 the cure.
 "See, what a double load we lift from
 breast! [life,
 "Off he may go, return, resume old
 "Laugh at the priest here and Pom-
 pilia there
 "In limbo each and punished for their
 pains,
 "And grateful tell the inquiring neigh-
 bourhood—
 "In Rome, no wrong but has its
 remedy."
 The case was closed. Now, am I fair
 or no
 In what I utter? Do I state the facts,
 Having forechosen a side? I prom-
 ised you!

The Canon Caponsacchi, then, was sent
 To change his garb, re-trim his tonsure,
 tie
 The clerkly silk round, every plait cor-
 rect,
 Make the impressive entry on his place
 Of relegation, thrill his Civita,
 As Ovid, a like sufferer in the cause,
 Planted a primrose-patch by Pontus:
 where,
 What with much culture of the sonnet-
 stave
 And converse with the aborigines,
 Soft savagery of eyes unused to roll,
 And hearts that all awry went pit-a-pat
 And wanted setting right in charity,
 What were a couple of years to while
 away?
 Pompilia, as enjoined, betook herself
 To the aforesaid Convertites, the sister-
 hood
 In Via Lungara, where the light ones
 live,
 Spin, pray, then sing like linnets o'er
 the flax.

" Anywhere, anyhow, out of my husband's house
 " Is heaven," cried she,—was therefore suited so.
 But for Count Guido Franceschini, he—
 The injured man thus righted—found no heaven
 I' the house when he returned there, I engage,
 Was welcomed by the city turned upside down
 In a chorus of inquiry. " What, back—you ?
 " And no wife ? Left her with the Penitents ?
 " Ah, being young and pretty, 'twere a shame
 " To have her whipped in public : leave the job
 " To the priests who understand ! Such priests as yours—
 " (Pontifex Maximus whipped Vestals once)
 " Our madcap Caponsacchi : think of him !
 " So, he fired up, showed fight and skill of fence ?
 " Ay, you drew also, but you did not fight !
 " The wiser, 'tis a word and a blow with him,
 " True Caponsacchi, of old Head-i'-the-Sack
 " That fought at Fiesole ere Florence was :
 " He had done enough, to firk you were too much.
 " And did the little lady menace you,
 " Make at your breast with your own harmless sword ?
 " The spitfire ! Well, thank God you're safe and sound,
 " Have kept the sixth commandment whether or no
 " The lady broke the seventh : I only wish
 " I were as saint-like, could contain me so.
 " I am a sinner, I fear I should have left [me ! "
 " Sir Priest no nose-tip to turn up at You, Sir, who listen but interpose no word,
 Ask yourself, had you borne a baiting thus ?
 Was it enough to make a wise man mad ?

Oh, but I'll have your verdict at the end !

Well, not enough, it seems : such me hurt falls,
 Frets awhile, and aches long, then less, and less,
 And so is done with. Such was not the scheme
 O' the pleasant Comparini : on Guido wound
 Ever in due succession, drop by drop
 Came slow distilment from the alembic here
 Set on to simmer by Canidian hate,
 Corrosives keeping the man's misery raw.
 First fire-drop,—when he thought to make the best
 O' the bad, to wring from out the sentence passed,
 Poor, pitiful, absurd although it were
 Yet what might eke him out resolute enough
 And make it worth his while he had the right
 And not the wrong i' the matter judged at Rome.
 Inadequate her punishment, no less
 Punished in some slight sort his wife had been ;
 Then, punished for adultery, what else
 On such admitted crime he thought to seize,
 And institute procedure in the courts
 Which cut corruption of this kind from man,
 Cast loose a wife proved loose and cast away :
 He claimed in due form a divorce at least.
 This claim was met now by a counter claim :
 Pompilia sought divorce from bed and board
 Of Guido, whose outrageous cruelty,
 Whose mother's malice and whose brother's hate
 Were just the white o' the charge, such dreadful depths
 Blackened its centre,—hints of worse than hate,
 Love from that brother, by that Guido's guile,
 That mother's prompting. Such reply was made,

So was the engine loaded, wound up,
sprung
On Guido, who received the bolt in
breast ;
But no less bore up, giddily perhaps.
He had the Abate Paolo still in Rome,
Brother and friend and fighter on his
side :
They rallied in a measure, met the foe
Manlike, joined battle in the public
courts,
As if to shame supine law from her
sloth :
And waiting her award, let beat the
while
Arezzo's banter, Rome's buffoonery,
On this ear and on that ear, deaf alike,
Safe from worse outrage. Let a scor-
pion nip,
And never mind till he contorts his
tail !
But there was sting i' the creature ;
thus it struck.
Guido had thought in his simplicity—
That lying declaration of remorse,
That story of the child which was no
child
And motherhood no motherhood at all,
—That even this sin might have its sort
of good
Inasmuch as no question could be
more,
Call it false, call the story true, no claim
Of further parentage pretended now :
The parents had abjured all right, at
least,
I' the woman still his wife : to plead
right now
Were to declare the abjuration false :
He was relieved from any fear hence-
forth
Their hands might touch, their breath
defile again
Pompilia with his name upon her yet.
Well, no : the next news was, Pom-
pilia's health
Demanded change after full three long
weeks
Spent in devotion with the Sisterhood,—
Rendering sojourn,—so the court
opined,—
Too irksome, since the convent's walls
were high
And windows narrow, nor was air
enough
Nor light enough, but all looked prison-
like,

The last thing which had come in the
court's head.
Propose a new expedient therefore,—
this !
She had demanded—had obtained in-
deed,
By intervention of whatever friends
Or perhaps lovers—(beauty in distress,
In one whose tale is the town-talk be-
side,
Never lacks friendship's arm about her
neck)—
Not freedom, scarce remitted penalty,
Solely the transfer to some private
place
Where better air, more light, new food
might be—
Incarcerated (call it, all the same)
At some sure friend's house she must
keep inside,
Be found in at requirement fast
enough,—
Domus pro carcere, in Roman style.
You keep the house i' the main, as most
men do [wise,
And all good women : but free other-
Should friends arrive, to lodge and
entertain.
And such a *domum*, such a dwelling-
place,
Having all Rome to choose from, where
chose she ?
What house obtained Pompilia's pre-
ference ?
Why, just the Comparini's—just, do
you mark,
Theirs who renounced all part and lot
in her
So long as Guido could be robbed there-
by,
And only fell back on relationship
And found their daughter safe and
sound again
So soon as that might stab him : yes,
the pair
Who, as I told you, first had baited
hook
With this poor gilded fly Pompilia-
thing,
Then caught the fish, pulled Guido to
the shore
And gutted him,—now found a further
use
For the bait, would trail the gauze wings
yet again
I' the way of what new swimmer passed
their stand.

They took Pompilia to their hiding-
place—

Not in the heart of Rome as formerly,
Under observance, subject to control—

But out o' the way,—or in the way,
who knows?

That blind mute villa lurking by the
gate

At Via Paulina, not so hard to miss

By the honest eye, easy enough to find
In twilight by marauders: where per-
chance

Some muffled Caponsacchi might re-
pair,

Employ odd moments when he too tried
change,

Found that a friend's abode was pleas-
anter

Than relegation, penance and the rest.

Come, here's the last drop does its
worst to wound,

Here's Guido poisoned to the bone, you
say,

Your boasted still's full strain and
strength: not so!

Our master-squeeze from screw shall
bring to birth

The hoard i' the heart o' the toad, hell's
quintessence.

He learned the true convenience of the
change,

And why a convent wants the cheerful
hearts

And helpful hands which female straits
require, [gate,

When, in the blind mute villa by the
Pompilia—what? sang, danced, saw
company?

—Gave birth, Sir, to a child, his son
and heir,

Or Guido's heir and Caponsacchi's son.
I want your word now: what do you
say to this?

What would say little Arezzo and great
Rome,

And what did God say and the devil
say

One at each ear o' the man, the hus-
band, now

The father? Why, the overburdened
mind

Broke down, what was a brain became
a blaze.

In fury of the moment—(that first news
Fell on the Count among his vines, it
seems,

Doing his farm-work,)—why, he sum-
moned steward,

Called in the first four hard hands and
stout hearts

From field and furrow, poured forth his
appeal,

Not to Rome's law and gospel any
more,

But this clown with a mother or a wife,
That clodpole with a sister or a son:

And, whereas law and gospel held
their peace,

What wonder if the sticks and stones
cried out?

All five soon somehow found themselves
at Rome,

At the villa door: there was the warmth
and light—

The sense of life so just an inch inside—
Some angel must have whispered
"One more chance!"

He gave it: bade the others stand
aside:

Knocked at the door,—“Who is it
knocks?” cried one.

“I will make,” surely Guido's angel
said,

“One final essay, last experiment,
“Speak the word, name the name from
out all names

“Which, if,—as doubtless strong illu-
sions are,

“And strange disguisings whence even
truth seems false,

“And, for I am a man, I dare not do
“God's work until assured I see with
God,—

“If I should bring my lips to breathe
that name

“And they be innocent,—nay, by one
touch

“Of innocence redeemed from utter
guilt,—

“That name will bar the door and bid
fate pass.

“I will not say ‘It is a messenger,
“A neighbour, even a belated man,

“Much less your husband's friend,
your husband's self:

“At such appeal the door is bound to
open.

“But I will say”—here's rhetoric and
to spare!

Why, Sir, the stumbling-block is cursed
and kicked,

Block though it be; the name that
brought offence
Will bring offence: the burnt child
dreads the fire
Although that fire feed on a taper-wick
Which never left the altar nor singed
fly:
And had a harmless man tripped you
by chance,
How would you wait him, stand or
step aside,
When next you heard he rolled your
way? Enough.

"Giuseppe Caponsacchi!" Guido cried;
And open flew the door: enough again.
Vengeance, you know, burst, like a
mountain-wave
That holds a monster in it, over the
house,
And wiped its filthy four walls free
again
With a wash of hell-fire,—father,
mother, wife,
Killed them all, bathed his name clean
in their blood,
And, reeking so, was caught, his
friends and he,
Haled hither and imprisoned yester-
night
O' the day all this was.

Now the whole is known,
And how the old couple come to lie in
state
Though hacked to pieces,—never, the
expert say,
So thorough a study of stabbing—
while the wife
Viper-like, very difficult to slay,
Writhes still through every ring of her,
poor wretch,
At the Hospital hard by—survives,
we'll hope,
To somewhat purify her putrid soul
By full confession, make so much
amends
While time lasts; since at day's end
die she must.
For Caponsacchi,—why, they'll have
him here,
The hero of the adventure, who so fit
To tell it in the coming Carnival?
'Twill make the fortune of whate'er
saloon
Hears him recount, with helpful cheek,
and eye

Hotly indignant now, now dewy-
dimmed,
The incidents of flight, pursuit, sur-
prise,
Capture, with hints of kisses all be-
tween—
While Guido, the most unromantic
spouse,
No longer fit to laugh at since the blood
Gave the broad farce an all too brutal
air,
Why, he and those our luckless friends
of his
May tumble in the straw this bitter
day—
Laid by the heels i' the New Prison, I
hear,
To bide their trial, since trial, and for
the life,
Follows if but for form's sake: yes,
indeed!

But with a certain issue: no dispute,
"Try him," bids law: formalities
oblige:
But as to the issue,—look me in the
face!—
If the law thinks to find them guilty,
Sir, [five,
Master or men—touch one hair of the
Then I say in the name of all that's
left
Of honour in Rome, civility i' the world
Whereof Rome boasts herself the cen-
tral source,—
There's an end to all hope of justice
more.
Astræa's gone indeed, let hope go too!
Who is it dares impugn the natural
law?
Deny God's word "the faithless wife
shall die?"
What, are we blind? How can we fail
to see,
This crowd of miseries make the man a
mark,
Accumulate on one devoted head
For our example, yours and mine who
read
Its lesson thus—"Henceforward let
none dare
"Stand, like a natural in the public
way,
"Letting the very urchins twitch his
beard
"And tweak his nose, to earn a nick-
name so,

"Of the male-Grissel or the modern
 Job!"
 Had Guido, in the twinkling of an eye,
 Summed up the reckoning, promptly
 paid himself,
 That morning when he came up with
 the pair
 At the wayside inn,—exacted his just
 debt
 By aid of what first mattock, pitchfork,
 axe
 Came to hand in the helpful stable-
 yard,
 And with that axe, if providence so
 pleased,
 Cloven each head, by some Rolando-
 stroke,
 In one clean cut from crown to clavicle,
 —Slain the priest-gallant, the wife-
 paramour,
 Sticking, for all defence, in each skull's
 cleft
 The rhyme and reason of the stroke
 thus dealt,
 To wit, those letters and last evidence
 Of shame, each package in its proper
 place,—
 Bidding, who pitied, undistend the
 skulls,—
 I say, the world had praised the man.
 But no!
 That were too plain, too straight, too
 simply just!
 He hesitates, calls law forsooth to help.
 And law, distasteful to who calls in
 law
 When honour is beforehand and would
 serve,
 What wonder if law hesitate in turn,
 Plead her disuse to calls o' the kind,
 reply
 Smiling a little "'Tis yourself assess
 "The worth of what's lost, sum of
 damage done:
 "What you touched with so light a
 finger-tip,
 "You whose concern it was to grasp
 the thing,
 "Why must law gird herself and
 grapple with?
 "Law, alien to the actor whose warm
 blood
 "Asks heat from law whose veins run
 lukewarm milk,—
 "What you dealt lightly with, shall law
 make out
 "Heinous forsooth?"

Sir, what's the good of law
 In a case o' the kind? None, as she al-
 but says.
 Calls in law when a neighbour breaks
 your fence,
 Cribs from your field, tampers with rent
 or lease,
 Touches the purse or pocket,—but
 woos your wife?
 No: take the old way trod when men
 were men!
 Guido preferred the new path,—for his
 pains,
 Stuck in a quagmire, floundered worse
 and worse
 Until he managed somehow scramble
 back
 Into the safe sure rutted road once
 more,
 Revenged his own wrong like a gentle-
 man.
 Once back 'mid the familiar prints, no
 doubt
 He made too rash amends for his first
 fault,
 Vaulted too loftily over what barred
 him late,
 And lit i' the mire again,—the common
 chance,
 The natural over-energy: the
 deed
 Maladroit yields three deaths instead
 of one,
 And one life left: for where's the
 Canon's corpse?
 All which is the worse for Guido, but,
 be frank—
 The better for you and me and all the
 world,
 Husbands of wives, especially in
 Rome.
 The thing is put right, in the old place
 —ay,
 The rod hangs on its nail behind the
 door,
 Fresh from the brine: a matter I com-
 mend
 To the notice, during Carnival that's
 near,
 Of a certain what's-his-name and jack-
 anapes
 Somewhat too civil of eves with lute
 and song
 About a house here, where I keep a
 wife.
 (You, being his cousin, may go tell him
 so.)

III

THE OTHER HALF-ROME

ANOTHER day that finds her living yet,
 Little Pompilia, with the patient brow
 And lamentable smile on those poor lips,
 And, under the white hospital-array,
 A flower-like body, to frighten at a bruise
 You'd think, yet now, stabbed through
 and through again,
 Alive i' the ruins. 'T is a miracle.
 It seems that, when her husband struck
 her first,
 She prayed Madonna just that she
 might live
 So long as to confess and be absolved ;
 And whether it was that, all her sad life
 long,
 Never before successful in a prayer,
 This prayer rose with authority too
 dread,—
 Or whether, because earth was hell to
 her,
 By compensation, when the blackness
 broke
 She got one glimpse of quiet and the
 cool blue,
 To show her for a moment such things
 were,—
 Or else,—as the Augustinian Brother
 thinks,
 The friar who took confession from her
 lip,—
 When a probationary soul that moves
 From nobleness to nobleness, as she,
 Over the rough way of the world, suc-
 cumbs,
 Bloodies its last thorn with unflinching
 foot,
 The angels love to do their work be-
 times,
 Staunch some wounds here nor leave so
 much for God.
 Who knows? However it be, con-
 fessed, absolved,
 She lies, with overplus of life beside
 To speak and right herself from first to
 last,
 Right the friend also, lamb-pure, lion-
 brave,
 Care for the boy's concerns, to save the
 son
 From the sire, her two-weeks' infant
 orphaned thus,

And—with best smile of all reserved
 for him—
 Pardon that sire and husband from the
 heart.
 A miracle, so tell your Molinists !
 There she lies in the long white lazar-
 house.
 Rome has besieged, these two days,
 never doubt,
 Saint Anna's where she waits her death,
 to hear
 Though but the chink o' the bell, turn
 o' the hinge
 When the reluctant wicket opes at last,
 Lets in, on now this and now that pre-
 tence,
 Too many by half,—complain the men
 of art,—
 For a patient in such plight. The
 lawyers first
 Paid the due visit—justice must be
 done ;
 They took her witness, why the murder
 was ; [soul
 Then the priests followed properly,—a
 To shrive ; 't was Brother Celestine's
 own right,
 The same who noises thus her gifts
 abroad :
 But many more, who found they were
 old friends,
 Pushed in to have their stare and take
 their talk
 And go forth boasting of it and to boast.
 Old Monna Baldi chatters like a jay,
 Swears—but that, prematurely trundled
 out
 Just as she felt the benefit begin,
 The miracle was snapped up by some-
 body,—
 Her palsied limb 'gan prick and promise
 life
 At touch o' the bedclothes merely,—
 how much more
 Had she but brushed the body as she
 tried !
 Cavalier Carlo—well, there 's some ex-
 cuse
 For him—Maratta who paints Virgins
 so—
 He too must fee the porter and slip by
 With pencil cut and paper squared,
 and straight
 There was he figuring away at face—
 "A lovelier face is not in Rome,"
 cried he,

" Shaped like a peacock's egg, the pure
as pearl,
" That hatches you anon a snow-white
chick."
Then, oh that pair of eyes, that pend-
ent hair,
Black this, and black the other!
Mighty fine—
But nobody cared ask to paint the
same,
Nor grew a poet over hair and eyes
Four little years ago when, ask and
have,
The woman who wakes all this rapture
leaned
Flower-like from out her window long
enough,
As much uncomplimented as uncropped
By comers and goers in Via Vittoria :
eh ?
'T is just a flower's fate : past parterre
we trip,
Till peradventure someone plucks our
sleeve—
" Yon blossom at the briar's end,
that 's the rose
" Two jealous people fought for yester-
day
" And killed each other : see, there 's
undisturbed
" A pretty pool at the root, of rival
red ! "
Then cry we, " Ah, the perfect para-
gon ! "
Then crave we, " Just one keepsake-
leaf for us ! "
Truth lies between : there 's anyhow a
child
Of seventeen years, whether a flower or
weed,
Ruined : who did it shall account to
Christ—
Having no pity on the harmless life
And gentle face and girlish form he
found,
And thus flings back : go practise if
you please
With men and women : leave a child
alone
For Christ's particular love's sake !—
so I say.
Somebody, at the bedside, said much
more,
Took on him to explain the secret cause
O' the crime : quoth he, " Such crimes
are very ripe,

" Explode nor make us wonder now-a-
days,
" Seeing that Antichrist disseminates
" That doctrine of the Philosophic Sin
" Molinos' sect will soon make eart
too hot ! "
" Nay," groaned the Augustinian
" what 's there new ?
" Crime will not fail to flare up from
men's hearts
" While hearts are men's and so born
criminal ;
" Which one fact, always old yet ever
new,
" Accounts for so much crime that, fo
my part,
" Molinos may go whistle to the win
" That waits outside a certain church
you know ! "
Though really it does seem as if sh
here,
Pompilia, living so and dying thus,
Has had undue experience how much
crime
A heart can hatch. Why was sh
made to learn
—Not you, not I, not even Molinos
self—
What Guido Franceschini's heart coul
hold ?
Thus saintship is effected probably ;
No sparing saints the process !—which
the more
Tends to the reconciling us, no saints
To sinnership, immunity and all.
For see now : Pietro and Violante's lif
Till seventeen years ago, all Rome
might note
And quote for happy—see the sign
distinct
Of happiness as we yon Triton's trump
What could they be but happy ?—
balanced so,
Nor low i' the social scale nor yet too
high,
Nor poor nor richer than comports with
ease,
Nor bright and envied, nor obscure and
scorned,
Nor so young that their pleasures fell
too thick,
Nor old past catching pleasure when it
fell,
Nothing above, below the just degree,
All at the mean where joy's components
mix.

So again, in the couple's very souls
You saw the adequate half with half to
match,

Each having and each lacking some-
what, both

Making a whole that had all and lacked
nought ;

The round and sound, in whose com-
posure just

The acquiescent and recipient side
Was Pietro's, and the stirring striving
one

Violante's : both in union gave the due
Quietude, enterprise, craving and con-
tent,

Which go to bodily health and peace of
mind.

But, as 't is said a body, rightly mixed,
Each element in equipoise, would last
Too long and live for ever,—accord-
ingly

Holds a germ—sand-grain weight too
much i' the scale—

Ordained to get predominance one day
And so bring all to ruin and release,—

Not otherwise a fatal germ lurked here :
" With mortals much must go, but
something stays ;

" Nothing will stay of our so happy
selves."

Out of the very ripeness of Life's core
A worm was bred—" Our life shall
leave no fruit."

Enough of bliss, they thought, could
bliss bear seed,

Yield its like, propagate a bliss in turn
And keep the kind up ; not supplant
themselves

But put in evidence, record they were,
Show them, when done with, i' the
shape of a child.

" 'T is in a child, man and wife grow
complete,

" One flesh : God says so : let him do
his work ! "

Now, one reminder of this gnawing
want,

One special prick o' the maggot at the
core

Always befell when, as the day came
round,

A certain yearly sum,—our Pietro be-
ing

As the long name runs, an usufructu-
ary,—

Dropped in the common bag as interest

Of money, his till death, not afterward,
Failing an heir : an heir would take
and take,

A child of theirs be wealthy in their
place

To nobody's hurt—the stranger else
seized all.

Prosperity rolled river-like and stopped,
Making their mill go ; but when wheel
wore out,

The wave would find a space and sweep
on free

And, half-a-mile off, grind some neigh-
bour's corn.

Adam-like, Pietro sighed and said no
more :

Eve saw the apple was fair and good to
taste,

So, plucked it, having asked the snake
advice.

She told her husband God was merciful,
And his and her prayer granted at the
last :

Let the old mill-stone moulder,—wheel
unworn,

Quartz from the quarry, shot into the
stream

Adroitly, should go bring grist as be-
fore—

Their house continued to them by an
heir, [child.

Their vacant heart replenished with a
We have her own confession at full
length

Made in the first remorse : 't was Jubi-
lee

Pealed in the ear o' the conscience and
it woke.

She found she had offended God no
doubt,

So much was plain from what had hap-
pened since,

Misfortune on misfortune ; but she
harm'd

No one i' the world, so far as she could
see.

The act had gladdened Pietro to the
height,

Her husband—God himself must glad-
den so

Or not at all—(thus much seems prob-
able

From the implicit faith, or rather say
Stupid credulity of the foolish man

Who swallowed such a tale nor strained
a whit

Even at his wife's far-over-fifty years
 Matching his sixty-and-under.) Him
 she blessed,
 And as for doing any detriment
 To the veritable heir,—why, tell her
 first
 Who was he? Which of all the hands
 held up
 I' the crowd, would one day gather
 round their gate,
 Did she so wrong by intercepting thus
 The ducat, spendthrift fortune thought
 to fling
 For a scramble just to make the mob
 break shins?
 She kept it, saved them kicks and cuffs
 thereby.
 While at the least one good work had
 she wrought,
 Good, clearly and incontestably! Her
 cheat—
 What was it to its subject, the child's
 self,
 But charity and religion? See the
 girl!
 A body most like—a soul too probably—
 Doomed to death, such a double death
 as waits
 The illicit offspring of a common trull,
 Sure to resent and forthwith rid herself
 Of a mere interruption to sin's trade,
 In the efficacious way old Tiber knows.
 Was not so much proved by the ready
 sale
 O' the child, glad transfer of this irk-
 some chance?
 Well then, she had caught up this cast-
 away:
 This fragile egg, some careless wild bird
 dropped,
 She had picked from where it waited
 the foot-fall,
 And put in her own breast till forth
 broke finch
 Able to sing God praise on mornings
 now.
 What so excessive harm was done?—
 she asked.
 To which demand the dreadful answer
 comes—
 For that same deed, now at Lorenzo's
 church,
 Both agents, conscious and unconscious,
 lie;
 While she, the deed was done to benefit,
 Lies also, the most lamentable of things

Vonder where curious people count h
 breaths,
 Calculate how long yet the little life
 Unspilt may serve their turn nor spo
 the show,
 Give them their story, then the church
 its group.
 Well, having gained Pompilia, the gi
 grew
 I' the midst of Pietro here, Violant
 there,
 Each, like a semicircle with stretch
 arms,
 Joining the other round her precious
 ness—
 Two walls that go about a garden-pl
 Where a chance sliver, branchlet slip
 from bole
 Of some tongue-leaved eye-figure
 Eden tree,
 Filched by two exiles and borne fa
 away,
 Patiently glorifies their solitude,—
 Year by year mounting, grade by grade
 surmounts
 The builded brick-work, yet is com
 passed still,
 Still hidden happily and shielded safe,—
 Else why should miracle have graced
 the ground?
 But on the twelfth sun that brough
 April there
 What meant that laugh? The coping
 stone was reached;
 Nay, a light tuft of bloom towered
 above
 To be toyed with by butterfly or bee
 Done good to or else harm to from out
 side:
 Pompilia's root, stem and a branch of
 two
 Home enclosed still, the rest would be
 the world's.
 All which was taught our couple thought
 obtuse,
 Since walls have ears, when one day
 brought a priest,
 Smooth-mannered soft-speeched sleek-
 cheeked visitor,
 The notable Abate Paolo—known
 As younger brother of a Tuscan house
 Whereof the actual representative,
 Count Guido, had employed his youth
 and age
 In culture of Rome's most productive
 plant—

A cardinal : but years pass and change comes,
 In token of which, here was our Paolo brought
 To broach a weighty business. Might he speak ?
 Yes—to Violante somehow caught alone
 While Pietro took his after-dinner doze,
 And the young maiden, busily as befits,
 Minded her broider-frame three chambers off.

So—giving now his great flap-hat a gloss
 With flat o' the hand between-whiles,
 soothing now
 The silk from out its creases o'er the calf,
 Setting the stocking clerical again,
 But never disengaging, once engaged,
 The thin clear grey hold of his eyes on her—
 He dissertated on that Tuscan house,
 Those Franceschini,—very old they were—
 Not rich however—oh, not rich, at least,
 As people look to be who, low i' the scale
 One way, have reason, rising all they can
 By favour of the money-bag : 't is fair—
 Do all gifts go together ? But don't suppose [poor !
 That being not so rich means all so
 Say rather, well enough—i' the way,
 indeed,
 Ha, ha, to better fortune than the best,
 Since if his brother's patron-friend kept faith,
 Put into promised play the Cardinal-ate,
 Their house might wear the red cloth that keeps warm,
 Would but the Count have patience—there 's the point !
 For he was slipping into years apace,
 And years make men restless—they needs must see
 Some certainty, some sort of end assured,
 Sparkle, tho' from the topmost beacon-tip
 That warrants life a harbour through the haze.

In short, call him fantastic as you choose,
 Guido was home-sick, yearned for the old sights
 And usual faces,—fain would settle himself
 And have the patron's bounty when it fell
 Irrigate far rather than deluge near,
 Go fertilize Arezzo, not flood Rome.
 Sooth to say, 't was the wiser wish : the Count
 Proved wanting in ambition,—let us avouch,
 Since truth is best,—in callousness o' heart,
 Winced at those pin-pricks whereby honours hang
 A ribbon o'er each puncture : his—no soul
 Ecclesiastic (here the hat was brushed)
 Humble but self-sustaining, calm and cold,
 Having, as one who puts his hand to the plough,
 Rencuned the over-vivid family-feel—
 Poor brother Guido ! All too plain, he pined
 Amid Rome's pomp and glare for dinginess
 And that dilapidated palace-shell
 Vast as a quarry and, very like, as bare—
 Since to this comes old grandeur now-a-days—
 Or that absurd wild villa in the waste
 O' the hill side, breezy though, for who likes air,
 Vittiano, nor unpleasant with its vines,
 Outside the city and the summer heats.
 And now his harping on this one tense chord
 The villa and the palace, palace this
 And villa the other, all day and all night
 Creaked like the implacable cicala's cry
 And made one's ear-drum ache : nought else would serve
 But that, to light his mother's visage up
 With second youth, hope, gaiety again,
 He must find straightway, woo and haply win
 And bear away triumphant back, some wife.
 Well now, the man was rational in his way—

He, the Abate,—ought he to interpose?
 Unless by straining still his tutelage
 (Priesthood leaps over elder-brother-
 ship)
 Across this difficulty : then let go,
 Leave the poor fellow in peace ! Would
 that be wrong ?
 There was no making Guido great, it
 seems,
 Spite of himself : then happy be his
 dole !
 Indeed, the Abate's little interest
 Was somewhat nearly touched i' the
 case, they saw :
 Since if his simple kinsman so were bent,
 Began his rounds in Rome to catch a
 wife,
 Full soon would such unworldliness sur-
 prise
 The rare bird, sprinkle salt on phoenix'
 tail,
 And so secure the nest a sparrow-hawk.
 No lack of mothers here in Rome,—no
 dread
 Of daughters lured as larks by looking-
 glass !
 The first name-pecking credit-scratch-
 ing fowl [nest
 Would drop her unfledged cuckoo in our
 To gather greyness there, give voice at
 length
 And shame the brood . . but it was
 long ago
 When crusades were, and we sent
 eagles forth !
 No, that at least the Abate could fore-
 stall.
 He read the thought within his
 brother's word,
 Knew what he purposed better than
 himself.
 We want no name and fame—having
 our own :
 No worldly aggrandisement—such we
 fly :
 But if some wonder of a woman's-
 heart
 Were yet untainted on this grimy
 earth,
 Tender and true—tradition tells of
 such—
 Prepared to pant in time and tune with
 ours—
 If some good girl (a girl, since she must
 take
 The new bent, live new life, adopt new
 modes)

Not wealthy—Guido for his rank w
 poor—
 But with whatever dowry came
 hand,
 There were the lady-love predestinat
 And somehow the Abate's guardi
 eye—
 Scintillant, rutilant, fraternal fire,—
 Roving round every way had seiz
 the prize
 —The instinct of us, we, the spiri
 ualty !
 Come, cards on table ; was it true
 false
 That here—here in this very tenement
 Yea, Via Vittoria did a marvel hide,
 Lily of a maiden, white with intact le
 Guessed thro' the sheath that saved
 from the sun ?
 A daughter with the mother's hand
 still clasped
 Over her head for fillet virginal,
 A wife worth Guido's house and han
 and heart ?
 He came to see ; had spoken, he coul
 no less—
 (A final cherish of the stockinged calf)
 If harm were,—well, the matter was o
 his mind.
 Then with the great air did he kiss
 devout, [height
 Violante's hand, and rise up his whol
 (A certain purple gleam about the
 black)
 And go forth grandly,—as if the Pop
 came next.
 And so Violante rubbed her eyes awhile
 Got up too, walked to wake her Pietro
 soon
 And pour into his ear the mighty new
 How somebody had somehow some
 where seen
 Their tree-top-tuft of bloom above the
 wall,
 And came now to apprise them the
 tree's self
 Was no such crab-sort as should feed
 the swine,
 But veritable gold, the Hesperian ball
 Ordained for Hercules to haste and
 pluck,
 And bear and give the Gods to banquet
 with—
 Hercules standing ready at the door.
 Whereon did Pietro rub his eyes in
 turn,

his rank was
 every came to
 predestinate!
 te's guardian
 rnal fire,—
 y had seized
 e, the spirit-
 as it true or
 y tenement—
 arvel hide,
 th intact leaf
 that saved it
 other's hands
 riginal,
 use and hand
 ken, he could
 (tinged calf)
 matter was off
 did he kiss,
 [height
 up his whole
 about the
 s if the Pope
 eyes awhile,
 ke her Pietro
 mighty news
 ehow some-
 m above the
 e them the
 should feed
 esperian ball
 haste and
 s to banquet
 at the door.
 his eyes in

Look very wise, a little woeful too,
 Then, periwig on head, and cane in
 hand,
 Sally forth dignifiedly into the Square
 Of Spain across Babbuino the six steps,
 Toward the Boat-fountain where our
 idlers lounge,—
 Ask, for form's sake, who Hercules
 might be,
 And have congratulation from the
 world.
 Heartily laughed the world in his fool's-
 face
 And told him Hercules was just the heir
 To the stubble once a corn-field, and
 brick-heap
 Where used to be a dwelling-place now
 burned.
 Guido and Franceschini; a Count,—
 ay:
 But a cross i' the poke to bless the
 Countship? No!
 All gone except sloth, pride, capacity,
 Humours of the imposthume incident
 To rich blood that runs thin,—nursed
 to a head
 By the rankly-salted soil—a cardinal's
 court
 Where, parasite and picker-up of
 crumbs,
 He had hung on long, and now, let go,
 said some,
 But shaken off, said others,—in any
 case
 Tired of the trade and something worse
 for wear,
 Was wanting to change town for coun-
 try quick,
 Go home again: let Pietro help him
 home!
 The brother, Alate Paolo, shrewder
 mouse,
 Had pricked for comfortable quarters,
 inched
 Into the core of Rome, and fattened so;
 But Guido, over-burly for rat's hole
 Suited to clerical slimness, starved out-
 side,
 Must shift for himself: and so the shift
 was this!
 What, was the snug retreat of Pietro
 tracked,
 The little provision for his old age
 snuffed?
 "Oh, make your girl a lady, an you
 list,

"But have more mercy on our wit
 than vaunt
 "Your bargain as we burgesses who
 brag!
 "Why, Goodman Dullard, if a friend
 must speak,
 "Would the Count, think you, stoop
 to you and yours
 "Were there the value of one penny-
 piece
 "To rattle 'twixt his palms—or likelier
 laugh,
 "Bid your Pompilia help you black his
 shoe?"

Home again, shaking oft the puzzled
 pate,
 Went Pietro to announce a change in-
 deed,
 Yet point Violante where some solace
 lay
 Of a rueful sort,—the taper, quenched
 so soon,
 Had ended merely in a snuff, not stink—
 Congratulate there was one hope the
 less
 Not misery the more: and so an end.

The marriage thus impossible, the rest
 Followed: our spokesman, Paolo,
 heard his fate,
 Resignedly Count Guido bore the blow:
 Violante wiped away the transient tear,
 Renounced the playing Danae to gold
 dreams,
 Praised much her Pietro's prompt saga-
 ciousness,
 Found neighbours' envy natural,
 lightly laughed
 At gossips' malice, fairly wrapped her-
 self
 In her integrity three folds about,
 And, letting pass a little day or two,
 Threw, even over that integrity,
 Another wrappage, namely one thick
 veil
 That hid her, matron-wise, from head
 to foot,
 And, by the hand holding a girl veiled
 too,
 Stood, one dim end of a December day,
 In Saint Lorenzo on the altar-step—
 Just where she lies now and that girl
 will lie—
 Only with fifty candles' company
 Now—in the place of the poor winking
 one

Which saw,—doors shut and sacristan
made sure,—
A priest—perhaps Abate Paolo—wed
Guido clandestinely, irrevocably
To his Pompilia aged thirteen years
And five months,—witness the church
register,—
Pompilia, (thus become Count Guido's
wife
Clandestinely, irrevocably his,)
Who all the while had borne, from first
to last,
As brisk a part i' the bargain, as yon
lamb,
Brought forth from basket and set out
for sale,
Bears while they chaffer, wary market-
man
And voluble housewife, o'er it,—each
in turn
Patting the curly calm unconscious
head,
With the shambles ready round the
corner there,
When the talk 's talked out and a bar-
gain struck.

Transfer complete, why, Pietro was
apprised.
Violante sobbed the sobs and prayed
the prayers
And said the serpent tempted so she
fell,
Till Pietro had to clear his brow apace
And make the best of matters: wrath
at first,—
How else? pacification presently,
Why not?—could flesh withstand the
impurpled one,
The very Cardinal, Paolo's patron-
friend?
Who, justifiably surnamed "a hinge,"
Knew where the mollifying oil should
drop
To cure the creak o' the valve,—con-
siderate
For frailty, patient in a naughty world,
He even volunteered to supervise
The rough draught of those marriage-
articles
Signed in a hurry by Pietro, since re-
voked: [harm,
Trust 's politic, suspicion does the
There is but one way to browbeat this
world,
Dumbfounder doubt, and repay scorn
in kind,—

To go on trusting, namely, till fair
move
Mountains.

And faith here made the mountain
move.
Why, friends whose zeal cried "Ca-
tion ere too late!"—
Bade "Pause ere jump, with both feet
joined, on slough!"—
Counselled "If rashness then, no
temperance!"—
Heard for their pains that Pietro had
closed eyes,
Jumped and was in the middle of the
mire,
Money and all, just what should sink
man.
By the mere marriage, Guido gained
forthwith
Dowry, his wife's right; no rescinding
there:
But Pietro, why must he needs ratify
One gift Violante gave, pay down on
doit
Promised in first fool's-flurry? Grasped
the bag
Lest the son's service flag,—is reason
and rhyme,
Above all when the son's a son-in-law
Words to the wind! The parents cast
their lot [son
Into the lap o' the daughter: and the
Now with a right to lie there, took what
fell,
Pietro's whole having and holding
house and field,
Goods, chattel and effects, his worldly
worth
Present and in perspective, all re-
nounced
In favour of Guido. As for the usu-
fruct—
The interest now, the principal anon,
Would Guido please to wait, at Pietro's
death:
Till when, he must support the couple's
charge,
Bear with them, housemates, pension-
aries, pawned
To an alien for fulfilment of their pact.
Guido should at discretion deal them
orts,
Bread-bounty in Arezzo the strange
place,—
They who had lived deliciously and
rolled

Rome's choicest comfit 'neath the
tongue before.
Into this quag, "jump" bade the
Cardinal!
And neck-deep in a minute there
flounced they.

But they touched bottom at Arezzo:
there--

Four months' experience of how craft
and greed

Quicken'd by penury and pretentious
hate

Of plain truth, brutify and bestialise,—
Four months' taste of apportioned in-

solence,
Cruelty graduated, dose by dose

Of ruffianism dealt out at bed and
board,

And lo, the work was done, success
clapped hands.

The starved, stripped, beaten brace of
stupid dupes

Broke at last in their desperation loose,
Fled away for their lives, and lucky so ;

Found their account in casting coat
air

And bearing off a shred of skin at least :
Left Guido lord o' the prey, as the lion

is,
And, careless what came after, carried

their wrongs
To Rome,—I nothing doubt, with such

remorse
As folly feels, since pain can make it

wise,
But crime, past wisdom, which is inno-

cence,
Needs not be plagued with till a later

day.

Pietro went back to beg from door to
door,

In hope that memory not quite extinct
Of cheery days and festive nights would

move
Friends and acquaintance—after the

natural laugh,
And tributary "Just as we foretold—"

To show some bowels, give the dregs o'
the cup,

Scraps of the trencher, to their host
that was,

Let him share the mat with the mas-

tiff, he
Who lived large and kept open house

so long.

Not so Violante : ever a-head i' the
march,

Quick at the bye-road and the cut-
across,

She went first to the best adviser, God—
Whose finger unmistakably was felt

In all this retribution of the past.
Here was the prize of sin, luck of a lie !

But here too was the Holy Year would
help,

Bound to rid sinners of sin vulgar, sin
Abnormal, sin prodigious, up to sin

Impossible and supposed for Jubilee's
sake :

To lift the leadenest of lies, let soar
The soul unhampered by a feather-

weight.
"I will" said she "go burn out this

bad hole
"That breeds the scorpion, baulk the

plague at least
"Its hope of further creeping progeny :

"I will confess my fault, be punished,
yes,

"But pardoned too : Saint Peter pays
for all."

So, with the crowd she mixed, made for
the dome,

Through the great door new-broken
for the nonce

Marched, muffled more than ever
matron-wise,

Up the left nave to the formidable
throne,

Fell into file with this the poisoner
And that the parricide, and reached in

turn
The poor repugnant Penitentiary

Set at this gully-hole o' the world's dis-
charge

To help the frightfullest of filth have
vent,

And then knelt down and whispered in
his ear

How she had bought Pompilia, palmed
the babe

On Pietro, passed the girl off as their
child

To Guido, and defrauded of his dreg
This one and that one,—more than she

could name,
Until her solid piece of wickedness

Happened to split and spread woe far
and wide :

Contritely now she brought the case for
cure.

Replied the throne—"Ere God forgive
the guilt,
"Make man some restitution! Do
your part!
"The owners of your husband's heri-
tage,
"Barred thence by this pretended birth
and heir,—
"Tell them, the bar came so, is broken
so,
"Theirs be the due reversion as before!
"Your husband who, no partner in the
guilt,
"Suffers the penalty, led blindfold thus
"By love of what he thought his flesh
and blood
"To alienate his all in her behalf,—
"Tell him too such contract is null and
void!
[law,
"Last, he who personates your son-in-
"Who with sealed eyes and stopped
ears, tame and mute,
"Took at your hand that bastard of a
whore
"You called your daughter and he
calls his wife,—
"Tell him, and bear the anger which is
just!
"Then, penance so performe I, may par-
don be!"

Who could gainsay this just and right
award?

Nobody in the world: but, out o' the
world,

Who knows?—might timid interven-
tion be

From any makeshift of an angel-guide,
Substitute for celestial guardianship,
Pretending to take care of the girl's
self:

"Woman, confessing crime is healthy
work,

"And telling truth relieves a liar like
you,

"But what of her my unconsidered
charge?

"No thought of, while this good befalls
yourself,

"What in the way of harm may find
out her?"

No least thought, I assure you: truth
being truth,

Tell it and shame the devil!

Said and done:

Home went Violante and disbosomed
all:

And Pietro who, six months before
had borne

Word after word of such a piece of no
Like so much cold steel inched through

his breast-blade,
Now at its entry gave a leap for joy

As who—what did I say of one in
quag?

Should catch a hand from heaven and
spring thereby

Out of the mud, on ten toes stand on
more.

"What? All that used to be, may
again?

"My money mine again, my house, my
land,

"My chairs and tables, all mine even
more?

"What, the girl's dowry never was the
girl's,

"And, unpaid yet, is never now to pay
"Then the girl's self, my pale Pompeian
child

"That used to be my own with her
great eyes—

"He who drove us forth, why should
he keep her

"When proved as very a pauper
himself?

"Will she come back, with nothing
changed at all,

"And laugh 'But how you dreamed
uneasily!

"I saw the great drops stand here on
your brow—

"Did I do wrong to wake you with
kiss?

"No, indeed, darling! No, for wide
awake

"I see another outburst of surprise:
"The lout-lord, bully-beggar, braggart
sneak,

"Who not content with cutting purses
crops ear—

"Assuredly it shall be salve to mine
"When this great news red-letters him
the rogue!

"Ay, let him taste the teeth o' the
trap, this fox,

"Give us our lamb back, golden fleece
and all,

"Let her creep in and warm our breast
again!

"What care for the past?—we three
are our old selves,

"Who know now what the outside
world is worth."

months before,
 a piece of news
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 ve to mine
 d-letters him,
 teeth o' the
 golden fleece
 m our breasts
 ?—we three
 the outside

And so, he carried case before the
 courts;
 And there Violante, blushing to the
 bone,
 Made public declaration of her fault,
 Renounced her motherhood, and
 prayed the law
 To interpose, frustrate of its effect
 Her folly, and redress the injury done.
 Whereof was the disastrous conse-
 quence,
 That though indisputably clear the
 case
 (For thirteen years are not so large a
 lapse,
 And still six witnesses survived in
 Rome
 To prove the truth o' the tale)—yet,
 patent wrong
 Seemed Guido's; the first cheat had
 chanced on him:
 Here was the pity that, deciding right,
 Those who began the wrong would gain
 the good.
 Guido pronounced the story one long lie
 Lied to do robbery and take revenge:
 Or say it were no lie at all but truth,
 Then, it both robbed the right heirs
 and shamed him
 Without revenge to humanise the deed:
 What had he done when first they
 shamed him thus?
 But that were too fantastic: lose's
 they,
 And leasing this world's-wonder of a lie,
 They lied to blot him though it brand
 themselves.
 So answered Guido through the Abate's
 mouth.
 Wherefore the court, its customary
 way,
 Inclined to the middle course the sage
 affect—
 They held the child to be a changeling,
 —good:
 But, lest the husband got no good
 thereby,
 They willed the dowry, though not hers
 at all,
 Should yet be his, if not by right then
 grace—
 Part-payment for the plain injustice
 done.
 But then, that other contract, Pietro's
 work,

R.P.

Renunciation of his own estate,
 That must be cancelled—give him back
 his goods,
 He was no party to the cheat at least!
 So ran the judgment:—whence a
 prompt appeal
 On both sides, seeing right is absolute.
 Cried Pietro "Is Pompilia not my
 child?"
 "Why give her my child's dowry?"—
 "Have I right
 "To the dowry, why not to the rest
 as well?"
 Cried Guido, or cried Paolo in his name:
 Till law said "Reinvestigate the case!"
 And so the matter pends, unto this day.
 Hence new disaster—that no outlet
 seemed;
 Whatever the fortune of the battle-
 field,
 No path whereby the fatal man might
 march
 Victorious, wrcath on head and spoils
 in hand,
 And back turned full upon the baffled
 foe,—
 Nor cranny whence, desperate and dis-
 graced,
 Stripped to the skin, he might be fain
 to crawl
 Worm-like, and so away with his defeat
 To other fortune and the novel prey.
 No, he was pinned to the place there,
 left alone
 With his immense hate and, the soli-
 tary
 Subject to satisfy that hate, his wife.
 "Cast her off? Turn her naked out of
 doors?"
 "Easily said! But still the action
 pends,
 "Still dowry, principal and interest,
 "Pietro's possessions, all I bargained
 for,—
 "Any good day, be but my friends
 alert,
 "May give them me if she continue
 mine.
 "Yet, keep her? Keep the puppet of
 my foes—
 "Her voice that lisps me back their
 curse—her eye
 "They lend their leer of triumph to—
 her lip
 "I touch and taste their very filth
 upon?"

In short, he also took the middle course
 Rome taught him—did at last excogitate
 How he might keep the good and leave
 the bad
 Twined in revenge, yet extricable,—
 nay
 Make the very hate's eruption, very
 rush
 Of the unpent sluice of cruelty relieve
 His heart first, then go fertilise his
 field.
 What if the girl-wife, tortured with due
 care,
 Should take, as though spontaneously,
 the road
 It were impolitic to thrust her on ?
 If, goaded, she broke out in full revolt,
 Followed her parents i' the face o' the
 world,
 Branded as runaway not castaway,
 Self-sentenced and self-punished in the
 act ?
 So should the loathed form and de-
 tested face
 Launch themselves into hell and there
 be lost
 While he looked o'er the brink with
 folded arms ;
 So should the heaped-up shames go
 shuddering back
 O' the head o' the heape.s, Pietro and
 his wife,
 And bury in the breakage three at once :
 While Guido, left free, no one right re-
 nounced,
 Gain present, gain prospective, all the
 gain,
 None of the wife except her rights ab-
 sorbed,
 Should ask law what it was law paused
 about—
 If law were dubious still whose word to
 take,
 The husband's—dignified and derelict,
 Or the wife's—the . . . what I tell you.
 It should be.

Guido's first step was to take pen, in-
 dite
 A letter to the Abate,—not his own,
 His wife's,—she should re-write, sign,
 seal and send.
 She liberally told the household-news,
 Rejoiced her vile progenitors were fled,
 Revealed their malice—how they even
 laid

A last injunction on her, when they
 That she should forthwith find a p
 inoar,
 Complot with him to gather s
 enough
 Then burn the house down,—tak
 previous care
 To poison all its inmates overnight
 And so companioned, so provision
 too,
 Follow to Rome and all join fortu
 gay.
 This letter, traced in pencil-characte
 Guido as easily got retraced in ink
 By his wife's pen, guided from end
 end,
 As it had been just so much Hebre
 Sir :
 For why ? That wife could broid
 sing perhaps,
 Pray certainly, but no more read th
 write
 This letter " which yet write she must
 he said
 " Being half courtesy and complimen
 " Half sisterliness : take the thing c
 trust ! "
 She had as readily re-traced the wor
 Of her own death-warrant,—in som
 sort 't was so.
 This letter the Abate in due course
 Communicated to such curious souls
 In Rome as needs must pry into th
 cause
 Of quarrel, why the Comparini fled
 The Franceschini, whence the griev
 ance grew,
 What the hubbub meant : " Nay,—se
 the wife's own word,
 " Authentic answer ! Tell detractor
 too
 " There 's a plan formed, a program
 figured here
 " —Pray God no after-practice put to
 proof,
 " This letter cast no light upon, one
 day ! "

So much for what should work in Rome,
 —back now
 To Arezzo, go on with the project there,
 Forward the next step with as bold a
 foot,
 And plague Pompilia to the height, you
 see !
 Accordingly did Guido set himself
 To worry up and down, across, around,

The woman, hemmed in by her household-bars,—

Chased her about the coop of daily life,
Having first stopped each outlet thence
save one

Which, like bird with a ferret in her
haunt,

She needs must seize as sole way of
escape

Though there was tied and twittering a
decoy

To seem as if it tempted,—just the
plume

O' the popinjay, and not a respite there
From tooth and claw of something in
the dark,—

Giuseppe Caponsacchi.

Now begins

The tenebrific passage of the tale :

How hold a light, display the cavern's
gorge ?

How, in this phase of the affair, show
truth ?

Here is the dying wife who smiles and
says

"So it was,—so it was not,—how it
was,

"I never knew nor ever care to
know—"

Till they all weep, physician, man of
law,

Even that poor old bit of battered
brass

Beaten out of all shape by the world's
sins,

Common utensil of the lazar-house—

Confessor Celestino groans "'T is
truth,

"All truth and only truth : there 's
something else,

"Some presence in the room beside us
all,

"Something that every lie expires be-
fore :

"No question she was pure from first
to last."

So far is well and helps us to believe :

But beyond, she the helpless, simple-
sweet

Or silly-sooth, unskilled to break one
blow

At her good fame by putting finger
forth,—

How can she render service to the
truth ?

The bird says "So I fluttered where a
springe

"Caught me : the springe did not con-
trive itself,

"That I know : who contrived it, God
forgive !"

But we, who hear no voice and have
dry eyes,

Must ask,—we cannot else, absolving
her,—

How of the part played by that same
decoy

I' the catching, eaging ? Was himself
caught first ?

We deal here with no innocent at least,
No witless victim,—he's a man of the
age

And a priest beside,—persuade the
mocking world

Mere clarity boiled over in this sort !

He whose own safety too,—(the Pope 's
apprised—

Good-natured with the secular offence,
The Pope looks grave on priesthood in
a scrape)

Our priest's own safety therefore,
may-be life,

Hangs on the issue ! You will find it
hard.

Guido is here to meet you with fixed
foot,

Stiff like a statue—"Leave what went
before !

"My wife fled i' the company of a priest,
"Spent two days and two nights alone
with him :

"Leave what came after !" He is
hard to throw.

Moreover priests are merely flesh and
blood ;

When we get weakness, and no guilt
beside,

We have no such great ill-fortune :
finding grey,

We gladly call that white which might
be black,

Too used to the double-dye. So, if the
priest

Moved by Pompilia's youth and
beauty, gave

Way to the natural weakness. . . .
Anyhow

Here be facts, character ; what they
spell

Determine, and thence pick what sense
you may !

There was a certain young bold hand-
some priest

Popular in the city, far and wide

Famed, for Arezzo's but a little place,
 As the best of good companions, gay
 and grave
 At the decent minute; settled in his
 stall,
 Or sidelings, lute on lap, by lady's
 couch,
 Ever the courtly Canon: see in such
 A star shall climb apace and culminate,
 Have its due handbreadth of the heaven
 at Rome,
 Though meanwhile pausing on Arezzo's
 edge,
 As modest candle 'mid the mountain
 fog,
 To rub off redness and rusticity
 Ere it sweep chastened, gain the silver-
 sphere.
 Whether through Guido's absence or
 what else,
 This Caponsacchi, favourite of the
 town,
 Was yet no friend of his nor fire o' the
 house,
 Though both moved in the regular
 magnates' march—
 Each must observe the other's tread
 and halt
 At church, saloon, theatre, house of
 play.
 Who could help noticing the husband's
 slouch,
 The black of his brow—or miss the
 news that buzzed
 Of how the little solitary wife
 Wept and looked out of window all day
 long?
 What need of minute search into such
 springs
 As start men, set o' the move?—
 machinery
 Old as earth, obvious as the noonday
 sun.
 Why, take men as they come,—an in-
 stance now,—
 Of all those who have simply gone to
 see
 Pompilia on her deathbed since four
 days,
 Half at the least are, call it how you
 please,
 In love with her—I don't except the
 priests
 Nor even the old confessor whose eyes
 run
 Over at what he styles his sister's
 voice

Who died so early and weaned
 from the world.
 Well, had they viewed her ere the
 mess pushed
 The last o' the red o' the rose a
 while yet
 Some hand, adventurous 'twixt
 wind and her,
 Might let the life run back and raise
 flower
 Rich with reward up to the guardi-
 face,—
 Would they have kept that hand
 ployed the same
 At fumbling on with prayer-
 pages? No!
 Men are men: why then need I say
 word
 More than this, that our man the Can-
 here
 Saw, pitied, loved Pompilia?
 This is wh
 This startling why: that Caponsacchi
 self—
 Whom foes and friends alike avow
 for good
 Or ill, a man of truth whate'er betide
 Intrepid altogether, reckless too
 How his own fame and fortune, tossed
 to the winds,
 Suffer by any turn the adventure take
 Nay, more—not thrusting, like a bad
 to hide,
 'Twixt shirt and skin a joy which
 shown is shame—
 But flirting flag-like i' the face o' the
 world
 This tell-tale kerchief, this conspicuous
 For the lady,—oh, called innocent love
 I know!
 Only, such scarlet fiery innocence
 As most men would try muffle up in
 shade,—
 —'Tis strange then that this else
 abashless mouth
 Should yet maintain, for truth's sake
 which is God's,
 That it was not he made the first ad-
 vance,
 That, even ere word had passed be-
 tween the two,
 Pompilia penned him letters, passionate
 prayers,
 If not love, then so simulating love
 That he, no novice to the taste of
 thyme,

Turned from such over-luscious honey-
 clot
 At end o' the flower, and would not
 lend his lip
 Till . . . but the tale here frankly out-
 soars faith :
 There must be falsehood somewhere.
 For her part,
 Pompilia quietly constantly avers
 She never penned a letter in her life
 Nor to the Canon nor any other man,
 Being incompetent to write and read :
 Nor had she ever uttered word to him,
 nor he
 To her till that same evening when they
 met,
 She on her window-terrace, he beneath
 I' the public street, as was their fate-
 ful chance,
 And she adjured him in the name of
 God
 Find out and bring to pass where, when
 and how
 Escape with him to Rome might be
 contrived.
 Means found, plan laid and time fixed,
 she avers,
 And heart assured to heart in loyalty,
 All at an impulse ! All extemporised
 As in romance-books ! Is that cred-
 ible ?
 Well, yes : as she avers this with calm
 mouth
 Dying, I do think " Credible ! " you'd
 cry—
 Did not the priest's voice come to break
 the spell :
 They questioned him apart, as the cus-
 tom is,
 When first the matter made a noise at
 Rome,
 And he, calm, constant then as she is
 now,
 For truth's sake did assert and reassert
 Those letters called him to her and he
 came,
 —Which damns the story credible
 otherwise.
 Why should this man,—mad to devote
 himself,
 Careless what comes of his own fame,
 the first,—
 Be studious thus to publish and declare
 Just what the lightest nature loves to
 hide,
 Nor screen a lady from the byword 's
 laugh

" First spoke the lady, last the cava-
 lier ! "
 —I say,—why should the man tell
 truth just here
 When graceful lying meets such ready
 shrift ?
 Or is there a first moment for a priest
 As for a woman, when invaded shame
 Must have its first and last excuse to
 show ?
 Do both contrive love's entry in the
 mind
 Shall look, i' the manner of it, a sur-
 prise,
 That after, once the flag o' the fort
 hauled down,
 Effrontery may sink drawbridge, open
 gate,
 Welcome and entertain the conqueror ?
 Or what do you say to a touch of the
 devil's worst ?
 Can it be that the husband, he who
 wrote
 The letter to his brother I told you of,
 I' the name of her it meant to crimin-
 ate,—
 What if he wrote those letters to the
 priest ?
 Further the priest says, when it first be-
 fell,
 This folly o' the letters, that he checked
 the flow,
 Put them back lightly each with its
 reply.
 Here again vexes new discrepancy :
 There never reached her eye a word
 from him ;
 He did write but she could not read—
 she could
 Burn what offended wifehood, woman-
 hood, [her,
 So did burn : never bade him come to
 Yet when it proved he must come, let
 him come,
 And when he did come though un-
 called, she spoke
 Prompt by an inspiration : thus it was.
 Will you go somewhat back to under-
 stand ?
 When first, pursuant to his plan, there
 sprung,
 Like an uncaged beast, Guido's cruelty
 On the weak shoulders of his wife, she
 cried
 To those whom law appoints resource
 for such,

The secular guardian,—that's the
 Governor,
 And the Archbishop,—that's the
 spiritual guide,
 And prayed them take the claws from
 out her flesh.
 Now, this is ever the ill consequence
 Of being noble, poor and difficult,
 Ungainly, yet too great to disregard,—
 That the born peers and friends heredi-
 tary
 Though disinclined to help from their
 own store
 The opprobrious wight, put penny in
 his poke
 From purse of theirs or leave the door
 ajar
 When he goes wistful by at dinner-
 time,—
 Yet, if his needs conduct him where
 they sit
 Smugly in office, Judge This, Bishop
 Dispensers of the shine and shade o'
 the place—
 And if, the friend's door shut and purse
 undrawn,
 The potentate may find the office-hall
 Do as good service at no cost—give help
 By-the-bye, pay up traditional dues
 at once
 Just through a feather-weight too much
 i' the scale,
 A finger-tip forgot at the balance-
 tongue,—
 Why, only churls refuse, or Molinists.
 Thus when, in the first roughness of sur-
 prise
 At Guido's wolf-face whence the sheep-
 skin fell,
 The frightened couple, all bewildered-
 ment,
 Rushed to the Governor,—who else
 rights wrong?
 Told him their tale of wrong and
 craved redress—
 Why, then the Governor woke up to
 the fact
 That Guido was a friend of old, poor
 Count!—
 So, promptly paid his tribute, promised
 the pair,
 Wholesome chastisement should soon
 cure their qualms
 Next time they came and prated and
 told lies:
 Which stopped all prating, sent them
 dumb to Rome.

Well, now it was Pompilia's turn to
 The troubles pressing on her, as I
 Three times she rushed, maddened
 misery,
 To the other mighty man, sobbed
 her prayer
 At footstool of the Archbishop—
 the friend
 Of her husband also! Oh, good friend
 of yore!
 So, the Archbishop, not to be outdone
 By the Governor, break custom more
 than he,
 Thrice bade the foolish woman stop
 tongue,
 Unloosed her hands from harassing
 gout,
 Coached her and carried her to
 Count again,
 —His old friend should be master
 his house,
 Rule his wife and correct her faults
 need!
 Well, driven from post to pillar in t
 wise,
 She, as a last resource, betook herself
 To one, should be no family-friend
 least,
 A simple friar o' the city; confessed
 him,
 Then told how fierce temptation of
 lease
 By self-dealt death was busy with her
 soul,
 And urged that he put this in word
 write plain
 For one who could not write, set down
 her prayer
 That Pietro and Violante, parent-like
 If somehow not her parents, should for
 love
 Come save her, pluck from out the flames
 the brand
 Themselves had thoughtlessly thrust in
 so deep
 To send gay-coloured sparkles up and
 cheer
 Their seat at the chimney-corner. The
 good friar
 Promised as much at the moment;
 but, alack,
 Night brings discretion: he was no
 one's friend,
 Yet presently found he could not turn
 about
 Nor take a step i' the case and fail to
 tread

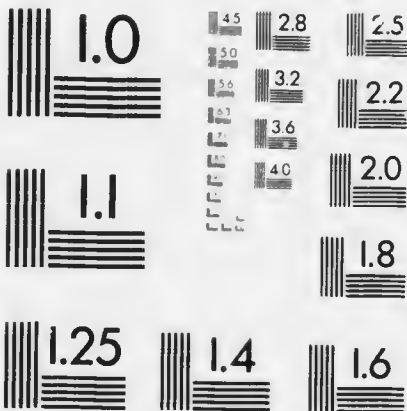
On some one's toe who either was a friend,
Or a friend's friend, or friend's friend
thrice-removed,
And woe to friar by whom offences
come!
So, the course being plain,—with a
general sigh
At matrimony the profound mistake,—
He threw reluctantly the business up,
Having his other penitents to mind.
If then, all outlets thus secured save
one,
At last she took to the open, stood and
stared
With her wan face to see where God
might wait—
And there found Caponsacchi wait as
well
For the precious something at perdi-
tion's edge,
He only was predestinate to save,—
And if they recognised in a critical flash
From the zenith, each the other, her
need of him,
His need of . . . say, a woman to perish
for,
The regular way o' the world, yet break
no vow,
Do no harm save to himself,—if this
were thus?
How do you say? It were improbable;
So is the legend of my patron-saint.
Anyhow, whether, as Guido states the
case,
Pompilia,—like a starving wretch i' the
street
Who stops and rifles the first passenger
In the great right of an excessive
wrong,—
Did somehow call this stranger and he
came,—
Or whether the strange sudden inter-
view
Blazed as when star and star must needs
go close
Till each hurts each and there is loss in
heaven—
Whatever way in this strange world it
was,—
Pompilia and Caponsacchi met, in fine,
She at her window, he i' the street be-
neath,
And understood each other at first
look.

All was determined and performed at
once.
And on a certain April evening, late
I' the month, this girl of sixteen, bride
and wife
Three years and over,—she who hither-
to
Had never taken twenty steps in Rome
Beyond the church, pinned to her
mother's gown,
Nor, in Arezzo, knew her way through
street
Except what led to the Archbishop's
door,—
Such an one rose up in the dark, laid
hand
On what came first, clothes and a trin-
ket or two,
Belongings of her own in the old day,—
Stole from the side o' the sleeping
spouse—who knows? [slid
Sleeping perhaps, silent for certain,—
Ghost-like from great dark room to
great dark room,
In through the tapestries and out again
And onward, unembarrassed as a fate,
Descended staircase, gained last door
of all,
Sent it wide open at first push of palm,
And there stood, first time, last and
only time,
At liberty, alone in the open street,—
Unquestioned, unmolested found her-
self
At the city gate, by Caponsacchi's side,
Hope there, joy there, life and all good
again,
The carriage there, the convoy there,
light there
Broadening into a full blaze at Rome
And breaking small what long miles
lay between;
Up she sprang, in he followed, they
were safe.
The husband quotes this for incredible,
All of the story from first word to last:
Sees the priest's hand throughout up-
holding hers,
Traces his foot to the alcove, that night,
Whither and whence blindfold he knew
the way,
Proficient in all craft and stealthiness;
And cites for proof a servant, eye that
watched
And ear that opened to purse secrets
up,



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



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A woman-spy,—suborned to give and take
 Letters and tokens, do the work of shame
 The more adroitly that herself, who helped
 Communion thus between a tainted pair,
 Had long since been a leper thick in spot,
 A common trull o' the town: she witnessed all,
 Helped many meetings, partings, took her wage
 And then told Guido the whole matter. Lies!
 The woman's life confutes her word,—her word
 Confutes itself: "Thus, thus and thus I lied."
 "And thus, no question, still you lie," we say.
 "Ay, but at last, e'en have it how you will,
 "Whatever the means, whatever the way, explodes
 "The consummation"—the accusers shriek:
 "Here is the wife avowedly found in flight,
 "And the companion of her flight, a priest;
 "She flies her husband, he the church his spouse:
 "What is this?"

Wife and priest alike reply
 "This is the simple thing it claims to be,
 "A course we took for life and honour's sake,
 "Very strange, very justifiable."
 She says, "God put it in my head to fly,
 "As when the martin migrates: autumn claps
 "Her hands, cries 'Winter's coming, will be here,
 "'Off with you ere the white teeth overtake!
 "'Fiee!' So I fled: this friend was the warm day,
 "The south wind and whatever favours flight;
 "I took the favour, had the help, how else?
 "And so we did fly rapidly all night,

"All day, all night—a longer night again,
 "And then another day, longest days,
 "And all the while, whether we fled stopped,
 "I scarce know how or why, o thought filled both,
 "'Fly and arrive!' So long as found strength
 "I talked with my companion, to him much,
 "Knowing that he knew more, knew me, knew God
 "And God's disposal of me,—but to sense
 "O' the blessed flight absorbed me the main,
 "And speech became mere talking through a sleep,
 "Till at the end of that last long night
 "In a red daybreak, when we reached an inn
 "And my companion whispered 'Ne stage—Rome!'
 "Sudden the weak flesh fell like pile up cards,
 "All the frail fabric at a finger's touch
 "And prostrate the poor soul too, as I said
 "But though Count Guido were furlong off,
 "'Just on me, I must stop and rest awhile!'
 "Then something like a white wave on the sea
 "Broke o'er my brain and buried me in sleep
 "Blessedly, till it ebbed and left me loose,
 "And where was I found but on a strange bed
 "In a strange room like hell, roaring with noise,
 "Ruddy with flame, and filled with men, in front
 "Whom but the man you call my husband, ay—
 "Count Guido once more between heaven and me,
 "For there my heaven stood, my salvation, yes—
 "That Caponsacchi all my heaven help,
 "Helpless himself, held prisoner in the hands

onger night—

y, longest of

her we fled or

or why, one

o long as I

panion, told

y more, knew

me,—but the

sorbed me in

mere talking

t last longest

n we reached

spered ' Next

fell like piled-

finger's touch,

soul too, and

Guido were a

stop and rest

white wave o'

l buried me in

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nd but on a

hell, roaring

ad filled with

a call my hus-

more between

stood, my sal-

my heaven of

prisoner in the

" Of men who looked up in my hus-
band's face

" To take the fate thence he should
signify,

" Just as the way was at Arezzo : then,

" Not for my sake but his who had
helped me—

" I sprang up, reached him with one
bound, and seized

" The sword o' the felon, trembling at
his side,

" Fit creature of a coward, unsheathed
the thing

" And would have pinned him through
the poison-bag

" To the wall and left him there to pal-
pitate,

" As you serve scorpions, but men in-
terposed—

" Disarmed me, gave his life to him
again

" That he might take mine and the
other lives,

" And he has done so. I submit my-
self ! "

The priest says—oh, and in the main
result

The facts asseverate, he truly says,
As to the very act and deed of him,

However you mistrust the mind o' the
man—

The flight was just for flight's sake, no
pretext

For aught except to set Pompilia free :
He says " I cite the husband's self's

worst charge
" In proof of my best word for both of
us.

" Be it conceded that so many times

" We took our pleasure in his palace :
then,

" What need to fly at all ?—or flying
no less,

" What need to outrage the lips sick
and white

" Of a woman, and bring ruin down be-
side,

" By halting when Rome lay one stage
beyond ? "

So does he vindicate Pompilia's fame,
Confirm her story in all points but one—

This ; that, so fleeing and so breathing
forth

Her last strength in the prayer to halt
awhile,

She makes confusion of the reddening
white

Which was the sunset when her strength
gave way,

And the next sunrise and its whitening
red

Which she revived in when her hus-
band came :

She mixes both times, morn and eve, in
one,

Having lived through a blank of night
'twixt each

Though dead-asleep, unaware as a
corpse,

She on the bed above ; her friend be-
low

Watched in the doorway of the inn the
while,

Stood i' the red o' the morn, that she
mistakes,

In act to rouse and quicken the tardy
crew

And hurry out the horses, have the
stage

Over, the last league, reach Rome and
be safe :

When up came Guido.
Guido's tale begins—

How he and his whole household, drunk
to death

By some enchanted potion, popped
drugs

Plied by the wife, lay powerless in gross
sleep

And left the spoilers unimpeded way,
Could not shake off their poison and

pursue,
Till noontide, then made shift to get on
horse

And did pursue : which means, he
took his time,

Pressed on no more than lingered after,
step

By step, just making sure o' the fugi-
tives,

Till at the nick of time, he saw his
chance,

Seized it, came up with and surprised
the pair.

How he must needs have gnawn lip and
gnashed teeth,

Taking successively at tower and town,
Village and roadside, still the same re-
port

" Yes, such a pair arrived an hour ago,
" Sat in the carriage just where your
horse stands,

" While we got horses ready,—turned
deaf ear

"To all entreaty they would even
alight ;

"Counted the minutes and resumed
their course."

Would they indeed escape, arrive at
Rome,

Leave no least loop to let damnation
through,

And foil him of his captured infamy,
Prize of guilt proved and perfect ? So
it seemed :

Till, oh the happy chance, at last stage,
Rome

But two short hours off, Castelnuovo
reached,

The guardian angel gave reluctant
place,

Satan stepped forward with alacrity,
Pompilia's flesh and blood succumbed,
perforce

A halt was, and her husband had his
will.

Perdue he couched, counted out hour
by hour

Till he should spy in the east a signal-
streak—

Night had been, morrow was, triumph
would be. [plete ?

Do you see the plan deliciously com-
The rush upon the unsuspecting sleep,
The easy execution, the outcry
Over the deed "Take notice all the
world !

"These two dead bodies, locked still in
embrace,—

"The man is Caponsacchi and a priest,

"The woman is my wife: they fled me
late,

"Thus have I found and you behold
them thus,

"And may judge me: do you approve
or no ?"

Success did seem not so improbable,
But that already Satan's laugh was
heard,

His black back turned on Guido—left
i' the lurch

Or rather, baulked of suit and service
now,

That he improve on both by one deed
more,

Burn up the better at no distant day,
Body and soul one holocaust to hell.

Anyhow, of this natural consequence
Did just the last link of the long chain
snap :

For his eruption was o' the priest, ali-
And alert, calm, resolute and formi-
able,

Nor the least look of fear in that bro-
brow—

One not to be disposed of by surpris-
And armed moreover—who had guess-
as much ?

Yes, there stood he in secular costum-
Complete from head to heel, with swo-
at side,

He seemed to know the trick of po-
fectly.

There was no prompt suppression
the man

As he said calmly "I have saved yo-
wife

"From death; there was no other wa-
but this;

"Of what do I defraud you exce-
death ?

"Charge any wrong beyond, I ans-
it."

Guido, the valorous, had met
match,

Was forced to demand help instead
fight,

Bid the authorities o' the place lend a
And make the best of a broken matt-
so.

They soon obeyed the summons—
suppose,

Apprized and ready, or not far to seek
Laid hands on Caponsacchi, found
fault,

A priest yet flagrantly accoutred thus,
Then, to make good Count Guido's
further charge,

Proceeded, prisoner made lead t-
way,

In a crowd, upstairs to the chamb-
door

Where wax-white, dead asleep, de-
beyond dream,

As the priest laid her, lay Pompilia y-

And as he mounted step and step wi-
the crowd

How I see Guido taking heart again
He knew his wife so well and the way
her—

How at the outbreak she would shro-
her shame

In hell's heart, would it mercifu-
yawn—

How, failing that, her forehead to
foot,

She would crouch silent till the great
 doom fell,
 Leave him triumphant with the crowd
 to see!
 Guilt motionless or writhing like a
 worm?
 No! Second misadventure, this worm
 turned,
 I told you: would have slain him on
 the spot
 With his own weapon, but they seized
 her hands:
 Leaving her tongue free, as it tolled the
 knell
 Of Guido's hope so lively late. The
 past
 Took quite another shape now. She
 who shrieked
 "At least and for ever I am mine and
 God's,
 "Thanks to his liberating angel Death—
 "Never again degraded to be yours
 "The ignoble noble, the unmanly man,
 "The beast below the beast in brutish-
 ness!"—
 This was the froward child, "the restif
 lamb
 "Used to be cherished in his breast,"
 he groaned—
 "Eat from his hand and drink from out
 his cup,
 "The while his fingers pushed their
 loving way
 "Through curl on curl of that soft coat
 —alas,
 "And she all silverly baaed gratitude
 "While meditating mischief!"—and
 so forth.
 He must invent another story now!
 The ins and outs o' the rooms were
 searched: he found
 Or showed for found the abominable
 prize—
 Love-letters from his wife who cannot
 write,
 Love-letters in reply o' the priest—
 thank God!—
 Who can write and confront his char-
 acter
 With this, and prove the false thing
 forged throughout:
 Spitting whereat, he needs must spat-
 ter who
 But Guido's self?—that forged and
 falsified
 One letter called Pompilia's, past dis-
 pute:

Then why not these to make sure still
 more sure?

So was the case concluded then and
 there:

Guido preferred his charges in due
 form, [signed

Called on the law to adjudicate, con-
 The accused ones to the Prefect of the
 place.

(Oh mouse-birth of that mountain-like
 revenge!)

And so to his own place betook him-
 self

After the spring that failed,—the wild-
 cat's way.

The captured parties were conveyed to
 Rome;

Investigation followed here i' the
 court—

Soon to review the fruit of its own work,
 From them to now being eight months
 and no more.

Guido kept out of sight and safe at
 home:

The Abate, brother Paolo, helped most
 At words when deeds were out of ques-
 tion, pushed

Nearest the purple, played best deputy,
 So, pleaded, Guido's representative

At the court shall soon try Guido's self,
 —what's more,

The court that also took—I told you,
 Sir— [cheat

That statement of the couple, how a
 Had been i' the birth of the babe, no
 child of theirs.

That was the prelude; this, the play's
 first act:

Whereof we wait what comes, crown,
 close of all.

Well, the result was something of a
 shade

On the parties thus accused,—how
 otherwise?

Shade, but with shine as unmistakable.
 Each had a prompt defence: Pompilia
 first—

"Earth was made hell to me who did
 no harm:

"I only could emerge one way from
 hell

"By catching at the one hand held me,
 so

"I caught at it and thereby stepped to
 heaven:

" If that be wrong, do with me what
you will ! "

Then Caponsacchi with a grave grand
sweep

O' the arm as though his soul warned
baseness off—

" If as a man, then much more as a
priest

" I hold me bound to help weak inno-
cence :

" If so my worldly reputation burst,

" Being the bubble it is, why, burst it
may :

" Blame I can bear though not blame-
worthiness.

" But use your sense first, see if the
miscreant here

" The man who tortured thus the
woman, thus

" Have not both laid the trap and fixed
the lure

" Over the pit should bury body and
soul !

" His facts are lies : his letters are the
fact—

" An infiltration flavoured with himself !

" As for the fancies—whether . . what
is it you say ?

" The lady loves me, whether I love her

" In the forbidden sense of your sur-
mise,—

" If, with the midday blaze of truth
above,

" The unlidde eye of God awake,
aware,

" You needs must pry about and track
the course

" Of each stray beam of light may tra-
verse earth,

" To the night's sun and Lucifer him-
self,

" Do so, at other time, in other place,

" Not now nor here ! Enough that
first to last

" I never touched her lip nor she my
hand

" Nor either of us thought a thought,
much less

" Spoke a word which the Virgin might
not hear.

" Be that your question, thus I answer
it."

Then the court had to make its mind
up, spoke.

" It is a thorny question, and a tale

" Hard to believe, but not impossible :

" Who can be absolute for either side

" A middle course is happily open y

" Here has a blot surprised the soc
blank,—

" Whether through favour, feebleness
or fault,

" No matter, leprosy has touched o
robe

" And we're unclean and must be pu
fied,

" Here is a wife makes holiday fro
home,

" A priest caught playing truant to
church,

" In masquerade moreover : both
lege

" Enough excuse to stop our lif
scourge

" Which else would heavily fall.
the other hand,

" Here is a husband, ay and man
mark,

" Who comes 'complaining here, o
mands redress

" As if he were the pattern of desert

" The while those plaguy allegatio
frown,

" Forbid we grant him the redress
seeks.

" To all men be our moderation know

" Rewarding none while compensati
each,

" Hurting all round though harmi
nobody,

" Husband, wife, priest, scot-free
one shall 'scape,

" Yet priest, wife, husband, boast t
unbroken head

" From application of our excellent o

" So that, whatever be the fact, in fi

" It makes no miss of justice in a so

" First, let the husband stomach as
may,

" His wife shall neither be returned hi
no—

" Nor branded, whipped and cag
but just consigned

" To a convent and the quietude s
craves ;

" So is he rid of his domestic plagu

" What better thing can happen to
man ?

" Next, let the priest retire—unsher
unshamed,

" Unpunished as for perpetrati
crime,

" But relegated (not imprisoned, Sir

"Sent for three years to clarify his youth
 "At Civita, a rest by the way to Rome:
 "There let his life skim off its last of lees
 "Nor keep this dubious colour.
 Judged the cause:
 "All parties may retire, content, we hope."
 That's Rome's way, the traditional road of law;
 Whither it leads is what remains to tell.

The priest went to his relegation-place,
 The wife to her convent, brother Paolo
 To the arms of brother Guido with the news
 And this beside—his charge was countercharged;
 The Comparini, his old brace of hates,
 Were breathed and vigilant and venomous now—
 Had shot a second bolt where the first stuck,
 And followed up the pending dowry-suit
 By a procedure should release the wife
 From so much of the marriage-bond as barred
 Escape when Guido turned the screw too much
 On his wife's flesh and blood, as husband may,
 No more defence, she turned and made attack,
 Claimed now divorce from bed and board, in short:
 Pleaded such subtle strokes of cruelty,
 Such slow surc sige laid to her body and soul,
 As, proved,—and proofs seemed coming thick and fast,—
 Would gain both freedom and the dowry back
 Even should the first suit leave them in his grasp:
 So urged the Comparini for the wife.
 Guido had gained not one of the good things
 He grasped at by his creditable plan
 O' the flight and following and the rest:
 the suit
 That smouldered late was fanned to fury new,
 This adjunct came to help with fiercer fire,

While he had got himself a quite new plague—
 Found the world's face an universal grin
 At this last best of the Hundred Merry Tales
 Of how a young and spritely clerk devised
 To carry off a spouse that moped too much,
 And cured her of the vapours in a trice:
 And how the husband, playing Vulcan's part,
 Told by the Sun, started in hot pursuit
 To catch the lovers, and came halting up,
 Cast his net and then called the Gods to see
 The convicts in their rosy impudence—
 Whereat said Mercury "Would that I were Mars!"
 Oh it was rare, and naughty all the same!
 Brief, the wife's courage and cunning,
 —the priest's show
 Of chivalry and adroitness,—last not least,
 The husband—how he ne'er showed teeth at all,
 Whose bark had promised biting; but just sneaked
 Back to his kennel, tail 'twixt legs, as 't were,—
 All this was hard to gulp down and digest.
 So pays the devil his liegeman, brass for gold.
 But this was at Arezzo: here in Rome
 Brave Paolo bore up against it all—
 Battled it out, nor wanting to himself
 Nor Guido nor the House whose weight he bore
 Pillar-like, not by force of arm but brain.
 He knew his Rome, what wheels we set to work;
 Plied influential folk, pressed to the ear
 Of the efficacious purple, pushed his way
 To the old Pope's self,—past decency indeed,—
 Praying him take the matter in his hands
 Out of the regular court's incompetence;
 But times are changed and nephews out of date

And favouritism unfashionable : the
Pope

Said " Render Cæsar what is Cæsar's
due ! "

As for the Comparini's counter-plea,
He met that by a counter-plea again,
Made Guido claim divorce—with help
so far

By the trial's issue : for, why punish-
ment

However slight unless for guiltiness
However slender ?—and a molehill
serves

Much as a mountain of offence this
way.

So was he gathering strength on every
side

And growing more and more to menace
—when

All of a terrible moment came the blow
That beat down Paolo's fence, ended
the play

O' the foil and brought Mannaia on the
stage.

Five months had passed now since
Pompilia's flight,

Months spent in peace among the Con-
vent nuns :

This,—being, as it seemed, for Guido's
sake

Solely, what pride might call imprison-
ment
And quote as something gained, to
friends at home,—

This naturally was at Guido's charge :
Grudge it he might, but penitential
fare,

Prayers, preachings, who but he de-
frayed the cost ?

So, Paolo dropped, as proxy, doit by
doit

Like heart's blood, till—what 's here ?
What notice comes ?

The Convent's self makes application
bland

That, since Pompilia's health is fast o'
the wane,

She may have leave to go combine her
cure

Of soul with cure of body, mend her
mind

Together with her thin arms and sunk
eyes

That want fresh air outside the con-
vent-wall,

Say in a friendly house,—and which so
fit

As a certain villa in the Pauline way
That happens to hold Pietro and
wife,

The natural guardians ? " Oh, a
shift the care

" You shift the cost, too ; Pietro p
in turn,

" And lightens Guido of a load ! A
then,

" Villa or convent, two names for
thing,

" Always the sojourn means impris-
ment,

" *Domum pro carcere*—nowise we re
" Nothing abate : how answers P
lo ? "

You,
What would you answer ? All
smooth and fair,

Even Paul's astuteness sniffed no ha-
i' the world.

He authorised the transfer, saw it ma-
And, two months after, reaped the fr-
of the same,

Having to sit down, rack his brain a-
What phrase should serve him best
notify

Our Guido that by happy providen-
A son and heir, a babe was born to h-
I' the villa,—go tell sympathiz-
friends !

Yes, such had been Pompilia's pri-
lege :

She, when she fled, was one mor-
gone with child,

Known to herself or unknown, eit-
way

Availing to explain (say men of art
The strange and passionate precipita-
Of maiden startled into motherhood
Which changes body and soul by n-
ture's law.

So when the she-dove breeds, stran-
yearnings come

For the unknown shelter by undream-
of shores,

And there is born a blood-pulse in l-
heart

To fight if needs be, though with flap-
wing,

For the wool-flock or the fur-tu-
though a hawk

Contest the prize,—wherefore, s-
knows not yet.

Anyhow, thus to Guido came the nev-
" I shall have quitted Rome ere y-
arrive

"To take the one step left,"—wrote Paolo.

Then did the winch o' the winepress of all hate,

Vanity, disappointment, grudge and greed,

Take the last turn that screws out pure revenge

With a bright bubble at the brim beside—

By an heir's birth he was assured at once

O' the main prize, all the money in dispute :

Pompilia's dowry might revert to her

Or stay with him as law's caprice should point,—

But now—now—what was Pietro's shall be hers,

What was hers shall remain her own,—if hers,

Why then,—oh, not her husband's but—her heir's !

That heir being his too, all grew his at last

By this road or by that road, since they join.

Before, why, push he Pietro out o' the world,—

The current of the money stopped, you see,

Pompilia being proved no Pietro's child;

Or let it be Pompilia's life he quenched,

Again the current of the money stopped,—

Guido debarred his rights as husband soon,

So the new process threatened ;—now, the chance,

Now, the resplendent minute ! Clear the earth,

Cleanse the house, let the three but disappear

A child remains, depositary of all,

That Guido may enjoy his own again !

Repair all losses by a master-stroke,

Wipe out the past, all done and left undone,

Swell the good present to best evermore,

Die into new life, which let blood baptize !

So, i' the blue of a sudden sulphur-blaze,

And why there was one step to take at Rome,

And why he should not meet with Paolo there,

He saw—the ins and outs to the heart of hell—

And took the straight line thither swift and sure.

He rushed to Vittiano, found four sons o' the soil,

Brutes of his breeding, with one spark i' the clod

That served for a soul, the looking up to him

Or aught called Franceschini as life, death,

Heaven, hell,—lord paramount, assembled these,

Harangued, equipped, instructed, pressed each clod

With his will's imprint ; then took horse, plied spur,

And so arrived, all five of them, at Rome

On Christmas Eve, and forthwith found themselves

Installed i' the vacancy and solitude

Left them by Paolo, the considerate man [once

Who, good as his word, disappeared at As if to leave the stage free. A whole week

Did Guido spend in study of his part, Then played it fearless of a failure. One,

Struck the year's clock whereof the hours are days,

And off was rung o' the little wheels the chime

"Good will on earth and peace to man : " but, two,

Proceeded the same bell and, evening come,

The dreadful five felt finger-wise their way

Across the town by blind cuts and black turns

To the little lone suburban villa ; knocked—

"Who may be outside ? " called a well-known voice.

"A friend of Caponsacchi's bringing friends

"A letter."

That's a test, the excusers say : Ay, and a test conclusive, I return.

What ? Had that name brought touch of guilt or taste

Of fear with it, aught to dash the present joy

With memory of the sorrow just at
 end,—
 She, happy in her parents' arms at
 length
 With the new blessing of the two weeks'
 babe,—
 How had that name's announcement
 moved the wife?
 Or, as the other slanders circulate,
 Were Caponsacchi no rare visitant
 On nights and days whither safe har-
 bour lured,
 What bait had been i' the name to ope
 the door?
 The promise of a letter? Stealthy
 guests
 Have secret watchwords, private en-
 trances:
 The man's own self might have been
 found inside
 And all the scheme made frustrate by a
 word.
 No: but since Guido knew, none knew
 so well,
 The man had never since returned to
 Rome
 Nor seen the wife's face more than
 villa's front,
 So, could not be at hand to warn or
 save,—
 For that, he took this sure way to the
 end.

"Come in," bade poor Violante cheer-
 fully,
 Drawing the door-bolt: that death
 was the first,
 Stabbed through and through. Pietro,
 close on her heels,
 Set up a cry—"Let me confess my-
 self!
 "Grant but confession!" Cold steel
 was the grant.
 Then came Pompilia's turn.
 Then they escaped.
 The noise o' the slaughter roused the
 neighbourhood.
 They had forgotten just the one thing
 more
 Which saves i' the circumstance, the
 ticket towit
 Which puts post-horses at a travelier's
 use:
 So, all on foot, desperate through the
 dark
 Reeled they like drunkards along open
 road,

Accomplished a prodigious two
 miles
 Homeward, and gained Baccano
 near,
 Stumbled at last, deaf, dumb, b
 through the feat,
 Into a grange and, one dead heap, s
 there
 Till the pursuers hard upon their t
 Reached them and took them, red f
 head to heel,
 And brought them to the prison wh
 they lie.
 The couple were laid i' the church
 days ago,
 And the wife lives yet by miracle.

All is t
 You hardly need ask what Count Gu
 says,
 Since something he must say.
 own the deed—" "
 (He cannot choose,—but—) "I
 clare the same
 "Just and inevitable,—since no v
 else
 "Was left me, but by this of tal
 life,
 "To save my honour which is m
 than life.
 "I exercised a husband's rights."
 which
 The answer is as prompt—"There
 no fault
 "In any one o' the three to pur
 thus:
 "Neither i' the wife, who kept all fa
 to you,
 "Nor in the parents, whom your
 first duped,
 "Robbed and maltreated, then tur
 out of doors.
 "You wronged and they endu
 wrong; yours the fault.
 "Next, had endurance overpassed
 mark
 "And turned resentment need
 remedy,—
 "Nay, put the absurd impossible ca
 for once—
 "You were all blameless of the bla
 alleged
 "And they blameworthy where you
 all blame,
 "Still, why this violation of the la
 "Yourself elected law should take
 course,

IV

TERTIUM QUID

TRUE, Excellency—as his Highness says,

Though she 's not dead yet, she 's as good as stretched

Symmetrical beside the other two ;
Though he 's not judged yet, he 's the same as judged,

So do the facts abound and super-abound :

And nothing hinders, now, we lift the case

Out of the shade into the shine, allow
Qualified persons to pronounce at last,
Nay, edge in an authoritative word
Between this rabble's-brabble of dolts
and fools

Who make up reasonless unreasoning Rome.

" Now for the Trial ! " they roar :
" the Trial to test

" The truth, weigh husband and weigh wife alike

" I ' the scales of law, make one scale kick the beam ! "

Law 's a machine from which, to please the mob,

Truth the divinity must needs descend
And clear things at the play's fifth act
—aha !

Hammer into their noddles who was who

And what was what. I tell the simpletons

" Could law be competent to such a feat

" 'T were done already : what begins next week

" Is end o' the Trial, last link of a chain

" Whereof the first was forged three years ago

" When law addressed herself to set wrong right,

" And proved so slow in taking the first step

" That ever some new grievance,—tort, retort,

" On one or the other side,—o'ertook i' the game,

" Retarded sentence, till this deed of death

" Is thrown in, as it were, last bale to boat

" Crammed to the edge with cargo—or passengers ?

" Avenge wrong, or show vengeance not your right ;

" Why, only when the balance in law's hand

" Trembles against you and inclines the way

" O' the other party, do you make protest,

" Renounce arbitrament, flying out of court,

" And crying ' Honour's hurt the sword must cure ? '

" Aha, and so i' the middle of each suit

" Trying i' the courts,—and you had three in play

" With an appeal to the Pope's self beside,—

" What, you may chop and change and right your wrongs

" Leaving the law to lag as she thinks fit ? "

That were too temptingly commodious, Count !

One would have still a remedy in reserve

Should reach the safest oldest sinner, you see !

One's honour forsooth ? Does that take hurt alone

From the extreme outrage ? I who have no wife,

Being yet sensitive in my degree

As Guido,—must discover hurt elsewhere

Which, half compounded-for in days gone by,

May profitably break out now afresh,

Need cure from my own expeditious hands.

The lie that was, as it were, imputed me

When you objected to my contract's clause,—

The theft as good as, one may say, alleged, [Sir,

When you, co-heir in a will, excepted,

To my administration of effects,

—Aha, do you think law disposed of these ?

My honour's touched and shall deal death around !

Count, that were too commodious, I repeat !

If any law be imperative on us all,
Of all are you the enemy : out with you
From the common light and air and life of man !

" ' *Trecentos inseris ; ohe, jam satis est !*
 " ' *Iluc appelle !*—passengers, the
 word must be."

Long since, the boat was loaded to my
 eyes.

To hear the rabble and brabble, you 'd
 call the case

Fused and confused past human finding
 out.

One calls the square round, t' other the
 round square—

And pardonably in that first surprise
 O' the blood that fell and splashed the
 diagram :

But now we 've used our eyes to the
 violent hue

Can't we look through the crimson and
 trace lines ?

It makes a man despair of history,
 Ensebius and the established fact—
 fig's end !

Oh, give the fools their Trial, rattle
 away

With the leash of lawyers, two on either
 side—

One barks, one bites,—Masters Arc-
 angeli

And Spreti,—that 's the husband's
 ultimate hope

Against the Fisc and the other kind of
 Fisc,

Bound to do barking for the wife : bow
 —wow ! [here

Why, Excellency, we and his Highness
 Would settle the matter as sufficiently

As ever will Advocate This and Fiscal
 That

And Judge the Other, with even—a
 word and a wink—

We well know who for ultimate arbiter.
 Let us beware o' the basset-table—lest

We jog the elbow of Her Eminence,
 Jostle his cards,—he 'll rap you out

a . . st !

By the window-seat ! And here 's the
 Marquis too !

Indulge me but a moment : if I fail
 —Favoured with such an audience,

understand !—

To set things right, why, class me with
 the mob

As understander of the mind of man !

The mob,—now, that 's just how the
 error comes !

Bethink you that you have to deal
 with *plebs*,

The commonalty ; this is an episode
 In burges-life,—why seek to aggra-
 vate,

Idealise, denaturalise the class ?
 People talk just as if they had to

With a noble pair that . . Excellency
 your ear !

Stoop to me, Highness,—listen
 look yourselves !

This Pietro, this Violante, live their
 At Rome in the easy way that 's

from worst
 Even for their betters,—theirselves

love themselves,
 Spend their own oil in feeding

own lamp
 That their own faces may grow bright

thereby.

They get to fifty and over : how's
 lamp ?

Full to the depth o' the wick,—more
 so much ;

And also with a remnant,—so much
 more

Of moneys,—which there 's no
 suming now,

But, when the wick shall moulder
 some day,

Failing fresh twist of tow to use
 dregs,

Will lie a prize for the passer-by,—
 wit

Anyone that can prove himself
 heir,

Seeing, the couple are wanting in
 child :

Meantime their wick swims in the
 broad bowl

O' the middle rank,—not raised a
 con's height

For wind to ravage, nor swung
 lamp graze ground

As watchman's cresset, he pokes
 and there,

Going his rounds to probe the rut
 the road

Or fish the luck o' the puddle. Pietro
 soul

Was satisfied when crony smirked
 " No wine

" Like Pietro's, and he drinks it every
 day ! "

His wife's heart swelled her body
 joyed its fill

When neighbours turned heads
 fully at church,

Sighed at the load of lace that came to pray.
 Well, having got through fifty years of
 flare,
 They burn out so, indulge so their dear
 selves,
 That Pietro finds himself in debt at
 last,
 As he were any lordling of us all :
 And, for the dark begins to creep on
 day,
 Creditors grow uneasy, talk aside,
 Take counsel, then importune all at
 once.
 For if the good fat rosy careless man,
 Who has not laid a ducat by, decease—
 Let the lamp fall, no heir at hand to
 catch—
 Why, being childless, there 's a spilth i'
 the street
 O' the remnant, there 's a scramble for
 the dregs
 By the stranger : so, they grant him no
 long day
 But come in a body, clamour to be paid.
 What 's his resource ? He asks and
 straight obtains
 The customary largess, dole dealt out
 To, what we call our "poor dear
 shame-faced ones,"
 In secret once a month to spare the
 shame
 O' the slothful and the spendthrift,—
 pauper-saints
 The Pope puts meat i' the mouth of,
 ravens they,
 And Providence he—just what the mob
 admires !
 That is, instead of putting a prompt
 foot
 On selfish worthless human slugs whose
 slime
 Has failed to lubricate their path in
 life,
 Why, the Pope picks the first ripe
 fruit that falls
 And gracious puts it in the vermin's
 way.
 Pietro could never save a dollar ?
 Straight
 He must be subsidised at our expense :
 And for his wife—the harmless house-
 hold sheep
 One ought not to see harassed in her
 age—
 Judge, by the way she bore adversity,

O' the patient nature you ask pity for !
 How long, now, would the roughest
 marketman,
 Handling the creatures huddled to the
 knife,
 Harass a mutton ere she made a mouth
 Or menaced biting ? Yet the poor
 sheep here,
 Violante, the old innocent burgess-wife,
 In her first difficulty showed great teeth
 Fit to crunch up and swallow a good
 round crime.
 She meditates the tenure of the Trust,
Fidei commissum is the lawyer-phrase,
 These funds that only want an heir to
 take—
 Goes o'er the gamut o' the creditor's cry
 By semitones from whine to snarl high
 up
 And growl down low, one scale in sun-
 dry keys,—
 Pauses with a little compunction for
 the face
 Of Pietro frustrate of its ancient
 cheer,—
 Never a bottle now for friend at need,—
 Comes to a stop on her own frittered
 lace
 And neighbourly condolences thereat,
 Then makes her mind up, sees the
 thing to do :
 And so, deliberately snaps house-book
 clasp,
 Posts off to vespers, missal beneath
 arm,
 Passes the proper San Lorenzo by,
 Dives down a little lane to the left, is
 lost
 In a labyrinth of dwellings best un-
 named,
 Selects a certain blind one, black at
 base,
 Blinking at top,—the sign of we know
 what,—
 One candle in a casement set to wink
 Streetward, do service to no shrine in-
 side,—
 Mounts thither by the filthy flight of
 stairs,
 Holding the cord by the wall, to the
 tip-top,
 Gropes for the door i' the dark, ajar of
 course,
 Kaps, opens, enters in : up starts a
 thing
 Naked as needs be—"What, you
 rogue, 't is you ?

" Back,—how can I have taken a
 farthing yet ?
 " Mercy on me, poor sinner that I am !
 " Here's . . . why, I took you for Ma-
 donna's self
 " With all that sudden swirl of silk i'
 the place !
 " What may your pleasure be, my
 bonny dame ? "
 Your Excellency supplies aught left
 obscure ?
 One of those women that abound in
 Rome,
 Whose needs oblige them eke out one
 poor trade
 By another vile one : her ostensible
 work
 Was washing clothes, out in the open air
 At the cistern by Citorio ; but true
 trade—
 Whispering to idlers when they stopped
 and praised
 The antles she let liberally shine
 In kneeling at the slab by the fountain-
 side,
 That there was plenty more to criticise
 At home, that eve, i' the house where
 candle blinked
 Decorously above, and all was done
 I' the holy fear of God and cheap be-
 side.
 Violante, now, had seen this woman
 wash,
 Noticed and envied her propitious
 shape,
 Tracked her home to her house-top,
 noted too,
 And now was come to tempt her and
 propose
 A bargain far more shameful than the
 first
 Which trafficked her virginity away
 For a melon and three pauls at twelve
 years old.
 Five minutes' talk with this poor child
 of Eve,
 Struck was the bargain, business at an
 end—
 " Then, six months hence, that person
 whom you trust,
 " Comes, fetches whatsoever babe it be ;
 " I keep the price and secret, you the
 babe,
 " Paying beside for mass to make all
 straight :
 " Meantime, I pouch the earnest-
 money-piece."

Down stairs again goes fumbling by
 rope
 Violante, triumphing in a flourish of
 From her own brain, self-lit by suc-
 cess,—
 Gains church in time for the " *Ma-
 ficat* "
 And gives forth " My reproof is tak-
 away,
 " And blessed shall mankind proclaim
 me now,"
 So that the officiating priest turns
 round
 To see who proffers the obstreperous
 praise :
 Then home to Pietro, the enraptured
 much
 But puzzled-more when told the wo-
 drous news—
 How orisons and works of charity,
 (Beside that pair of pinners and a co-
 Birth-day surprise last Wednesday w-
 five weeks)
 Had borne fruit in the Autumn of his
 life,—
 They, or the Orvieto in a double dose
 Anyhow, she must keep house next six
 months,
 Lie on the settle, avoid the three-legged
 stool,
 And, chiefly, not be crossed in wish or
 whim,
 And the result was like to be an heir.
 Accordingly, when time was come
 about,
 He found himself the sire indeed of three
 Francesca Vittoria Pompilia and the
 rest
 O' the names whereby he sealed her his
 next day.
 A crime complete in its way is here,
 hope ?
 Lies to God, lies to man, every way lies
 To nature and civility and the mode
 Flat robbery of the proper heirs thus
 foiled
 O' the due succession,—and, what fol-
 lowed thence,
 Robbery of God, through the confes-
 sor's ear
 Debarred the most noteworthy inci-
 dent
 When all else done and undone twelve
 month through
 Was put in evidence at Easter-time.
 All other peccadillos !—but this one

To the priest who comes next day to
dine with us ?
'T were inexpedient : decency forbade.
Is so far clear ? You know Violante
now,
Compute her capability of crime
By this authentic instance ? Black
hard cold
Crime like a stone you kick up with
your foot
I' the middle of a field ?
I thought as much.
But now, a question,—how long does it
lie,
The bad and barren bit of stuff you
kick,
Before encroached on and encompassed
round
With minute moss, weed, wild-flower
—made alive
By worm, and fly, and foot of the free
bird ?
Your Highness,—healthy minds let by-
gones be,
Leave old crimes to grow young and
virtuous-like
I' the sun and air ; so time treats ugly
deeds :
They take the natural blessing of all
change.
There was the joy o' the husband silly-
sooth,
The softening of the wife's old wicked
heart,
Virtues to right and left, profusely paid
If so they might compensate the saved
sin.
And then the sudden existence, dewy-
dear,
O' the rose above the dunghheap, the
pure child
As good as new created, since with-
drawn
From the horror of the pre-appointed
lot
With the unknown father and the
mother known
Too well,—some fourteen years of
squalid youth,
And then libertinage, disease, the
grave—
Hell in life here, hereafter life in hell :
Look at that horror and this sott re-
pose !
Why, moralist, the sin has saved a
soul !

Then, even the palpable grievance to
the heirs—
'Faith this was no frank setting hand
to throat
And robbing a man, but . . . Excel-
lency, by your leave—
How did you get that marvel of a gem,
The sapphire with the Graces grand
and Greek ?
The story is, stooping to pick a stone
From the pathway through a vine-
yard—no man's-land—
To pelt a sparrow with, you chanced
on this :
Why now, do those five clowns o' the
family
O' the vinedresser digest their porridge
worse
That not one keeps it in his goatskin
pouch
To do flints'-service with the tinder-
box ?
Don't cheat me, don't cheat you,
don't cheat a friend !
But are you so hard on who jostles just
A stranger with no natural sort of
claim
To the havings and the holdings (here's
the point)
Unless by misadventure, and defect
Of that which ought to be—nay,
which there 's none
Would dare so much as wish to profit
by— [words
Since who dares put in just so many
" May Pietro fail to have a child, please
God !
" So shall his house and goods belong
to me,
" The sooner that his heart will pine
betimes ? "
Well then, God don't please, nor his
heart shall pine !
Because he has a child at last, you see,
Or selfsame thing as though a child it
were,
He thinks, whose sole concern it is to
think :
If he accepts it why should you demur ?
Moreover, say that certain sin there
seem,
The proper process of unsinning sin
Is to begin well-doing somehow else.
Pietro,—remember, with no sin at all
I' the substitution,—why, this gift of
God

Plunged in his lap from over Paradise
 Steadied him in a moment, set him
 straight
 On the good path he had been straying
 from.
 Henceforward no more wilfulness and
 waste,
 Cuppings, carousings,—these a sponge
 wiped out.
 All sort of self-denial was easy now
 For the child's sake, the chatelaine to
 be,
 Who must want much and might want
 who knows what ?
 And so, the debts were paid, habits re-
 formed,
 Expense curtailed, the dowry set to
 grow.
 As for the wife,—I said, hers the whole
 sin :
 So, hers the exemplary penance. 'T
 was a text
 Whereon folk preached and praised,
 the district through :
 " Oh, make us happy and you make us
 good !
 " It all comes of God giving her a
 child :
 " Such graces follow God's best earthly
 gift ! "

Here you put by my guard, pass to my
 heart
 By the home-thrust—" There 's a lie
 at base of all." [no,
 Why, thou exact Prince, is it a pearl or
 Yon globe upon the Principessa's neck?
 That great round glory of pellucid stuff,
 A fish secreted round a grain of grit !
 Do you call it worthless for the worth-
 less core ?
 (She don't, who well knows what she
 changed for it !)
 So, to our brace of burgesses again !
 You see so far i' the story, who was
 right,
 Who wrong, who neither, don't you ?
 What, you don't ?
 Eh ? Well, admit there 's somewhat
 dark i' the case,
 Let 's on—the rest shall clear, I pro-
 mise you.
 Leap over a dozen years : you find,
 these passed,
 An old good easy creditable sire,
 A careful housewife's beaming bustling
 face,

Both wrapped up in the love of the
 one child,
 The strange tall pale beautiful creature
 grown
 Lily-like out o' the cleft i' the sun-shine
 rock
 To bow its white miraculous birth
 buds
 I' the way of wandering Joseph and his
 spouse,—
 So painters fancy : here it was a face
 And this their lily,—could they but
 transplant
 And set in vase to stand by Solomon's
 porch
 'Twixt lion and lion !—this Pompilia
 theirs,
 Could they see worthily married, well
 bestowed
 In house and home ! And why despair
 of this
 With Rome to choose from, save the
 topmost rank ?
 Themselves would help the choice with
 heart and soul, [hear
 Throw their late savings in a common
 Should go with the dowry, to be for-
 lowed in time
 By the heritage legitimately hers :
 And when such paragon was found and
 fixed,
 Why, they might chant their " *Nun
 dimittas* " straight.
 Indeed the prize was simply full to
 fault ;
 Exorbitant for the suitor they should
 seek,
 And social class to choose among, these
 cits.
 Yet there 's a latitude : exceptions
 white
 Amid the general brown o' the species
 lurks
 A burgess nearly an aristocrat,
 Legitimately in reach : look out for
 him !
 What banker, merchant, has seen bet-
 ter days,
 What second-rate painter a-pushing up
 a set a-slipping down, shall bid the best
 For this young beauty with the thump-
 ing purse ?
 Alack, had it been but one of such as
 these
 So like the real thing they may pass for
 it,

All had gone well ! Unluckily fate must needs

It proved to be the impossible thing itself ;

The truth and not the sham : hence ruin to them all.

For, Guido Franceschini was the head
Of an old family in Arezzo, old
To that degree they could afford be poor

Better than most : the case is common too.

Out of the vast door 'scutcheoned overhead,

Creeps out a serving-man on Saturdays
To cater for the week,—turns up anon
I' the market, chaffering for the lamb's least leg,

Or the quarter-fowl, less entrails, claws and comb :

Then back again with prize,—a liver begged

Into the bargain, gizzard overlooked,—
He 's mincing these to give the beans a taste,

When, at your knock, he leaves the simmering soup.

Waits on the curious stranger-visitant,
Napkin in half-wiped hand, to show the rooms,

Point pictures out have hung their hundred years,

" Priceless," he tells you,—puts in his place at once

The man of money : yes, you 're banker-king

Or merchant-kaiser, wallow in your wealth

While patron, the house-master, can't afford

To stop' our ceiling-hole that rain so rots—

But he 's the man of mark, and there 's his shield,

And yonder 's the famed Rafael, first in kind,

The painter painted for his grandfather—

You have paid a paul to see : " Good morning, Sir ! "

Such is the law of compensation. Here the poverty was getting too acute ;

There gaped so many noble mouths to feed,

Beans must suffice unflavoured of the fowl.

The mother,—hers would be a spun-out life

I' the nature of things ; the sisters had done well

And married men of reasonable rank :
But that sort of illumination stops,
Throws back no heat upon the parent-hearth.

The family instinct felt out for its fire
To the Church,—the Church traditionally helps

A second son : and such was Paolo,
Established here at Rome these thirty years,

Who played the regular game,—priest and Abate,

Made friends, owned house and land, became of use

To a personage : his course lay clear enough.

The youngest caught the sympathetic flame,

And, though unfledged wings kept him still i' the cage,

Yet he shot up to be a Canon, so
Clung to the higher perch and crowed in hope.

Even our Guido, eldest brother, went
As far i' the way o' the Church as safety seemed,

He being Head o' the House, ordained to wive,—

So, could but dally with an Order or two

And testify good-will i' the cause : he clipt

His top-hair and thus far affected Christ,
But main promotion must fall otherwise,

Though still from the side o' the Church : and here was he

At Rome, since first youth, worn threadbare of soul

By forty-six years' rubbing on hard life,

Getting fast tired o' the game whose word is—" Wait ! "

When one day,—he too having his Cardinal

To serve in some ambiguous sort, as serve

To draw the coach the plumes o' the horses' heads,—

The Cardinal saw fit to dispense with him,

Ride with one plume the less ; and off it dropped.

- Guido thus left,—with a youth spent in
vain
And not a penny in purse to show for it,
Advised with Paolo, bent no doubt in
chafe
The black brows somewhat formidably
the while.
"Where is the good I came to get at
Rome?"
"Where the repayment of the servi-
tude
"To a purple popinjay, whose feet I
kiss,
"Knowing his father wiped the shoes of
mine?"
- "Patience," pats Paolo the recalci-
trant—
"You have not had, so far, the proper
luck,
"Nor do my gains suffice to keep us
both:
"A modest competency is mine, not
more.
"You are the Count however, yours
the style,
"Heirdom and state,—you can't ex-
pect all good.
"Had I, now, held your hand of cards
. . . well, well—
"What's yet unplayed, I'll look at, by
your leave,
"Over your shoulder,—I who made
my game,
"Let's see, if I can't help to handle
yours.
"Fie on you, all the Honours in your
fist,
"Countship, Househeadship. — how
have you misdealt!
"Why, in the first place, they will
marry a man!
"*Notum tonsoribus!* To the Tonsor
then!
"Come, clear your looks, and choose
your freshest suit,
"And, after function's done with, down
we go
"To the woman-dealer in perukes, a
wench
"I and some others settled in the shop
"At Place Colonna: she's an oracle.
Hmm!
"Dear, 'tis my brother: brother, 'tis
my dear.
"Dear, give us counsel! Whom do
you suggest
- "As properest party in the qu-
round,
"For the Count here?—he is mi-
to take wife,
"And further tells me he intend
slip
"Twenty zecchines under the bott
scalp
"Of his old wig when he sends i
revive
"For the wedding: and I add a t
too.
"You know what personage
potent with." "
And so plumped out Pompilia's na
the first.
She told them of the household and
ways,
The easy husband and the shrew
wife
In Via Vittoria,—how the tall yo
girl,
With hair black as yon patch and e
as big
As yon pomander to make freckles
Would have so much for certain, and
much more
In likelihood,—why, it suited, slipt
smooth
As the Pope's pantoufle does on
Pope's foot.
"I'll to the husband!" Guido ups a
cries.
"Ay, so you'd play your last cou
card, no doubt!"
Puts Paolo in with a groan—"On
you see,
"Tis I, this time, that supervise yo
lead.
"Priests play with women, mai
wives, mothers,—why?
"These play with men and take the
off our hands.
"Did I come, counsel with some cu
beard gruff
"Or rather this sleek young-old ba
beress?
"Go, brother, stand you rapt in th
ante-room
"Of Her Efficacy my Cardinal
"For an hour,—he likes to have lor
suits lounge,—
"While I betake myself to the gre
mare,
"The better horse,—how wise th
people's word!—
"And wait on Madam Violante."

Said and done.
 He was at Via Vittoria in three skips:
 Proposed at once to fill up the one want
 O' the burgess-family which, wealthy
 enough,
 And comfortable to heart's desire, yet
 crouched
 Outside a gate to heaven,—locked,
 bolted, barred,
 Whereof Count Guido had a key he
 kept
 Under his pillow, but Pompilia's hand
 Might slide behind his neck and pilfer
 thence.
 The key was fairy; mention of it, made
 Violante feel the thing shoot one sharp
 ray
 That reached the heart o' the woman.
 "I assent:
 "Yours be Pompilia, hers and ours
 that key
 "To all the glories of the greater life!
 "There 's Pietro to convince: leave
 that to me!"

Then was the matter broached to Pie-
 tro; then
 Did Pietro make demand and get re-
 sponse
 That in the Countship was a truth, but
 in
 The counting up of the Count's cash, a
 lie:
 He thereupon stroked grave his chin,
 looked great,
 Declined the honour. Then the wife
 wiped one—
 Winked with the other eye turned
 Paolo-ward,
 Whispered Pompilia, stole to church
 at eve,
 Found Guido there and got the mar-
 riage done,
 And finally begged pardon at the feet
 Of her dear lord and master. Where-
 upon
 Quoth Pietro—"Let us make the best
 of things!"
 "I knew your love would licence us,"
 quoth she:
 Quoth Paolo once more, "Mothers,
 wives and maids,
 "These be the tools wherewith priests
 manage men."

Now, here take breath and ask,—
 which bird o' the brace

Decoyed the other into clapnet? Who
 Was fool, who knave? Neither and
 both, perchance.
 There was a bargain mentally proposed
 On each side, straight and plain and
 fair enough;
 Mind knew its own mind: but when
 mind must speak,
 The bargain have expression in plain
 terms,
 There was the blunder incident to
 words,
 And in the clumsy process, fair turned
 foul.
 The straight backbone-thought of the
 crooked speech
 Were just—"I Guido truck my name
 and rank
 "For so much money and youth and
 female charms."— [child
 "We Pietro and Violante give our
 "And wealth to you for a rise i' the
 world thereby."
 Such naked truth while chambered in
 the brain
 Shocks nowise: walk it forth by way
 of tongue,—
 Out on the cynical unseemliness!
 Hence was the need, on either side, of a
 lie
 To serve as decent wrappage: so,
 Guido gives
 Money for money,—and they, bride for
 groom,
 Having, he, not a doit, they, not a
 child
 Honestly theirs, but this poor waif and
 stray.
 According to the words, each cheated
 each;
 But in the inexpressive barter of
 thoughts,
 Each did give and did take the thing
 designed,
 The rank on this side and the cash on
 that—
 Attained the object of the traffic, so,
 The way of the world, the daily bargain
 struck
 In the first market! Why sells Jack
 his ware?
 "For the sake of serving an old custo-
 mer."
 Why does Jill buy it? "Simply not
 to break
 "A custom, pass the old stall the first
 time,"

Why, you know where the gist is of the exchange :
 Each sees a profit, throws the fine words in.
 Don't be too hard o' the pair ! Had each pretence
 Been simultaneously discovered, stripped
 From off the body o' the transaction, just
 As when a cook . . will Excellency forgive ?
 Strips away those long loose superfluous legs
 From either side the crayfish, leaving folk
 A meal all meat henceforth, no garnishry,
 (With your respect, Prince !)—balance had been kept,
 No party blamed the other,—so, starting fair,
 All subsequent fence of wrong returned by wrong [least
 I' the matrimonial thrust and parry, at
 Had followed on equal terms. But, as it chanced,
 One party had the advantage, saw the cheat
 Of the other first and kept its own concealed :
 And the luck o' the first discovery fell, beside,
 To the least adroit and self-possessed o' the pair.
 'Twas foolish Pietro and his wife saw first
 The nobleman was penniless, and screamed
 " We are cheated ! "

Such unprofitable noise
 Angers at all times : but when those who plague,
 Do it from inside your own house and home,
 Gnats which yourself have closed the curtain round,
 Noise goes too near the brain and makes you mad.
 The gnats say, Guido used the candle-flame
 Unfairly,—worsened that first bad of his,
 By practice of all kind of cruelty
 To oust them and suppress the wail and whine,—

That speedily he so scared and but them,
 Fain were they, long before five more were out,
 To beg him grant, from what was their wealth,
 Just so much as would help them to Rome
 Where, when they had finished paying the last doit
 O' the dowry, they might beg from door to door.
 So say the Comparini—as if it were
 In pure resentment for this worse than bad,
 That then Violante, feeling conscience prick,
 Confessed her substitution of the child
 Whence all the harm came,—and to Pietro first
 Bethought him of advantage to himself
 I' the deed, as part revenge, part remedy
 For all miscalculation in the pact.
 On the other hand " Not so ! " Guido retorts—
 " I am the wronged, solely, from first to last,
 " Who gave the dignity I engaged to give,
 " Which was, is, cannot but continue gain.
 " My being poor was a bye-circumstance,
 " Miscalculated piece of untowardness
 " Might end to-morrow did heaven windows ope,
 " Or uncle die and leave me his estate
 " You should have put up with that minor flaw,
 " Getting the main prize of the jewel
 If wealth,
 " Not rank, had been prime object of your thoughts,
 " Why not have taken the butcher's son, the boy
 " O' the baker or candlestick-maker
 In all the rest,
 " It was yourselves broke compact and played false,
 " And made a life in common impossible.
 " Show me the stipulation of our bond
 " That you should make your profit of being inside

red and bullied
ore five months
what was once
help them back
inished paying
ight beg from
as if it were
his worse than
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ntage to him-
enge, part re-
the pact.
t so!" Guido
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I engaged to
but continue
bye-circum-
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did heaven's
me his estate.
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of the jewel.
me object in
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stick-maker?
compact and
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of our bond
our profit of

"My house, to hustle and edge me out
o the same,
"First make a laughing-stock of mine
and me,
"Then round us in the ears from morn
to night
"(Because we show wry faces at your
mirth)
"That you are robbed, starved, beaten
and what not!
"You fled a hell of your own lighting-
up,
"Pay for your own miscalculation too:
"You thought nobility, gained at any
price,
"Would suit and satisfy,—find the
mistake,
"And now retaliate, not on yourselves,
but me.
"And how? By telling me, i' the face
of the world,
"It is have been cheated all this while,
"Abominably and irreparably,—my
name
"Given to a cur-cast mongrel, a drab's
brat,
"A beggar's bye-blow,—thus depriv-
ing me
"Of what yourselves allege the whole
and sole
"Aim on my part i' the marriage,—
money to wit. [guard
"This thrust I have to parry by a
"Which leaves me open to a counter-
thrust
"On the other side,—no way but there
's a pass
"Clean through me. If I prove, as I
hope to do,
"There 's not one truth in this your
odious tale
"O' the buying, selling, substituting—
prove
"Your daughter was and is your
daughter,—well
"And her dowry hers and therefore
mine,—what then?
"Why, where 's the appropriate pun-
ishment for this
"Enormous lie hatched for mere
malice' sake
"To ruin me? Is that a wrong or no?
"And if I try revenge for remedy,
"Can I well make it strong and bitter
enough?"

I anticipate however—only ask,

Which of the two here sinned most?
A nice point!
Which brownness is least black—decide
who can,
Wager-by-battle-of-cheating! What
do you say,
Highness? Suppose, your Excellency,
we leave
The question at this stage, proceed to
the next, [upon,
Both parties step out, fight their prize
In the eye o' the world?
They brandish law 'gainst law;
The grinding of such blades, each parry
of each,
Throws terrible sparks off, over and
above the thrusts,
And makes more sinister the fight, to
the eye,
Than the very wounds that follow. Be-
side the tale
Which the Comparini have to re-assert,
They needs must write, print, publish
all abroad
The straitnesses of Guido's household
life—
The petty nothings we bear privately
But break down under when fools flock
around.
What is it all to the facts o' the couple's
case,
How helps it prove Pompilia not their
child,
If Guido's mother, brother, kith and kin
Fare ill, lie hard, lack clothes, lack fire,
lack food?
That 's one more wrong than needs.
On the other hand,
Guido,—whose cue is to dispute the
truth
O' the tale, reject the shame it throws
on him,—
He may retaliate, fight his foe in turn
And welcome, we allow. Ay, but he
can't!
He 's at home, only acts by proxy here:
Law may meet law—but all the gibes
and jeers,
The superfluity of naughtiness,
Those libels on his House,—how reach
at them?
Two hateful faces, grinning all a-glow,
Not only make parade of spoil they
filched,
But foul him from the height of a tower,
you see.

Unluckily temptation is at hand—
 To take revenge on a trifle overlooked,
 A pet lamb they have left in reach out-
 side,
 Whose first bleat, when he plucks the
 wool away,
 Will strike the grinners grave: his
 wife remains
 Who, four months earlier, some thir-
 teen years old,
 Never a mile away from mother's
 house
 And petted to the height of her desire,
 Was told one morning that her fate was
 come,
 She must be married—just as, a month
 before,
 Her mother told her she must comb her
 hair
 And twist her curls into one knot be-
 hind.
 These fools forgot their pet lamb, fed
 with flowers,
 Then 'ticed as usual by the bit of cake,
 Out of the bower into the butchery.
 Plague her, he plagues them threefold:
 but how plague?
 The world may have its word to say to
 that:
 You can't do some things with im-
 punity.
 What remains . . . well, it is an ugly
 thought . . .
 But that he drive herself to plague her-
 self—
 Herself disgrace herself and so disgrace
 Who seek to disgrace Guido?

There's the clue
 To what else seems gratuitously vile,
 If, as is said, from this time forth the
 rack
 Was tried upon Pompilia: 't was to
 wrench
 Her limbs into exposure that brings
 shame.
 The aim o' the cruelty being so crueller
 still
 That cruelty almost grows compas-
 sion's self.
 Could one attribute it to mere return
 O' the parents' outrage, wrong aveng-
 ing wrong.
 They see in this a deeper deadlier aim,
 Not to vex just a body they held dear,
 But blacken too a soul they boasted
 white,

And show the world their saint i
 lover's arms,
 No matter how driven thither,—so t
 say.

On the other hand, so much is ea
 said,
 And Guido lacks not an apologist.
 The pair had nobody but themse
 to blame,
 Being selfish beasts throughout, no l
 no more:
 —Cared for themselves, their suppo
 good, naught else,
 And brought about the marriage; g
 proved bad,
 As little they cared for her its victi
 nay,
 Meant she should stay behind and t
 the chance,
 If haply they might wriggle themse
 free.
 They baited their own hook to cate
 fish
 With this poor worm, failed o'
 prize, and then
 Sought how to unbait tackle, let wo
 float
 Or sink, amuse the monster while th
 'scaped.
 Under the best stars Hymen brin
 above,
 Had all been honesty on either side,
 A common sincere effort to good en
 Still, this would prove a difficult pro
 lem, Prince!
 —Given, a fair wife, aged thirte
 years,
 A husband poor, care-bitten, sorro
 sunk,
 Little, long-nosed, bush-bearded, la
 tern-jawed,
 Forty-six years full,—place the t
 grown one,
 She, cut off sheer from every natur
 aid,
 In a strange town with no famili
 face—
 He, in his own parade-ground or
 treat
 As need were, free from challeng
 much less check
 To an irritated, disappointed will—
 How evolve happiness from such
 match?
 'T were hard to serve up a congeni
 dish

Out of these ill-agreeing morsels, Duke,
 By the best exercise of the cook's craft,
 Best interspersion of spice, salt and
 sweet !
 But let two ghastly scullions concoct
 mess
 With brimstone, pitch, vitriol and
 devil's-dung—
 Throw in abuse o' the man, his body
 and soul,
 Kith, kin and generation, shake all slab
 At Rome, Arezzo, for the world to nose,
 Then end by publishing, for fiend's
 arch-prank,
 That, over and above sauce to the
 meat's self,
 Why, even the meat, bedevilled thus in
 dish,
 Was never a pheasant but a carrion-
 crow—
 Prince, what will then the natural
 loathing be ?
 What wonder if this ?—the compound
 plague o' the pair
 Pricked Guido,—not to take the course
 they hoped,
 That is, submit him to their state-
 ment's truth,
 Accept its obvious promise of relief,
 And thrust them out of doors the girl
 again
 Since the girl's dowry would not enter
 there,
 —Quit of the one if baulked of the
 other : no ! [him,
 Rather did rage and hate so work in
 Their product proved the horrible con-
 ceit
 That he should plot and plan and bring
 to pass
 His wife might, of her own free will and
 deed,
 Relieve him of her presence, get her
 gone,
 And yet leave all the dowry safe behind,
 Confirmed his own henceforward past
 dispute,
 While blotting out, as by a belch of
 hell,
 Their triumph in her misery and death.
 You see, the man was Aretine, had
 touch
 O' the subtle air that breeds the subtle
 wit ;
 Was noble too, of old blood thrice-
 refined

That shrinks from clownish coarseness
 in disgust :
 Allow that such an one may take re-
 venge,
 You don't expect he 'll catch up stone
 and fling,
 Or try cross-buttock, or whirl quarter-
 staff ?
 Instead of the honest drubbing clowns
 bestow,
 When out of temper at the dinner spoilt,
 On meddling mother-in-law and tire-
 some wife,—
 Substitute for the clown a nobleman,
 And you have Guido, practising, 't is
 said,
 Unmitigably from the very first,
 The finer vengeance : this, they say,
 the fact
 O' the famous letter shows—the writ-
 ing traced
 At Guido's instance by the timid wife
 Over the pencilled words himself writ
 first—
 Wherein she, who could neither write
 nor read,
 Was made unblushingly declare a tale
 To the brother, the Abate then in Rome,
 How her putative parents had im-
 pressed,
 On their departure, their enjoiment ;
 bade
 " We being safely arrived here, follow,
 you !
 " Poison your husband, rob, set fire to
 all,
 " And then by means o' the gallant you
 procure
 " With ease, by helpful eye and ready
 tongue,
 " The brave youth ready to dare, do
 and die,
 " You shall run off and merrily reach
 Rome
 " Where we may live like flies in honey-
 pot : "—
 Such being exact the programme of the
 course
 Imputed her as carried to effect.
 They also say,—to keep her straight
 therein,
 All sort of torture was piled, pain on
 pain,
 On either side Pompilia's path of life,
 Built round about and over against by
 fear,

Circumvallated month by month, and
 week
 By week, and day by day, and hour by
 hour,
 Close, closer and yet closer still with
 pain,
 No outlet from the encroaching pain
 save just
 Where stood one saviour like a piece of
 heaven,
 Hell's arms would strain round but for
 this blue gap.
 She, they say further, first tried every
 chink,
 Every imaginable break i' the fire,
 As way of escape: ran to the Com-
 missary,
 Who bade her not malign his friend her
 spouse;
 Flung herself thrice at the Arch-
 bishop's feet,
 Where three times the Archbishop let
 her lie,
 Spend her whole sorrow and sob full
 heart forth,
 And then took up the slight load from
 the ground
 And bore it back for husband to chas-
 tise,— [right.
 Mildly of course,—but natural right is
 So went she slipping ever yet a ching
 at help,
 Missing the high till come to lowest and
 last,
 No more than a certain friar of mean
 degree,
 Who heard her story in confession,
 wept,
 Crossed himself, showed the man with-
 in the monk.
 "Then, will you save me, you the one i'
 the world?
 "I cannot even write my woes, nor put
 "My prayer for help in words a friend
 may read,—
 "I no more own a coin than have an
 hour
 "Free of observance,—I was watched
 to church,
 "Am watched now, shall be watched
 back presently,—
 "How buy the skill of scribe i' the
 market-place?
 "Pray you, write down and send what-
 ever I say
 "O' the need I have my parents take
 me hence!"

The good man rubbed his eyes
 could not choose—
 Let her dictate her letter in such
 sense
 That parents, to save breaking down
 wall,
 Might lift her over: she went back
 heaven in her heart.
 Then the good man took counsel of
 couch,
 Woke and thought twice, the second
 thought the best:
 "Here am I, foolish body that I be
 "Caught all but pushing, teach
 who but I,
 "My betters their plain duty,—what
 I dare
 "Help a case the Archbishop would
 not help,
 "Mend matters, peradventure, if
 loves mar?
 "What hath the married life but strife
 and plagues
 "For proper dispensation? So a f
 "Once touched the ark,—poor Hop
 that I am! [I l
 "Oh married ones, much rather sho
 "In patience all of ye possess y
 souls!
 "This life is brief and troubles die w
 it:
 "Where were the prick to soar
 homeward else?" [w
 So saying, he burnt the letter he l
 Said *Ave* for her intention, in its pla
 Took snuff and comfort, and had d
 with all.
 Then the grim arms stretched ye
 little more
 And each touched each, all but a
 streak i' the midst,
 Whereat stood Caponsacchi, who cr
 "This way,
 "Out by me! Hesitate one mom
 more
 "And the fire shuts out me and sh
 in you!
 "Here my hand holds you life out
 Whereupon
 She clasped the hand, which closed
 hers and drew
 Pompilia out o' the circle now comple
 Whose fault or shame but Guido's
 ask her friends.
 But then this is the wife's—Pompil
 tale—

his eyes and
 utter in such a
 breaking down a
 he went back,
 t.
 counsel of his
 ce, the second
 ly that I be,
 ing, teaching,
 duty,—what,
 bishop would
 venture, God
 life but strifes
 on? So a fool
 —poor Hophni
 [I bid,
 rather should
 possess your
 troubles die with
 k to soar up
 [writ,
 letter he had
 on, in its place,
 and had done
 stretched yet a
 n, all but one
 chi, who cried,
 e one moment
 me and shuts
 you life out!"
 which closed on
 now complete.
 ut Guido's?—
 's—Pompilia's

Eve's . . . no, not Eve's, since Eve, to
 speak the truth,
 Was hardly fallen (our candour might
 pronounce)
 So much of paradisaal nature, Eve's,
 When simply saying in her own defence
 "The serpent tempted me and I did
 eat."
 Her daughters ever since prefer to urge
 "Adam so starved me I was fain ac-
 cept
 "The apple any serpent pushed my
 way."
 What an elaborate theory have we
 here,
 Ingeniously nursed up, pretentiously
 Brought forth, pushed forward amid
 trumpet-blast,
 To account for the thawing of an icicle,
 Show us there needed Ætna vomit
 flame
 Ere run the crystal into dew-drops!
 Else,
 How, unless hell broke loose to cause
 the step,
 How could a married lady go astray?
 Bless the fools! And 't is just this way
 they are blessed,
 And the world wags still,—because
 fools are sure
 —Oh, not of my wife nor your daugh-
 ter! No!
 But of their own: the case is altered
 quite.
 Look now,—last week, the lady we all
 love,—
 Daughter o' the couple we all venerate,
 Wife of the husband we all cap before,
 Mother o' the babes we all breathe
 blessings on,—
 Was caught in converse with a negro
 page.
 Hell thawed that icicle, else "Why was
 it—
 "Why?" asked and echoed the fools.
 "Because, you fools,—"
 So did the dame's self answer, she who
 could,
 With that fine candour only forthcom-
 ing
 When 't is no odds whether withheld or
 no—
 "Because my husband was the saint
 you say,
 "And,—with that childish goodness,
 absurd faith,
 "Stupid self-satisfaction, you so
 praise,—

"Saint to you, insupportable to me.
 "Had he,—instead of calling me fine
 names,
 "Lucretia and Susanna and so forth,
 "And curtaining Correggio carefully
 "Lest I be taught that Leda had two
 legs,—
 "But once never so little tweaked
 my nose
 "For peeping through my fan at Car-
 nival,
 "Confessing thereby 'I have no easy
 task—
 "'I need use all my powers to hold
 you mine,
 "'And then,—why 't is so doubtful if
 they serve,
 "'That—take this, as an earnest of
 despair!'
 "Why, we were quits—I had wiped
 the harm away,
 "Thought 'The man fears me!' and
 foregone revenge."
 We must not want all this elaborate
 work
 To solve the problem why young fancy-
 and-flesh
 Slips from the dull side of a spouse in
 years,
 Betakes it to the breast of brisk-and-
 bold
 Whose love-scrapes furnish talk for all
 the town!

Accordingly, one word on the other side
 Tips over the piled-up fabric of a tale.
 Guido says—that is, always, his friends
 say—
 It is unlikely from the wickedness,
 That any man treat any woman so.
 The letter in question was her very
 own,
 Unprompted and unaided: she could
 write—
 As able to write as ready to sin, or free,
 When there was danger, to deny both
 facts,
 He bids you mark, herself from first to
 last
 Attributes all the so-styled torture just
 To jealousy,—jealousy of whom but
 just
 This very Caponsacchi! How suits
 here
 This with the other alleged motive,
 Prince?
 Would Guido make a terror of the man

He meant should tempt the woman,
 as they charge?
 Do you fright your hare that you may
 catch your hare?
 Consider too, the charge was made and
 met
 At the proper time and place where
 proofs were plain—
 Heard patiently and disposed of thor-
 oughly
 By the highest powers, possessors of
 most light,
 The Governor, for the law, and the
 Archbishop
 For the gospel: which acknowledged
 primacies,
 'T is impudently pleaded, he could
 warp
 Into a tacit partnership with crime—
 He being the while, believe their own
 account,
 Impotent, penniless and miserable!
 He further asks—Duke, note the
 knotty point!—
 How he,—concede him skill to play
 such part
 And drive his wife into a gallant's arms,
 Could bring the gallant to play his part
 too
 And stand with arms so opportunely
 wide?
 How bring this Caponsacchi,—with
 whom, friends
 And foes alike agree, throughout his
 life
 He never interchanged a civil word
 Nor lifted courteous cap to—how bend
 him,
 To such observancy of beck and call,
 —To undertake this strange and peril-
 ous feat
 For the good of Guido, using, as the
 lure,
 Pompilia whom, himself and she avoue',
 He had nor spoken with nor seen, in-
 deed,
 Beyond sight in a public theatre,
 When she wrote letters (she that could
 not write!)
 The importunate shamelessly-protected
 love
 Which brought him, thought reluctant,
 to her feet,
 And forced on him the plunge which,
 howsoe'er
 She might swim up i' the whirl, must
 bury him

Under abysmal black: a priest
 trive
 No mitigable amour to be hushed
 But open flight and noon-day inf
 Try and concoct defence for su
 volt!
 Take the wife's tale as true, sa
 was wronged,—
 Pray, in what rubric of the brevi
 Do you find it registered the par
 priest
 That to right wrongs he skip from
 church-door,
 Go journeying with a woman tha
 wife,
 And be pursued, o'ertaken and
 tur! . . . how?
 In a lay dress, playing the sentine
 Where the wife sleeps (says he wh
 should know)
 And sleeping, sleepless, both have
 the night!
 Could no one else be found to ser
 need—
 No woman—or if man, no safer s
 Than this not well-reputed turbule
 Then, look into his own account o
 case!
 He, being the stranger and aston
 one,
 Yet received protestations of her
 From lady neither known nor c
 about:
 Love, so protested, bred in him dis
 After the wonder,—or incredulity,
 Such impudence seeming impossib
 But, soon assured such impud
 might be,
 When he had seen with his own ey
 last
 Letters thrown down to him i' the
 street
 From behind lattice where the
 lurked,
 And read their passionate summon
 her side—
 Why then, a thousand thou
 swarmed up and in,—
 How he had seen her once, a mome
 space,
 Observed she was so young and be
 tiful,
 Heard everywhere report she suffe
 much
 From a jealous husband thrice her a
 —in short

... a priest con-
... to be hushed up,
... on-day infamy?
... nce for such re-

... as true, say she

... of the breviary
... red the part of a

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... his own eyes at

... him i' the very

... where the lady

... te summons to

... and thoughts

... ce, a moment's

... ung and beau-

... rt she suffered

... thrice her age,

There flashed the propriety, expedi-
ency
Of treating, trying might they come to
terms,

—At all events, granting the interview
Prayed for, and so adapted to assist
Decision as to whether he advance,
Stand or retire, in his benevolent mood.
Therefore the interview befell a'
length;

And at this one and only interview,
He saw the sole and single course to
take—

Bade her dispose of him, head, heart
and hand,

Did her behest and braved the conse-
quence,

Not for the natural end, the love of man
For woman whether love be virtue or
vice,

But, please you, altogether for pity's
sake—

Pity of innocence and helplessness!
And how did he assure himself of both?
Had he been the house-inmate, visitor,
Eye-witness of the described martyr-
dom,

So, competent to pronounce its remedy
Ere rush on such extreme and desper-
ate course,

Involving such enormity of harm,
Moreover, to the husband judged thus,
doomed

And damned without a word in his
defence?

But no,—the truth was felt by instinct
here!

—Process which saves a world of
trouble and time,

And there 's his story: what do you
say to it,

Trying its truth by your own instinct
too,

Since that 's to be the expeditious
mode?

"And now, do hear my version,"
Guido cries:

"I accept argument and inference
both.

"It would indeed have been miracu-
lous

"Had such a confidency sprung to
birth

"With no more fanning from acquaint-
anceship

"Then here avowed by my wife and
this priest,

B.P.

"Only, it did not: you must substi-
tute

"The old stale unromantic way of
fault,

"The commonplace adventure, mere
intrigue

"In the prose form with the unpoetic
tricks,

"Cheatings and lies: they used the
hackney chair

"Satan jaunts forth with, shabby and
serviceable,

"No gilded gimcrack-novelty from
below,

"To bowl you along thither, swift and
sure.

"That same officious go-between, the
wench

"That gave and took the letters of the
two,

"Now offers self and service back to
me:

"Bears testimony to visits night by
night

"When all was safe, the husband far
and away,—

"To many a timely slipping out at
large

"By light o' the morning-star, ere he
should wake.

"And when the fugitives were found at
last,

"Why, with them were found also, to
belie

"What protest they might make of in-
nocence,

"All documents yet wanting, if need
were,

"To establish guilt in them, disgrace in
me—

"The chronicle o' the converse from its
rise

"To culmination in this outrage: read!

"Letters from wife to priest, from
priest to wife,—

"Here they are, read and say where
they chime in

"With the other tale, superlative
purity

"O' the pair of saints! I stand or
fall by these."

But then on the other side again,—how
say

The pair of saints? That not one
word is theirs—

No syllable o' the batch or writ or sent

Or yet received by either of the two.

"Found," says the priest, "because
he needed them,

"Failing all other proofs, to prove our
fault :

"So, here they are, just as is natural.

"Oh yes—we had our missives, each
of us !

"Not these, but to the full as vile, no
doubt :

"Hers as from me,—she could not
read, so burnt,—

"Mine as from her,—I burnt because I
read.

"Who forged and found them? *Cui
profuerint !*"

(I take the phrase out of your High-
ness' mouth)

"He who would gain by her fault and
my fall,

"The trickster, schemer and pretender
—he

"Whose whole career was lie entailing
lie

"Sought to be sealed truth by the
worst lie last !"

Guido rejoins—"Did the other end
o' the tale

"Match this beginning ! 'Tis alleged
I prove

"A murderer at the end, a man of
force

"Prompt, indiscriminate, effectual :
good !

"Then what need all this trifling
woman's-work,

"Letters and embassies and weak in-
trigue,

"When will and power were mine to
end at once

"Safely and surely ? Murder had
come first

"Not last with such a man, assure
yourselves !

"The silent *acquetta*, stilling at com-
mand—

"A drop a day i' the wine or soup, the
dose,—

"The shattering beam that breaks
above the bed

"And beats out brains, with nobody to
blame

"Except the wormy age which eats
even oak,—

"Nay, the staunch steel or trusty cord,
—who cares

"I' the blind old palace, a pitfall
each step,

"With none to see, much more
terpose

"O' the two, three creeping house-
servant-things

"Born mine and bred mine ?—I
willed gross death,

"I had found nearer paths to t
him prey

"Than this that goes meandering
and there

"Through half the world and
down in its course

"Notice and noise,—hate, venge
should it fail,

"Derision and contempt though it
ceed !

"Moreover, what o' the future sor
The unborn babe about to be e

mine,—
"What end in heaping all this sl
on him,

"Were I indifferent to my own b
share ?

"Would I have tried these croo
nesses, say,

"Willing and able to effect
straight ?"

"Ay, would you !"—one may hear
priest retort,

"Being as you are, i' the stock, a
of guile,

"And ruffianism but an added gra
You, a born coward, try a cowar

arms,
"Triek and chicane,—and only w
these fail

"Does violence follow, and like
you bite

"Caught out in stealing. Also, [disgr
"You hardly shrunk at, wholly s
velled her :

"You plunged her thin white delic
hand i' the flame

"Along with your coarse horny b
ish fist,

"Held them a second there, then d
out both

"—Yours roughed a little, hers ruin
through and through.

"Your hurt would heal forthwith
ointment's touch—

"Namely, succession to the inherita
Which bolder crime had lost yo

let things change,

face, a pitfall at
 much more to in-
 eeping house-dog-
 mine?—had I
 paths to thrust
 meandering here
 world and calls
 ate, vengeance
 pt though it suc-
 [heir?
 e future son and
 out to be called
 g all this shame
 my own black
 these crooked-
 to effect the
 e may hear the
 e stock, a man
 added graft.
 try a coward's
 and only when
 and like fox
 [disgrace
 ng. Also, the
 t, wholly shri-
 white delicate
 se horny brut-
 ere, then drew
 le, hers ruined
 gh.
 l forthwith at
 the inheritance
 had lost you:

"The birth o' the boy warrant the
 bolder crime,
 "Why, murder was determined, dared
 and done.
 "For me," the priest proceeds with his
 reply,
 "The look o' the thing, the chances of
 mistake,
 "All were against me,—that, I knew
 the first:
 "But, knowing also what my duty was,
 "I did it: I must look to men more
 skilled
 "I' the reading hearts than ever was
 the world."

Highness, decide! Pronounce, Her
 Excellency!

Or . . . even leave this argument in
 doubt,

Account it a fit matter, taken up
 With all its faces, manifold enough,
 To put upon—what fronts us, the next
 stage,

Next legal process!—Guido, in pursuit,
 Coming up with the fugitives at the inn,
 Caused both to be arrested then and
 there

And sent to Rome for judgment on the
 case—

Thither, with all his armoury of proofs
 Betook himself, and there we 'll meet
 him now,

Waiting the further issue.

Here some smile

"And never let him henceforth dare to
 plead,—

"Of all pleas and excuses in the world

"For any deed hereafter to be done,—

"His irrepressible wrath at honour's
 wound!

"Passion and madness irrepressible?

"Why, Count and cavalier, the hus-
 band comes

"And catches foe i' the very act of
 shame:

"There's man to man,—nature must
 have her way,—

"We look he should have cleared
 things on the spot.

"Yes, then, indeed—even tho' it prove
 he erred—

"Though the ambiguous first appear-
 ance, mount

"Of solid injury, melt soon to mist,

"Still,—had he slain the lover and the
 wife—

"Or, since she was a woman and his
 wife,

"Slain him, but stript her naked to the
 skin

"Or at best left no more of an attire

"Than patch sufficient to pin paper to,

"Some one love-letter, infamy and all,

"As passport to the Paphos fit for such,

"Safe-conduct to her natural home the
 stews,—

"Good! One had recognised the
 power o' the pulse.

"But when he stands, the stock-fish,—
 sticks to law—

"Offers the hole in his heart, all fresh
 and warm,

"For scrivener's pen to poke and play
 about—

"Can stand, can stare, can tell his
 beads perhaps,

"Oh, let us hear no syllable o' the rage!

"Such rage were a convenient after-
 thought

"For one who would have shown his
 teeth belike,

"Exhilited unbridled rage enough,

"Had but the priest been found, as was
 to hope,

"In serge, not silk, with crucifix, not
 sword:

"Whereas the grey innocuous grub, of
 yore,

"Had hatched a hornet, tickle to the
 touch,

"The priest was metamorphosed into
 knight.

"And even the timid wife, whose cue
 was—shriek,

"Bury her brow beneath his trampling
 foot,—

"She too sprang at him like a pytho-
 ness:

"So, gulp down rage, passion must be
 postponed,

"Calm be the word! Well, our word
 is—we brand

"This part o' the business, howsoever
 the rest

"Befall."

"Nay," interpose as prompt
 his friends—

"This is the world's way! So you
 adjudge reward

"To the forbearance and legality

"Yourselves begin by inculcating—ay

"Exactng from us all with knife at
 throat!

"This one wrong more you add to
 wrong's amount,—
 "You publish all, with the kind com-
 ment here,
 "Its victim was too cowardly for re-
 venge." "
 Make it your own case,—you who stand
 apart!
 The husband wakes one morn from
 heavy sleep,
 With a taste of poppy in his mouth,—
 rubs eyes,
 Finds his wife flown, his strong box
 ransacked too,
 Follows as he best can, overtakes i' the
 end.
 You bid him use his privilege: well, it
 seems
 He 's scarce cool-blooded enough for
 the right move—
 Does not shoot when t! game were
 sure, but stands [since
 Bewildered at the critical minute,—
 He has the first flash of the fact alone
 To judge from, act with, not the steady
 lights
 Of after-knowledge,—yours who stand
 at ease
 To try conclusions: he 's in smother
 and smoke,
 You outside, with explosion at an end:
 The sulphur may be lightning or a
 squib—
 He 'll know in a minute, but till then,
 he doubts.
 Back from what you know to what he
 knew not!
 Hear the priest's lofty "I am inno-
 cent,"
 The wife's as resolute "You are
 guilty!" Come!
 Are you not staggered?—pause, and
 you lose the move!
 Naught left you but a low appeal to
 law,
 "Coward" tied to your tail for com-
 pliment!
 Another consideration: have it your
 way!
 Admit the worst: his courage failed
 the Count,
 He 's cowardly like the best o' the bur-
 gesses
 He 's grown incorporate with,—a very
 cur,
 Kick him from out your circle by all
 means!

Why, trundled down this reputa-
 stair,
 Still, the Church-door lies wide to t
 him in,
 And the Court-porch also: in he sne
 to each,—
 "Yes, I have lost my honour and
 wife,
 "And, being moreover an igno
 bound,
 "I dare not jeopardise my life
 them!"
 Religion and Law lean forward fr
 their chairs,
 "Well done, thou good and faithf
 servant!" Ay,
 Not only applaud him that he scor
 the world,
 But punish should he dare do oth
 wise.
 If the case be clear or turbid,—
 must say!
 Thus, anyhow, it mounted to the st
 In the law-courts,—let 's see clea
 from this point!—
 Where the priest tells his story true
 false,
 And the wife her story, and the h
 band his,
 All with result as happy as before
 The courts would nor condemn nor
 acquit
 This, that or the other, in so distinc
 sense
 As end the strife to either's absol
 loss:
 Pronounced, in place of someth
 definite,
 "Each of the parties, whether goat
 sheep
 "I' the main, has wool to show a
 hair to hide.
 "Each has brought somehow troubl
 is somehow cause
 "Of pains enough,—even though
 worse were proved.
 "Here is a husband, cannot rule
 wife
 "Without provoking her to scream a
 scratch
 "And scour the fields,—causelessly,
 may be:
 "Here is that wife,—who makes h
 sex our plague,
 "Wedlock, our bugbear,—perha
 with cause enough:

" And here is the truant priest o' the
 trio, worst
 " Or best—each quality being con-
 ceivable.
 " Let us impose a little mulct on each.
 " We punish youth in state of pupillage
 " Who talk at hours when youth is
 bound to sleep,
 " Whether the prattle turn upon Saint
 Rose
 " Or Donna Olimpia of the Vatican :
 " 'T is talk, talked wisely or unwisely
 talked,
 " 'I' the dormitory where to talk at all,
 " Transgresses, and is mulct : as here
 we mean.
 " For the wife,—let her betake herself,
 for rest,
 " After her run, to a House of Conver-
 tites—
 " Keep there, as good as real imprison-
 ment :
 " Being sick and tired, she will recover
 so.
 " For the priest, spritely strayer out of
 bounds,
 " Who made Arezzo hot to hold him,—
 Rome
 " Profits by his withdrawal from the
 scene.
 " Let him be relegate to Civita,
 " Circumscribed by its bounds till
 matters mend :
 " There he at least lies out o' the way
 of harm
 " From foes—perhaps from the too
 friendly fair.
 " And finally for the husband, whose
 rash rule
 " Has but itself to blame for this ado,—
 " If he be vexed that, in our judgments
 dealt, [right,
 " He fails obtain what he accounts his
 " Let him go comforted with the
 thought, no less,
 " That, turn each sentence howsoever
 he may,
 " There 's satisfaction to extract there-
 from.
 " For, does he wish his wife proved in-
 nocent ?
 " Well, she 's not guilty, he may safely
 urge,
 " Has missed the stripes dishonest
 wives endure—
 " This being a fatherly pat o' the
 cheek, no more.

" Does he wish her guilty ? Were she
 otherwise
 " Would she be locked up, set to say her
 prayers,
 " Prevented intercourse with the out-
 side world,
 " And that suspected priest in banish-
 ment,
 " Whose portion is a further help i'
 the case ?
 " Oh, ay, you all of you want the other
 thing,
 " The extreme of law, some verdict
 neat, complete—
 " Either, the whole o' the dowry i'
 your poke
 " With full release from the false wife,
 to boot,
 " And heading, hanging for the priest,
 beside—
 " Or, contrary, claim freedom for the
 wife,
 " Repayment of each penny paid her
 spouse,
 Amends for the past, release for the
 future ! Such
 " Is wisdom to the children of this
 world ;
 " But we 've no mind, we children of
 the light,
 " To miss the advantage of the golden
 mean,
 " And push things to the steel point."
 Thus the courts.

Is it settled so far ? Settled or dis-
 turbed,
 Console yourselves : 't is like . . an in-
 stance, now !
 You 've seen the puppets, of Place Na-
 vona, play,—
 Punch and his mate,—how threats
 pass, blows are dealt,
 And a crisis comes : the crowd or clap
 or hiss
 Accordingly as disposed for man or
 wife—
 When down the actors duck awhile
 perdue,
 Donning what novel rag-and-feather
 trim
 Best suits the next adventure, new
 effect :
 And,—by the time the mob is on the
 move,
 With something like a judgment *pro*
 and *con*,—

There 's a whistle, up again the actors
 pop
 In t' other tatter with fresh-tinselled
 staves,
 To re-engage in one last worst fight
 more
 Shall show, what you thought tragedy
 was farce.
 Note, that the climax and the crown of
 things
 Invariably is, the devil appears himself,
 Armed and accoutred, horns and hoofs
 and tail!
 Just so, nor otherwise it proved—
 you 'll see:
 Move to the murder, never mind the
 rest!

Guido, at such a general duck-down,
 I' the breathing-space,—of wife to con-
 vent here,
 Priest to his relegation, and himself
 To Arezzo,—had resigned his part per-
 force [best,
 To brot' the fate, who bustled, did his
 Retrieve things somewhat, managed
 the three suits—
 Since, it should seem, there were three
 suits-at-law
 Behoved him look to, still, lest bad
 grow worse:
 First civil suit,—the one the parents
 brought,
 Impugning the legitimacy of his wife,
 Affirming thence the nullity of her
 rights:
 This was before the Rota,—Molinès,
 That 's judge there, made that notable
 decree
 Which partly leaned to Guido, as I
 said,—
 But Pietro had appeared against the
 same
 To the very court will judge what we
 judge now—
 Tommati and his fellows,—Suit the
 first.
 Next civil suit,—demand on the wife's
 part
 Of separation from the husband's bed
 On plea of cruelty and risk to life—
 Claims restitution of the dowry paid,
 Immunity from paying any more:
 This second, the Vicegerent has to
 judge.
 Third and last suit,—this time, a
 criminal one,—

Answer to, and protection from, these,—
 Guido's complaint of guilt against
 wife
 In the Tribunal of the Governor,
 Venturini, also judge of the pro-
 cause.
 Three suits of all importance plagu-
 him,
 Beside a little private enterprise
 Of Guido's,—essay at a shorter cut
 For Paolo, knowing the right way
 Rome,
 Had, even while superintending the
 three suits
 I' the regular way, each at its pro-
 court, [P
 Ingeniously made interest with
 To set such tedious regular forms as
 And, acting the supreme and ultim-
 judge,
 Declare for the husband and aga-
 the wife.
 Well, at such crisis and extreme
 straits,
 The man at bay, buffeted in this way
 Happened the strangest accident of
 "Then," sigh friends, "the last feat
 broke his back,
 "Made him forget all possible remed-
 "Save one—he rushed to, as the s-
 relief
 "From horror and the abomina-
 thing."
 "Or rather," laugh foes, "then
 there befall
 "The luckiest of conceivable even-
 "Most pregnant with impunity
 him,
 "Which henceforth turned the fla-
 of all attack,
 "And bade him do his wickedest a-
 worst."
 —The wife's withdrawal from the Co-
 vertites,
 Visit to the villa where her parent
 lived,
 And birth there of his babe. Diver-
 ence here!
 I simply take the facts, ask what the
 show.
 First comes this thunderclap of a sur-
 prise:
 Then follow all the signs and silences
 Premonitory of earthquake. Paolo
 first

Vanished, was swept off somewhere,
 lost to Rome :
 (Wells dry up, while the sky is sunny
 and blue.)
 Then Guido girds himself for enter-
 prise,
 Hies to Vittiano, counsels with his
 steward,
 Comes to terms with four peasants
 young and bold,
 And starts for Rome the Holy, reaches
 her
 At very holiest, for 't is Christmas Eve,
 And makes straight for the Abate's
 dried-up font,
 The lodge where Paolo ceased to work
 the pipes.
 And then, rest taken, observation made
 And plan completed, all in a grim week,
 The five proceed in a body, reach the
 place,
 —Pietro's, by the Paolina, silent, lone,
 And stupefied by the propitious snow,—
 At one in the evening: knock: a
 voice "Who's there?"
 "Friends with a letter from the priest
 your friend."
 At the door, straight smiles old Vio-
 lante's self.
 She falls,—her son-in-law stabs through
 and through,
 Reaches thro' her at Pietro—"With
 your son
 "This is the way to settle suits, good
 sire!"
 He bellows "Mercy for heaven, not
 for earth!"
 "Leave to confess and save my sinful
 soul,
 "Then do your pleasure on the body of
 me!"
 —"Nay, father, soul with body must
 take its chance!"
 He presently got his portion and lay
 still.
 And last, Pompilia rushes here and
 there
 Like a dove among lightnings in her
 brake,
 Falls also: Guido's, this last hus-
 band's-act.
 He lifts her by the long dishevelled
 hair,
 Holds her away at arms' length with
 one hand,
 While the other tries if life come from
 the mouth—

Looks out his whole heart's hate on
 the shut eyes,
 Draws a deep satisfied breath, "So—
 dead at last!"
 Throws down the burthen on dead
 Pietro's knees,
 And ends all with "Let us away, my
 boys!"
 And, as they left by one door, in at the
 other
 Tumbled the neighbours—for the
 shrieks had pierced
 To the mill and the grange, this cottage
 and that shed.
 Soon followed the Public Force; pur-
 suit began
 Though Guido had the start and chose
 the road:
 So, that same night was he, with the
 other four,
 Overtaken near Baccano,—where they
 sank
 By the wayside, in some shelter meant
 for beasts,
 And now lay heaped together, nuzzling
 swine,
 Each wrapped in bloody cloak, each
 grasping still
 His unwiped weapon, sleeping all the
 same
 The sleep o' the just,—a journey of
 twenty miles
 Bringing just and unjust to a level, you
 see.
 The only one i' the world that suffered
 aught
 By the whole night's toil and trouble,
 flight and chase,
 Was just the officer who took them,
 Head
 O' the Public Force,—Patrizj, zealous
 soul,
 Who, having duty to sustain the flesh,
 Got heated, caught a fever and so died:
 A warning to the over-vigilant,
 —Virtue in a chafe should change her
 linen quick,
 Lest pleurisy get start of providence.
 (That's for the Cardinal, and told, I
 think!)
 Well, they bring back the company to
 Rome.
 Says Guido, "By your leave, I fain
 would ask
 "How you found out 't was I who did
 the deed?

"What put you on my track, a for-
 eigner,
 "Supposed in Arezzo,—and assuredly
 safe
 "Except for an oversight: who told
 you, pray?"
 "Why, naturally your wife!" Down
 Guido drops
 O' the horse he rode,—they have to
 steady and stay,
 At either side the brute that bore him,
 bound,
 So strange it seemed his wife should
 live and speak!
 She had prayed—at least so people
 tell you now—
 For but one thing to the Virgin for her-
 self,
 Not simply, as did Pietro 'mid the
 stabs,—
 Time to confess and get her own soul
 saved—
 But time to make the truth apparent,
 truth
 For God's sake, lest men should believe
 a lie:
 Which seems to have been about the
 single prayer
 She ever put up, that was granted her.
 With this hope in her head, of telling
 truth,—
 Being familiarised with pain, beside,—
 She bore the stabbing to a certain pitch
 Without a useless cry, was flung for
 dead
 On Pietro's lap, and so attained her
 point.
 Her friends subjoin this—have I done
 with them?—
 And cite the miracle of continued life
 (She was not dead when I arrived just
 now)
 As attestation to her probity.
 Does it strike your Excellency? Why,
 your Highness,
 The self-command and even the final
 prayer,
 Our candour must acknowledge ex-
 plainable
 As easily by the consciousness of guilt.
 So, when they add that her confession
 runs
 She was of wifhood one white inno-
 cence
 In thought, word, act, from first of
 her short life

To last of it; praying, i' the face
 death,
 That God forgive her other sins—
 this,
 She is charged with and must die
 that she failed
 Anyway to her husband: while the
 on
 Comments the old Religious—"—
 much good,
 "Patience beneath enormity of ill,
 "I hear to my confusion, woe is me
 "Sinner that I stand, shamed in
 walk and gait
 "I have practised and grown old in,
 a child!"—
 Guido's friends shrug the should
 "Just this same
 "Prodigious absolute calm in the
 hour
 "Confirms us,—being the natural
 sult
 "Of a life which proves consistent
 the close.
 "Having braved heaven and deceive
 earth throughout,
 "She braves still and deceives sti
 gains thereby
 "Two ends, she prizes beyond earth
 heaven:
 "First sets her lover free, imperill
 sore
 "By the new turn things take: I
 answers yet
 "For the part he played: they hav
 summoned him indeed:
 "The past ripped up, he may be pur
 ished still:
 "What better way of saving him tha
 this?
 "Then,—thus she dies revenged to th
 uttermost
 "On Guido, drags him with her in th
 dark,
 "The lower still the better, do yo
 doubt?
 "Thus, two days, does she love he
 love to the end,
 "And hate her hate—death, hell i
 no such price
 "To pay for these,—lovers and hater
 hold."
 But there's another parry for th
 thrust.
 "Confession," cry folks—"a confes
 sion, think!
 "Confession of the moribund is true!"

i' the face of
 ther sins—not
 must die for,
 : while there-
 religious—" So
 mity of ill,
 , woe is me,
 hamed in the
 own old in, by
 the shoulder,
 m in the last
 e natural re-
 consistent to
 and deceived
 deceives still,
 yond earth or
 e, imperilled
 gs take: he
 : they have
 d:
 may be pun-
 ing him than
 enged to the
 th her in the
 ter, do you
 she love her
 ath, hell is
 s and haters
 ry for the
 "a confes-
 nd is true!"

Which of them, my wise friends?
 This public one,
 Or the private other we shall never
 know?
 The private may contain—your casu-
 ists teach,—
 The acknowledgment of, and the peni-
 tence for,
 That other public one, so people say.
 However it be—we trench on delicate
 ground,
 Her Eminence is peeping o'er the
 cards,—
 Can one find nothing in behalf of this
 Catastrophe? Deaf folks accuse the
 dumb!
 You criticise the drunken reel, fool's-
 speech,
 Maniacal gesture of the man,—we
 grant!
 But who poured poison in his cup, we
 ask?
 Recall the list of his excessive wrongs,
 First cheated in his wife, robbed by
 her kin,
 Rendered anon the laughing-stock o'
 the world
 By the story, true or false, of his wife's
 birth,—
 The last seal publicly apposed to shame
 By the open flight of wife and priest,—
 why, Sirs,
 Step out of Rome a furlong, would you
 know
 What another guess tribunal than ours
 here,
 Mere worldly Court without the help of
 grace,
 Thinks of just that one incident o' the
 flight?
 Guido preferred the same complaint
 before
 The court at Arezzo, bar of the Gran-
 duke,—
 In virtue of it being Tuscany
 Where the offence had rise and flight
 began,—
 Self-same complaint he made in the
 sequel here
 Where the offence grew to the full, the
 flight
 Ended: offence and flight, one fact
 judged twice
 By two distinct tribunals,—what re-
 sult?
 There was a sentence passed at the
 same time

By Arezzo and confirmed by the Gran-
 duke,
 Which nothing baulks of swift and sure
 effect
 But absence of the guilty, (flight to
 Rome
 Frees them from Tuscan jurisdiction
 now)
 —Condemns the wife to the oppro-
 brious doom
 Of all whom law just lets escape from
 death.
 The Stinche, House of Punishment, for
 life,—
 That's what the wife deserves in Tus-
 cany:
 Here, she deserves—remitting with a
 smile
 To her father's house, main object of
 the flight!
 The thief presented with the thing he
 steals!
 At this discrepancy of judgments—
 mad,
 The man took on himself the office,
 judged;
 And the only argument against the use
 O' the law he thus took into his own
 hands
 Is . . what, I ask you?—that, re-
 venging wrong,
 He did not revenge sooner, kill at first
 Whom he killed last! That is the final
 charge.
 Sooner? What's soon or late i' the
 case?—ask we.
 A wound i' the flesh no doubt wants
 prompt redress;
 It smarts a little to-day, well in a week,
 Forgotten in a month; or never, or
 now, revenge!
 But a wound to the soul? That
 rankles worse and worse.
 Shall I comfort you, explaining—"Not
 this once
 "But now it may be some five hundred
 times [rogue:
 "I called you ruffian, pandar, liar and
 "The injury must be less by lapse of
 time?"
 The wrong is a wrong, one and immor-
 tal too,
 And that you bore it those five hundred
 times,
 Let it rankle unrevenged five hundred
 years,

Is just five hundred wrongs the more
and worse !

Men, plagued this fashion, get to ex-
plode this way,
If left no other.

" But we left this man
" Many another way, and there's his
fault,"

" T is answered—" He himself preferred
our arm

" O' the law to fight his battle with.
No doubt

" We did not open him an armoury

" To pick and choose from, use, and
then reject.

" He tries one weapon and fails,—he
tries the next

" And next : he flourishes wit and
common sense,

" They fail him,—he plies logic dought-
ily,

" It fails him too,—thereon, discovers
last

" He has been blind to the combust-
ibles—

" That all the while he is a-glow with
ire,

" Boiling with irrepressible rage, and
so

" May try explosives and discard cold
steel,—

" So hire assassins, plot, plan, execute !

" Is this the honest self-forgetting rage

" We are called to pardon ? Does the
furious bull

" Pick out four help mates from the
grazing herd

" And journey with them over hill and
dale

" Till he find his enemy ?"

What rejoinder ? save
That friends accept our bull-similitude.
Bull-like,—the indiscriminate slaugh-
ter, rude

And reckless aggravation of revenge,
Were all i' the way o' the brute who
never once

Ceases, amid all provocation more,
To bear in mind the first tormentor,
first

Giver o' the wound that goaded him to
fight :

And, though a dozen follow and rein-
force

The aggressor, wound in front and
wound in flank,

Continues undisturbedly pursuit,
And only after prostrating his p
Turns on the pettier, makes a g
prey.

So Guido rushed against Violante
Author of all his wrongs, *fons et*
Malorum—increasingly drunk,—
justice done,

He finished with the rest. Do
blame a bull ?

In truth you look as puzzled as
preached !

How is that ? There are diffic
perhaps

On any supposition, and either si
Each party wants too much, c
sympathy

For its object of compassion, more
just.

Cry the wife's friends, " O the enor
crime

" Caused by no provocation in
world !"

" Was not the wife a little weak
inquire—

" Punished extravagantly, if
please,

" But meriting a little punishment

" One treated inconsiderately, say,
" Rather than one deserving not a

" Treatment and discipline o'
harsher sort ?"

No, they must have her purity i
Quite angel,—and her parents an
too

Of an aged sort, immaculate, word
deed,

At all events, so seeming, till the fi
Even Guido, by his folly, forced
them

The untoward avowal of the trick o
birth,

Would otherwise be safe and se
now.

Why, here you have the awful
crimes

For nothing ! Hell broke loose o
butterfly !

A dragon born of rose-dew and
moon !

Yet here is the monster ! Why, h
a mere man—

Born, bred, and brought up in
usual way.

His mother loves him, still his broth
stick

lly pursuit,
ating his prize
makes a general

st Violante, first
ags, *fons et origo*
y drunk,—which

rest. Do you

puzzled as ere I

e are difficulties

nd either side.

o much, claims

ssion, more than

O the enormous

ocation in the

ittle weak ?"—

antly, if you

ounishment ?

ately, say,

erving not at all

cipline o' the

er purity itself,

parents angels

ulate, word and

g, till the fiend,

lly, forced from

f the trick o' the

afe and secret

he awfullest of

oke loose on a

e-dew and the

r ! Why, he's

ght up in the

till his brothers

To the good fellow of the boyish games ;
The Governor of his town knows and
approves,

The Archbishop of the place knows and
assists :

Here he has Cardinal This to vouch for
the past

Cardinal That to trust for the future,—
match

And marriage were a Cardinal's mak-
ing,—in short,

What if a tragedy be acted here

Impossible for malice to improve,

And innocent Guido with his innocent
four

Be added, all five, to the guilty three,

That we of these last days be edified

With one full taste o' the justice of the
world ?

The long and the short is, truth is what
I show :—

Undoubtedly no pains ought to be
spared

To give the mob an inkling of our
lights.

It seems unduly harsh to put the man

To the torture, as I hear the court in-
tends,

Though readiest way of twisting out the
truth ;

He is noble, and he may be innocent :

On the other hand, if they exempt the
man

(As it is also said they hesitate

On the fair ground, presumptive guilt
is weak

I' the case of nobility and privilege).—

What crime that ever was, ever will be,

Deserves the torture ? Then abolish
it !

You see the reduction *ad absurdum*,
Sirs ?

Her Excellency must pronounce, in
fine !

What, she prefers going and joining
play ?

Her Highness finds it late, intends re-
tire ?

I am of their mind : only, all this talk,
talked,

'T was not for nothing that we talked, I
hope ?

Both know as much about it, now, at
least,

As all Rome : no particular thanks, I
beg !

(You 'll see, I have not so advanced
myself,

After my teaching the two idiots here !)

V

COUNT GUIDO FRANCESCHINI

THANKS, Sir, but, should it please the
reverend Court,

I feel I can stand somehow, half sit
down

Without help, make shift to even speak,
you see,

Fortified by the sip of . . . why, 't is
wine,

Velletri,—and not vinegar and gall,

So changed and good the times grow !

Thanks, kind Sir !

Oh, but one sip 's enough ! I want my
head

To save my neck, there 's work awaits
me still.

How cautious and considerate . . .
aie, aie, aie,

Not your fault, sweet Sir ! Come, you
take to heart

An ordinary matter. Law is law.

Noblemen were exempt, the vulgar
thought,

From racking, but, since law thinks
otherwise,

I have been put to the rack : all 's over
now,

And neither wrist—what men style, out
of joint :

If any harm be, 't is the shoulder-blade,

The left one, that seems wrong i' the
socket,—Sirs,

Much could not happen, I was quick to
faint,

Being past my prime of life, and out of
health.

In short I thank you, —yes, and mean
the word.

Needs must tl. Court be slow to under-
stand

How this quite novel form of taking
pain,

This getting tortured merely in the
flesh,

Amounts to almost an agreeable change

In my case, me fastidious, plied too
much

With opposite treatment, used (forgive
the joke)

To the rasp-tooth toying with this brain
of mine,

And, in and out my heart, the play o'
the probe.
Four years have I been operated on
I' the soul, do you see—its tense or
tremulous part—
My self-respect, my care for a good
name,
Pride in an old one, love of kindred—
just
A mother, brothers, sisters, and the
like,
That looked up to my face when days
were dim,
And fancied they found light there—
no one spot,
Foppishly sensitive, but has paid its
pang.
That, and not this you now oblige me
with,
That was the Vigil-torment, if you
please!
The poor old noble House that drew
the rags
O' the Franceschini's once superb
array
Close round her, hoped to slink unchal-
lenged by,—
Pluck off these! Turn the drapery in-
side out
And teach the tittering town how scar-
let wears!
Show men the lucklessness, the impro-
vidence
Of the easy-natured Count before this
Count, [for,
The father I have some slight feeling
Who let the world slide, nor foresaw
that friends
Then proud to cap and kiss the patron's
shoe,
Would, when the purse he left held
spider-webs,
Properly push his child to wall one day!
Mimic the tetchy humour, furtive
glance
And brow where half was furious half
fatigued,
O' the same son got to be of middle age,
Sour, saturnine,—your humble servant
here,—
When things go cross and the young
wife, he finds
Take to the window at a whistle's bid,
And yet demurs thereon, preposterous
fool!—
Wherewith the worthies judge he wants
advice

And beg to civilly ask what 's evil here
Perhaps remonstrate on the habit the
deem
He 's given unduly to, of beating her
... Oh, sure he beats her—why say
John so else,
Who is cousin to George who is sib to
Tecla's self
Who cooks the meal and combs the
lady's hair?
What? 'T is my wrist you mere
dislocate
For the future when you mean me mar-
tyrdom?
—Let the old mother's economy alone
How the brocade-strips saved o' the
seamy side
O' the wedding-gown buy raiment for a
year?
—How she can dress and dish up—
lordly dish
Fit for a duke, lamb's head and pur-
tenance—
With her proud hands, feast household
so a week?
No word o' the wine rejoicing God and
man
The less when three-parts water
Then, I say,
A trifle of torture to the flesh, like
yours,
While soul is spared such foretaste o'
hell-fire,
Is naught. But I curtail the catalogue
Through policy,—a rhetorician's
trick,—
Because I would reserve some choice
points
O' the practice, more exactly parallel—
(Having an eye to climax) with what
gift,
Eventual grace the Court may have in
store
I' the way of plague—my crown o'
punishments.
When I am hanged or headed, time
enough
To prove the tenderness of only that
Mere heading, hanging,—not their
counterpart,
Not demonstration public and precise
That I, having married the mongrel o'
a drab,
Am bound to grant that mongrel-brat
my wife,
Her mother's birthright-licence as it
just,—

Let her sleep undisturbed, i' the family style,
 Her sleep out in the embraces of a priest,
 Nor disallow their bastard as my heir !
 Your sole mistake,—dare I submit so much
 To the reverend Court ?—has been in all this pains
 To make a stone roll down hill,—rack and wrench
 And rend a man to pieces, all for what ?
 Why—make him ope mouth in his own defence,
 Show cause for what he has done, the irregular deed,
 (Since that he did it, scarce dispute can be)
 And clear his fame a little, beside the luck
 Of stopping even yet, if possible,
 Discomfort to his flesh from noose or axe—
 For that, out come the implements of law !
 May it content my lords the gracious Court
 To listen only half so patient-long
 As I will in that sense profusely speak,
 And—fie, they shall not call in screws to help !
 I killed Pompilia Franceschini, Sirs ;
 Killed too the Comparini, husband, wife,
 Who called themselves, by a notorious lie,
 Her father and her mother to ruin me.
 There 's the irregular deed : you want no more
 Than right interpretation of the same,
 And truth so far—am I to understand ?
 To that then, with convenient speed,—because
 Now I consider,—yes, despite my boast,
 There is an ailing in this omoplat
 May clip my speech all too abruptly close,
 Whatever the good-will in me. Now for truth !
 I' the name of the indivisible Trinity !
 Will my lords, in the plentitude of their light,
 Weigh well that all this trouble has come on me
 Through my persistent treading in the paths

Where I was trained to go,—wearing that yoke
 My shoulder was predestined to receive,
 Born to the hereditary stoop and crease ?
 Noble, I recognised my nobler still,
 The Church, my suzerain ; no mock-mistress, she ;
 The secular owned the spiritual : mates of mine
 Have thrown their careless hoofs up at her call
 " Forsake the clover and come drag my wain ! "
 There they go cropping : I protruded nose
 To halter, bent my back of docile beast,
 And now am wheeled, one wide wound all of me,
 For being found at the eleventh hour o' the day
 Padding the mill-track, not neck-deep in grass :
 —My one fault, I am stiffened by my work,
 —My one reward, I help the Court to smile !

I am representative of a great line,
 One of the first of the old families
 In Arezzo, ancientest of Tuscan towns.
 When my worst foe is fain to challenge this,
 His worst exception runs—not first in rank
 But second, noble in the next degree
 Only ; not malice 'self maligns me more.
 So, my lord opposite has composed, we know,
 A marvel of a book, sustains the point
 That Francis boasts the primacy 'mid saints ;
 Yet not inaptly hath his argument
 Obtained response from yon my other lord
 In thesis published with the world's applause
 —Rather 't is Dominic such post befits :
 Why, at the worst, Francis stays Francis still,
 Second in rank to Dominic it may be,
 Still, very saintly, very like our Lord ;
 And I at least descend from a Guido once
 Homager to the Empire, naught below—

Of which account as proof that, none o'
the line
Having a single gift beyond brave
blood,
Or able to do aught but give, give, give
In blood and brain, in house and land
and cash,
Not get and garner as the vulgar may,
We became poor as Francis or our Lord.
Be that as it likes you, Sirs,—whenever
it chanced
Myself grew capable anyway of remark,
(Which was soon—penury makes wit
premature)
This struck me, I was poor who should
be rich
Or pay that fault to the world which
trifles not
When lineage lacks the flag yet lifts
the pole:
Therefore I must make move forthwith,
transfer
My stranded self, born fish with gill
and fin
Fit for the deep sea, now left flap bare-
backed
In slush and sand, a show to crawlers
vile
Reared of the low-tide and aright there-
in.
The enviable youth with the old name,
Wide chest, stout arms, sound brow
and pricking veins,
A heartful of desire, man's natural
load,
A brainful of belief, the noble's lot,—
All this life, cramped and gasping,
high and dry
I' the wave's retreat,—the misery, good
my lords,
Which made you merriment at Rome
of late,—
It made me reason, rather—muse, de-
mand
—Why our bare dropping palace, in
the street
Where such-an-one whose grandfather
sold tripe
Was adding to his purchased pile a
fourth
Tall tower, could hardly show a turret
sound?
Why Countess Beatrice, whose son I
am,
Cowered in the winter-time as she spun
flax,
Blew on the earthen basket of live ash,

Instead of jaunting forth in coach and
six
Like such-another widow who ne'
was wed?
I asked my fellows, how came th'
about?
"Why, Jack, the sutler's child, pe'
haps the camp's,
"Went to the wars, fought sturdily
took a town
"And got rewarded as was natural.
"She of the coach and six—excuse m'
there!
"Why, do n't you know the story o'
her friend?
"A clown dressed vines on somebody's
estate,
"His boy recoiled from muck, like
Latin more,
"Stuck to his pen and got to be a priest
"Till one day . . . don't you mind
that telling tract
"Against Molinos, the old Cardina'
wrote?
"He penned and dropped it in th'
patron's desk
"Who, deep in thought and absen'
much of mind, [own
"Licensed the thing, allowed it for hi'
"Quick came promotion,—*summa cu-
que*, Count!
"Oh, he can pay for coach and six, b'
sure!"
"—Well, let me go, do likewise: 'war'
the word—
"That way the Franceschini worke'
at first,
"I'll take my turn, try soldiership."—
"What, you?
"The eldest son and heir and prop o'
the house,
"So do you see your duty? Here '
your post,
"Hard by the hearth and altar. (Roan'
from roof,
"This youngster, play the gypsy ou'
of doors,
"And who keeps kith and kin that fal'
on us?)
"Stand fast, stick tight, conserve you'
gods at home!"
"—Well then, the quiet course, the
contrary trade!
"We had a cousin amongst us once wa'
Pope,
"And minor glories manifold. Try
the Church,

"The tonsure, and,—since heresy 's
 but half-slain
 "Even by the Cardinal's tract he
 thought he wrote,—
 "Have at Molinos!"—"Have at a
 fool's head!
 "You a priest? How were marriage
 possible?
 "There must be Franceschini till time
 ends—
 "That 's your vocation. Make your
 brothers priests,
 "Paul shall be porporate, and Girolamo
 step
 "Red-stockinged in the presence when
 you choose,
 "But save one Franceschini for the
 age!
 "Be not the vine but dig and dung its
 root,
 "Be not a priest but gird up priest-
 hood's loins,
 "With one foot in Arezzo stride to
 Rome,
 "Spend yourself there and bring the
 purchase back!
 "Go hence to Rome, be guided!"

So I was.

I turned alike from the hill-side zig-zag
 thread
 Of way to the table-land a soldier takes,
 Alike from the low-lying pasture-place
 Where churchmen graze, recline and
 ruminate,
 —Ventured to mount no platform like
 my lords
 Who judge the world, bear brain I dare
 not brag—
 But stationed me, might thus the ex-
 pression serve,
 As who should fetch and carry, come
 and go,
 Meddle and make i' the cause my lords
 love most—
 The public weal, which hangs to the
 law, which holds
 By the Church, which happens to be
 through God himself.
 Humbly I helped the Church till here I
 stand,—
 Or would stand but for the omoplat,
 you see!
 Bidden qualify for Rome, I, having a
 field,
 Went, sold it, laid the sum at Peter's
 foot:

Which means—I settled home-accounts
 with speed,
 Set apart just a modicum should suf-
 fice
 To keep the villa's head above the
 waves
 Of weed inundating its oil and wine,
 And prop roof, stanchion wall o' the
 palace so
 It should keep breath i' the body, hold
 its own
 Amid the advance of neighbouring
 loftiness—
 (People like building where they used
 to beg)—
 Till succoured one day,—shared the
 residue
 Between my mother and brothers and
 sisters there,
 Black-eyed babe Donna This and
 Donna That,
 As near to starving as might decently
 be,
 —Left myself journey-charges, change
 of suit,
 A purse to put i' the pocket of the
 Groom
 O' the Chamber of the patron, and a
 glove [niece
 With a ring to it for the digits of the
 Sure to be helpful in his household,—
 then
 Started for Rome, and led the life pre-
 scribed.
 Close to the Church, though clean of it,
 I assumed
 Three or four orders of no consequence,
 —They cast out evil spirits and exor-
 cise,
 For example; bind a man to nothing
 more,
 Give clerical savour to his layman's-
 salt,
 Facilitate his claim to loaf and fish
 Should miracle leave, beyond what
 feeds the flock,
 Fragments to brim the basket of a
 friend—
 While, for the world's sake, I rode,
 danced and gamed,
 Quitted me like a courtier, measured
 mine
 With whatsoever blade had fame in
 fence,
 —Ready to let the basket go its round
 Even though my turn was come to
 help myself,

Should Dives count on me at dinner-time
 As just the understander of a joke
 And not immoderate in repartee.
Utrique sic paratus, Sirs, I said
 "Here," (in the fortitude of years
 fifteen,
 So good a pedagogue is penury)
 "Here, wait, do service,—serving and
 to serve!
 "And, in due time, I nowise doubt at
 all,
 "The recognition of my service comes.
 "Next year I'm only sixteen. I can
 wait."

I waited thirty years, may it please the
 Court:
 Saw meanwhile many a denizen o' the
 dung
 Hop, skip, jump o'er my shoulder,
 make him wings
 And fly aloft,—succeed, in the usual
 phrase.
 Everyone soon or late comes round by
 Rome:
 Stand still here, you 'll see all in turn
 succeed.
 Why, look you, so and so, the physician
 here,
 My father's lacquey's son we sent to
 school,
 Doctored and dosed This Eminence and
 That,
 Salved the last Pope his certain obstinate
 sore,
 Soon bought land as became him,
 names it now:
 I grasp bell at his griffin-guarded gate,
 Traverse the half-mile avenue,—a
 term,
 A cypress, and a statue, three and
 three,—
 Delivered message from my Monsignor,
 With varlety at lounge i' the vestibule
 I 'm barred from, who bear mud upon
 my shoe.
 My father's chaplain's nephew, Chamberlain,—
 Nothing less, please you!—courteous
 all the same,
 —He does not see me though I wait an
 hour
 At his staircase-landing 'twixt the
 brace of busts,
 A noseless Sylla, Marius maimed to
 match,

My father gave him for a hexastich
 Made on my birth-day,—but he sends
 me down,
 To make amends, that relic I prize
 most—
 The unburnt end o' the very candle,
 Sirs,
 Purfled with paint so prettily round
 and round,
 He carried in such state last Peter's
 day,—
 In token I, his gentleman and squire,
 Had held the bridle, walked his man-
 aged mule
 Without a tittup the procession
 through.
 Nay, the official,—one you know, sweet
 lords!—
 Who drew the warrant for my transfer
 late
 To the New Prisons from Tordinona,—
 he
 Graciously had remembrance—"Franciscus . . ha?
 "His sire, now—how a thing shall
 come about!—
 "Paid me a dozen florins above the fee,
 "For drawing deftly up a deed of sale
 "When troubles fell so thick on him,
 good heart,
 "And I was prompt and pushing! By
 all means! [lie,—
 "At the New Prisons be it his son shall
 "Anything for an old friend!" and
 thereat
 Signed name with triple flourish under-
 neath.
 These were my fellows, such their fortunes now,
 While I—kept fasts and feasts innumerable,
 Matins and vespers, functions to no end
 I' the train of Monsignor and Eminence,
 As gentleman-squire, and for my zeal's
 reward
 Have sorely missed a place at the table-
 foot
 Except when some Ambassador, o' such
 like,
 Brought his own people. Bricci, one
 day I felt
 The tick of time inside me, turning-
 point
 And slight sense there was now enough
 of this:
 That I was near my seventh climacteric,

Hard upon, if not over, the middle life,
 And, although fed by the east-wind,
 fulsome-fine
 With foretaste of the Land of Promise,
 still
 My gorge gave symptom it might play
 me false ;
 Better not press it further,—be content
 With living and dying only a nobleman,
 Who merely had a father great and
 rich,
 Who simply had one greater and richer
 yet,
 And so on back and back till first and
 best
 Began i' the night ; I finish in the day.
 "The mother must be getting old," I
 said ;
 "The sisters are well wedded away, our
 name
 "Can manage to pass a sister off, at
 need,
 "And do for dowry : both my brothers
 thrive—
 "Regular priests they are, nor, bat-
 like, 'bide
 "Twixt flesh and fowl with neither
 privilege.
 "My spare revenue must keep me and
 mine.
 "I am tired : Arezzo's air is good to
 breathe ;
 "Vittiano,—one limes flocks of thrushes
 there ;
 "A leathern coat costs little and lasts
 long :
 "Let me bid hope good-bye, content at
 home !"
 Thus, one day, I disbosomed me and
 bowed.
 Whereat began the little buzz and
 thrill
 O' the gazers round me ; each face
 brightened up :
 As when at your Casino, deep in dawn,
 A gamester says at last, "I play no
 more,
 "Forego gain, acquiesce in loss, with-
 draw
 "Anyhow : " and the watchers of his
 ways.
 A trifle struck compunctious at the
 word,
 Yet sensible of relief, breathe free once
 more,
 Break up the ring, venture polite ad-
 vice—

B.P.

"How, Sir ? So scant of heart and
 hope indeed ?
 "Retire with neither cross nor pile
 from play ?—
 "So incurious, so short-casting ?—
 give your chance
 "To a younger, stronger, bolder spirit
 belike,
 "Just when luck turns and the fine
 throw sweeps all ?"
 Such was the chorus : and its good-will
 meant—
 "See that the loser leave door hand-
 somely !
 "There 's an ill look,—it 's sinister,
 spoils sport,
 "When an old bruised and battered
 year-by-year
 "Fighter with fortune, not a penny in
 poke, [ment
 "Reels down the steps of our establish-
 "And staggers on broad daylight and
 the world,
 "In shagrag beard and doleful doub-
 let, drops
 "And breaks his heart on the outside :
 people prate
 "Such is the profit of a trip upstairs !"
 "Contrive he sidle forth, baulked of
 the blow
 "Best dealt by way of moral, bidding
 down [heads
 "No curse but blessings rather on our
 "For some poor prize he bears at tat-
 tered breast,
 "Some palpable sort of kind of good
 to set
 "Over and against the grievance :
 give him quick !"
 Whereon protested Paul, "Go hang
 yourselves !
 "Leave him to me. Count Guido and
 brother of mine,
 "A word in your ear ! Take courage
 since faint heart
 "Ne'er won . . . aha, fair lady, don't
 men say ?
 "There 's a *sors*, there 's a right Vir-
 gilian dip !
 "Do you see the happiness o' the hint ?
 At worst,
 "If the Church want no more of you,
 the Court
 "No more, and the Camp as little, the
 ingrates,—come,
 "Count you are counted : still you 've
 coat to back,

" Not cloth of gold and tissue, as we hoped,
 " But cloth with sparks and spangles on its frieze
 " From Camp, Court, Church, enough to make a shine,
 " Entitle you to carry home a wife
 " With the proper dowry, let the worst betide !
 " Why, it was just a wife you meant to take ! "

Now, Paul's advice was weighty :
 priests should know :

And Paul apprised me, ere the week was out,

That Pietro and Violante, the easy pair,
 The cits enough, with stomach to be more,

Had just the daughter and exact the sum

To truck for the quality of myself :
 " She 's young,

" Pretty and rich : you're noble, classic, choice.

" Is it to be a match ? " " A match," said I.

Done ! He proposed all, I accepted all,

And we performed all. So I said and did

Simply. As simply followed, not at first

But with the outbreak of misfortune, still

One comment on the saying and doing — " What ?

" No blush at the avowal you dared buy

" A girl of age beseems your grand-daughter,

" Like ox or ass ? Are flesh and blood a ware ?

" Are heart and soul a chattel ? " Softly, Sirs !

Will the Court of its charity teach poor me

Anxious to learn, of any way i' the world,

Allowed by custom and convenience, save

This same which, taught from my youth up, I trod ?

Take me along with you ; where was the wrong step ?

If what I gave in barter, style and state
 And all that hangs to Franceschini-

hood,

Were worthless,—why, society goes to ground,

its rules are idiot's-rambling. Honour of birth,—

If that thing has no value, cannot buy Something with value of another sort

You 've no reward nor punishment to give

I' the giving or the taking honour ; straight

Your social fabric, pinnacle to base, Comes down a-clatter like a house of cards.

Get honour, and keep honour free from flaw,

Aim at still higher honour,—gabble o' the goose !

Go bid a second blockhead like myself Spend fifty years in guarding bubbles

of breath, Soapsuds with air i' the belly, gilded

brave, Guarded and guided, all to break at touch

O' the first young girl's hand and first old fool's purse !

All my privation and endurance, all Love, loyalty and labour dared and did,

Fiddle-de-dee !—why, doer and darer both,—

Count Guido Franceschini had hit the mark

[effect, Far better, spent his life with more

As a dancer or a prizier, trades that pay !

On the other hand, bid this buffoonery cease,

Admit that honour is a privilege, The question follows, privilege worth

what ? Why, worth the market-price,—now

up, now down, Just so with this as with all other ware :

Therefore essay the market, sell your name,

Style and condition to who buys them best !

" Does my name purchase," had I dared inquire,

" Your niece, my lord ? " there would have been rebuff

Though courtesy, your Lordship cannot else—

" Not altogether ! Rank for rank may stand :

" But I have wealth beside, you—poverty ;

"Your scale flies up there: bid a second bid,
 "Rank too and wealth too!" Reasoned like yourself!
 But was it to you I went with goods to sell?
 This time 'twas my scale quietly kissed the ground,
 Mere rank against mere wealth—some youth beside,
 Some beauty too, thrown into the bargain, just
 As the buyer likes or lets alone. I thought
 To deal o' the square: others find fault, it seems:
 The thing is, those my offer most concerned,
 Pietro, Violante, cried they fair or foul?
 What did they make o' the terms? Preposterous terms?
 Why then accede so promptly, close with such
 Nor take a minute to chaffer? Bargain struck,
 They straight grew bilious, wished their money back, [I,
 Repented them, no doubt: why, so did So did your Lordship, if town-talk be true,
 Of paying a full farm's worth for that piece
 By Pietro of Cortona—probably His scholar Ciro Ferri may have retouched—
 You caring more for colour than design—
 Getting a little tired of cupids too. That's incident to all the folk who buy!
 I am charged, I know, with gilding fact by fraud;
 I falsified and fabricated, wrote Myself down roughly richer than I prove,
 Rendered a wrong revenue,—grant it all!
 Mere grace, mere coquetry such fraud, I say:
 A flourish round the figures of a sum For fashion's sake, that deceives nobody.
 The veritable back-bone, understood Essence of this same bargain, blank and bare,
 Being the exchange of quality for wealth.—

What may such fancy-flights be? Flecks of oil
 Flirted by chapmen where plain dealing grates.
 I may have dripped a drop—"My name I sell;
 "Not but that I too boast my wealth"—as they,
 "—We bring you riches; still our ancestor
 "Was hardly the rapsallion, folks saw flogged,
 'But heir to we know who, were rights of force!"
 They knew and I knew where the backbone lurked
 I' the writhings of the bargain, lords, believe!
 I paid down all engaged for, to a doit, Delivered them just that which, their life long,
 They hungered in the hearts of them to gain—
 Incorporation with nobility thus In word and deed: for that they gave me wealth.
 But when they came to try their gain, my gift,
 Quit Rome and qualify for Anzocco, take
 The tone o' the new sphere that absorbed the old,
 Put away gossip Jack and goody Joan And go become familiar with the Great, Greatness to touch and taste and handle now,—
 Why, then,—they found that all was vanity,
 Vexation, and what Solomon describes! The old abundant city-fare was best,
 The kindly warmth o' the commons, the glad clap [grin
 Of the equal on the shoulder, the frank Of the underling at all so many spoons
 Fire-new at neighbourly treat,—best, best and best
 Beyond compare!—down to the loll itself
 O' the pot-house settle,—better such a bench
 Than the stiff crucifixion by my dais Under the piece-meal damask canopy
 With the coroneted coat of arms atop!
 Poverty and privation for pride's sake, All they engaged to easily brave and bear,—

with the fit upon them and their
 brains a-work,—
 Proved unendurable to the sobered sots.
 A banished prince, now, will exude a
 juice
 And salamander-like support the flame :
 He dines on chestnuts, chucks the husks
 to help
 The broil o' the brazier, pays the due
 baioe,
 Goes off light-hearted : his grimace
 begins
 At the funny humours of the christen-
 ing feast
 Of friend the money-lender,—then he's
 touched
 By the flame and frizzles at the babe to
 kiss !
 Here was the converse trial, opposite
 mind :
 Here did a petty nature split on rock
 Of vulgar wants predestinate for such—
 One dish at supper and weak wine to
 boot !
 The prince had grinned and borne :
 the citizen shrieked,
 Summoned the neighbourhood to at-
 test the wrong,
 Made noisy protest he was murdered,
 —stoned
 And burned and drowned and hanged,
 —then broke away, [rest.
 He and his wife, to tell their Rome the
 And this you admire, you men o' the
 world, my lords ?
 This moves compassion, makes you
 doubt my faith ?
 Why, I appeal to . . sun and moon ?
 Not I !
 Rather to Plautus, Terence, Boeae-
 cio's Book,
 My townsman, frank Ser Franco's
 merry Tales,—
 To all who strip a vizard from a face,
 A body from its padding, and a soul
 From froth and ignorance it styles it-
 self,—
 If this be other than the daily hap
 Of purblind greed that dog-like still
 drops bone,
 Grasps shadow, and then howls the ease
 is hard !
 So much for them so far : now for my-
 self,
 My profit or loss i' the matter : married
 am I :

Text whereon friendly censors burst to
 preach.
 Ay, at Rome even, long ere I was left
 To regulate her life for my young bride
 Alone at Arezzo, friendliness outbroke
 (Sifting my future to predict its fault),
 "Purchase and sale being thus so
 plain a point,
 "How of a certain soul bound up, may-
 be,
 "I' the barter with the body and money-
 bags ?
 "From the bride's soul what is it you
 expect ?"
 Why, loyalty and obedience,—wish
 and will
 To settle and suit her fresh and plastic
 mind
 To the novel, nor disadvantageous
 mould !
 Father and mother shall the woman
 leave,
 Cleave to the husband, be it for weal or
 woe :
 There is the law : what sets this law
 aside
 In my particualr ease ? My friends
 submit
 "Guide, guardian, benefactor,—fee-
 faw, fum, [old
 "The fact is you are forty-five years
 "Nor very comely even for that age
 "Girls must have boys." Why, let
 girls say so then,
 Nor call the boys and men, who say
 the same,
 Brute this and beast the other as they
 do !
 Come, cards on table ! When you
 chant us next
 Epithalamium full to overflow
 With praise and glory of white woman-
 hood,
 The chaste and pure—troll no such lies
 o'er lip !
 Put in their stead a crudity or two,
 Such short and simple statement of the
 case
 As youth chalks on our walls at spring
 of year !
 No ! I shall still think nobler of the
 sex,
 Believe a woman still may take a man
 For the short period that his soul wears
 flesh,
 And, for the soul's sake, understand
 the fault

Of armour frayed by fighting. Tush,
it tempts

One's tongue too much ! I'll say—the
law 's the law :

With a wife I look to find all wifeliness,
As when I buy, timber and twig, a
tree—

I buy the song o' the nightingale inside.

Such was the paet : Pompilia from the
first

Broke it, refused from the beginning
day

Either in body or soul to cleave to mine,
And published it forthwith to all the
world.

No rupture,—you must join ere you
can break,—

Before we had cohabited a month
She found I was a devil and no man,—

Made common cause with those who
found as much,

Her parents, Pietro and Violante,—
moved

Heaven and earth to the rescue of all
three.

In four months' time, the time o' the
parents' stay,

Arezzo was a-ringing, bells in a blaze,
With the unimaginable story rife

I' the mouth of man, woman and child
—to wit

My misdemeanour. First the lighter
side,

Ludicrous face of things,—how very
poor

The Franceschini had become at last,
The meanness and the misery of each
shift

To save a soldo, stretch and make ends
Next, the more hateful aspect,—how
myself

With cruelty beyond Caligula's
Had stripped and beaten, robbed and
murdered them,

The good old couple, I decoyed, abused,
Plundered and then cast out, and hap-
pily so,

Since,—in due course the abominable
comes,—

Woe worth the poor young wife left
lonely here !

Repugnant in my person as my mind,
I sought,—was ever heard of such re-
venge ?

—To lure and bind her to so cursed a
couch,

Such co-embrace with sulphur, snake
and toad,

That she was fain to rush forth, call the
stones

O' the common street to save her, not
from hate

Of mine merely, but . . . must I
burn my lips

With the blister of the lie ? . . the
satyr-love

Of who but my own brother, the young
priest,

Too long enforced to Lenten fare belike,
Now tempted by the morsel tossed
him full

I' the trencher where lay bread and
herbs at best.

Mark, this yourselves say !—this, none
disallows,

Was charged to me by the universal
voice

At the instigation of my four-months'
wife !—

And then you ask " Such charges so
preferred,

" (Truly or falsely, here concerns us not)
" Prieked you to punish now if not be-
fore ?—

" Did not the harshness double itself,
the hate

" Harden ? " I answer " Have it your
way and will ! " [then ?

Say my resentment grew apace : what
Do you cry out on the marvel ? When
I find

That pure smooth egg which, laid with-
in my nest,

Could not but hatch a comfort to us all,
Issues a cockatrice for me and mine,

Do you stare to see me stamp on it ?
Swans are soft :

Is it not clear that she you call my wife,
That any wife of any husband, caught
Whetting a sting like this against his
breast,—

Speckled with fragments of the fresh-
broke shell,

Married a month and making outcry
thus,—

Proves a plague-prodigy to God and
man ?

She married : what was it she married
for,

Counted upon and meant to meet
thereby ?

" Love " suggests some one, " love, a
little word

"Whereof we have not heard one syllable."

So, the Pompilia, child, girl, wife, in one,

Wanted the beating pulse, the rolling eye,

The frantic gesture, the devotion due
From Thyrsis to Neæra! Guido's love—

Why not Provençal roses in his shoe,
Plume to his cap, and trio of guitars
At casement, with a bravo close beside?
Good things all these are, clearly claimable

When the fit price is paid the proper way.

Had it been some friend's wife, now,
threw her fan

At my foot, with just this pretty scrap attached,

"Shame, death, damnation—fall these as they may,

"So I find you, for a minute! Come this eve!"

—Why, at such sweet self-sacrifice,—who knows?

I might have fired up, found me at my post,

Ardent from head to heel, nor feared catch cough.

Nay, had some other friend's . . . say,
daughter, tripped [me,

Upstairs and tumbled flat and frank on
Bareheaded and barefooted, with loose hair

And garments all at large,—cried
"Take me thus!"

"Duke So-and-So, the greatest man in Rome—

"To escape his hand and heart have I broke bounds,

"Traversed the town and reached you!"—Then, indeed,

The lady had not reached a man of ice!
I would have rummaged, ransacked at the word

Those old odd corners of an empty heart

For remnants of dim love the long disused,

And dusty crumbings of romance!
But here,

We talk of just a marriage, if you please—

The every-day conditions and no more;
Where do these bind me to bestow one drop

Of blood shall dye my wife's true-love-knot pink?

Pompilia was no pigeon, Venus' pet,
That shuffled from between her pressing paps

To sit on my rough shoulder,—but a hawk,

I bought at a hawk's price and carried home

To do hawk's service—at the Rotunda, say,

Where, six o' the callow nestlings in a row,

You pick and choose and pay the price for such.

I have paid my pound, await my penny's worth,

So, hoodwink, starve and properly train my bird,

And, should she prove a haggard,—twist her neck!

Did I not pay my name and style, my hope

And trust, my all? Through spending these amiss

I am here! 'T is scarce the gravity of the Court

Will blame me that I never piped a tune,

Treated my falcon-gentle like my finch.
The obligation I incurred was just

To practise mastery, prove my master-ship:—

Pompilia's duty was—submit herself,
Afford me pleasure, perhaps cure my bile.

Am I to teach my lords what marriage means,

What God ordains thereby and man fulfils

Who, docile to the dictate, treads the house?

My lords have chosen the happier part with Paul

And neither marry nor burn,—yet priestliness

Can find a parallel to the marriage-bond

In its own blessed special ordinance
Whereof indeed was marriage made the type:

The Church may show her insubordinate,

As marriage her refractory. How of the Monk

Who finds the claustral regimen too sharp

After the first month's essay ? What's the mode

With the Deacon who supports indifferently

The rod o' the Bishop when he tastes its smart

Full four weeks ? Do you straight-way slacken hold

Of the innocents, the all-unwary ones Who, eager to profess, mistook their mind ?—

Remit a fast-day's rigour to the Monk Who fancied Francis' manna meant roast quails,

Concede the Deacon sweet society, He never thought the Levite-rule renounced,—

Or rather prescribe short chain and sharp scourge

Corrective of such peccant humours ? This—

I take to be the Church's mode, and mine. [wife

If I was over-harsh,—the worse i' the Who did not win from harshness as she ought,

Wanted the patience and persuasion, lore

Of love, should cure me and console herself.

Put case that I mishandle, flurry and fright

My hawk through clumsiness in sportsmanship,

Twitoh out five pens where plucking one would serve—

What, shall she bite and claw to mend the case ?

And, if you find I pluck five more for that,

Shall you weep "How he roughs the turtle there ?"

Such was the starting ; now of the further step.

In lieu of taking penance in good part, The Monk, with hue and cry, summons a mob

To make a bonfire of the convent, say,— And the Deacon's pretty piece of virtue (save

The ears o' the Court ! I try to save my head)

Instructed by the ingenuous postulant, Taxes the Bishop with adultery, (mud Needs must pair off with mud, and filth with filth)—

Such being my next experience : who knows not—

The couple, father and mother of my wife,

Returned to Rome, published before my lords,

Put into print, made circulate far and wide

That they had cheated me who cheated them ?

Pompilia, I supposed their daughter, drew

Breath first 'mid Rome's worst rankness, through the deed

Of a drab and a rogue, was bye-blow bastard-babe

Of a nameless strumpet, passed off, palmed on me

As the daughter with the dowry. Daughter ? Dirt

O' the kennel ! Dowry ? Dust o' the street ! Naught more,

Naught less, naught else but—oh—ah—assuredly

A Franceschini and my very wife !

Now take this charge as you will, for false or true,—

This charge, preferred before your very selves

Who judge me now,—I pray you, adjudge again, [lies,

Classing it with the cheats or with the By which category I suffer most !

But of their reckoning, theirs who dealt with me

In either fashion,—I reserve my word, Justify that in its place ; I am now to say,

Whichever point o' the charge might poison most,

Pompilia's duty was no doubtful one. You put the protestation in her mouth

"Henceforward and forevermore, avault

"Ye fiends, who drop disguise and glare revealed

"In your own shape, no longer father mine

"Nor mother mine ! Too nakedly you hate

"Me whom you looked as if you loved once,—me

"Whom, whether true or false, your tale now damns,

"Divulged thus to my public infamy,

"Private perdition, absolute overthrow.

" For, hate my husband to your hearts' content,

" I, spoil and prey of you from first to last,

" I who have lured you the blind service, lured

" The lion to your pit-fall,—I, thus left

" To answer for my ignorant bleating there,

" I should have been remembered and withdrawn

" From the first o' the natural fury, not flung loose

" A proverb and a byeword men will mouth

" At the cross-way, in the corner, up and down

" Rome and Arezzo,—there, full in my face,

" If my lord, missing them and finding me,

" Content himself with casting his reproach

" To drop i' the street where such impostors die.

" Ah, but—that husband, what the wonder were !—

" If, far from casting thus away the rag

" Smeared with the plague, his hand had chanced upon,

" Sewn to his pillow by Locusta's wile,—

" Far from abolishing, root, stem and branch,

" The misgrowth of infectious mistletoe

" Foisted into his stock for honest graft,—

" If he, repudiate not, renounce nowise,

" But, guarding, guiding me, maintain my cause

" By making it his own, (what other way ?)

" —To keep my name for me, he call it his,

" Claim it of who would take it by their lie,—

" To save my wealth for me—or babe of mine

" Their lie was framed to beggar at the birth—

" He bid them loose grasp, give our gold again :

" Refuse to become partner with the pair

" Even in a game which, played adroitly, gives

" Its winner life's great wonderful new chance,—

" Of marrying, to wit, a second time,—

" Ah, did he do thus, what a friend were he !

" Anger he might show,—who can stamp out flame

" Yet spread no black o' the brand ?

yet, rough albeit

" In the act, as whose bare feet feed embers scorch,

" What grace were his, what gratitude were mine !"

Such protestation should have been my wife's.

Looking for this, do I exact too much

Why, here's the,—word for word so much, no more,—

Avowal she made, her pure spontaneous speech

To my brother the Abate at first blush

Ere the good impulse had begun to fade—

So did she make confession for the pain

So pour forth praises in her own behalf

" Ay, the false letter," interpose my lords—

" The simulated writing,—'t was a trick :

" You traced the signs, she merely marked the same,

" The product was not hers but yours. Alack,

I want no more impulsion to tell truth

From the other trick, the torture inside there !

I confess all—let it be understood—

And deny nothing ! If I baffle you so

Can so fence, in the plenitude of right

That my poor lathen dagger puts aside

Each pass o' the Bilboa, beats you at the same,—

What matters inefficiency of blade ?

Mine and not hers the letter,—conceded, lords !

Impute to me that practice !—take as proved

I taught my wife her duty, made her see

What it behoved her see and say and do,

Feel in her heart and with her tongue declare,

And, whether sluggish or recalcitrant

Forced her to take the right step, I myself

Marching in mere marital rectitude

And who finds fault here, say the tale be true ?

Would not my lords commend the
priest whose zeal

Seized on the sick, morose or moribund,
By the palsy-smitten finger, made it
cross

His brow correctly at the critical time ?

—Or answered for the inarticulate
babe

At baptism, in its stead declared the
faith,

And saved what else would perish un-
professed ?

True, the incapable hand may rally yet,
Renounce the sign with renovated
strength,—

The babe may grow up man and Molin-
ist,—

And so Pompilia, set in the good path
And left to go alone there, soon might
see

That too frank-forward, all too simple-
strait

Her step was, and decline to tread the
rough,

When here lay, tempting foot, the mea-
dow-side,

And there 'he coppice called with sing-
ing-birds !

Soon she discovered she was young
and fair,

That many in Arezzo knew as much,—
Yes, this next cup of bitterness, my
lords,

Had to begin go filling, drop by drop,
Its measure up of full disgust for me,

Filtered into by every noisome drain—
Society's sink toward which all mois-
ture runs.

Would not you prophesy—" She on
whose brow is stamped

" The note of the imputation that we
know,—

" Rightly or wrongly mothered with a
whore,—

" Such an one, to disprove the frightful
charge,

" What will she but exaggerate chas-
tity,

" Err in excess of wifehood, as it were,
" Renounce even levities permitted
youth,

" Though not youth struck to age by a
thunderbolt ?

" Cry ' wolf ' i' the sheepfold, where 's
the sheep dares bleat,

" Knowing the shepherd listens for a
growl ? "

So you expect. How did the devil
decree ?

Why, my lords, just the contrary of
course !

It was in the house from the window, at
the church

From the hassock,—where the theatre
lent its lodge,

Or staging for the public show left
space,—

That still Pompilia needs must find
herself

Launching her looks forth, letting looks
reply

As arrows to a challenge ; on all sides
Ever new contribution to her lap,

Till one day, what is it knocks at my
clenched teeth

But the cup full, curse-collected all for
me ?

And I must needs drink, drink this gal-
lant's praise,

That minion's prayer, the other fop's
reproach,

And come at the dregs to—Caponsac-
chi ! Sirs,

I,—chin deep in a marsh of misery,
Struggling to extricate my name and
fame

And fortune from the marsh would
drown them all,

My face the sole unstrangled part of
me,—

I must have this new gadfly in that
face,

[too !
Must free me from the attacking lover
Men say I battled ungracefully enough—

Was harsh, uncouth and ludicrous be-
yond

The proper part o' the husband : have
it so !

Your lordships are considerate at least—
You order me to speak in my defence

Plainly, expect no quavering tuneful
trills

As when you bid a singer solace you,—
Nor look that I shall give it, for a grace,

Stans pede in uno :—you remember
well

In the one case, 't is a plainsong too
severe,

This story of my wrongs,—and that I
ache

And need a chair, in the other. Ask
you me

Why, when I felt this trouble flap my
face,

Already pricked with every shame could perch,—

When, with her parents, my wife plained me too,—

Why I enforced not exhortation mild To leave whore's-tricks and let my brows alone,

With mulct of comfits, promise of perfume ?

" Far from that ! No, you took the opposite course,

" Breathed threatnings, rage and slaughter ! " What you will !

And the end has come, the doom is verily here,

Unhindered by the threatening. See fate's flare

Full on each face of the dead guilty three !

Look at them well, and now, lords, look at this !

Tell me : if on that day when I found first

That Caponsacchi thought the nearest way

To his church was some half-mile round by my door, [pose,

And that he so admired, shall I suppose—

The manner of the swallows' come-and-go

Between the props o' the window overhead,—

That window happening to be my wife's,—

As to stand gazing by the hour on high, Of May-eves, while she sat and let him smile,—

If I,—instead of threatening, talking big,

Showing hair-powder, a prodigious pinch,

For poison in a bottle,—making believe

At desperate doings with a bauble-sword,

And other bugaboo-and-baby-work,—

Had, with the vulgarest household implement,

Calmly and quietly cut off, clean thro' bone,

But one joint of one finger of my wife, Saying " For listening to the serenade,

" Here's your ring-finger shorter a full third :

" Be certain I will slice away next joint,

" Next time that anybody underneath Seems somehow to be sauntering as

he hoped

" A flower would eddy out of your hand to his

" While you please fidget with the branch above

" O' the rose-tree in the terrace ! "—

had I done so,

Why, there had followed a quick sharp scream, some pain,

Much calling for plaister, damage to the dress,

A somewhat sulky countenance next day,

Perhaps reproaches,—but reflection too !

I don't hear much of harm that Malchus did

After the incident of the ear, my lords Saint Peter took the efficacious way

Malchus was sore but silenced for his life :

He did not hang himself i' the Potter's Field

Like Judas, who was trusted with the bag

And treated to sops after he proved thief.

So, by this time, my true and obedient wife

Might have been telling beads with gloved hand ;

Awkward a little at pricking heart and darts

On sampler possibly, but well otherwise :

Not where Rome shudders now to see her lie.

I give that for the course a wise man takes ;

I took the other however, tried the fool's,

The lighter remedy, brandished rapid dread

With cork-ball at the tip, boxed Malchus' ear

Instead of severing the cartilage, Called her a terrible nickname, and the like

And there an end : and what was the end of that ?

What was the good effect o' the gentle course ?

Why, one night I went drowsily to bed

Dropped asleep suddenly, not suddenly woke,

But did wake with rough rousing and loud cry,
To find noon in my face, a crowd in my room,
Fumes in my brain, fire in my throat, my wife
Gone God knows whither,—rifled vesture-chest,
And ransacked money-coffer. "What does it mean?"
The servants had been drugged too, stared and yawned,
"It must be that our lady has eloped!"
—"Whither and with whom?"
—"With whom but the Canon's self?"
"One recognises Caponsacchi there!"—
(By this time the admiring neighbourhood
Joined chorus round me while I rubbed my eyes)
"T is months since their intelligence began,—
"A comedy the town was privy to,—
"He wrote and she wrote, she spoke, he replied,
"And going in and out your house last night
"Was easy work for one . . . to be plain with you . . . [dawn
"Accustomed to do both, at dusk and
"When you were absent,—at the villa, you know,
"Where husbandry required the master-mind.
"Did not you know? Why, we all knew, you see!"
And presently, bit by bit, the full and true
Particulars of the tale were volunteered
With all the breathless zeal of friendship—"Thus
"Matters were managed: at the seventh hour of night"
—"Later, at daybreak" . . . "Capon-sacchi came"
—"While you and all your household slept like death,
"Drugged as your supper was with drowsy stuff"
—"And your own cousin Guillichini too—
"Either or both entered your dwelling-place,
"Plundered it at their pleasure, made prize of all,
"Including your wife . . ."—"Oh, your wife led the way,

"Out of doors, on to the gate . . ."
"But gates are shut,
"In a decent town, to darkness and such deeds:
"They climbed the wall—your lady must be wile—
"At the gap, the broken bit . . ."
"Torrione, true!
"To escape the questioning guard at the proper gate,
"Clemente, where at the inn, heard by, 'the Horse,'
"Just outside, a calash in readiness
"Took the two principals, all alone at last,
"To gate San Spirito, which o'erlooks the road,
"Leads to Perugia, Rome and liberty."
Bit by bit thus made-up mosaic-wise,
Flat lay my fortune,—tessellated floor,
Imperishable tracery devils should foot
And frolic it on, around my broken gods,
Over my desecrated hearth.
So much
For the terrible effect of threatening, Sirs!
Well, this way I was shaken wide awake,
Doctored and drenched, somewhat unpoisoned so;
Then, set on horseback and bid seek the lost,
I started alone, head of me, heart of me
Fire, and each limb as languid . . . ah, sweet lords,
Bethink you!—poison-torture, try persuade
The next refractory Molinis' with that! . . .
Floundered thro' day and night, another day
And yet another night, and so at last,
As Lucifer kept falling to find hell,
Tumbled into the court-yard of an inn
At the end, and fell on whom I thought to find,
Even Caponsacchi,—what part once was priest,
Cast to the winds now with the cassock-rags:
In cape and sword a cavalier confessed,
There stood he chiding dilatory grooms,
Chafing that only horseflesh and no team

Of eagles would supply the last relay,
Whirl him along the league, the one
post more

Between the couple and Rome and
liberty.

'T was dawn, the couple were rested in a
a sort,

And though the lady, tired,—the ten-
derer sex,—

Still lingered in her chamber,—to ad-
just

The limp hair, look for any blush
astray,—

She would descend in a twinkling,—
"Have you out

"The horses therefore!"

So did I find my wife.

Is the case complete? Do your eyes
here see with mine?

Even the parties dared deny no one
Point out of all these points.

What follows next?

"Why, that then was the time," you
interpose,

"Or then or never, while the fact was
fresh,

"To take the natural vengeance:
there and thus

"They and you,—somebody had stuck
a sword

"Beside you while he pushed you on
your horse,—

"'T was requisite to slay the couple,
Count!"

Just so my friends say—"Kill!"
they cry in a breath,

Who presently, when matters grow to a
head

And I do kill the offending ones indeed,—
When crime of theirs, only surmised
before,

Is patent, proved indisputably now,—
When remedy for wrong, untried at the
time,

Which law professes shall not fail a
friend,

Is thrice tried now, found threefold
worse than null,—

When what might turn to transient
shade, who knows?

Solidifies into a blot which breaks
Heil's black off in pale flakes for fear of
mine,—

Then, when I claim and take revenge
—"So rash?"

They cry—"so little reverence for the
law?"

Listen, my masters, and disting-
here!

At first, I called in law to act and b
Seeing I did so, "Why, 't is cle
they cry,

"You shrank from gallant readi
and risk,

"Were coward: the thing 's i
plicable else."

Sweet my lords, let the thing be
fall flat,

Play the reed, not the oak, to brow
man.

Only, inform my ignorance! Sa
stand

Convicted of the having been af
Proved a poltroon, no lion but a lam

Does that deprive me of my right
lamb

And give my fleece and flesh to the
wolf?

Are eunuchs, women, children, sh
less quite

Against attack their own tim
tempts?

Cowardice were misfortune and
crime!

—Take it that way, since I am f
so low

I scarce dare brush the fly that blow
And thank the man who simply

not there,—

Unless the Court be generous, con
hend

How one brought up at the very fe
law

As I, awaits the grave Gamaliel's
Ere he elench fist at outrage,—

less, stab!

—How, ready enough to rise a
right time,

I still could recognise no time m
Unsanctioned by a move o' the

ment-seat,

So, mute in misery, eyed my ma
here

Motionless till the authoritative
Pronounced amercement. Ther

the riddle solved:

This is just why I slew nor her nor
But called in law, law's delegate i

place,

And bade arrest the guilty couple,
We had some trouble to do so-
have heard

They braved me,—he with : tro
and scorn,

and distinguish:
 to act and help:
 y, 't is clear,"
 allant readiness
 thing 's inex-
 e thing be! I
 ak, to breath of
 orance! Say I
 ng been afraid,
 n but a lamb,—
 of my right of
 flesh to the first
 children, shield-
 own timidity
 fortune and no
 nce I am fallen
 [face,
 ly that blows my
 ho simply spits
 nerous, compre-
 the very feet of
 Gamaliel's nod
 outrage,—much
 to rise at the
 no time mature
 ove o' the judg-
 yed my masters
 thoritative word
 ment. There 's
 nor her nor him,
 s delegate in the
 ily couple, Sirs I
 e to do so—you
 e with : rrogance

She, with a volubility of curse,
 A conversancy in the skill of tooth
 And claw to make suspicion seem ab-
 surd,
 Nay, an alacrity to put to proof
 At my own throat my own sword, teach
 me so
 To try conclusions better the next
 time,—
 Which did the proper service with the
 mob.
 They never tried to put on mask at all :
 Two avowed lovers forcibly torn apart,
 Upbraid the tyrant as in a playhouse
 scene,
 Ay, and with proper clapping and ap-
 plause
 From the audience that enjoys the bold
 and free.
 I kept still, said to myself, " There's
 law ! " Anon
 We searched the chamber where they
 passed the night,
 Found what confirmed the worst was
 feared before,
 However needless confirmation now—
 The witches' circle intact, charms un-
 disturbed
 That raised the spirit and succubus,—
 letters, to wit,
 Love-laden, each the bag o' the bee
 that bore
 Honey from lily and rose to Cupid's
 hive,—
 Now, poetry in some rank blossom-
 burst,
 Now, prose,—“ Come here, go there,
 wait such a while,
 “ He 's at the villa, now he 's back
 again :
 “ We are saved, we are lost, we are
 lovers all the same ! ”
 All in order, all complete,—even to a
 clue
 To the drowsiness that happed so
 opportune—
 No mystery, when I read “ Of all
 things, find
 “ What wine Sir Jealousy decides to
 drink—
 “ Red wine ? Because a sleeping-
 potion, dust
 “ Dropped into white, discolours wine
 and shows.”
 —“ Oh, but we did not write a single
 word !

“ Somebody forged the letters in our
 name !— ”
 Both in a breath protested presently.
 Aha, Sacchetti again !—“ Dame,”—
 quoth the Duke,
 “ What meaneth this epistle, counsel
 me,
 “ I pick from out thy placket and per-
 use,
 “ Wherein my page averreth thou art
 white
 “ And warm and wonderful 'twixt pap
 and pap ? ”
 “ Sir,” laughed the Lady, “ 't is a coun-
 terfeit !
 “ Thy page did never stroke but Dian's
 breast,
 “ The pretty hound I nurture for thy
 sake :
 “ To lie were losel,—by my fay, no
 more ! ”
 And no more say I too, and spare the
 Court.
 Ah, the Court ! yes, I come to the
 Court's self ;
 Such the case, so complete in fact and
 proof
 I laid at the feet of law,—there sat my
 lords,
 Here sit they now, so may they ever sit
 In easier attitude than suits my haunch !
 In this same chamber did I bare my
 sores
 O' the soul and not the body,—shun no
 shame,
 Shrink from no probing of the ulcerous
 part,
 Since confident in Nature,—which is
 God,—
 That she who, for wise ends, concocts a
 plague,
 Curbs, at the right time, the plague's
 virulence too :
 Law renovates even Lazarus,—cures
 me !
 Cæsar thou seekest ? To Cæsar
 thou shalt go !
 Cæsar's at Rome ; to Rome accord-
 ingly !
 The case was soon decided : both
 weights, cast
 I' the balance, vibrate, neither kicks
 the beam,
 Here away, there away, this now and
 now that.

To every one o' my grievances law gave
Redress, could purblind eye but see the
point.

The wife stood a convicted runagate
From house and husband,—driven to
such a course

By what she somehow took for cruelty,
Oppression and imperilment of life—
Not that such things were, but that so
they seemed :

Therefore, the end conceded lawful,
(since

To save life there 's no risk should stay
our leap)

It follows that all means to the lawful
end

Are lawful likewise,—poison, theft and
flight.

As for the priest's part, did he meddle
or make,

Enough that he too thought life jeo-
pardised ;

Concede him then the colour charity
Casts on a doubtful course,—in blackish
white

Or whitish black, will charity hesitate ?
What did he else but act the precept

out,
Leave, like a provident shepherd, his
safe flock

To follow the single lamb and stray-
away ?

Best hope so and think so,—that the
ticklish time

I' the carriage, the tempting privacy,
the last

Somewhat ambiguous accident at the
inn,

—All may bear explanation : may ?
then, must !

The letters,—do they so incriminate ?
But what if the whole prove a prank o' the pen,

Flight of the fancy, none of theirs at
all,

Bred of the vapours of my brain be-
like,

Or at worst mere exercise of scholar's-
wit

In the courtly Caponsacchi : verse,
convict ?

Did not Catullus write less seemly
once ?

Yet *doctus* and unblemished he abides.
Wherefore so ready to infer the worst ?

Still, I did righteously in bringing
doubts

For the law to solve,—take the solu-
tion now !

" Seeing that the said associates, wife
and priest,

" Bear themselves not without some
touch of blame

" —Else why the pother, scandal and
outcry

" Which trouble our peace and require
chastisement ?

" We, for complicity in Pompilia's
flight

" And deviation, and carnal intercourse

" With the same, do set aside and rele-
gate

" The Canon Caponsacchi for three
years

" At Civita in the neighbourhood of
Rome :

" And we consign Pompilia to the care

" Of a certain Sisterhood of penitents

" I' the city's self, expert to deal with
such."

Word for word, there's your judgment !
Read it, lords,

Re-utter your deliberate penalty
For the crime yourselves establish !

Your award—
Who chop a man's right hand off at the
wrist

For tracing with forefinger words in
wine

O' the table of a drinking-booth that
bear

Interpretation as they mocked the
Church !

—Who brand a woman black between
the breasts

For sinning by connection with a Jew
While for the Jew's self—pudency be
dumb !

You mete out punishment such and
such, yet so

Punish the adultery of wife and priest
Take note of that, before the Molinist
do,

And read me right the riddle, since
right must be !

While I stood rapt away with wonder-
ment,

Voices broke in upon my mood and
muse.

" Do you sleep ? " began the friends at
either ear,

" The case is settled,—you willed
should be so—

" None of our counsel, always recollect

- "With law's award, budge! Ba k
into your place!
- "Your betters shall arrange the rest
for you.
- "We 'll enter a new action, claim di-
vorce:
- "Your marriage was a cheat them-
selves allow:
- "You erred i' the person,—might have
married thus
- "Your sister or your daughter una-
ware.
- "We 'll gain you, that way, liberty at
least,
- "Sure of so much by law's own show-
ing. Up
- "And off with you and your unlucki-
ness—
- "Leave us to bury the blunder, sweep
things smooth!"
- I was in humble frame of mind, be sure!
I bowed, betook me to my place again.
Station by station I retraced the road,
Touched at this hostel, passed this post-
house by,
Where, fresh-remembered yet, the
fugitives
Had risen to the heroic stature: still—
"That was the bench they sat on,—
there's the board
- "They took the meal at,—yonder
garden-ground
- "They leaned across the gate of,"—
ever a word
- O' the Helen and the Paris, with "Ha!
you're he,
- "The . . much-commiserated hus-
band?" Step
- By step, across the pelting, did I reach
Arezzo, underwent the archway's grin,
Traversed the length of sarcasm in the
street,
Found myself in my horrible house
once more,
And after a colloquy . . no word as-
sists!
- With the mother and the brothers, stif-
fened me
- Strait out from head to foot as dead
man does,
- And, thus prepared for life as he for
hell,
- Marched to the public Square and met
the world.
- Apologize for the pincers, palliate
screws?
- Ply me with such toy-trifles, I entreat!
- Trust who has tried both sulphur and
sops-in-wine!
- I played the man as I best might, bade
friends
- Put non-essentials by and face the fact.
- "What need to hang myself as you ad-
vise?
- "The paramour is banished,—the
ocean's width,
- "Or the suburb's length,—to Ultima
Thule, say,
- "Or Proxima Civitas, what's the odds
of name
- "And place? He 's banished, and
the fact 's the thing.
- "Why should law banish innocence an
inch?
- "Here 's guilt then, what else do I care
to know?
- "The adulteress lies imprisoned,—
whether in a well
- "With bricks above and a snake for
company, [much
- "Or tied by a garter to a bed-post,—
- "I mind what 's little,—least 's enough
and to spare!
- "The little filip on the coward's cheek
- "Serves as though crab-tree cudgel
broke his pate.
- "Law has pronounced there 's punish-
ment, less or more:
- "And I take note o' the fact and use it
thus—
- "For the first flaw in the original bond,
- "I claim release. My contract was to
wed
- "The daughter of Pietro and Violante.
Both
- "Protest they never had a child at all.
- "Then I have never made a contract:
good!
- "Cancel me quick the thing pretended
one.
- "I shall be free. What matter if hur-
ried over
- "The harbour-boom by a great favour-
ing tide,
- "Or the last of a spent ripple that lifts
and leaves?
- "The Aba'e is about it. Laugh who
wins!
- "You shall not laugh me out of faith in
law!
- "I listen, through all your noise, to
Rome!"
- Rome spoke.

"Three months letters thence admon-
 ised me,
 "Your plan for the divorce is all mis-
 take.
 "It would hold, now, had you, taking
 thought to wed
 "Rachel of the blue eye and golden
 hair,
 "Found swarth-skinned Leah cumber
 couch next day:
 "But Rachel, blue-eyed golden-haired
 aright,
 "Proving to be only Laban's child,
 not Lot's,
 "Remains yours all the same for ever
 more.
 "No whit to the purpose is your plea:
 you err
 "I' the person and the quality—no-
 wise
 "In the individual,—that 's the case in
 point!
 "You go to the ground,—are met by a
 cross-suit
 "For separation, of the Rachel here,
 "From bed and board,—she is the
 injured one,
 "You did the wrong and have to an-
 swer it.
 "As for the circumstance of imprison-
 ment
 "And colour it lends to this your new
 attack,
 "Never fear, that point is considered
 too!
 "The durance is already at an end;
 "The convent-quiet preyed upon her
 health,
 "She is transferred now to her parents'
 house
 "—No-parents, when that cheats and
 plunders you,
 "But parentage again confessed in full,
 "When such confession pricks and
 plagues you more—
 "As now—for, this their house is not
 the house
 "In Via Vittoria wherein neighbours'
 watch
 "Might incommode the freedom of
 your wife,
 "But a certain villa smothered up in
 vines
 "At the town's edge by the gate i' the
 Pauline way,
 "Out of eye-reach, out of ear-shot, little
 and lone,

"Whither a friend,—at Civita, we
 hope,
 "A good half-dozen hours' ride off,—
 might, some eve,
 "Betake himself, and whence ride back,
 some morn,
 "Nobody the wiser: but be that as it
 may, [now,
 "Do not afflict your brains with trifles
 "You have still three suits to manage,
 all and each
 "Ruinous truly should the event play
 false.
 "It is indeed the likelier so to do,
 "That brother Paul, your single prop
 and stay,
 "After a vain attempt to bring the
 Pope
 "To set aside procedures, sit himself
 "And summarily use prerogative,
 "Afford us the infallible finger's tact
 "To disentwine your tangle of affairs,
 "Paul,—finding it moreover past his
 strength
 "To stem the irruption, bear Rome's
 ridicule
 "Of . . . since friends must speak . .
 to be round with you . .
 "Of the old outwitted husband,
 wronged and wroth,
 "Pitted against a brace of juveniles—
 "A brisk priest who is versed in Ovid's
 art
 "More than his Summa, and a game-
 some wife
 "Able to act Corinna without book,
 "Beside the waggish parents who
 played dupes
 "To dupe the duper—(and truly
 divers scenes
 "Of the Arezzo palace, tickle rib
 "And tease eye till the tears come, so
 we laugh;
 "Nor wants the shock at the inn its
 comic force,
 "And then the letters and poetry—
merum sal!)
 "—Paul, finally, in such a state of
 things,
 "After a brief temptation to go jump
 "And join the fishes in the Tiber,
 drowns
 "Sorrow another and a wiser way:
 "House and goods, he has sold all off,
 is gone,
 "Leaves Rome,—whether for France
 or Spain, who knows?

Or Britain almost divided from our orb.

"You have lost him anyhow."

Now,—I see my lords
Shift in their seat,—would I could do
the same!

They probably please expect my hile
was moved

To purpose, nor much blame me : now,
they judge,

The fiery titillation urged my flesh
Break through the bonds. By your
pardon, no, sweet Sirs!

I got such missives in the public place ;
When I sought home,—with such news,
mounted stair

And sat at last in the sombre gallery,
(‘T was autumn, the old mother in bed
betimes,

Having to bear that cold, the finer
frame

Of her daughter-in-law had found in-
tolerable—

The brother, walking misery away
O’ the mountain-side with dog and gun
belike)

As I supped, ate the coarse bread,
drank the wine

Weak once, now acrid with the toad’s-
head-squeeze,

My wife’s bestowment,—I broke silence
thus :

"Let me, a man, manfully meet the
fact,

"Confront the worst o’ the truth, end,
and have peace!

"I am irremediably beaten here,—
"The gross illiterate vulgar couple,—
bah!

"Why, they have measured forces,
mastered mine,

"Made me their spoil and prey from
first to last.

"They have got my name,—’t is nailed
now fast to theirs,

"The child or changeling is anyway
my wife ;

"Point by point as they plan they exe-
cute,

"They gain all, and I lose all—even to
the lure

"That led to loss,—they have the
wealth again

"They hazarded awhile to hook me
with,

"Have caught the fish and find the bait
entire :

B. P.

"They even have their child or change-
ling back

"To trade with, turn to account a
second time.

"The brother, presumably might tell
a tale

"Or give a warning,—he, too, flies the
field,

"And with him vanish help and hope
of help.

"They have caught me in the cavern
where I fell,

"Covered my loudest cry for human aid
"With this enormous paving-stone of
shame. [clay ?

"Well, are we demigods or merely
"Is success still attendant on desert?

"Is this, we live on, heaven and the
final state,

"Or earth which means probation to
the end?

"Why claim escape from man’s pre-
destined lot

"Of being beaten and baffled?—
God’s decree,

"In which I, bowing bruised head, ac-
quiesce.

"One of us Franceschini fell long since
"I’ the Holy Land, betrayed, tradition
runs,

"To Paynims by the feigning of a girl
"He rushed to free from ravisher, and
found

"Lay safe enough with friends in am-
buscade

"Who flayed him while she clapped her
hands and laughed :

"Let me end, falling by a like device.
"It will not be so hard. I am the last
"O’ my line which will not suffer any
more.

"I have attained to my full fifty years,
" (About the average of us all, ’tis said,
"Though it seems longer to the un-
lucky man)

"—Lived through my share of life ;
let all end here,

"Me and the house and grief and
shame at once.

"Friends my informants,—I can bear
your blow!"

And I believe ’t was in no unmeet
match

For the stoic’s mood, with something
like a smile,

That, when morose December roused
me next,

3 E

I took into my hand, broke seal to read
 The new epistle from Rome. "All
 to no use !
 " Whate'er the turn next injury take,"
 smiled I,
 " Here 's one has chosen his part and
 knows his cue.
 " I am done with, dead now ; strike
 away, good friends !
 " Are the three suits decided in a
 trice ?
 " Against me,—there's no question !
 How does it go ?
 " Is the parentage of my wife demon-
 strated
 " Infamous to her wish ? Parades
 she now
 " Loosed of the cincture that so irked
 the loin ?
 " Is the last penny extracted from my
 purse
 " To mulct me for demanding the first
 pound
 " Was promised in return for value
 paid ?
 " Has the priest, with nobody to court
 beside,
 " Courted the Muse in exile, hitched
 my hap
 " Into a rattling ballad-rhyme which,
 bawled
 " At tavern-doors, wakes rapture
 everywhere,
 " And helps cheap wine down throat
 this Christmas time,
 " Beating the bagpipes ? Any or ail of
 these !
 " As well, good friends, you cursed my
 palace here
 " To its old cold stone face,—stuck
 your cap for crest
 " Over the shield that 's extant in the
 Square,—
 " Or spat on the statue's cheek, the im-
 patient world
 " Sees cumber tomb-top in our family
 church :
 " Let him creep under covert as I shall
 do,
 " Half-below ground already indeed.
 Good-bye !
 " My brothers are priests, and childless
 so ; that's well—
 " And, thank God most for this, no
 child leave I—
 " None after me to bear till his heart
 break

" The being a Franceschini and
 son !"
 " Nay," said the letter, " but you ha
 just that !
 " A babe, your veritable son and heir
 " Lawful,—'t is only eight mont
 since your wife
 " Left you,—so, son and heir, yo
 babe was born
 " Last Wednesday in the villa,—y
 see the cause
 " For quitting Convent without be
 of drum,
 " Stealing a hurried march to this
 treat
 " That's not so savage as the Sisterho
 " To slips and stumbles : Pietro's hea
 is soft, [p
 " Violante leans to pity's side,—t
 " Ushered you into life a bouncing bo
 " And he's already hidden away a
 safe
 " From any claim on him you mean
 make—
 " They need him for themselves,
 don't fear, they know
 " The use o' the bantling,—the ner
 thus laid bare
 " To nip at, new and nice, with fing
 nail !"
 Then I rose up like fire, and fire-li
 roared.
 What, all is only beginning not endin
 now ?
 The worm which wormed its way fro
 skin through flesh
 To the bone and there lay biting, d
 its best,
 What, it goes on to scrape at the bon
 self,
 Will wind to inmost marrow and ma
 den me ?
 There 's to be yet my representative,
 Another of the name shall keep d
 played
 The flag with the ordure on it, brandi
 still
 The broken sword has served to stin
 jakes ?
 Who will he be, how will you call t
 man ?
 A Franceschini,—when who cut r
 purse,
 Filched my name, hemmed me roun
 hustled me hard

hini and my

but you have

son and heir—

eight months

and heir, your

the villa,—you

without beat

ch to this re-

the Sisterhood

Pietro's heart

[pair

's side,—the

ouncing boy:

en away and

you mean to

themselves,—

w

g,—the nerve

, with finger-

and fire-like

g not ending

its way from

ay biting, did

at the bone's

ow and mad-

esentative,

all keep dis-

on it, brandish

rved to stir a

l you call the

who cut my

ed me round,

As rogues at a fair some fool they strip
i' the midst,

When these count gains, vaunt pillage
presently :—

But a Caponsacchi, oh, be very sure !

When what demands its tribute of ap-
plause

Is the cunning and impudence o' the
pair of cheats,

The lies and lust o' the mother, and
the brave

Bold carriage of the priest, worthily
crowned

By a witness to his feat i' the following
age,—

And how this threefold cord could
hook and fetch

And land leviathan that king of pride !
Or say, by some mad miracle of chance,

Is he indeed my flesh and blood, this
babe ?

Was it because fate forged a link at last
Betwixt my wife and me, and both alike

Found we had henceforth some one
thing to love,

Was it when she could damn my soul
indeed

She unlatched door, let all the devils o'
the dark

Dance in on me to cover her escape ?
Why then, the surplusage of disgrace,

the spilt
Over and above the measure of infamy,

Failing to take effect on my coarse
flesh

Seasoned with scorn now, saturate with
shame,—

Is saved to instil on and corrode the
brow,

The baby-softness of my first-born
child—

The child I had died to see though in a
dream,

The child I was bid strike out for, beat
the wave

And baffle the tide of troubles where I
swam,

So I might touch shore, lay down life
at last

At the feet so dim and distant and
divine

Of the apparition, as 't were Mary's
babe

Had held, through night and storm,
the torch aloft,—

Born now in very deed to bear this
brand

On forehead and curse me who could
not save !

Rather be the town-talk true, Square's
jest, street's jeer

True, my own inmost heart's confes-
sion true,

And he's the priest's bastard and none
of mine !

Ay, there was cause for flight, swift
flight and sure !

The husband gets unruly, breaks all
bounds

When he encounters some familiar face,
Fashion of feature, brow and eyes and
lips

Where he least looked to find them,—
time to fly !

This bastard then, a nest for him is
made,

[flesh—
As the manner is of vermin, in my
Shall I let the filthy pest buzz, flap and

'sting,
Busy at my vitals and, nor hand nor
foot

Lift, but let be, lie still and rot resigned?
No, I appeal to God,—what says Him-
self,

How lessons Nature when I look to
learn ?

Why, that I am alive, am still a man
With brain and heart and tongue and
right hand too—

Nay, even with friends, in such a cause
as this,

To right me if I fail to take my right.
No more of law ; a voice beyond the
law

Enters my heart, *Quis est pro Domino ?*

Myself, in my own Vittiano, told the
tale

To my own serving-people summoned
there :

Told the first half of it, scarce heard to
end

By judges who got done with judgment
quick

And clamoured to go execute her
'hest—

Who cried " Not one of us that dig
your soil

" And dress your vineyard, prune your
olive-trees,

" But would have brained the man de-
bauched our wife,

" And staked the wife whose last al-
lured the man,

" And paunched the Duke, had it been possible,
 " Who ruled the land, yet barred us such revenge ! "
 I fixed on the first whose eyes caught mine, some four,
 Resolute youngsters with the heart still fresh,
 Filled my purse with the residue o' the coin
 Uncaught-up by my wife whom haste made blind,
 Donned the first rough and rural garb I found,
 Took whatsoever weapon came to hand,
 And out we flung and on we ran or reeled
 Romeward, I have no memory of our way,
 Only that, when at intervals the cloud Of horror about me opened to let in life,
 I listened to some song in the ear, some snatch
 Of a legend, relic of religion, stray
 Fragment of record very strong and old
 Of the first conscience, the anterior right,
 The God's-gift to mankind, impulse to quench
 The antagonistic spark of hell and tread
 Satan and all his malice into dust,
 Declare to the world the one law, right is right.
 Then the cloud re-encompassed me, and so
 I found myself, as on the wings of winds,
 Arrived : I was at Rome on Christmas Eve.

 Festive bells—everywhere the Feast o' the Babe,
 Joy upon earth, peace and good will to man !
 I am baptized. I started and let drop
 The dagger. " Where is it, His promised peace ? "
 Nine days o' the Birth-Feast did I pause and pray
 To enter into no temptation more.
 I bore the hateful house, my brother's once,
 Deserted,—let the ghost of social joy
 Mock and make mouths at me from empty room

And idle door that missed the master step,—
 Bore the frank wonder of incredulous eyes,
 As my own people watched without word,
 Waited, from where they huddled round the hearth
 Black like all else, that nod so slowly come—
 I stopped my ears even to the inner call
 Of the dread duty, heard only the sullen
 " Peace upon earth," saw nothing of the face
 O' the Holy Infant and the halo that
 Able to cover yet another face
 Behind it, Satan's which I else should see.
 But, day by day, joy waned and withdrew
 ered off :
 The Babe's face, premature with pain and pine,
 Sank into wrinkled ruinous old age
 Suffering and death, then mysteriously
 disappeared,
 And showed only the Cross at end of
 Left nothing more to interpose 'twixt
 me
 And the dread duty,—for the angel
 song,
 " Peace upon earth," louder and louder
 pealed
 " O Lord, how long, how long be
 avenged ? "
 On the ninth day, this grew too much
 for man.
 I started up—" Some end must be
 At once,
 Silence : then, scratching like a dead
 watch-tick,
 Slowly within my brain was syllabled
 " One more concession, one decision
 way
 " And but one, to determine thee
 truth,—
 " This way, in fine, I whisper in thy
 " Now doubt, anon decide, thereupon
 act ! "
 " This is a way, thou whisperest in
 ear !
 " I doubt, I will decide, then act," said
 I—
 Then beckoned my companions : " This
 is come ! "
 And so, all yet uncertain save the way

To do right, and the daring aught save
leave

Right undone, I did find myself at
last

I' the dark before the villa with my
friends,

And made the experiment, the final
test,

Ultimate chance that ever was to be
For the wretchedness inside. I

knocked—pronounced
The name, the predetermined touch

for truth,
"What welcome for the wanderer?

Open straight—"

To the friend, physician, friar upon his
rounds,—

Traveller belated, beggar lame and
blind?—

No, but—"to Caponsacchi!" And
the door

Opened.
And then,—why, even then, I

think,
I' the minute that confirmed my worst

of fears,
Surely,—I pray God that I think

aright!—
Had but Pompilia's self, the tender

thing
Who once was good and pure, was once

my lamb
And lay in my bosom, had the well-

known shape
Fronted me in the door-way,—stood

there faint
With the recent pang, perhaps, of giv-

ing birth
To what might, though by miracle,

seem my child,—
Nay more, I will say, had even the

aged fool [age
Pietro, the dotard, in whom folly and

Wrought, more than enmity or male-
volence,

To practise and conspire against my
peace,—

Had either of these but opened, I had
paused.

But it was she the hag, she that brought
hell

For a dowry with her to her husband's
house,

She the mock-mother, she that made
the match

And married me to perdition, spring
and source

O' the fire inside me that boiled up
from heart

To brain and hailed the Fury gave it
birth,—

Violante Comparini, she it was,
With the old grin amid the wrinkles

yet,
Opened: as if in turning from the

Cross,
With trust to keep the sight and save

my soul,
I had stumbled, first thing, on the ser-

pent's head
Coiled with a leer at foot of it.

There was the end!

Then was I rapt away by the impulse,
one

Immeasurable everlasting wave of a
need

To abolish that detested life. 'T was
done:

You know the rest and how the folds o'
the thing,

Twisting for help, involved the other
two

More or less serpent-like: how I was
mad,

Blind, stamped on all, the earth-
worms with the asp,

And ended so.
You came on me that night,

Your officers of justice,—caught the
crime

In the first natural frenzy of remorse?
Twenty miles off, sound sleeping as a

child
On a cloak i' the straw which promised

shelter first,
With the bloody arms beside me,—

was it not so?
Wherefore not? Why, how else should

I be found?
I was my own self, had my sense again,

My soul safe from the serpents. I could
sleep:

Indeed and, dear my lords, I shall
sleep now,

Spite of my shoulder, in five minutes'
space,

When you dismiss me, having truth
enough!

It is but a few days are passed, I find,
Since this adventure. Do you tell me,

four?
Then the dead are scarce quiet where

they lie,
Old Pietro, old Violante, side by side

At the church Lorenzo,—oh, they
know it well!

So do I. But my wife is still alive,
Has breath enough to tell her story yet,
Her way, which is not mine, no doubt
at all.

And Caponsacchi, you have summoned
him,—

Was he so far to send for? Not at
hand?

I thought some few o' the stabs were in
his heart,

Or had not been so lavish,—less had
served.

Well, he too tells his story,—florid
prose

As smooth as mine is rough. You see,
my lords,

There will be a lying intoxicating smoke
Born of the blood,—confusion prob-
ably,—

For lies breed lies—but all that rests
with you!

The trial is no concern of mine; with
me

The main of the care is over: I at least
Recognise who took that huge burthen
off,

Let me begin to live again. I did
God's bidding and man's duty, so,
breathe free;

Look you to the rest! I heard Him-
self prescribe,

That great Physician, and dared lance
the core

Of the bad ulcer; and the rage abates,
I am myself and whole now: I prove
cured

By the eyes that see, the ears that hear
again,

The limbs that have relearned their
youthful play,

The healthy taste of food and feel of
clothes

And taking to our common life once
more,

All that now urges my defence from
death.

The willingness to live, what means it
else?

Before,—but let the very action speak!
Judge for yourselves, what life seemed
worth to me

Who, not by proxy but in person,
pitched

Head-foremost into danger as a fool
That never cares if he can swim or no—

So he but find the bottom, braves the
brook.

No man omits precaution, quite ne-
gleets

Seeresy, safety, schemes not how re-
treat,

Having schemed he might advance
Did I so scheme?

Why, with a warrant which 't is ask-
and have,

With horse thereby made mine without
a word,

I had gained the frontier and slept safe
that night.

Then, my companions,—call them what
you please,

Slave or stipendiary,—what need o'
one

To me whose righthand did its owner's
work?

Hire an assassin yet expose yourself
As well buy glove and then thrus-
naked hand

I' the thorn-bush. No, the wise man
stays at home,

Sends only agents out, with pay to
earn:

At home, when they come back,—h-
straight discards

Or else disowns. Why use such tool
at all

When a man's foes are of his house
like mine,

Sit at his board, sleep in his bed
Why noise,

When there 's the *acquetta* and the
silent way?

Clearly my life was valueless.

But no

Health is returned, and sanity of soul
Nowise indifferent to the body's harm

I find the instinct bids me save my
life;

My wits, too, rally round me; I pick up
And use the arms that strewed the
ground before,

Unnoticed or spurned aside: I take
my stand,

Make my defence. God shall not lose
a life

May do Him further service, while
speak

And you hear, you my judges and la-
hope!

You are the law: 't is to the law I look
I began life by hanging to the law,

braves the
quite ne-
not how re-
at advance.
ch 't is ask
ine without
and slept safe
all them what
at need of
its owner's
se yourself?
then thrust
he wise man
with pay to
he back,—he
se such tools
of his house,
in his bed?
etta and the
ess.
But now
anity of soul
body's harm.
me save my
ne; I pick up
strewed the
ide: I take
shall not lose
vice, while I
dges and last
he law I look.
the law,

To the law it is I hang till life shall end.
My brother made appeal to the Pope,
't is true,
To stay proceedings, judge my cause
himself
Nor trouble law,—some fondness of
conceit
That rectitude, sagacity sufficed
The investigator in a case like mine,
Dispensed with the machine of law.
The Pope
Knew better, set aside my brother's
plea [cause
And put me back to law,—referred the
Ad judices meos,—doubtlessly did well.
Here, then, I clutch my judges,—I
claim law—
Cry, by the higher law whereof your
law
O' the land is humbly representative,—
Cry, on what point is it, where either
accuse,
I fail to furnish you defence? I stand
Acquitted, actually or virtually,
By every intermediate kind of court
That takes account of right or wrong in
man,
Each unit in the series that begins
With God's throne, ends with the tri-
bunal here.
God breathes, not speaks, his verdicts,
felt not heard,
Passed on successively to each court I
call
Man's conscience, custom, manners, all
that make
More and more effort to promulgate,
mark
God's verdict in determinable words,
Till last come human jurists—solidify
Flund result,—what 's fixable lies
forged,
Statute,—the residue escapes in fume,
Yet hangs aloft, a cloud, as palpable
To the finer sense as word the legist
welds.
Justinian's Pandects only make precise
What simply sparkled in men's eyes
before,
Twitched in their brow or quivered on
their lip,
Waited the speech they cailed but would
not come.
These courts then, whose decree your
own confirms,—
Take my whole life, not this last act
alone,

Look on it by the light reflected thence!
What has Society to charge me with?
Come, unreservedly,—favour nor fear,—
I am Guido Franceschini, am I not?
You know the courses I was free to
take?
I took just that which let me serve the
Church,
I gave it all my labour in body and
soul
Till these broke down i' the service.
"Specify?"
Well, my last patron was a Cardinal.
I left him unconvicted of a fault—
Was even helped, by way of gratitude,
Into the new life that I left him for,
This very misery of the marriage,—he
Made it, kind soul, so far as in him lay—
Signed the deed where you yet may see
his name.
He is gone to his reward,—dead, being
my friend
Who could have helped here also,—
that, of course!
So far, there 's my acquittal, I suppose.
Then comes the marriage itself—no
question, lords,
Of the entire validity of that!
In the extremity of distress, 't is true,
For after-reasons, furnished abund-
antly,
I wished the thing invalid, went to you
Only some months since, set you duly
forth
My wrong and prayed your remedy,
that a cheat
Should not have force to cheat my
whole life long.
"Annul a marriage? 'T is impos-
sible!
"Though ring about your neck be
brass not gold,
"Needs must it clasp, gangrene you all
the same!" [far,
Well, let me have the benefit, just so
O' the fact announced,—my wife then
is my wife,
I have allowance for a husband's right.
I am charged with passing right's due
bound,—such acts
As I thought just, my wife called cruelty.
Complained of in due form,—convoked
no court
Of common gessipry, but took her
wrongs—
And not once, but so long as patience
served—

To the town's top, jurisdiction's pride
 of place,
 To the Archbishop and the Governor.
 These heard her charge with my reply,
 and found
 That futile, this sufficient: they dis-
 missed
 The hysteric querulous rebel, and con-
 firmed
 Authority in its wholesome exercise,
 They, with directest access to the facts.
 "—Ay, for it was their friendship fa-
 voured you,
 " Hereditary alliance against a breach
 " I' the social order: prejudice for the
 name
 " Of Franceschini!"—So I hear it
 said:
 But not here. You, lords, never will
 you say
 " Such is the nullity of grace and
 truth,
 " Such the corruption of the faith,
 such lapse [ists
 " Of law, such warrant have the Molin-
 " For daring reprehend us as they do,—
 " That we pronounce it just a common
 case,
 " Two dignitaries, each in his degree
 " First, foremost, this the spiritual
 head, and that
 " The secular arm o' the body politic,
 " Should, for mere wrong's love and
 injustice' sake,
 " Side with, aid and abet in cruelty
 " This broken beggarly noble,—bribed
 perhaps
 " By his watered wine and mouldy
 crust of bread—
 " Rather than that sweet tremulous
 flower-like wife
 " Who kissed their hands and curled
 about their feet
 " Looking the irresistible loveliness
 " In tears that takes man captive,
 turns " . . . enough!
 Do you blast your predecessors?
 What forbids
 Posterity to trebly blast yourselves
 Who set the example and instruct their
 tongue?
 You dreaded the crowd, succumbed to
 the popular cry,
 Or else, would nowise seem defer
 thereto
 And yield to public clamour though i'
 the right!

You ridded your eye of my unsee-
 ness,
 The noble whose misfortune wea-
 you —
 Or, what 's more probable, made
 mon cause
 With the cleric section, punished in
 self
 Maladroit uncomplaisant laity,
 Defective in behaviour to a priest
 Who claimed the customary part-
 ship
 I' the house and the wife. Lords,
 lie will serve!
 Look to it,—or allow me freed so far
 Then I proceed a step, come with cl-
 hands
 Thus far, re-tell the tale told e-
 months since.
 The wife, you allow so far, I have
 wronged,
 Has fled my roof, plundered me
 decamped
 In company with the priest her p-
 mour:
 And I gave chace, came up with, cau-
 the two
 At the wayside inn where both
 spent the night,
 Found them in flagrant fault, and fo-
 as well,
 By documents with name and plan
 date,
 The fault was furtive then that's
 grant now,
 Their intercourse a long establish-
 crime.
 I did not take the license law's self gi-
 To slay both criminals o' the spot
 the time,
 But held my hand,—preferred p-
 prodigy
 Of patience which the world c-
 cowardice,
 Rather than seem anticipate the law
 And cast discredit on its organs,—you
 So, to your bar I brought both cr-
 inals,
 And made my statement: heard th-
 counter-charge
 Nay,—their corroboration of my t-
 Nowise disputing its allegements,
 I' the main, not more than natu-
 decency
 Compels men to keep silence in
 kind,—

Only contending that the deeds
 avowed
 Would take another colour and bear
 excuse.
 You were to judge between us ; so you
 did.
 You disregard the excuse, you breathe
 away
 The colour of innocence and leave
 guilt black,
 " Guilty " is the decision of the court,
 And that I stand in consequence un-
 touched,
 One white integrity from head to heel.
 Not guilty ? Why then did you pun-
 ish them ?
 True, punishment has been inade-
 quate—
 'T is not I only, not my friends that
 joke,
 My foes that jeer, who echo " inade-
 quate "—
 For, by a chance that comes to help for
 once, [judged
 The same case simultaneously was
 At Arezzo, in the province of the Court
 Where the crime had beginning but not
 end.
 They then, deciding on but half o' the
 crime,
 The effraction, robbery,—features of the
 fault
 I never cared to dwell upon at Rome,—
 What was it they adjudged as penalty
 To Pompilia,—the one criminal o' the
 pair
 Amenable to their judgment, not the
 priest
 Who is Rome's ? Why, just imprison-
 ment for life
 I' the Stinche. There was Tuscany's
 award
 To a wife that robs her husband : you
 at Rome
 Having to deal with adultery in a wife
 And, in a priest, breach of the priestly
 vow,
 Give gentle sequestration for a month
 In a manageable Convent, then release,
 You call imprisonment, in the very
 house
 O' the very couple, the sole aim and
 end
 Of the culprits' crime was—there to
 reach and rest
 And there take solace and defy me :
 well,—

This difference 'twixt their penalty and
 yours
 Is immaterial : take your penalty
 less—
 Merely that she should henceforth
 wear black gloves
 And white fan, she who wore the
 opposite—
 Why, all the same the fact o' the thing
 subsists. [may,
 Reconcile to your conscience as you
 Be it on your own heads, you pro-
 nounced one half
 O' the penalty for heinousness like hers
 And his, that 's for a fault at Carnival
 Of confit-pelting past discretion's law,
 Or accident to handkerchief in Lent
 Which falls perversely as a lady kneels
 Abruptly, and but half conceals her
 neck !
 I acquiesce for my part,—punished,
 though
 By a pin-point scratch, means guilty :
 guilty means
 —What have I been but innocent
 hitherto ?
 Anyhow, here the offence, being pun-
 ished, ends.
 Ends ?—for you deemed so, did you
 not, sweet lords ?
 That was throughout the veritable aim
 O' the sentence light or heavy,—to re-
 dress
 Recognised wrong ? You righted me,
 I think ?
 Well then,—what if I, at this last or all,
 Demonstrate you, as my whole plead-
 ing proves,
 No particle of wrong received thereby
 One atom of right ?—that cure grew
 worse disease ?
 That in the process you call " justice
 done "
 All along you have nipped away just
 inch
 By inch the creeping climbing length of
 plague
 Breaking my tree of life from root to
 branch,
 And left me, after all and every act
 Of your interference,—lightened of
 what load ?
 At liberty wherein ? Mere words and
 wind !
 " Now I was saved, now I should feel
 no more

" The hot breath, find a respite from
 fixed eye
 " And vibrant tongue ! " Why, scarce
 your back was turned,
 There was the reptile, that feigned
 death at first,
 Renewing its detested spire and spire
 Around me, rising to such heights of
 hate
 That, so far from mere purpose now to
 crush
 And coil itself on the remains of me,
 Body and mind, and there flesh fang
 content,
 Its aim is now to evoke life from death,
 Make me anew, satisfy in my son
 The hunger I may feed but never sate,
 Tormented on to perpetuity,—
 My son, whom, dead, I shall know,
 understand,
 Feel, hear, see, never more escape the
 sight
 In heaven that 's turned to hell, or hell
 returned
 (So, rather, say) to this same earth
 again,—
 Moulded into the image and made one,
 Fashioned of soul as featured like in
 face,
 First taught to laugh and lisp and
 stand and go
 By that thief, poisoner and adulteress
 I call Pompilia, he calls . . . sacred
 name,
 Be unpronounced, be unpolluted here !
 And last led up to the glory and prize
 of hate
 By his . . . foster-father, Caponsacchi's
 self,
 The perjured priest, pink of conspira-
 tors,
 Tricksters and knaves, yet polished,
 superfine,
 Manhood to model adolescence by . . .
 Lords, look on me, declare,—when,
 what I show,
 Is nothing more nor less than what you
 deemed
 And doled me out for justice,—what did
 you say ?
 For reparation, restitution and more,—
 Will you not thank, praise, bid me to
 your breasts
 For having done the thing you thought
 to do,
 And thoroughly trampled out sin's life
 at last ?

I have heightened phrase to make y
 soft speech serve,
 Doubled the blow you but essayed
 strike,
 Carried into effect your mandate here
 That else had fallen to ground : m
 duty done,
 Oversight of the master just suppl
 By zeal i' the servant : I, being used
 serve,
 Have simply . . . what is it th
 charge me with ?
 Blackened again, made legible o
 more
 Your own decree, not permanen
 writ,
 Rightly conceived but all too fain
 traced,—
 It reads efficient, now, comminator
 A terror to the wicked, answers so
 The mood o' the magistrate, the mi
 of law.
 Absolve, then, me, law's mere exec
 ant !
 Protect your own defender,—save m
 Sirs !
 Give me my life, give me my libert
 My good name and my civic righ
 again !
 It would be too fond, too complac
 play
 Into the hands o' the devil, should v
 lose
 The game here, I for God : a soldie
 bee
 That yields his life, exenterate wi
 the stroke
 O' the sting that saves the hive.
 need that life,
 Oh, never fear ! I'll find life plent
 use
 Though it should last five years mor
 aches and all !
 For, first thing, there's the mother
 age to help—
 Let her come break her heart upo
 my breast,
 Not on the blank stone of my nameles
 tomb !
 The fugitive brother has to be bidde
 back
 To the old routine, repugnant to th
 tread,
 Of daily suit and service to th
 Church,—
 Thro' gibe and jest, those stones tha
 Shimei flung !

Ay, and the spirit-broken youth at home,
 The awe-struck altar-ministrant, shall make
 Amends for faith now palsied at the source,
 Shall see truth yet triumphant, justice yet
 A victor in the battle of this world !
 Give me—for last, best gift, my son again,
 Whom law makes mine,—I take him at your word,
 Mine be he, by miraculous mercy, lords !
 Let me lift up his youth and innocence
 To purify my palace, room by room
 Purged of the memories, lend from his bright brow
 Light to the old proud paladin my sire
 Shrunk now for shame into the darkest shade
 O' the tapestry, showed him once and shrouds him now !
 Then may we,—strong from that re-kindled smile,—
 Go forward, face new times, the better day.
 And when, in times made better through your brave
 Decision now,—might but Utopia be !—
 Rome rife with honest women and strong men,
 Manners reformed, old habits back once more,
 Customs that recognise the standard worth,—
 The wholesome household rule in force again,
 Husbands once more God's representative,
 Wives like the typical Spouse once more, and Priests
 No longer men of Belial, with no aim
 At leading silly women captive, but
 Of rising to such duties as yours now,—
 Then will I set my son at my right hand
 And tell his father's story to this point,
 Adding "The task seemed superhuman, still
 "I dared and did it, trusting God and law :
 "And they approved of me : give praise to both !"
 And if, for answer, he shall stoop to kiss

My hand, and peradventure start thereat,—
 I engage to smile "That was an accident
 "I' the necessary process,—just a trip
 "O' the torture-irons in their search for truth,—
 "Hardly misfortune, and no fault at all."

VI

GIUSEPPE CAPONSACCHI

ANSWER you, Sirs ? Do I understand aright ?
 Have patience ! In this sudden smoke from hell,—
 So things disguise themselves,—I cannot see
 My own hand held thus broad before my face
 And know it again. Answer you ? Then that means
 Tell over twice what I, the first time, told
 Six months ago : 't was here, I do believe,
 Fronting you same three in this very room,
 I stood and told you : yet now no one laughs,
 Who then . . nay, dear my lords, but laugh you did,
 As good as laugh, what in a judge we style
 Laughter—no levity, nothing indecorous, lords !
 Only,—I think I apprehend the mood :
 There was the blameless shrug, permissible smirk,
 The pen's pretence at play with the pursed mouth,
 The titter stifled in the hollow palm
 Which rubbed the eyebrow and ear-essed the nose,
 When I first told my tale : they meant, you know,
 "The sly one, all this we are bound believe !
 "Well, he can say no other than what he says.
 "We have been young, too,—come, there's greater guilt !
 "Let him but decently disembroil himself,
 "Scramble from out the scrape nor move the mud,—

"We solid ones may risk a finger-stretch!"

And now you sit as grave, stare as aghast

As if I were a phantom: now 't is—

"Friend,

"Collect yourself!"—no laughing matter more—

"Counsel the Court in this extremity,

"Tell us again!"—tell that, for telling which,

I got the jocular piece of punishment, Was sent to lounge a little in the place

Whence now of a sudden here you summon me

To take the intelligence from just—your lips

You, Judge Tommati, who then tittered most,—

That she I helped eight months since to escape

Her husband, is retaken by the same, Three days ago, if I have seized your

sense,—

(I being disallowed to interfere,

Meddle or make in a matter none of mine,

For you and law were guardians quite enough

O' the innocent, without a pert priest's help)—

[ingly,

And that he has butchered her accord—As she foretold and as myself believed,—

And, so foretelling and believing so, We were punished, both of us, the

merry way:

Therefore, tell once again the tale! For what?

Pompilia is only dying while I speak! Why does the mirth hang fire and miss

the smile?

My masters, there 's an old book, you should con

For strange adventures, applicable yet, 'T is stuffed with. Do you know that

there was once

This thing: a multitude of worthy folk Took recreation, watched a certain

group

Of soldiery intent upon a game,—

How first they wrangled, but soon fell to play,

Threw dice,—the best diversion in the world.

A word in your ear,—they are now casting lots,

Ay, with that gesture quaint and uncouth,

For the coat of One murdered an hour ago!

I am a priest,—talk of what I have learned.

Pompilia is bleeding out her life belied, Gasping away the latest breath of a

This minute, while I talk—not while you laugh?

Yet, being sobered now, what is it you ask

By way of explanation? There 's the fact!

It seems to fill the universe with sight And sound,—from the four corners of

this earth

Tells itself over, to my sense at least, But you may want it lower set i' the

scale,—

Too vast, too close it clangs in the ears, perhaps;

You'd stand back just to comprehend it more: [denied]

Well then, let me, the hollow rock, coo The voice o' the sea and wind, interpret you

The mystery of this murder. Gaze above!

It is too paltry, such a transference O' the storm's roar to the cranny of

the stone!

This deed, you saw begin—why do you end its end

Surprise you? Why should the event enforce

The lesson, we ourselves learned, say and I,

From the first o' the fact, and taught you, all in vain?

This Guido from whose throat you took my grasp,

Was this man to be favoured, now, feared,

Let do his will, or have his will restrained,

In the relation with Pompilia?—say Did any other man need interpose

—Oh, though first comer, though strange at the work

As fribble must be, conceit, for that 's near [world]

To knave as, say, a priest who fears to Was he bound brave the peril, save to

doomed,

plaint and cry
 dered an hour

what I have
 her life belike,
 breath of all,
 lk—not while

what is it you

There 's the
 rse with sight
 our corners of

sense at least.
 wer set i' the

ngs in the ear,

o comprehend
 [dense

low rock, con-

murder. God

ransference
 the cranny of

in—why does

ould the event

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roast you took

oured, now, or

e his will re-

mpilia?—say!

interpose

er, though as

oxcomb, fool

[world—

who fears the

peril, savè the

Or go on, sing his snatch and pluck his
 flower,
 Keep the straight path and let the vic-
 tim die?

I held so; you decided otherwise,
 Saw no such peril, therefore no such
 need

To stop song, loosen flower, and leave
 path: Law,
 Law was aware and watching, would
 suffice,

Wanted no priest's intrusion, palpably
 Pretence, too manifest a subterfuge!
 Whereupon I, priest, coxcomb, fribble
 and fool,

Ensneced me in my corner, thus re-
 buked,

A kind of culprit, over-zealous hound
 Kicked for his pains to kennel; I gave
 place,

To you, and let the law reign para-
 mount:

I left Pompilia to your watch and ward,
 And now "I point me—there and
 thus she lies!

Mer, for the last time, what do you
 want with me?

Is it,—you acknowledge, as it were, a
 use,

A profit in employing me?—at length
 I may conceivably help the august law?
 I am free to break the blow, next hawk
 that swoops [repute?

On next dove, nor miss much of good
 Or what if this your summons, after all,
 Be but the form of mere release, no
 more,

Which turns the key and lets the cap-
 tive go?

I have paid enough in person at Civita,
 Am free,—what more need I concern
 me with?

Thank you! I am rehabilitated then,
 A very reputable priest. But she—
 The glory of life, the beauty of the
 world,

The splendour of heaven, . . . well,
 Sirs, does no one move?

Do I speak ambiguously? The glory,
 I say,

And the beauty, I say, and splendour,
 still say I,

Who, a priest, trained to live my whole
 life long

On beauty and splendour, solely at their
 source,

God,—have thus recognised my food
 in one,

You tell me, is fast dying while we talk,
 Pompilia,—how does lenity to me,
 Remit one death-bed pang to her?
 Come, smile!

The proper wink at the hot-headed
 youth

Who lets his soul show, through tran-
 sparent words,
 The mundane love that 's sin and scan-
 dal too!

You are all struck acquiescent now, it
 seems:

It seems the oldest, gravest signor
 here,

Even the redoubtable Tommati, sits
 Chop-fallen,—understands how law
 might take

Service like mine, of brain and heart
 and hand,

In good part. Better late than never,
 law!

You understand of a sudden, gospel
 too

Has a claim here, may possibly pro-
 nounce

Consistent with my priesthood, worthy
 Christ,

That I endeavoured to save Pompilia?

Then,

You were wrong, you see: that's well
 to see, though late:

That's all we may expect of man, this
 side

The grave: his good is—knowing he is
 bad:

Thus will it be with us when the books
 ope

And we stand at the bar on Judgment
 Day.

Well then, I have a mind to speak, see
 cause

To relume the quenched flax by this
 dreadful light,

Burn my soul out in showing you the
 truth.

I heard, last time I stood here to be
 judged,

What is priest's-duty,—labour to pluck
 tares

And weed the corn of Molinism; let me
 Make you hear, this time, how, in such
 a case,

Man, he be in the priesthood or at
 plough,

Mindful of Christ or marching step by
 With . . . what 's his style, the other
 potentate
 Who bids have courage and keep hon-
 our safe,
 Nor let minuter admonition tease?—
 How he is bound, better or worse, to act.
 Earth will not end through this mis-
 judgment, no!
 For you and the others like you sure to
 come,
 Fresh work is sure to follow,—wicked-
 ness
 That wants withstanding. Many a
 man of blood,
 Many a man of guile will clamour yet,
 Bid you redress his grievance,—as he
 clutched
 The prey, forsooth a stranger stepped
 between,
 And there's the good gripe in pure
 waste! My part
 Is done; i' the doing it, I pass away
 Out of the world. I want no more with
 earth.
 Let me, in heaven's name, use the very
 snuff
 O' the taper in one last spark shall
 show truth
 For a moment, show Pompilia who was
 true!
 Not for her sake, but yours: if she is
 dead,
 Oh, Sirs, she can be loved by none of
 you
 Most or least priestly! Saints, to do
 us good,
 Must be in heaven, I seem to under-
 stand:
 We never find them saints before, at
 least.
 Be her first prayer then presently for
 you—
 She has done the good to me . . .
 What is all this?
 There, I was born, have lived, shall die,
 a fool!
 This is a foolish outset:—might with
 cause
 Give colour to the very lie o' the man,
 The murderer,—make as if I loved his
 wife,
 In the way he called love. He is the
 fool there!
 Why, had there been in me the touch
 of taint,

I had picked up so much of knave
 policy
 As hide it, keep one hand pressed
 the place
 Suspected of a spot would damn
 both.
 Or no, not her!—not even if any
 you
 Dares think that I, i' the face of death
 her death
 That 's in my eyes and ears and brain
 and heart,
 Lie,—if he does, let him! I mean
 say,
 So he stop there, stay thought from
 smirching her
 The snow-white soul that angels fear
 to take
 Untenderly. But, all the same,
 know
 I too am taintless, and I bare my breast
 You can't think, men as you are, all
 you,
 But that, to hear thus suddenly such
 an end
 Of such a wonderful white soul, that
 comes
 Of a man and murderer calling that
 white black,
 Must shake me, trouble and disadvan-
 tage. Sirs,
 Only seventeen!
 Why, good and wise you are
 You might at the beginning stop my
 mouth:
 So, none would be to speak for her,
 that knew.
 I talk impertinently, and you bear,
 All the same. This it is to have to do
 With honest hearts: they easily may
 err,
 But in the main they wish well to the
 truth.
 You are Christians; somehow, no one
 ever plucked
 A rag, even, from the body of the Lord,
 To wear and mock with, but, despite
 himself,
 He looked the greater and was the bet-
 ter. Yes,
 I shall go on now. Does she need or
 not
 I keep calm? Calm I'll keep as monk
 that croons
 Transcribing battle, earthquake, fam-
 ine, plague,

From parchment to his cloister's
chronicle.

Not one word more from the point now!

I begin.

Yes, I am one of your body and a priest.
Also I am a younger son o' the House
Oldest now, greatest once, in my birth-
town

Arezzo, I recognise no equal there—
(I want all arguments, all sorts of arms
That seem to serve,—use this for a
reason, wait!)

Not therefore thrust into the Church,
because

O' the piece of bread one gets there.
We were first

Of Fiesole, that rings still with the fame
Of Capo-in-Sacco our progenitor:
When Florence ruined Fiesole, our folk
Migrated to the victor-city, and there
Flourished,—our palace and our tower
attest,

In the Old Mercato,—this was years
ago,

Four hundred, full,—no, it wants
fourteen just.

Our arms are those of Fiesole itself,
The shield quartered with white and
red: a branch

Are the Salviati of us, nothing more.
That were good help to the Church?
But better still—

Not simply for the advantage of my
birth

I' the way of the world, was I proposed
for priest;

But because there 's an illustration,
I' the day, that 's loved and looked to
as a saint

Still in Arezzo, he was bishop of,
Sixty years since: he spent to the last
doit

His bishop's-revenue among the poor,
And used to tend the needy and the
sick,

Barefoot, because of his humility.
He it was,—when the Granduke Fer-
dinand

Swore he would raze our city, plough
the place

And sow it with salt, because we Are-
tines

Had tied a rope about the neck, to hale
The statue of his father from its base
For hate's sake,—he availed by prayers
and tears

To pacify the Duke and save the town.
This was my father's father's brother.
You see,

For his sake, how it was I had a right
To the self-same office, bishop in the
egg,

So, grew i' the garb and prattled in the
school,

Was made expect, from infancy almost,
The proper mood o' the priest; till
time ran by

And brought the day when I must read
the vows,

Declare the world renounced and
undertake

To become priest and leave probation,
—leap

Over the ledge into the other life,
Having gone trippingly hitherto up to
the height

O'er the wan water. Just a vow to
read!

I stopped short awe-struck. "How
shall holiest flesh

"Engage to keep such vow inviolate,
"How much less mine,—I know my-
self too weak,

"Unworthy! Choose a worthier
stronger man!"

And the very Bishop led and stopped
the mouth

In its mid-protestation. "Incapable?
"Qualmish of conscience? Thou in-
genious boy!

"Clear up the clouds and cast thy
scruples far!

"I satisfy thee there 's an easier sense
"Wherein to take such vow than suits
the first

"Rough rigid reading. Mark what
makes all smooth,

"Nay, has been even a solace to my-
self!

"The Jews who needs must, in their
synagogue,

"Utter sometimes the holy name of
God,

"A thing their superstition boggles at,
"Pronounce aloud the ineffable sacro-
sanct,—

"How does their shrewdness help
them? In this wise;

"Another set of sounds they substi-
tute,

"Jumble so consonants and vowels—
how

"Should I know?—that there grows
 from out the old
 "Quite a new word that means the
 very same—
 "And o'er the hard place slide they
 with a smile.
 "Giuseppe Maria Caponsacchi mine,
 "Nobody wants you in these latter
 days
 "To prop the Church by breaking your
 back-bone,—
 "As the necessary way was once, we
 know,
 "When Dioclesian flourished and his
 like;
 "That building of the buttress-work
 was done [bide,
 "By martyrs and confessors: let it
 "Add not a brick, but, where you see a
 chink,
 "Stick in a sprig of ivy or root a rose
 "Shall make amends and beautify the
 pile!
 "We profit as you were the painfulest
 "O' the martyrs, and you prove your-
 self a match
 "For the cruellest confessor ever was,
 "If you march boldly up and take
 your stand
 "Where their blood soaks, their bones
 yet strew the soil,
 "And cry 'Take notice, I the young
 and free
 "'And well-to-do i' the world, thus
 leave the world,
 "'Cast in my lot thus with no gay
 young world
 "'But the grand old Church: she
 tempts me of the two!
 "Renounce the world? Nay, keep
 and give it us!
 "Let us have you, and boast of what
 you bring.
 "We want the pick o' the earth to
 practise with,
 "Not its offscouring, halt and deaf
 and blind
 "In soul and body. There's a rubble-
 stone
 "Unfit for the front o' the building,
 stuff to stow
 "In a gap behind and keep us weather-
 tight;
 "There's porphyry for the prominent
 place. Good luck!
 "Saint Paul has need enough and to
 spare, I trow,

"Of ragged run-away Onesimus:
 "He wants the right hand with the
 signet-ring
 "Of King Agrippa, now, to shake an
 use.
 "I have a heavy scholar cloistered up
 "Close under lock and key, kept at his
 task
 "Of letting Fenelon know the fool he is
 "In a book I promise Christendome
 next Spring,
 "Why, if he covets so much meat, the
 clown,
 "As a lark's wing next Friday, or
 any day,
 "Diversion beyond catching his own
 fleas,
 "He shall be properly swinged,
 promise him.
 "But you, who are so quite another
 paste
 "Of a man,—do you obey me? Cul-
 tivate
 "Assiduous, that superior gift you
 have
 "Of making madrigals—(who told
 me? Ah!)
 "Get done a Marinesque Adonias
 straight
 "With a pulse o' the blood a-pricking
 here and there,
 "That I may tell the lady, 'And he's
 ours!'"

So I became a priest: those terms
 changed all,
 I was good enough for that, nor cheated
 so;
 I could live thus and still hold head
 erect.
 Now you see why I may have been he-
 fore
 A fribble and coxcomb, yet, as priest,
 break word
 Nowise, to make you disbelieve me
 now.
 I need that you should know my truth.
 Well, then,
 According to prescription did I live,
 —Conformed myself, both read the bre-
 viary
 And wrote the rhymes, was punctual to
 my place
 I' the Pieve, and as diligent at my post
 Where beauty and fashion rule. I
 throve apace,
 Sub-deacon, Canon, the authority

- For delicate play at tarocs, and arbiter
O' the magnitude of fan-mounts: all
the while
Wanting no whit the advantage of a
hint
Benignant to the promising pupil,—
thus:
"Enough attention to the Countess
now,
"The young one; 't is her mother
rules the roast,
"We know where, and puts in a word:
go pay
"Devoir to-morrow morning after
mass!
"Break that rash promise to preach,
Passion-week!
"Has it escaped you the Archbishop
grunts
"And snuffles when one grieves to tell
his Grace
"No soul dares treat the subject of the
day
"Since his own masterly handling it
(ha, ha!)
"Five years ago,—when somebody
could help
"And touch up an odd phrase in time
of need,
"(He, he!)—and somebody helps you,
my son!
"Therefore, don't prove so indispens-
able
"At the Pieve, sit more loose i' the
seat, nor grow
"A fixture by attendance morn and
eve!
"Arezzo 's just a haven midway
Rome—
"Rome 's the eventual harbour,—make
for port,
"Crowd sail, crack cordage! And
your cargo be
"A polished presence, a genteel man-
ner, wit
"At will, and tact at every pore of
you!
"I sent our lump of learning, Brother
Clout,
"And Father Slouch, our piece of
piety,
"To see Rome and try suit the Car-
dinal.
"Thither they clump-clumped, beads
and book in hand,
"And ever since 't is meat for man and
maid
- "How both flopped down, prayed
blessing on bent pate
"Bald many an inch beyond the ton-
sure's need,
"Never once dreaming, the two moony
dolts,
"There 's nothing moves his Emin-
ence so much
"As—far from all this awe at sancti-
tude—
"Heads that wag, eyes that twinkle,
modified mirth
"At the closet-lectures on the Latin
tongue
"A lady learns so much by, we know
where.
"Why, body o' Bacchus, you should
crave his rule
"For pauses in the elegiac couplet,
chasms
"Permissible only to Catullus! There!
"Now go do duty: brisk, break Pris-
cian's head
"By reading the day's office—there 's
no help.
"You 've Ovid in your poke to plaster
that;
"Amen 's at the end of all: then sup
with me!"
- Well, after three or four years of **this**
life,
In prosecution of my calling, I
Found myself at the theatre one night
With a brother Canon, in a mood and
mind
Proper enough for the place, amused or
no:
When I saw enter, stand, and seat her-
self
A lady, young, tall, beautiful, strange
and sad.
It was as when, in our cathedral once,
As I got yawningly through matin-
song,
I saw *facchini* bear a burden up,
Base it on the high-altar, break away
A board or two, and leave the thing in-
side
Lofty and lone: and lo, when next I
looked,
There was the Rafael! I was still one
stare,
When—"Nay, I'll make her give you
back your gaze"—
Said Canon Conti; and at the word he
tossed

A paper-twist of comfits to her lap,
 And dodged and in a trice was at my
 back
 Nodding from over my shoulder. Then
 she turned,
 Looked our way, smiled the beautiful
 sad strange smile.
 "Is not she fair? 'T is my new cou-
 sin," said he:
 "The fellow lurking there i' the black
 o' the box
 "Is Guido, the old scapegrace: she 's
 his wife,
 "Married three years since: how his
 Countship sulks!
 "He has brought little back from Rome
 beside,
 "After the bragging, bullying. A fair
 face,
 "And—they do say—a pocket-full of
 gold
 "When he can worry both her parents
 dead.
 "I don 't go much there, for the cham-
 ber 's cold
 "And the coffee pale. I got a turn at
 first
 "Paying my duty,—I observed they
 crouched
 "—The two old frightened family
 spectres, close
 "In a corner, each on each like mouse
 on mouse
 "I' the cat's cage: ever since, I stay at
 home.
 "Hallo, there 's Guido, the black,
 mean and small,
 "Bends his brows on us—please to
 bend your own
 "On the shapely nether limbs of Light-
 skirts there
 "By way of a diversion! I was a fool
 "To fling the sweetmeats. Prudence,
 for God's love!
 "To-morrow I'll make my peace, e'en
 tell some fib,
 "Try if I can't find means to take you
 there."
 That night and next day did the gaze
 endure,
 Burnt to my brain, as sunbeam thro'
 shut eyes,
 And not once changed the beautiful sad
 strange smile.
 At vespers Conti leaned beside my seat
 I' the choir,—part said, part sung—
 "In ex-cel-sis—

"All 's to no purpose: I have lo-
 low,
 "But he saw you staring—*quia* s
 don't incline
 "To know you nearer: him we w
 not hold
 "For Hercules,—the man would
 your shoe
 "If you and certain efficacious fri
 "Managed him warily,—but the
 the wife:
 "Spare her, because he beats her
 it is,
 "She 's breaking her heart quite
 enough—*jam tu*—
 "So, be you rational and make am
 "With little Light-skirts yonder-
secula
 "Secu-lo-o-o-o-rum. Ah, you rog
 Everyone knows
 "What great dame she makes jealo
 one against one,
 "Play, and win both!"
 Sirs, ere the week was
 I saw and said to myself "Light-sk
 hides teeth
 "Would make a dog sick,—the g
 dame shows spite
 "Should drive a cat mad: 't is
 poor work this—
 "Counting one's fingers till the s
 net 's crowned.
 "I doubt much if Marino really be
 "A better bard than Dante after
 "'T is more amusing to go pace at
 "I' the Duomo,—watch the day's
 gleam outside
 "Turn, as into a skirt of God's o
 robe,
 "Those lancet-windows' jewelled m
 acle,—
 "Than go eat the Archbishop's or
 lans,
 "Digest his jokes. Luckily Lent
 near:
 "Who cares to look will find me in
 stall
 "At the Pieve, constant to this faith
 least—
 "Never to write a canzonet any more
 So, next week, 't was my patron spo
 abrupt,
 In altered guise, "Young man, can
 be true
 "That after all your promise of sou
 fruit,

I have louted
ing—*quia sub*—
him we would
nan would lick
ficacious friends
y,—but there's
e beats her, as
heart quite fast
d make amends
rts yonder—in
h, you rogue!
makes jealous:
week was out,
f "Light-skirts
ck,—the great
ad: 't is but
s till the sol-
o really be
ante after all.
go pace at eve
the day's last
of God's own
jewelled mir-
bishop's orto-
ckily Lent is
find me in my
to this faith at
et any more."
r patron spoke
g man, can it
mise of sound

"You have kept away from Countess
young or old
"And gone play truant in church all
day long?
"Are you turning Molinist?" I an-
swered quick
"Sir, what if I turned Christian? It
might be.
"The fact is, I am troubled in my mind,
"Beset and pressed hard by some
novel thoughts.
"This your Arezzo is a limited world;
"There's a strange Pope,—'t is said, a
priest who thinks.
"Rome is the port, you say: to Rome
I go.
"I will live alone, one does so in a
crowd,
"And look into my heart a little."
"Lent
"Ended,"—I told friends,—"I shall
go to Rome."

One evening I was sitting in a muse
Over the opened "Summa," darkened
round
By the mid-March twilight, thinking
how my life
Had shaken under me,—broke short
indeed
And showed the gap 'twixt what is,
what should be,—
And into what abysm the soul may
slip,
Leave aspiration here, achievement
there,
Lacking omnipotence to connect ex-
tremes—
Thinking moreover . . oh, thinking
if you like,
How utterly dissociated was I
A priest and celibate, from the sad
strange wife
Of Guido,—just as an instance to the
point,
Naught more,—how I had a whole
store of strengths
Eating into my heart, which craved
employ,
And she, perhaps, need of a finger's
help,—
And yet there was no way in the wide
world
To stretch out mine and so relieve my-
self—
How when the page o' the "Summa"
preached its best,

Her smile kept glowing out of it, as to
mock
The silence we could break by no one
word,—
There came a tap without the cham-
ber-door,
And a whisper, when I bade who
tapped speak out,
And, in obedience to my summons, last
In glided a masked muffled mystery,
Laid lightly a letter on the opened book,
Then stood with folded arms and foot
demure,
Pointing as if to mark the minutes'
flight.

I took the letter, read to the effect
That she, I lately flung the comfits to,
Had a warm heart to give me in ex-
change,
And gave it,—loved me and confessed
it thus,
And bade me render thanks by word of
mouth,
Going that night to such a side o' the
house
Where the small terrace overhangs a
street
Blind and deserted, not the street in
front:
Her husband being away, the surly
patch,
At his villa of Vittiano.

"And you?"—I asked:
"What may you be?"—"Count Gui-
do's kind of maid—
"Most of us have two functions in his
house.
"We all hate him, the lady suffers
much,
"T is just we show compassion, furn-
ish aid,
"Specially since her choice is fixed so
well.
"What answer may I bring to cheer
the sweet
"Pompilia?"

Then I took a pen and wrote.
"No more of this! That you are fair,
I know:
"But other thoughts now occupy my
mind.
"I should not thus have played the in-
sensible
"Once on a time. What made you,—
may one ask,—

- "Marry your hideous husband? 'T
was a fault,
"And now you taste the fruit of it.
Farewell."
- "There!" smiled I as she snatched
it and was gone—
"There, let the jealous miscreant,—
Guido's self,
"Whose mean soul grins through this
transparent trick,—
"Be balked so far, defrauded of his
aim!
"What fund of satisfaction to the
knave,
"Had I kicked this his messenger down
stairs,
"Trussed to the middle of her impud-
ence,
"Setting his heart at ease so! No,
indeed!
"There's the reply which he shall turn
and twist
"At pleasure, snuff at till his brain
grow drunk,
"As the bear does when he finds a
scented glove
"That puzzles him,—a hand and yet
no hand,
"Of other perfume than his own foul
paw!
"Last month, I had doubtless chosen
to play the dupe,
"Accepted the mock-invitation, kept
"The sham appointment, cudgel be-
neath cloak,
"Prepared myself to pull the appoint-
er's self
"Out of the window from his hiding-
place [ger
"Behind the gown of this part-messen-
"Part-mistress who would personate
the wife.
"Such had seemed once a jest permis-
sible:
"Now, I am not i' the mood."
Back next morn brought
The messenger, a second letter in hand.
"You are cruel, Thyrsis, and Myrtilla
moans
"Neglected but adores you, makes re-
quest
"For mercy: why is it you dare not
come?
"Such virtue is scarce natural to your
age:
- "You must love someone else;
hear you do,
"The Baron's daughter or the Ad-
cate's wife,
"Or both,—all 's one, would you m-
me the third—
"I take the crumbs from table gr-
fully
"Nor grudge who feasts there. Fai-
I blush and blaze!
"Yet if I break all bounds, there
reason sure,
"Are you determinedly bent on Rom-
"I am wretched here, a monster t-
tures me:
"Carry me with you! Come and
you will!
"Concert this very evening! Do
write!
"I am ever at the window of my ro-
"Over the terrace, at the *Ave*. Come
- I questioned—lifting half the woma-
mask
To let her smile loose. "So, you ga-
my line
"To the merry lady?" "She kiss-
off the wax,
"And put what paper was not kiss-
away,
"In her bosom to go burn: but merr-
no!
"She wept all night when eveni-
brought no friend, [breas
"Alone, the unkind missive at h-
"Thus Philomel, the thorn at h-
breast too,
"Sings" . . . "Writes this secon-
letter?" "Even so!
"Then she may peep at vespers forth-
—"What risk
"Do we run o' the husband?"
"Ah,—no risk at all!
"He is more stupid even than jealous
Ah—
"That was the reason? Why, th-
man's away!
"Beside, his bugbear is that friend o-
yours,
"Fat little Canon Conti. He fear-
him—
"How should he dream of you?
told you truth—
"He goes to the villa at Vittiano—'t
"The time when Spring-sap rises in
the vine—

"Spends the night there. And then
his wife 's a child,
"Does he think a child outwits him?
A mere child:
"Yet so full grown, a dish for any duke.
"Don't quarrel longer with such cates,
but come!"

I wrote "In vain do you solicit me.
"I am a priest: and you are wedded
wife,

"Whatever kind of brute your husband prove.

"I have scruples, in short. Yet
should you really show

"Sign at the window . . . but nay,
best be good!

"My thoughts are elsewhere."—"Take
her that!"

—"Again

"Let the incarnate meanness, cheat
and spy,

"Mean to the marrow of him, make his
heart

"His food, anticipate hell's worm once
more!

"Let him watch shivering at the win-
dow—ay,

"And let this hybrid, this his light-of-
love

"And lackey-of-lies,—a sage eco-
nomy,—

"Paid with embracings for the rank
brass coin,—

"Let her report and make him chuckle
o'er

"The break-down of my resolution
now,

"And lour at disappointment in good
time! [turns,

"—So tantalize and so enrage by
"Until the two fall each on the other
like

"Two famished spiders, as the coveted
fly

"That toys long, leaves their net and
them at last!"

And so the missives followed thick and
fast

For a month, say,—I still came at
every turn

On the soft sly adder, endlong 'neath
my tread.

I was met i' the street, made sign to in
the church,

A slip was found i' the door-sill, scrib-
bled word

"Twixt page and page o' the prayer-
book in my place:

A crumpled thing dropped even before
my feet,

Pushed through the blind, above the
terrace-rail,

As I passed, by day, the very window
once.

And ever from corners would be peer-
ing up

The messenger, with the self-same de-
mand

"Obdurate still, no flesh but adamant?

"Nothing to cure the wound, assuage
the throe

"O' the sweetest lamb that ever loved
a bear?"

And ever my one answer in one tone—
"Go your ways, temptress! Let a
priest read, pray,

"Unplagued of vain talk, visions not
for him!

"In the end, you 'll have your will and
ruin me!"

One day, a variation: thus I read:
"You have gained little by timidity.

"My husband has found out my love
at length,

"Sees cousin Conti was the stalking-
horse,

"And you the game he covered, poor
fat soul!

"My husband is a formidable foe,
"Will stick at nothing to destroy you.

Stand

"Prepared, or better, run till you reach
Rome!

"I bade you visit me, when the last
place

"My tyrant would have turned suspi-
cious at,

"Or cared to seek you in, was . . . why
say, where?

"But now all 's changed: beside, the
season 's past

"At the villa,—wants the master's eye
no more.

"Anyhow, I beseech you, stay away
"From the window! He might well
be posted there."

I wrote—"You raise my courage, or
call up

"My curiosity, who am but man.

"Tell him he owns the palace, not the
street

" Well done, the husband, who shall
fare the worse ! "
And on my lip again was—" Out with
thee,
" Guido ! " When all at once she re-
appeared ;
But, this time, on the terrace overhead,
So close above me, she could almost
touch
My head if she bent down ; and she
did bend,
While I stood still as stone, all eye, all
ear.

She began—" You have sent me let-
ters, Sir :
" I have read none, I can neither read
nor write ;
" But she you gave them to, a woman
here,
" One of the people in whose power I
am,
" Partly explained their sense, I think,
to me
" Obligated to listen while she inculcates
" That you, a priest, can dare love me,
a wife,
" Desire to live or die as I shall bid,
" (She makes me listen if I will or no)
" Because you saw my face a single
time.
" It cannot be she says the thing you
mean ;
" Such wickedness were deadly to us
both :
" But good true love would help me
now so much—
" I tell myself, you may mean good and
true.
" You offer me, I seem to understand,
" Because I am in poverty and starve,
" Much money, where one piece would
save my life.
" The silver cup upon the altar-cloth
" Is neither yours to give nor mine to
take ;
" But I might take one bit of bread
therefrom,
" Since I am starving, and return the
rest,
" Yet do no harm : this is my very case.
" I am in that strait, I may not abstain
" From so much of assistance as would
bring
" The guilt of theft on neither you nor
me ;
" But no superfluous particle of aid,

" I think, if you will let me state my
case,
" Even had you been so fancy-fevered
here,
" Not your sound self, you must grow
healthy now—
" Care only to bestow what I can take.
" That it is only you in the wide world,
" Knowing me nor in thought nor word
nor deed,
" Who, all unprompted save by your
own heart,
" Come proffering assistance now,—
were strange
" But that my whole life is so strange :
as strange
" It is, my husband whom I have not
wronged
" Should hate and harm me. For his
own soul's sake,
" Hinder the harm ! But there is
something more,
" And that the strangest : it has got to
be
" Somehow for my sake too, and yet
not mine,
" —This is a riddle—for some kind of
sake
" Not any clearer to myself than you,
" And yet as certain as that I draw
breath,—
" I would fain live, not die—oh no,
not die !
" My case is, I was dwelling happily
" At Rome with those dear Comparini,
called
" Father and mother to me ; when at
once
" I found I had become Count Guido's
wife :
" Who then, not waiting for a moment,
changed
" Into a fury of fire, if once he was
" Merely a man : his face threw fire at
mine,
" He laid a hand on me that burned all
peace,
" All joy, all hope, and last all fear
away,
" Dipping the bough of life, so pleasant
once,
" In fire which shrivelled leaf and bud
alike,
" Burning not only present life but
past,
" Which you might think was safe be-
yond his reach,

- " He reached it, though, since that beloved pair,
 " My father once, my mother all those years,
 " That loved me so, now say I dreamed a dream
 " And bid me wake, henceforth no child of theirs,
 " Never in all the time their child at all.
 " Do you understand? I cannot: yet so it is.
 " Just so I say of you that proffer help:
 " I cannot understand what prompts your soul,
 " I simply needs must see that it is so,
 " Only one strange and wonderful thing more.
 " They came here with me, those two dear ones, kept
 " All the old love up, till my husband, till
 " His people here so tortured them, they fled.
 " And now, is it because I grow in flesh
 " And spirit one with him their torturer,
 " That they, renouncing him, must cast off me?
 " If I were graced by God to have a child,
 " Could I one day deny God graced me so?
 " Then, since my husband hates me, I shall break
 " No law that reigns in this fell house of hate,
 " By using—letting have effect so much
 " Of hate as hides me from that whole of hate
 " Would take my life which I want and must have—
 " Just as I take from your excess of love
 " Enough to save my life with, all I need.
 " The Archbishop said to murder me were sin: [death
 " My leaving Guido were a kind of
 " With no sin,—more death, he must answer for.
 " Hear now what death to him and life to you
 " I wish to pay and owe. Take me to Rome!
 " You go to Rome, the servant makes me hear.
- " Take me as you would take a dog, think,
 " Masterless left for strangers to me treat:
 " Take me home like that—leave me the house
 " Where the father and the mother are and soon
 " They'll come to know and call me my name,
 " Their child once more, since child I am, for all
 " They now forget me, which is the worst o' the dream—
 " And the way to end dreams is to break them, stand,
 " Walk, go: then help me to stand, walk and go!
 " The Governor said the strong should help the weak:
 " You know how weak the stronger women are.
 " How could I find my way there by myself? [hear-
 " I cannot even call out, make them
 " Just as it dreams: I have tried and proved the fact.
 " I have told this story and more to good great men,
 " The Archbishop and the Governor they smiled.
 " 'Stop your mouth, fair one!'—presently they frowned,
 " 'Get you gone, disengage you from our feet!'
 " I went in my despair to an old priest
 " Only a friar, no great man like these two,
 " But good, the Augustinian, people name
 " Romano,—he confessed me two months since:
 " He fears God, why then needs he fear the world?
 " And when he questioned how it came about
 " That I was found in danger of a sin—
 " Despair of any help from providence,—
 " 'Since, though your husband outrages you,' said he,
 " 'That is a case too common, though wives die
 " 'Or live, but do not sin so deep as this!'
 " Then I told—what I never will tell you—

"How, worse than husband's hate, I
had to bear
"The love,—soliciting to shame called
love,—
"Of his brother,—the young idle
priest i' the house
"With only the devil to meet there.
'This is grave—
"Yes, we must interfere: I counsel,
—write
"To those who used to be your par-
ents once,
"Of dangers here, bid them convey
you hence!
"But," said I, "when I neither read
nor write?"
"Then he took pity and promised 'I
will write.'
"If he did so,—why, they are dumb or
dead:
"Either they give no credit to the tale,
"Or else, wrapped wholly up in their
own joy
"Of such escape, they care not who
cries, still
"I' the clutches. Anyhow, no word
arrives. [ness
"All such extravagance and dreadful-
"Seems incident to dreaming, cured
one way,—
"Wake me! The letter I received
this morn',
"Said—if the woman spoke your very
sense—
"You would die for me: 'I can be-
lieve it now:
"For now the dream gets to involve
yourself.
"First of all, you seemed wicked and
not good,
"In writing me those letters: you
came in
"Like a thief upon me. I this morning
said
"In my extremity, entreat the thief!
"Try if he have in him no honest touch!
"A thief might save me from a mur-
derer.
"T was a thief said the last kind word
to Christ:
"Christ took the kindness and forgave
the theft:
"And so did I prepare what I now say.
"But now, that you stand and I see
your face,
"Though you have never uttered
word yet,—well, I know,

"Here too has been dream-work, delu-
sion too,
"And that at no time, you with the
eyes here,
"Ever intended to do wrong by me,
"Nor wrote such letters therefore. It
is false,
"And you are true, have been true,
will be true.
"To Rome then,—when is it you take
me there?
"Each minute lost is mortal. When?
—I ask."
I answered "It shall be when it can be.
"I will go hence and do your pleasure,
find
"The sure and speedy means of travel,
then
"Come back and take you to your
friends in Rome.
"There wants a carriage, money and
the rest,—
"A day's work by to-morrow at this
time.
"How shall I see you and assure es-
cape?"
She replied, "Pass, to-morrow at this
hour.
"If I am at the open window, well:
"If I am absent, drop a handkerchief
"And walk by! I shall see from
where I watch,
"And know that all is done. Return
next eve,
"And next, and so till we can meet and
speak!"
"To-morrow at this hour I pass," said
I.
She was withdrawn.
Here is another point
I bid you pause at. When I told thus
far,
Some one said, subtly, "Here at least
was found
"Your confidence in error,—you per-
ceived
"The spirit of the letters, in a sort,
"Had been the lady's, if the body
should be
"Supplied by Guido: say, he forged
them all!
"Here was the unforged fact—she sent
for you,
"Spontaneously elected you to help,
"—What men call, loved you: Guido
read her mind,

"Gave it expression to assure the world
 "The case was just as he foresaw: he wrote,
 "She spoke."
 "Sirs, that first simile serves still,—
 That falsehood of a scorpion hatched, I say,
 Nowhere i' the world but in Madonna's mouth.
 Go on! Suppose, that falsehood foiled, next eve
 Pictured Madonna raised her painted hand, [Babe,
 Fixed the face Rafael bent above the
 On my face as I flung me at her feet:
 Such miracle vouchsafed and manifest,
 Would that prove the first lying tale was true?
 Pompilia spoke, and I at once received,
 Accepted my own fact, my miracle
 Self-authorised and self-explained,—she chose
 To summon me and signify her choice.
 Afterward,—oh! I gave a passing glance
 To a certain ugly cloud-shape, goblin-shred
 Of hell-smoke hurrying past the splendid moon
 Out now to tolerate no darkness more,
 And saw right through the thing that tried to pass
 For truth and solid, not an empty lie:
 "So, he not only forged the words for her
 "But words for me, made letters he called mine:
 "What I sent, he retained, gave these in place,
 "All by the mistress-messenger! As I
 "Recognised her, at potency of truth,
 "So she, by the crystalline soul, knew me,
 "Never mistook the signs. Enough of this—
 "Let the wraith go to nothingness again,
 "Here is the orb, have only thought for her!"
 "Thought?" nay, Sirs, what shall follow was not thought:
 I have thought sometimes, and thought long and hard.
 I have stood before, gone round a serious thing,

Tasked my whole mind to touch
 clasp it close,
 As I stretch forth my arm to touch this bar.
 God and man, and what duty I both,—
 I dare to say I have confronted the
 In thought: but no such faculty here.
 I put forth no thought,—power all that night
 I paced the city: it was the Spring.
 By the invasion I lay passive to,
 In rushed new things, the old were away;
 Alike abolished—the imprisonment
 Of the outside air, the inside weight of the world
 That pulled me down. Death meant to spurn the ground,
 Soar to the sky,—die well and you that.
 The very immolation made the bliss
 Death was the heart of life, and all harm
 My folly had crouched to avoid, proved a veil
 Hiding all gain my wisdom strove to grasp:
 As if the intense centre of the flame
 Should turn a heaven to that devoted fly
 Which hitherto, sophist alike and saint
 Saint Thomas with his sober goose-quill,
 And sinner Plato by Cephisian reed
 Would fain, pretending just the insect good,
 Whisk off, drive back, consign to shadow again.
 Into another state, under new rule
 I knew myself was passing swift and sure;
 Whereof the initiatory pang approached,
 Felicitous annoy, as bitter-sweet
 As when the virgin-band, the victor chaste,
 Feel at the end the earthly garment drop,
 And rise with something of a ro shame
 Into immortal nakedness: so I lay,
 and let come the proper thrill
 would thrill
 Into the ecstasy and outthrob pain.

l to touch and
arm to touch
at duty I owe
nfronted these
faculty helped
ht,—powerless,
was the first
ssive to,
e old were rapt
nprisonment
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Death meant,
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ng of a rosy
: so I
proper thro
throb pain.

I' the grey of dawn it was I found my-
self
Facing the pillared front o' the Pieve—
mine,
My church: it seemed to say for the
first time
"But am not I the Bride, the mystic
love
"O' the Lamb, who took thy plighted
troth, my priest,
"To fold thy warm heart on my heart
of stone
"And freeze thee nor unfasten any
more?
"This is a fleshly woman,—let the free
"Bestow their life-blood, thou art
pulseless now!"
See! Day by day I had risen and left
this church
At the signal waved me by some foolish
fan,
With half a curse and half a pitying
smile
For the monk I stumbled over in my
haste,
Prostrate and corpse-like at the altar-
foot
Intent on his *corona*: then the church
Was ready with her quip, if word con-
duced,
To quicken my pace nor stop for prating—
"There!
"Be thankful you are no such ninny,
go [cards
"Rather to teach a black-eyed novice
"Than gabble Latin and protrude that
nose
"Smoothed to a sheep's through no
brains and much faith!"
That sort of incentive! Now the
church changed tone—
Now, when I found out first that life
and death
Are means to an end, that passion uses
both,
Indisputably mistress of the man
Whose form of worship is self-sacrifice—
Now, from the stone lungs sighed the
scrannel voice
'Leave that live passion, come be dead
with me!"
As if, i' the fabled garden, I had gone
On great adventure, plucked in igno-
rance
Hedge-fruit, and feasted to satiety,
Laughing at such high fame for hips
and haws,

And scorned the achievement: then
come all at once
O' the prize o' the place, the thing of
perfect gold,
The apple's self: and, scarce my eye on
that,
Was 'ware as well o' the sevenfold
dragon's watch.
Sirs, I obeyed. Obedience was too
strange,—
This new thing that had been struck
into me
By the look o' the lady,—to dare dis-
obey
The first authoritative word. 'T was
God's.
I had been lifted to the level of her,
Could take such sounds into my sense.
I said
"We two are cognisant o' the Master
now;
"It is she bids me bow the head: how
true,
"I am a priest! I see the function
here;
"I thought the other way self-sacrifice:
"This 's the true, seals up the perfect
sum.
I pay it, sit down, silently obey."
So, I went home. Dawn broke, noon
broadened, I—
I sat stone-still, let time run over me.
The sun slanted into my room, had
reached
The west. I opened book,—Aquinas
blazed
With one black name only on the white
page.
I looked up, saw the sunset: vespers
rang:
"She counts the minutes till I keep my
word
"And come say all is ready. I am a
priest.
"Duty to God is duty to her: I think
"God, who created her, will save her
too
"Some new way, by one miracle the
more,
"Without me. Then, prayer may
ava'l perhaps."
I went to my own place i' the Pieve,
read
The office: I was back at home again
Sitting i' the dark. "Could she but
know—but know

"That, were there good in this distinct
from God's,
"Really good as it reached her, though
procured
"By a sin of mine,—I should sin : God
forgives.
"She knows it is no fear withholds me :
fear ?
"Of what ? Suspense here is the ter-
rible thing.
"If she should, as she counts the min-
utes, come
"On the fantastic notion that I fear
"The world now, fear the Archbishop,
fear perhaps
"Count Guido, he who, having forged
the lies,
"May wait the work, attend the effect,
—I fear
"The sword of Guido ! Let God see
to that—
"Hating lies, let not her believe a lie ! "
Again the morning found me. "I will
work,
"Tie down my foolish thoughts.
Thank God so far !
"I have saved her from a scandal,
stopped the tongues
"Had broken else into a cackle and
hiss
"Around the noble name. Duty is
still
"Wisdom : I have been wise." So
the day wore.

At evening—"But, achieving victory,
"I must not blink the priest's peculiar
part,
"Nor shrink to counsel, comfort :
priest and friend—
"How do we discontinue to be friends ?
"I will go minister, advise her seek
"Help at the source,—above all, not
despair :
"There may be other happier help at
hand.
"I hope it,—wherefore then neglect to
say ? "

There she stood—leaned there, for the
second time,
Over the terrace, looked at me, then
spoke :
"Why is it you have suffered me to
stay
"Breaking my heart two days more
than was need ?

"Why delay help, your own heart
yearns to give ?
"You are again here, in the self-same
mind,
"I see here, steadfast in the face
you,—
"You grudge to do no one thing that
ask.
"Why then is nothing done ?
know my need.
"Still, through God's pity on me, time
is time
"And one day more : shall I see
or no ? "
I answered—"Lady, waste no thought
no word
"Even to forgive me ! Care for what
I care—
"Only ! Now follow me as I wish
fate !
"Leave this house in the dark
morrow night,
"Just before daybreak :—there's no
moon this eve—
"It sets, and then begins the sunset
black.
"Descend, proceed to the Torricione
step
"Over the low dilapidated wall,
"Take San Clemente, there's no other
gate
"Unguarded at the hour : some pass
thence
"An inn stands ; cross to it ; I shall
there."

She answered, "If I can but find my
way.

"But I shall find it. Go now ! "

I did
Took rapidly the route myself pre-
scribed.
Stopped at Torricione, climbed the
ruined place,
Proved that the gate was practically
reached
The inn, no eye, despite the darkness,
miss,
Knocked there and entered, made the
host secure :
"With Caponsacchi it is ask and have
"I know my betters. Are you bound
for Rome ?
"I get swift horse and trusty man
said he.

Then I retraced my steps, was found
 once more
 In my own house for the last time :
 there lay
 The broad pale opened " Summa."
 " Shut his book,
 " There 's other showing ! 'T was a
 Thomas too
 " Obtained,—more favoured than his
 namesake here,—
 " A gift, tied faith fast, foiled the tug
 of doubt,—
 " Our Lady's girdle ; down he saw it
 drop
 " As she ascended into heaven, they
 say :
 " He kept that safe and bade all doubt
 adieu.
 " I too have seen a lady and hold a
 grace."
 I know not how the night passed :
 morning broke :
 Presently came my servant. " Sir,
 this eve—
 " Do you forget ? " I started.—
 " How forget ?
 " What is it you know ? "—" With
 due submission, Sir,
 " This being last Monday in the month
 but one
 " And a vigil, since to-morrow is Saint
 George,
 " And feast day, and moreover day for
 copes,
 " And Canon Conti now away a month,
 " And Canon Crispi sour because, for-
 sooth,
 " You let him sulk in stall and bear the
 brunt
 " Of the octave. . . Well, Sir, 'tis im-
 portant ! "
 " True ! "
 " Harken, I have to start for Rome
 this night.
 " No word, lest Crispi overboil and
 burst !
 " Provide me with a laic dress ! Throw
 dust
 " I' the Canon's eye, stop his tongue's
 scandal so !
 " See there 's a sword in case of acci-
 dent."
 I knew the knave, the knave knew me.

And thus
 Through each familiar hindrance of the
 day

Did I make steadily for its hour and
 end,—
 Felt time's old barrier-growth of right
 and fit
 Give way through all its twines, and let
 me go ;
 Use and wont recognised the excepted
 man,
 Let speed the special service,—and I
 sped
 Till, at the dead between midnight and
 morn,
 There was I at the goal, before the
 gate,
 With a tune in the ears, low leading
 up to loud,
 A light in the eyes, faint that would
 soon be flare,
 Ever some spiritual witness new and
 new
 In faster frequency, crowding solitude
 To watch the way o' the warfare,—till,
 at last,
 When the ecstatic minute must bring
 birth,
 Began a whiteness in the distance,
 waxed
 Whiter and whiter, near grew and
 more near,
 Till it was she : there did Pompilia
 come :
 The white I saw shine through her was
 her soul's,
 Certainly, for the body was one black,
 Black from head down to foot. She
 did not speak,
 Glided into the carriage,—so a cloud
 Gathers the moon up. " By San
 Spirito,
 " To Rome, as if the road burned
 underneath !
 " Reach Rome, then hold my head in
 pledge, I pay
 " The run and the risk to heart's con-
 tent ! " Just that,
 I said,—then, in another tick of time,
 Sprang, was beside me and I alone.
 So it began, our flight thro' dusk to
 clear,
 Through day and night and day again
 to night
 Once more, and to last dreadful dawn
 of all.
 Sirs, how should I lie quiet in my grave
 Unless you suffer me wring, drop by
 drop,

My brain dry, make a riddance of the
drench

Of minutes with a memory in each,
Recorded motion, breath or look of
hers,

Which poured forth would present you
one pure glass,

Mirror you plain,—as God's sea, glassed
in gold,

His saints,—the perfect soul Pompilia?
Men,

You must know that a man gets drunk
with truth

Stagnant inside him! Oh, they've
killed her, Sirs!

Can I be calm?

Calmly! Each incident
Proves, I maintain, that action of the
flight

For the true thing it was. The first
faint scratch

O' the stone will test its nature, teach
its worth

To idiots who name Parian, coprolite.
After all, I shall give no glare—at best

Only display you certain scattered
lights

Lamping the rush and roll of the
abyss—

Nothing but here and there a fire-point
pricks

Wavelet from wavelet: well!

For the first hour
We both were silent in the night, I
know:

Sometimes I did not see nor under-
stand.

Blackness engulfed me,—partial stu-
por, say—

Then I would break way, breathe
through the surprise,

And be aware again, and see who sat
In the dark vest with the white face and
hands.

I said to myself—"I have caught it, I
conceive

"The mind o' the mystery: 't is the
way they wake

"And wait, two martyrs somewhere in
a tomb [die;

"Each by each as their blessing was to

"Some signal they are promised and
expect,

"When to arise before the trumpet
scares:

"So, through the whole course of the
world they wait

"The last day, but so fearless and
safe!

"No otherwise, in safety and not
"I lie, because she lies too by
side.

You know this is not love, Sirs,—
faith,

The feeling that there's God, he re-
and rules

Out of this low world: that is all
harm!

At times she drew a soft sigh—m-
seemed

Always to hover just above her lip
Not settle,—break a silence music

In the determined morning, I
found

Her head erect, her face turned full
me,

Her soul intent on mine through
wide eyes.

I answered them. "You are sa-
hitherto.

"We have passed Perugia,—g-
round by the wood,

"Not through, I seem to think,—
opposite

"I know Assisi; this is holy ground
Then she resumed. "How long si-

we both left

"Arezzo?"—"Years—and cert-
hours beside."

It was at . . . ah, but I forget
names!

'T is a mere post-house and a hovel
two,—

I left the carriage and got bread and
wine

And brought it her.—"Does it det-
to eat?"

"—They stay perforce, change hor-
—therefore eat!

"We lose no minute: we arrive,
sure!"

She said—I know not where—ther-
a great hill

Close over, and the stream has lost
bridge,

One fords it. She began—"I ha-
heard say

"Of some sick body that my moth-
knew,

"'T was no good sign when in a li-
diseased

"All the pain suddenly departs,—as

fearless and so

y and not fear,
es too by my

ove, Sirs,—it is

God, he reigns

that is all; no

ft sigh—music

bove her lips
ence music too.

orning, I first

e turned full to

e through two

You are saved

Perugia,—gone

to think,—and

holy ground."

How long since

and certain

t I forget the

and a hovel or

got bread and

Does it detain

change horses,

we arrive, be

where—there's

um has lost its

an—"I have

at my mother

hen in a limb

departs,—as if

"The guardian angel discontinued pain

"Because the hope of cure was gone at last:

"The limb will not again exert itself,

"It needs be pained no longer: so with me,

"—My soul whence all the pain is past at once:

"All pain must be to work some good in the end.

"True, this I feel now, this may be that good,

"Pain was because of,—otherwise, I fear!"

She said,—a long while later in the day,
When I had let the silence be,—
abrupt—

"Have you a mother?"—"She died,
I was born."

"A sister then?"—"No sister."—"Who was it—

"What woman were you used to serve this way,

"Be kind to, till I called you and you came?"

I did not like that word. Soon afterward—

"Tell me, are men unhappy, in some kind

"Of mere unhappiness at being men,
"As women suffer, being womanish?

"Have you, now, some unhappiness, I mean,

"Born of what may be man's strength overmuch,

"To match the undue susceptibility,
"The sense at every pore when hate is close?

"It hurts us if a baby hides its face
"Or child strikes at us punily, calls names

"Or makes a mouth,—much more if stranger men

"Laugh or frown,—just as that were much to bear!

"Yet rocks split,—and the blow-ball does no more,

"Quivers to feathery nothing at a touch;

"And strength may have its drawback weakness 'scapes."

Once she asked "What is it that made you smile,

"At the great gate with the eagles and the snakes,

"Where the company entered, 't is a long time since?"

"—Forgive—I think you would not understand:

"Ah, but you ask me,—therefore, it was this.

"That was a certain bishop's village,

"I knew it by the eagles,—and at once

"Remembered this same bishop was just he

"People of old were wont to bid me please

"If I would catch preferment: so, I smiled

"Because an impulse came to me, a whim—

"What if I prayed the prelate leave to speak,

"Began upon him in his presence-hall

"—What, still at work so grey and obsolete?

"Still roched and mitred more or less?

"Don't you feel all that out of fashion now?

"I find out when the day of things is done!"

At eve we heard the *angelus*: she turned—

"I told you I can neither read nor write.

"My life stopped with the play-time; I will learn,

"If I begin to live again: but you—

"Who are a priest—wherefore do you not read

"The service at this hour? Read Gabriel's song,

"The lesson, and then read the little prayer

"To Raphael, proper for us travelers!"

I did not like that, neither, but I read.

When we stopped at Foligno it was dark.

The people of the post came out with lights:

The driver said, "This time to-morrow, may

"Saints only help, relays continue good,

"Nor robbers hinder, we arrive at Rome."

I urged,—"Why tax your strength a second night?"

" Trust me, alight here and take brief repose !
 " We are out of harm's reach, past pursuit : go sleep
 " If but an hour ! I keep watch, guard the while
 " Here in the doorway." But her whole face changed,
 The misery grew again about her mouth,
 The eyes burned up from faintness, like the fawn's
 Tired to death in the thicket, when she feels
 The probing spear o' the huntsman.
 " Oh, no stay !"
 She cried, in the fawn's cry, " On to Rome, on, on—
 " Unless 't is you who fear,—which cannot be !"
 We did go on all night ; but at its close
 She was troubled, restless, moaned low, talked at whiles
 To herself, her brow on quiver with the dream :
 Once, wide awake, she menaced, at arms' length
 Waved away something— " Never again with you !
 " My soul is mine, my body is my soul's :
 " You and I are divided ever more
 " In soul and body : get you gone !"
 Then I—
 " Why, in my whole life I have never prayed !
 " Oh, if the God, that only can, would help !
 " Am I his priest with power to cast out fiends ?
 " Let God arise and all his enemies
 " Be scattered !" By morn, there was peace, no sigh
 Out of the deep sleep.

When she woke at last,
 I answered the first look—" Scarce twelve hours more,
 " Then, Rome ! There probably was no pursuit,
 " There cannot now be peril : bear up brave !
 " Just some twelve hours to press through to the prize—
 " Then, no more of the terrible journey !" " Then,
 " No more o' the journey : if it might but last !

" Always, my life-long, thus to you still !
 " It is the interruption that I dread
 " With no dread, ever to be here thus !
 " Never to see a face nor hear a voice
 " Yours is no voice ; you speak and you are dumb ;
 " Nor face, I see it in the dark. I wish
 " No face nor voice that change grow unkind."
 That I liked, that was the best thing she said.
 In the broad day, I dared enter
 " Descend !"
 I told a woman, at the garden-gate
 By the post-house, white and pleasant in the sun,
 " It is my sister,—talk with her apart
 " She is married and unhappy, you perceive ;
 " I take her home because her heart is hurt ;
 " Comfort her as you women understand !"
 So, there I left them by the garden wall,
 Paced the road, then bade put the horses to,
 Came back, and there she sat : close to her knee,
 A black-eyed child still held the bowl of milk,
 Wondered to see how little she could drink,
 And in her arms the woman's infant
 She smiled at me " How much good this has done !
 " This is a whole night's rest and much more !
 " I can proceed now, though I wish to stay.
 " How do you call that tree with the thick top
 " That holds in all its leafy green a gold
 " The sun now like an immense egg of fire ?"
 (It was a million-leaved mimosa)
 " Take
 " The babe away from me and let me go !"
 And in the carriage " Still a day, my friend !
 " And perhaps half a night, the woman fears.

thus to journey

that I dread,—
to be here and

or hear a voice !
you speak when

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t, the woman

" I pray it finish since it cannot last.

" There may be more misfortune at the
close,

" And where will you be ? God suffice
me then ! "

And presently—for there was a road-
side-shrine—

" When I was taken first to my own
church

" Lorenzo in Lucina, being a girl,

" And bid confess my faults, I inter-
posed

" But teach me what fault to confess
and know ! "

" So, the priest said—' You should be-
think yourself :

" Each human being needs must
have done wrong ! "

" Now, be you candid and no priest but
friend—

" Were I surprised and killed here on
the spot,

" A runaway from husband and his
home,

" Do you account it were in sin I died ?

" My husband used to seem to harm
me, not . . .

" Not on pretence he punished sin of
mine,

" Nor for sin's sake and lust of cruelty,

" But as I heard him bid a farming-
man [wood

" At the villa take a lamb once to the

" And there ill-treat it, meaning that
the wolf

" Should hear its cries, and so come,
quick be caught,

" Enticed to the trap : he practised
thus with me

" That so, whatever were his gain
thereby,

" Others than I might become prey
and spoil.

" Had it been only between our two
selves,—

" His pleasure and my pain,—why,
pleasure him

" By dying, nor such need to make a
coil !

" But this was worth an effort, that my
pain

" Should not become a snare, prove
pain threefold

" To other people—strangers—or un-
born—

" How should I know ? I sought re-
lease from that—

B.P.

" I think, or else from,—dare I say,
some cause

" Such as is put into a tree, which turns
Away from the north wind with what
nest it holds,—

" The woman said that trees so turn :
now, friend,

" Tell me, because I cannot trust my-
self !

" You are a man : what have I done
amiss ? "

You must conceive my answer,—I for-
get—

Taken up wholly with the thought, per-
haps,

This time she might have said,—might,
did not say—

" You are a priest." She said, " my
friend."

Day wore,

We passed the places, somehow the
calm went,

Again the restless eyes began to rove
In new fear of the foe mine could not
see :

She wandered in her mind,—addressed
me once

" Gaetano ! "—that is not my name :
whose name ?

I grew alarmed, my head seemed turn-
ing too :

I quickened pace with promise now,
now threat :

Bade drive and drive, nor any stopping
more.

" Too deep i' the thick of the struggle,
struggle through !

" Then drench her in repose though
death's self pour

" The plenitude of quiet,—help us, God,
Whom the winds carry ! "

Suddenly I saw

The old tower, and the little white-
walled clump

Of buildings and the cypress-tree or
two,—

" Already Castelnovo—Rome ! " I
cried,

" As good as Rome,—Rome is the next
stage, think !

" This is where travellers' hearts are
wont to beat.

" Say you are saved, sweet lady ! "

Up she woke.
The sky was fierce with colour from the
sun

Setting. She screamed out "No, I must not die!

"Take me no farther, I should die: stay here!

"I have more life to save than mine!" She swooned.

We seemed safe: what was it foreboded so?

Out of the coach into the inn I bore
The motionless and breathless pure and pale

Pompilia,—bore her through a pitying group

And laid her on a couch, still calm and cured

By deep sleep of all woes at once. The host

Was urgent "Let her stay an hour or two!

"Leave her to us, all will be right by morn!"

Oh, my foreboding! But I could not hoose.

I paced the passage, kept watch all night long.

I listened,—not one movement, not one sigh.

"Fear not: she sleeps so sound!" they said—but I

Feared, all the same, kept fearing more and more,

Found myself throb with fear from head to foot,

Filled with a sense of such impending woe,

That, at first pause of night, pretence of grey,

I made my mind up it was morn.—"Reach Rome,

"Lest hell reach her! A dozen miles to make,

"Another long breath, and we emerge!" I stood

I' the courtyard, roused the sleepy grooms. "Have out

"Carriage and horse, give haste, take gold!"—said I. [morn,—

While they made ready in the doubtful 'T was the last minute,—needs must I ascend

And break her sleep; I turned to go. And there

Faced me Count Guido, there posed the mean man

As master,—took the field, encamped his rights,

Challenged the world: there le new triumph, there

Scowled the old malice in the visage And black o' the scamp. Soon triumph

suppled the tongue A little, malice glued to his dry thr

And he part howled, part hissed oh, how he kept

Well out o' the way, at arm's len and to spare!—

"My salutation to your priestsh What?

"Matutinal, busy with book so soo "Of an April day that 's damp as to

that now "Deluge Arezzo at its darling's flight

" 'T is unfair, wrongs femininity at la "To let a single dame monopolize

"A heart the whole sex claims, sho share alike:

"Therefore I overtake you, Can Come!

"The lady,—could you leave her s so soon?

"You have not yet experienced at hands

"My treatment, you lay down drugged, I see!

"Hence this alertness—hence no dea in-life

"Like what held arms fast when stole from mine.

"To be sure, you took the solace a repose

"That first night at Foligno!—ne abound

"O' the road by this time,—men galed me much,

"As past them I came halting af you,

"Vulcan pursuing Mars, as poets sing, "Still at the last here pant I, b

arrive, "Vulcan—and not without my C clops too,

"The Commissary and the unpoison arm

"O' the Civil Force, should Mars tu mutineer.

"Enough of fooling: capture the c prits, friend!

"Here is the lover in the smart d guise

"With the sword,—he is a priest, mine lies still:

"There upstairs hides my wife t runaway,

" His leman : the two plotted, pois-
 oned first,
 " Plundered me after, and eloped thus
 far
 " Where now you find them. Do your
 duty quick !
 " Arrest and hold him ! That 's done :
 now catch her ! "
 During this speech of that man,—well,
 I stood
 Away, as he managed,—still, I stood as
 near
 The throat of him,—with these two
 hands, my own,—
 As now I stand near yours, Sir,—one
 quick spring,
 One great good satisfying gripe, and lo !
 There had he lain abolished with his lie,
 Creation purged o' the miscreate, man
 redeemed,
 A spittle wiped off from the face of
 God !
 I, in some measure, seek a poor excuse
 For what I left undone, in just this fact
 That my first feeling at the speech I
 quote
 Was—not of what a blasphemy was
 dared,
 Not what a bag of venom'd purulence
 Was split and noisome,—but how
 splendidly
 Mirthful, what ludicrous a lie was
 launched !
 Would Molière's self wish more than
 hear such man
 Call, claim such w^c man for his own, his
 wife,
 Even though, in due amazement at the
 boast,
 He had stammered, she moreover was
 divine ?
 She to be his,—were hardly less absurd
 Than that he took her name into his
 mouth,
 Licked, and then let it go again, the
 beast,
 Signed with his slaver, Oh, .she
 poisoned him,
 Plundered him, and the rest ! Well,
 what I wished
 Was, that he would but go on, say once
 more
 So to the world, and get his meed of
 men,
 The fist's reply to the filth. And
 while I mused,
 The minute, oh the misery, was gone !

On either idle hand of me there stood
 Really an officer, nor laughed i' the
 least.
 They rendered justice to his reason,
 laid
 Logic to heart, as 't were submitted
 them
 " Twice two makes four."
 " And now, catch her !"—he cried.
 That sobered me. " Let myself lead
 the way—
 " Ere you arrest me, who am some-
 body,
 " And, as you hear, a priest and privi-
 leged,—
 " To the lady's chamber ! I presume
 you—men
 " Expert, instructed how to find out
 truth,
 " Familiar with the guise of guilt.
 Detect
 " Guilt on her face when it meets mine,
 then judge
 " Between us and the mad dog howling
 there ! "
 Up we all went together, in they broke
 O' the chamber late my chapel. There
 she lay, [eve,
 Composed as when I laid her, that last
 O' the couch, still breathless, motion-
 less, sleep's self,
 Wax-white, seraphic, saturate with the
 sun
 O' the morning that now flooded from
 the front
 And filled the window with a light like
 blood.
 " Behold the poisoner, the adulteress,
 "—And feigning sleep too ! Seize,
 bind !"—Guido hissed.
 She started up, stood erect, face to face
 With the husband : back he fell, was
 buttressed there
 By the window all a-flame with morn-
 ing-red,
 He the black figure, the opprobrious
 blur
 Against all peace and joy and light
 and life.
 " Away from between me and hell ! "
 —she cried :
 " Hell for me, no embracing any more !
 " I am God's, I love God, God—whose
 knees I clasp,
 " Whose utterly most just award I
 take,

'But bear no more love-making devils :
 hence ! "
 I may have made an effort to reach
 her side
 From where I stood i' the door-way,—
 anyhow
 I found the arms, I wanted, pinioned
 fast,
 Was powerless in the clutch to left and
 right
 O' the rabble pouring in, rascality
 Enlisted, rampant on the side of hearth
 Home and the husband,—pay in pros-
 pect too !
 They heaped themselves upon me,—
 " Ha !—and him
 " Also you outrage ? Him, too, my
 sole friend,
 " Guardian and saviour ? That I
 baulk you of,
 " Since—see how God can help at last
 and worst ! "
 She sprung at the sword that hung be-
 side him, seized,
 Drew, brandished it, the sunrise burned
 for joy
 O' the blade, " Die," cried she, " devil,
 in God's name ! "
 Ah, but they all closed round her, twelve
 to one,
 —The unmanly men, no woman-
 mother made,
 Spawned somehow ! Dead-white and
 disarmed she lay.
 No matter for the sword, her word suf-
 ficed
 To spike the coward through and
 through : he shook,
 Could only spit between the teeth—
 " You see ?
 " You hear ? Bear witness, then !
 Write down . . . but, no—
 " Carry these criminals to the prison-
 house,
 " For first thing ! I begin my search
 meanwhile
 " After the stolen effects, gold, jewels,
 plate,
 " Money and clothes, they robbed me of
 and fled :
 " With no few amorous pieces, verse
 and prose,
 " I have much reason to expect to
 find."

When I saw, that,—no more than the
 first mad speech,

Made out the speaker mad and a lau-
 ing-stock,
 So neither did this next device expl-
 One listener's indignation,—that
 scribe
 Did sit down, set himself to write
 deed,
 And sundry knaves began to peer a-
 pry
 In corner and hole,—that Gui-
 wiping brow
 And getting him a countenance, v-
 fast
 Losing his fear, beginning to strut f-
 O' the stage of his exploit, snuff he
 sniff there,—
 I took the truth in, guessed sufficien-
 The service for the moment—" Wh-
 I say,
 " Slight at your peril ! We are ali-
 here,
 " My adversary and I, called no-
 both ;
 " I am the nobler, and a name m-
 know. [co-
 " I could refer our cause to our o-
 " In our own country, but prefer app-
 " To the nearer jurisdiction. Bein-
 priest,
 " Though in a secular garb,—for r-
 sons good
 " I shall adduce in due time to r-
 peers,—
 " I demand that the Church I ser-
 decide
 " Between us, right the slandered la-
 there.
 " A Tuscan noble, I might claim t-
 Duke :
 " A priest, I rather choose the Chur-
 —bid Rome
 " Cover the wronged with her inviol-
 shield."

There was no refusing this : they bo-
 me off,
 They bore her off, to separate cells
 the same
 Ignoble prison, and, separate, then
 to Rome.
 Pompilia's face, then and thus, look-
 on me
 The last time in this life : not one sig-
 since,
 Never another sight to be ! And yet
 I thought I had saved her. I appeal
 to Rome :

It seems I simply sent her to her death.
You tell me she is dying now, or dead ;
I cannot bring myself to quite believe
This is a place you torture people in :
What if this your intelligence were just
A subtlety, an honest wile to work
On a man at unawares ? 'T were
worthy you.

No, Sirs, I cannot have the lady dead !
That erect form, flashing brow, fulgur-
ant eye,

That voice immortal (oh, that voice of
hers !)

That vision in the blood-red daybreak
—that

Leap to life of the pale electric sword
Angels go armed with,—that was not
the last

O' the lady ! Come, I see through it,
you find—

Know the manœuvre ! Also herself
I had saved her : do you dare say she
spoke false ?

Let me see for myself if it be so !

Though she were dying, a priest might
be of use,

The more when he 's a friend too,—she
called me

Far beyond " friend." Come, let me
see her—indeed

It is my duty, being a priest : I hope
I stand confessed, established, proved a
priest ?

My punishment had motive that, a
priest

I, in a laic garb, a mundane mode,
Did what were harmlessly done other-
wise.

I never touched her with my finger-tip
Except to carry her to the couch, that
eve,

Against my heart, beneath my head,
bowed low,

As we priests carry the paten : that is
why

—To get leave and go see her of your
grace—

I have told you this whole story over
again.

Do I deserve grace ? For I might lock
lips,

Laugh at your jurisdiction : what have
you

To do with me in the matter ? I sup-
pose

You hardly think I donned a bravo's
dress

To have a hand in the new crime ; on
the old,

Judgment 's delivered, penalty im-
posed,

I was chained fast at Civita hand and
foot—

She had only you to trust to, you and
Rome,

Rome and the Church, and no pert
meddling priest

Two days ago, when Guido, with the
right,

Hacked her to pieces. One might well
be wroth ;

I have been patient, done my best to
help :

I come from Civita and punishment
As friend of the court—and for pure
friendship's sake

Have told my tale to the end,—nay,
not the end—

For, wait—I'll end—not leave you that
excuse !

When we were parted,—shall I go on
there ?

I was presently brought to Rome—
yes, here I stood

Opposite yonder very crucifix—
And there sat you and you, Sirs, quite
the same.

I heard charge, and bore question, and
told tale

Noted down in the book there,—turn
and see

If, by one jot or tittle, I vary now !
I' the colour the tale takes, there's
change perhaps ;

'T is natural, since the sky is different,
Eclipse in the air now ; still, the out-
line stays.

I showed you how it came to be my
part

To save the lady. Then your clerk
produced

Papers, a pack of stupid and impure
Banalities called letters about love—

Love, indeed,—I could teach who
styled them so,

Better, I think, though priest and love-
less both !

" —How was it that a wife, young, in-
nocent,

" And stranger to your person, wrote
this page ? "

" —She wrote it when the Holy Father
wrote



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"The bestiality that posts thro' Rome,
"Put in his mouth by Pasquin."—

"Nor perhaps

"Did you return these answers, verse
and prose,

"Signed, sealed and sent the lady?
There's your hand!"

"—This precious piece of verse, I
really judge

"Is meant to copy my own character,
"A clumsy mimic; and this other
prose,

"Not so much even; both rank for-
gery:

"Verse, quotha? Bembo's verse!
When Saint John wrote

"The tract '*De Tribus*,' I wrote this
to match."

"—How came it, then, the documents
were found

"At the inn on your departure?"—
"I opine,

"Because there were no documents to
find

"In my presence,—you must hide be-
fore you find.

"Who forged them, hardly practised
in my view;

"Who found them, waited till I turned
my back."

"—And what of the clandestine visits
paid,

"Nocturnal passage in and out the
house

"With its lord absent? 'T is alleged
you climbed . . ."

"—Flew on a broomstick to the man i'
the moon!

"Who witnessed or will testify this
trash?"

"—The trusty servant, Margherita's
self,

"Even she who brought you letters,
you confess,

"And, you confess, took letters in
reply:

"Forget not we have knowledge of the
facts!"

"—Sirs, who have knowledge of the
facts, defray

"The expenditure of wit I waste in
vain,

"Trying to find out just one fact of all!

"She who brought letters from who
could not write,

"And took back letters to who could
not read,—

"Who was that messenger, of your
charity?"

"—Well, so far favours you the cir-
cumstance

"That this same messenger . . . how
shall we say? . . .

"*Sub imputatione meretricis*

"*Laborat*,—which makes accusation
null:

"We waive this woman's:—naught
makes void the next.

"Borsi, called Venerino, he who drove,
"O' the first night when you fled away,
at length

"Deposes to your kissings in the coach,

"—Frequent, frenetic . . ." "When
deposed he so?"

"After some weeks of sharp imprison-
ment . . ."

"—Granted by friend the Governor, I
engage—"

"—For his participation in your flight!

"At length his obduracy melting made

"The avowal mentioned . . ." "Was
dismissed forthwith

"To liberty, poor knave, for recom-
pense.

"Sirs, give what credit to the lie you
can!

"For me, no word in my defence
speak,

"And God shall argue for the lady!"

Did I stand question, and make an
answer, still

With the same result of smiling disbe-

Polite impossibility of faith

In such affected virtue in a priest;

But a showing fair play, an indulgence

even,

To one no worse than others after all—

Who had not brought disgrace to the

order, played

Discreetly, ruffled gown nor ripped the

cloth

In a bungling game at romps: I have

told you, Sirs—

If I pretended simply to be pure

Honest and Christian in the case,—al-

surd!

As well go boast myself above the need

O' the human nature, careless how

meat smells,

Wine tastes,—a saint above the smach

But once

Abate my crest, own flaws i' the fles

agree

To go with the herd, be hog no more nor less,

Why, hogs in common herd have common rights—

I must not be unduly borne upon,
Who had just romanced a little, sown wild oats,

But 'scaped without a scandal, flagrant fault.

My name helped to a mirthful circumstance :

" Joseph " would do well to amend his plea :

Undoubtedly—some toying with the wife,

But as for ruffian violence and rape,
Potiphar pressed too much on the other side !

The intrigue, the elopement, the disguise,—well charged !

The letters and verse looked hardly like the truth.

Your apprehension was—of guilt enough

To be compatible with innocence,
So, punished best a little and not too much.

Had I struck Guido Franceschini's face,

You had counselled me withdraw for my own sake,

Baulk him of bravo-hiring. Friends came round,

Congratulated, " Nobody mistakes !

" The pettiness o' the forfeiture defines

" The peccadillo : Guido gets his share :

" His wife is free of husband and hook-nose,

" The mouldy viands and the mother-in-law.

" To Civita with you and amuse the time,

" Travesty us ' *De Raptu Helenæ* !

" A funny figure must the husband cut

" When the wife makes him skip,—too ticklish, eh ?

" Do it in Latin, not the Vulgar, then !

" Sazons—we'll copy and send his Eminence !

" Mind—one iambus in the final foot !

" He'll rectify it, be your friend for life ! "

Oh, Sirs, depend on me for much new light

Thrown on the justice and religion here

By this proceeding, much fresh food for thought !

And I was just set down to study these
In relegation, two short days ago,

Admiring how you read the rules, when,
• • clap,

A thunder comes into my solitude—
I am caught up in a whirlwind and cast here,

Told of a sudden, in this room where so late

You dealt out law adroitly, that those scales, [from,

I meekly bowed to, took my allotment
Guido has snatched at, broken in your hands,

Metes to himself the murder of his wife,
Full measure, pressed down, running over now !

Can I assist to an explanation ?—Yes,
I rise in your esteem, sagacious Sirs,

Stand up a renderer of reasons, not
The officious priest would personate

Saint George

For a mock Princess in undragoned days.

What, the blood startles you ? What, after all

The priest who needs must carry sword on thigh

May find imperative use for it ? Then, there was

A Princess, was a dragon belching flame,
And should have been a Saint George also ? Then,

There might be worse schemes than to break the bonds

At Arezzo, lead her by the little hand,
Till she reached Rome, and let her try to live ?

But you were the law and the gospel,—would one please

Stand back, allow your faculty elbow-room ?

You blind guides who must needs lead eyes that see !

Fools, alike ignorant of man and God !
What was there here should have perplexed your wit

For a wink of the owl-eyes of you ?
How miss, then,

What's now forced on you by this flare of fact—

As if Saint Peter failed to recognise
Nero as no apostle, John or James,

Till some one burned a martyr, made a torch

O' the blood and fat to show his features by !

Could you fail read this cartulary aright
 On head and front of Franceschini
 there,
 Large-lettered like hell's masterpiece of
 print,—
 That he, from the beginning pricked at
 heart
 By some lust, lech of hate against his
 wife,
 Plotted to plague her into overt sin
 And shame, would slay Pompilia body
 and soul,
 And save his mean self—miserably
 caught
 I' the quagmire of his own tricks,
 cheats and lies ?
 —That himself wrote those papers,—
 from himself
 To himself,—which, i' the name of me
 and her,
 His mistress-messenger gave her and
 me.
 Touching us with such pustules of the
 soul
 That she and I might take the taint,
 be shown
 To the world and shuddered over,
 speckled so ?
 —That the agent put her sense into my
 words,
 Made substitution of the thing she
 hoped,
 For the thing she had and held, its op-
 posite,
 While the husband in the background
 bit his lips
 At each fresh failure of his precious
 plot ?
 —That when at the last we did rush
 each on each,
 By no chance but because God willed it
 so—
 The spark of truth was struck from out
 our souls—
 Made all of me, desried in the first
 glance,
 Seem fair and honest and permissible
 love
 O' the good and true—as the first glance
 told me
 There was no duty patent in the world
 Like daring try be good and true my-
 self,
 Leaving the shows of things to the
 Lord of Show
 And Prince o' the Power of the Air.
 Our very flight,

Even to its most ambiguous circum-
 stance,
 Irrefragably proved how futile,
 false . . .
 Why, men—men and not boys—boys
 and not babes—
 Babes and not beasts—beasts and not
 stocks and stones !—
 Had the liar's lie been true one pin-
 point speck,
 Were I the accepted suitor, free o' the
 place,
 Disposer of the time, to come at a call
 And go at a wink as who should say me
 nay,—
 What need of flight, what were the gain
 therefrom
 But just damnation, failure or suc-
 cess ?
 Damnation pure and simple to her the
 wife
 And me the priest—who bartered pri-
 vate bliss
 For public reprobation, the safe shade
 For the sunshine which men see to pelt
 me by :
 What other advantage,—we who led
 the days
 And nights alone i' the house,—was
 flight to find ?
 In our whole journey did we stop an
 hour,
 Diverge a foot from strait road till we
 reached
 Or would have reached—but for that
 fate of ours—
 The father and mother, in the eye of
 Rome,
 The eye of yourselves we made aware
 of us
 At the first fall of misfortune ? And
 indeed
 You did so far give sanction to our
 flight,
 Confirm its purpose, as lend helping
 hand,
 Deliver up Pompilia not to him
 She fled, but those the flight was ven-
 tured for.
 Why then could you, who stopped
 short, not go on
 One poor step more, and justify the
 means,
 Having allowed the end ?—not see an
 say
 " Here 's the exceptional conduct that
 should claim

"To be exceptionally judged on rules
"Which, understood, make no excep-
tion here"—

Why play instead into the devil's
hands

By dealing so ambiguously as gave
Guido the power to intervene like me,
Prove one exception more? I saved
his wife

Against law: against law he slays her
now:

Deal with him!

I have done with being judged.
I stand here guiltless in thought, word
and deed,

To the point that I apprise you,—in
contempt

For all misapprehending ignorance
O' the human heart, much more the
mind of Christ,—

That I assuredly did bow, was blessed
By the revelation of Pompilia. There!
Such is the final fact I fling you, Sirs,
To mouth and mumble and misinter-
pret: there!

"The priest 's in love," have it the
vulgar way!

Unpriest me, rend the rags o' the vest-
ment, do— [dare—

Degrade deep, disenfranchise all you
Remove me from the midst, no longer
priest

And fit companion for the like of you—
Your gay Abati with the well-turned
leg

And rose i' the hat-rim, Canons, cross at
neck

And silk mask in the pocket of the
gown,

Brisk bishops with the world's musk
still unbrushed

From the rochet; I'll no more of these
good things:

There 's a crack somewhere, something
that 's unsound

I' the rattle!

For Pompilia—be advised,
Build churches, go pray! You will
find me there,

I know, if you come,—and you will
come, I know.

Why, there 's a Judge weeping! Did
not I say

You were good and true at bottom?
You see the truth—

I am glad I helped you: she helped me
just so.

But for Count Guido,—you must coun-
sel there!

I bow my head, bend to the very dust,
Break myself up in shame of faultiness.
I had him one whole moment, as I said—
As I remember, as will never out
O' the thoughts of me,—I had him in
arm's reach

There,—as you stand, Sir, now you
cease to sit,—

I could have killed him ere he killed his
wife,

And did not: he went off alive and
well

And then effected this last feat—
through me!

Me—not through you—dismiss that
fear! 'T was you

Hindered me staying here to save her,
—not [him

From leaving you and going back to
And doing service in Arezzo. Come,
Instruct me in procedure! I con-
ceive—

In all due self-abasement might I
speak—

How you will deal with Guido: oh, not
death!

Death, if it let her life be: otherwise
Not death,—your lights will teach you
clearer! I

Certainly have an instinct of my own
I' the matter: bear with me and weigh
its worth!

Let us go away—leave Guido all alone
Back on the world again that knows
him now!

I think he will be found (indulge so far!)
Not to die so much as slide out of life,
Pushed by the general horror and
common hate

Low, lower,—left o' the very ledge of
things,

I seem to see him catch convulsively
One by one at all honest forms of life,
At reason, order, decency and use—
To cramp him and get foothold by at
least;

And still they disengage them from his
clutch.

"What, you are he, then, had Pom-
pilia once

"And so forwent her? Take not up
with us!"

And thus I see him slowly and surely
 edged
 Off all the table-land whence life up-
 springs
 Aspiring to be immortality,
 As the snake, hatched on hill-top by
 mischance,
 Despite his wriggling, slips, slides,
 slidders down
 Hill-side, lies low and prostrate on the
 smooth
 Level of the outer place, lapsed in the
 vale :
 So I lose Guido in the loneliness,
 Silence and dusk, till at the doleful
 end,
 At the horizontal line, creation's verge,
 From what just is to absolute nothing-
 ness—
 Lo, what is this he meets, strains on-
 ward still ?
 What other man deep further in the
 fate,
 Who, turning at the prize of a footfall
 To flatter him and promise fellowship,
 Discovers in the act a frightful face—
 Judas, made monstrous by much soli-
 tude !
 The two are at one now ! Let them
 love their love
 That bites and claws like hate, or hate
 their hate
 That mops and mows and makes as it
 were love !
 There, let them each tear each in
 devil's-fun,
 Or fondle this the other while malice
 aches—
 Both teach, both learn detestability !
 Kiss him the kiss, Iscariot ! Pay that
 back,
 That smatch o' the slayer blistering on
 your lip—
 By the better trick, the insult he spared
 Christ—
 Lure him the lure o' the letters, Are-
 tine !
 Lick him o'er slimy-smooth with jelly-
 filth
 O' the verse-and-prose pollution in
 love's guise !
 The cockatrice is with the basilisk !
 There let them grapple, denizens o' the
 dark,
 Foes or friends, but indissolubly bound,
 In their one spot out of the ken of God
 Or care of man, for ever and ever more !

Why, Sirs, what's this ? Why,
 sorry and strange !—
 Futility, divagation : this from
 Bound to be rational, justify an
 Of sober man !—whereas, being r
 so much,
 I give you cause to doubt the
 mind :
 A pretty sarcasm for the world
 fear
 You do her wit injustice,—all th
 me !
 Like my fate all through,—ineffe
 help !
 A poor rash advocate I prove m
 You might be angry with good c
 but sure
 At the advocate,—only at the u
 zeal
 That spoils the force of his own p
 think ?
 My part was just to tell you how t
 stand,
 State facts and not be flustered at
 fume.
 But then 't is a priest speaks : a
 love,—no !
 If you let buzz a vulgar fly like th
 About your brains, as if I loved,
 sooth,
 Indeed, Sirs, you do wrong ! We
 no thought
 Of such infatuation, she and I :
 There are many points that prove
 do be just !
 I told you,—at one little roadside-p
 I spent a good half-hour, paced to
 fro
 The garden ; just to leave her
 awhile,
 I plucked a handful of Spring herb
 bloom :
 I might have sat beside her on
 bench
 Where the children were : I wish
 thing had been,
 Indeed : the event could not be wo
 you know :
 One more half-hour of her saved ! S
 dead now, Sirs !
 While I was running on at such a r
 Friends should have plucked me by
 sleeve : I went
 Too much o' the trivial outside of
 face
 And the purity that shone there—pl
 to me,

Not to you, what more natural? Nor
 am I
 Infatuated,—oh, I saw, be sure
 Her brow had not the right line, leaned
 too much,
 Painters would say; they like the
 straight-up Greek:
 This seemed bent somewhat with an in-
 visible crown
 Of martyr and saint, not such as art
 approves.
 And how the dark orbs dwelt deep
 underneath,
 Looked out of such a sad sweet heaven
 on me—
 The lips, compressed a little, came for-
 ward too,
 Careful for a whole world of sin and
 pain.
 That was the face, her husband makes
 his plea,
 He sought just to disfigure,—no of-
 fence
 Beyond that! Sirs, let us be rational!
 He needs must vindicate his honour,—
 ay,
 Yet shirks, the coward, in a clown's
 disguise,
 Away from the scene, endeavours to
 escape.
 Now, had he done so, slain and left no
 trace
 O' the slayer,—what were vindicated,
 pray?
 You had found his wife disfigured or a
 corpse,
 For what and by whom? It is too
 palpable!
 Then, here 's another point involving
 law:
 I use this argument to show you meant
 No calumny against us by that title
 O' the sentence,—liars try to twist it
 so:
 What penalty it bore, I had to pay
 Till further proof should follow of inno-
 cence—
Probationis ob defectum,—proof?
 How could you get proof without try-
 ing us?
 You went through the preliminary
 form,
 Stopped there, contrived this sentence
 to amuse
 The adversary. If the title ran
 For more than fault imputed and not
 proved,

That was a simple penman's error, else
 A slip i' the phrase,—as when we say
 of you
 "Charged with injustice"—which
 may either be
 Or not be,—'t is a name that sticks
 meanwhile.
 Another relevant matter: fool that I
 am!
 Not what I wish true, yet a point
 friends urge:
 It is not true,—yet, since friends think
 it helps,—
 She only tried me when some others
 failed—
 Began with Conti, whom I told you of,
 And Guillichini, Guido's kinsfolk both,
 And when abandoned by them, not be-
 fore,
 Turned to me. That 's conclusive why
 she turned.
 Much good they got by the happy
 cowardice!
 Conti is dead, poisoned a month ago:
 Does that much strike you as a sin?
 Not much,
 After the present murder,—one mark
 more
 On the Moor's skin,—what is black by
 blacker still?
 Conti had come here and told truth.
 And so
 With Guillichini; he 's condemned of
 course
 To the galleys, as a friend in this affair,
 Tried and condemned for no one thing
 i' the world,
 A fortnight since by who but the
 Governor?— [help
 The just judge, who refused Pompilia
 At first blush, being her husband's
 friend, you know.
 There are two tales to suit the separate
 courts,
 Arezzo and Rome: he tells you here,
 we fled
 Alone, unhelped,—lays stress on the
 main fault,
 The spiritual sin, Rome looks to: but
 elsewhere
 He likes best we should break in, steal,
 bear off,
 Be fit to brand and pillory and flog—
 That's the charge goes to the heart of
 the Governor:
 If these unpriest me, you and I may
 yet

Converse, Vincenzo Marzi-Medici !
 Oh, Sirs, there are worse men than you,
 I say !
 More easily duped, I mean ; this stupid
 lie,
 Its liar never dared propound in Rome,
 He gets Arezzo to receive,—nay more,
 Gets Florence and the Duke to author-
 ise !
 This is their Rota's sentence, their
 Granduke
 Signs and seals ! Rome for me hence-
 forward—Rome,
 Where better men are,—most of all,
 that man
 The Augustinian of the Hospital,
 Who writes the letter,—he confessed,
 he says,
 Many a dying person, never one
 So sweet and true and pure and beauti-
 ful.
 A good man ! Will you make him
 Pope one day ?
 Not that he is not good too, this we
 have—
 But old,—else he would have his word
 to speak,
 His truth to teach the world : I thirst
 for truth,
 But shall not drink it till I reach the
 source.

Sirs, I am quiet again. You see, we are
 So very pitiable, she and I,
 Who had conceivably been otherwise.
 Forget distemperature and idle heat !
 Apart from truth's sake, what 's to
 move so much ?

Pompilia will be presently with God ;
 I am, on earth, as good as out of it,
 A relegated priest ; when exile ends,
 I mean to do my duty and live long.
 She and I are mere strangers now :
 but priests

Should study passion ; how else cure
 mankind,
 Who come for help in passionate ex-
 tremes ?

I do but play with an imagined life
 Of who, unfettered by a vow, unblessed
 By the higher call,—since you will have
 it so,— [there.
 Leads it companioned by the woman
 To live, and see her learn, and learn by
 her,

Out of the low obscure and petty
 world—

Or only see one purpose and one will
 Evolve themselves i' the world, chan-
 wrong to right :

To have to do with nothing but t
 true,

The good, the eternal—and these, n
 alone

In the main current of the general li
 But small experiences of every day,
 Concerns of the particular hearth a
 home :

To learn not only by a comet's rush
 But a rose's birth,—not by the gran
 eur, God—

But the comfort, Christ. All this, h
 far away !

Mere delectation, meet for a minut
 dream !—

Just as a drudging student trims l
 lamp,

Opens his Plutarch, puts him in t
 place

Of Roman, Grecian ; draws the patch
 gown close,

Dreams, " Thus should I fight, save
 rule the world ! "—

Then smilingly, contentedly, awakes
 To the old solitary nothingness.

So I, from such communion, pass co
 tent . . .

O great, just, good God ! Miserab
 me !

VII

POMPILIA

I AM just seventeen years and fi
 months old,

And, if I lived one day more, three f
 weeks ;

'T is writ so in the church's register,
 Lorenzo in Lucina, all my names

At length, so many names for one po
 child,

—Francesca Camilla Vittoria Angela
 Pompilia Comparini,—laughable !

Also 't is writ that I was married th
 Four years ago : and they will add

hope,
 When they insert my death, a word

two,—
 Omitting all about the mode of deat

This, in its place, this which one ca
 to know.

That I had been a mother of a son
 Exactly two weeks. It will be throu

grace

and one will
world, change
hing but the
and these, not
e general life,
every day,
ar hearth and
omet's rush
by the grand-
All this, how
or a minute's
ent trims his
s him in the
ys the patched
fight, save or
lly, awakes
ngness.
ion, pass con-
! Miserable
ears and five
ore, three full
h's register,
ay names
es for one poor
oria Angela
ughable!
married there
ey will add, I
ath, a word or
ode of death,-
hich one cares
er of a son
will be through

O' the Curate, not through any claim I
have;
Because the boy was born at, so bap-
tized
Close to, the Villa, in the proper
church:
A pretty church, I say no word against,
Yet stranger-like,—while this Lorenzo
seems
My own particular place, I always say.
I used to wonder, when I stood scarce
high
As the bed here, what the marble lion
meant,
With half his body rushing from the
wall,
Eating the figure of a prostrate man—
(To the right, it is, of entry by the door)
An ominous sign to one baptized like
me,
Married, and to be buried there, I hope.
And they should add, to have my life
complete,
He is a boy and Gaetan by name—
Gaetano, for a reason,—if the friar
Don Celestine will ask this grace for
me
Of Curate Ottoboni: he it was
Baptized me: he remembers my
whole life
As I do his grey hair.

All these few things
I know are true,—will you remember
them?
Because time flies. The surgeon cared
for me,
To count my wounds,—twenty-two
dagger-wounds,
Five deadly, but I do not suffer much—
Or too much pain,—and am to die to-
night.
Oh how good God is that my babe was
born,
—Better than born, baptized and hid
away
Before this happened, safe from being
hurt!
That had been sin God could not well
forgive:
He was too young to smile and save
himself.
When they took, two days after he was
born,
My babe away from me to be baptized
And hidden awhile, for fear his foe
should find,—

The country-woman, used to nursing
babes,
Said "Why take on so? where is the
great loss?
"These next three weeks he will but
sleep and feed,
"Only begin to smile at the month's
end;
"He would not know you, if you kept
him here,
"Sooner than that; so, spend three
merry weeks
"Snug in the Villa, getting strong and
stout,
"And then I bring him back to be your
own,
"And both of you may steal to—we
know where!"
The month—there wants of it two weeks
this day!
Still, I half fancied when I heard the
knock
At the Villa in the dusk, it might prove
she—
Come to say "Since he smiles before
the time,
"Why should I cheat you out of ore
good hour?
"Back I have brought him; speak to
him and judge!" [worse,
Now I shall never see him; what is
When he grows up and gets to be my
age,
He will seem hardly more than a great
boy;
And if he asks "What was my mother
like?"
People may answer "Like girls of
seventeen"—
And how can he but think of this and
that,
Lucias, Marias, Sofias, who titter or
blush
When he regards them as such boys
may do?
Therefore I wish someone will please
to say
I looked already old though I was
young;
Do I not . . say, if you are by to
speak . .
Look nearer twenty? No more like,
at least,
Girls who look arch or redden when
boys laugh,
Than the poor Virgin that I used to
know

At our street-corner in a lonely niche,—
The babe, that sat upon her knees,
broke off,—

Thin white glazed clay, you pitied her
the more :

She, not the gay ones, always got my
rose.

How happy those are who know how to
write !

Such could write what their son should
read in time,

Had they a whole day to live out like
me.

Also my name is not a common name,
"Pompilia," and may help to keep
apart

A little the thing I am from what girls
are.

But then how far away, how hard to
find

Will anything about me have become,
Even if the boy bethink himself and
ask !

No father that he ever knew at all,
Nor ever had—no, never had, I say !
That is the truth,—nor any mother
left,

Out of the little two weeks that she
lived,

Fit for such memory as might assist :
As good too as no family, no name,
Not even poor old Pietro's name, nor
hers,

Poor kind unwise Violante, since it
seems

They must not be my parents any
more.

That is why something put it in my
head

To call the boy "Gaetano"—no old
name

For sorrow's sake ; I looked up to the
sky

And took a new saint to begin anew.
One who has only been made saint—
how long ?

Twenty-five years : so, carefuller, per-
haps,

To guard a namesake than those old
saints grow,

Tired out by this time,—see my own
five saints !

On second thoughts, I hope he will re-
gard

The history of me as what some one
dreamed,

And get to disbelieve it at the last :
Since to myself it dwindles fast to this
Sheer dreaming and impossibility,—

Just in four days too ! All the seven
teen years,

Not once did a suspicion visit me
How very different a lot is mine
From any other woman's in the world
The reason must be, 't was by step a
step

It got to grow so terrible and strange
These strange woes stole on tiptoe,
it were,

Into my neighbourhood and privacy
Sat down where I sat, laid them where
lay ;

And I was found familiarised with fear
When friends broke in, held up a torch
and cried

"Why, you Pompilia in the cave
thus,

"How comes that arm of yours about
wolf ?

"And the soft length,—lies in and
your feet

"And laps you round the knee,
snake it is !"

And so on.

Well, and they are right enough
By the torch they hold up now :
first, observe,

I never had a father,—no, nor yet
A mother : my own boy can say
least

"I had a mother whom I kept
weeks !"

Not I, who little used to doubt
doubt

Good Pietro, kind Violante, gave
birth ?

They loved me always as I love
babe

(—Nearly so, that is—quite so close
not be—)

Did for me all I meant to do for him
Till one surprising day, three years ago

They both declared, at Rome, before
some judge

In some court where the people flood
to hear,

That really I had never been their child
Was a mere castaway, the careless child
Of an unknown man, the crime and
too much

Of a woman known too well,—little
these,

Therefore, of whom I was the flesh and blood :

What then to Pietro and Violante, both
No more my relatives than you or you?
Nothing to them ! You know what
they declared.

So with my husband,—just such a surprise,

Such a mistake, in that relationship !
Everyone says that husbands love
their wives,

Guard them and guide them, give them
happiness ;

'Tis duty, law, pleasure, religion : well,
You see how much of this comes true
in mine !

People indeed would fain have some-
how proved

He was no husband : but he did not
hear,

Or would not wait, and so has killed us
all.

Then there is . . . only let me name one
more !

There is the friend,—men will not ask
about,

But tell untruths of, and give nick-
names to,

And think my lover, most surprise of
all !

Do only hear, it is the priest they mean
Giuseppe Caponsacchi : a priest—love,
And love me ! Well, yet people think
he did.

I am married, he has taken priestly
vows,

They know that, and yet go on, say,
the same,

" Yes, how he loves you ! " " That
was love "—they say,

When anything is answered that they
ask :

Or else " No wonder you love him "—
they say.

Then they shake heads, pity much,
scarcely blame—

As if we neither of us lacked excuse,
And anyhow are punished to the full !

And downright love atones for every-
thing !

Nay, I heard read-out in the public
court

Before the judge, in presence of my
friends,

Letters 't was said the priest had sent
to me,

And other letters sent him by myself,
We being lovers !

Listen what this is like !

When I was a mere child, my mother
. . . that 's

Violante, you must let me call her so
Nor waste time, trying to unlearn the
word, . . .

She brought a neighbour's child of my
own age

To play with me of rainy afternoons ;
And, since there hung a tapestry on the
wall,

We two agreed to find each other out
Among the figures. " 'Tisbe, that is
you,

" With half-moon on your hair-knot,
spear in hand,

" Flying, but no wings, only the great
scarf

" Blown to a bluish rainbow at your
back : [alone ! "

" Call off your hound and leave the stag
"—And there are you, Pompilia, such
green leaves

" Flourishing out of your five finger-
ends,

" And all the rest of you so brown and
rough :

" Why is it you are turned a sort of
tree ? "

You know the figures never were our-
selves

Though we nicknamed them so. Thus,
all my life,—

As well what was, as what, like this,
was not,—

Looks old, fantastic and impossible :
I touch a fairy thing that fades and

fades.

—Even to my babe ! I thought, when
he was born,

Something began for once that would
not end,

Nor change into a laugh at me, but
stay

For evermore, eternally quite mine.
Well, so he is,—but yet they bore him
off,

The third day, lest my husband should
lay traps

And catch him, and by means of him
catch me.

Since they have saved him so, it was
well done :

Yet thence comes such confusion of
what was

With what will be,—that late seems
 long ago,
 And, what years should bring round,
 already come,
 Till even he withdraws into a dream
 As the rest do: I fancy him grown
 great,
 Strong, stern, a tall young man who
 tutors me,
 Frowns with the others "Poor impru-
 dent child!
 "Why did you venture out of the safe
 street?
 "Why go so far from help to that lone
 house?
 "Why open at the whisper and the
 knock?"

Six days ago when it was New Year's-
 day,
 We bent above the fire and talked of
 him,
 What he should do when he was grown
 and great.
 Violante, Pietro, each had given the
 arm
 I leant on, to walk by, from couch to
 chair
 And fireside,—laughed, as I lay safe at
 last,
 "Pompilia's march from bed to board
 is made,
 "Pompilia back again and with a babe,
 "Shall one day lend his arm and help
 her walk!"
 Then we all wished each other more
 New Years.
 Pietro began to scheme—"Our cause
 is gained;
 "The law is stronger than a wicked
 man:
 "Let him henceforth go his way, leave
 us ours!
 "We will avoid the city, tempt no
 more
 "The greedy ones by feasting and
 parade,—
 "Live at the other villa, we know
 where,
 "Still farther off, and we can watch
 the babe
 "Grow fast in the good air; and wood
 is cheap
 "And wine sincere outside the city
 gate.
 "I still have two or three old friends
 will grope

"Their way along the mere half-n
 of road,
 "With staff and lantern on a moon
 night
 "When one needs talk: they 'll f
 me, never fear,
 "And I'll find them a flask of the
 sort yet!"
 Violante said "You chatter like
 crow:
 "Pompilia tires o' the tattle, and sl
 to bed:
 "Do not too much the first day
 somewhat more
 "To-morrow, and, the next, begin
 cape
 "And hood and coat! I have s
 wool enough."
 Oh what a happy friendly eve
 that!

And, next day, about noon, out Pie
 went—
 He was so happy and would talk
 much,
 Until Violante pushed and laugh
 him forth
 Sight-seeing in the cold,—"So m
 to see
 "I' the churches! Swathe y
 throat three times!" she cried
 "And, above all, beware the slipp
 ways,
 "And bring us all the news by sup
 time!"
 He came back late, laid by cloak, s
 and hat,
 Powdered so thick with snow it m
 us laugh,
 Rolled a great log upon the ash o'
 hearth,
 And bade Violante treat us to a fl
 Because he had obeyed her faithf
 Gone sight-see through the seven,
 found no church
 To his mind like San Giovan
 "There 's the fold,
 "And all the sheep together, big
 cats!
 "And such a shepherd, half the siz
 life,
 "Starts up and hears the angel
 when, at the door,
 A tap: we started up: you know
 rest.
 Pietro at least had done no harm
 know;

mere half-mile
 on a moonless
 they 'll find
 ask of the old
 hatter like a
 ttle, and shall
 e first day,—
 next, begin the
 I have spun
 ndly eve was
 on, out Pietro
 would talk so
 and laughed
 d,—“ So much
 Swathe your
 ” she cried,
 re the slippery
 ews by supper-
 by cloak, staff
 a snow it made
 the ash o' the
 t us to a flask,
 her faithfully,
 the seven, and
 an Giovanni—
 together, big as
 half the size of
 the angel”—
 you know the
 ne no harm, I

Nor even Violante, so much harm as
 makes
 Such revenge lawful. Certainly she
 erred—
 Did wrong, how shall I dare say other-
 wise?—
 In telling that first falsehood, buying
 me
 From my poor faulty mother at a price,
 To pass off upon Pietro as his child :
 If one should take my babe, give him a
 name,
 Say he was not Gaetano and my own,
 But that some other woman made his
 mouth
 And hands and feet,—how very false
 were that !
 No good could come of that ; and all
 harm did.
 Yet if a stranger were to represent
 “ Needs must you either give your
 babe to me [more,
 “ And let me call him mine for ever
 “ Or let your husband get him ”—ah,
 my God,
 That were a trial I refuse to face !
 Well, just so here : it proved wrong but
 seemed right
 To poor Violante—for there lay, she
 said,
 My poor real dying mother in her rags,
 Who put me from her with the life and
 all,
 Poverty, pain, shame and disease at
 once,
 To die the easier by what price I
 fetched—
 Also (I hope) because I should be
 spared
 Sorrow and sin,—why may not that
 have helped ?
 My father,—he was no one, any one,—
 The worse, the likelier,—call him,—he
 who came, [way,
 Was wicked for his pleasure, went his
 And left no trace to track by ; there
 remained
 Nothing but me, the unnecessary life,
 To catch up or let fall,—and yet a
 thing
 She could make happy, be made happy
 with,
 This poor Violante,—who would frown
 thereat ?
 Well, God, you see ! God plants us
 where we grow.

R.P.

It is not that, because a bud is born
 At a wild briar's end, full i' the wild
 beast's way,
 We ought to pluck and put it out of
 reach
 On the oak-tree top,—say, “ There the
 bud belongs ! ”
 She thought, moreover, real lies were—
 lies told
 For harm's sake ; whereas this had
 good at heart,
 Good for my mother, good for me, and
 good
 For Pietro who was meant to love a
 babe,
 And needed one to make his life of use,
 Receive his house and land when he
 should die.
 Wrong, wrong and always wrong !
 how plainly wrong !
 For see, this fault kept pricking, as
 faults do,
 All the same at her heart,—this false-
 hood hatched,
 She could not let it go nor keep it fast.
 She told me so,—the first time I was
 found
 Locked in her arms once more after
 the pain,
 When the nuns let me leave them and
 go home,
 And both of us cried all the cares
 away,—
 This it was set her on to make amends,
 This brought about the marriage—
 simply this !
 Do let me speak for her you blame so
 much !
 When Paul, my husband's brother,
 found me out,
 Heard there was wealth for who should
 marry me,
 So, came and made a speech to ask my
 hand
 For Guido,—she, instead of piercing
 straight
 Through the pretence to the ignoble
 truth,
 Fancied she saw God's very finger
 point,
 Designate just the time for planting
 me,
 (The wild briar-slip she plucked to love
 and wear)
 In soil where I could strike real root,
 and grow,
 And get to be the thing I called myself :

3 H

For, wife and husband are one flesh,
 God says,
 And I, whose parents seemed such and
 were none,
 Should in a husband have a husband
 now,
 Find nothing, this time, but was what
 it seemed,
 —All truth and no confusion any more.
 I know she meant all good to me, all
 pain
 To herself,—since how could it be
 aught but pain,
 To give me up, so, from her very breast,
 The wilding flower-tree-branch that,
 all those years,
 She had got used to feel for and find
 fixed?
 She meant well: has it been so ill i'
 the main? [judge
 That is but fair to ask: one cannot
 Of what has been the ill or well of life,
 The day that one is dying,—sorrows
 change
 Into not altogether sorrow-like;
 I do see strangeness but scarce misery,
 Now it is over, and no danger more.
 My child is safe; there seems not so
 much pain.
 It comes, most like, that I am just ab-
 solved,
 Purged of the past, the foul in me,
 washed fair,—
 One cannot both have and not have,
 you know,—
 Being right now, I am happy and
 colour things.
 Yes, every body that leaves life sees all
 Softened and bettered: so with other
 sights:
 To me at least was never evening yet
 But seemed far beautifuller than its
 day,
 For past is past.

There was a fancy came,
 When somewhere, in the journey with
 my friend,
 We stepped into a hovel to get food;
 And there began a yelp here, a bark
 there,—
 Misunderstanding creatures that were
 wroth
 And vexed themselves and us till we
 retired.
 The hovel is life: no matter what dogs
 bit

Or cats scratched in the hovel I br
 from,
 All outside is lone field, moon and s
 peace—
 Flowing in, filling up as with a sea
 Whereon comes Someone, walks
 on the white,
 Jesus Christ's self, Don Celestine
 clares,
 To meet me and calm all things b
 again.
 Beside, up to my marriage, thirt
 years
 Were, each day, happy as the day
 long:
 This may have made the change
 terrible.
 I know that when Violante told
 first
 The cavalier,—she meant to bring n
 morn,
 Whom I must also let take, kiss
 hand,—
 Would be at San Lorenzo the same
 And marry me,—which over, we sho
 go
 Home both of us without him as bef
 And, till she bade speak, I must h
 my tongue,
 Such being the correct way with g
 brides,
 From whom one word would mak
 father blush,—
 I know, I say, that when she told
 this,
 —Well, I no more saw sense in what
 said
 Than a lamb does in people clipp
 wool;
 Only lay down and let myself
 clipped.
 And when next day the cavalier v
 came
 (Tisbe had told me that the slim yo
 man
 With wings at head, and wings at f
 and sword
 Threatening a monster, in our tapes
 Would eat a girl else,—was a cava
 When he proved Guido Franceschin
 old
 And nothing like so tall as I mysel
 Hook-nosed and yellow in a bush
 beard,
 Much like a thing I saw on a b
 wrist,

hovel I break
 moon and such
 with a sea
 ne, walks fast
 Celestine de-
 all things back
 riage, thirteen
 as the day was
 he change too
 plante told me
 t to bring next
 take, kiss my
 o the same eve
 over, we should
 t him as before,
 k, I must hold
 way with girl-
 would make a
 en she told me
 nse in what she
 people clipping
 let myself be
 e cavalier who
 the slim young
 d wings at feet,
 n our tapestry,
 was a cavalier)
 Franceschini,—
 as I myself,
 y in a bush of
 aw on a boy's

He called an owl and used for catching
 birds,—
 And when he took my hand and made
 a smile—
 Why, the uncomfortableness of it all
 Seemed hardly more important in the
 case
 Than,—when one gives you, say, a
 coin to spend,—
 Its newness or its oldness ; if the piece
 Weigh properly and buy you what you
 wish,
 No matter whether you get grime or
 glare !
 Men take the coin, return you grapes
 and figs.
 Here, marriage was the coin, a dirty
 piece
 Would purchase me the praise of those
 I loved :
 About what else should I concern my-
 self ?
 So, hardly knowing what a husband
 meant,
 I supposed this or any man would serve,
 No whit the worse for being so uncouth :
 For I was ill once and a doctor came
 With a great ugly hat, no plume thereto,
 Black jerkin and black buckles and
 black sword,
 And white sharp beard over the ruff in
 front,
 And oh so lean, so sour-faced and aus-
 tere !—
 Who felt my pulse, made me put out
 my tongue,
 Then oped a phial, dripped a drop or
 two
 Of a black bitter something,—I was
 cured !
 What mattered the fierce beard or the
 grim face ?
 It was the physic beautified the man,
 Master Malpichi,—never met his match
 In Rome, they said,—so ugly all the
 same !
 However, I was hurried through a
 storm,
 Next dark eve of December's deadest
 day—
 How it rained !—through our street
 and the Lion's-mouth
 And the bit of Corso,—cloaked round,
 covered close,
 I was like something strange or contra-
 band,—

Into blank San Lorenzo, up the aisle,
 My mother keeping hold of me so tight,
 I fancied we were come to see a corpse
 Before the altar which she pulled me
 toward.
 There we found waiting an unpleasant
 priest
 Who proved the brother, not our parish
 friend,
 But one with mischief-making mouth
 and eye,
 Paul, whom I know since to my cost.
 And then
 I heard the heavy church-door lock out
 help
 Behind us : for the customary warnith,
 Two tapers shivered on the altar.
 " Quick—
 " Lose no time !"—cried the priest.
 And straightway down
 From . . what's behind the altar
 where he hid—
 Hawk-nose and yellowness and bush
 and all,
 Stepped Guido, caught my hand, and
 there was I
 O' the chancel, and the priest had
 opened book,
 Read here and there, made me say
 that and this,
 And after, told me I was now a wife,
 Honoured indeed, since Christ thus
 weds the Church,
 And therefore turned he water into
 wine,
 To show I should obey my spouse like
 Christ. [apart,
 Then the two slipped aside and talked
 And I, silent and scared, got down
 again
 And joined my mother who was weep-
 ing now.
 Nobody seemed to mind us any more,
 And both of us on tiptoe found our way
 To the door which was unlocked by
 this, and wide.
 When we were in the street, the rain
 had stopped,
 All things looked better. At our own
 house-door,
 Violante whispered " No one syllable
 " To Pietro ! Girl-brides never breathe
 a word !"
 "—Well treated to a wetting, drag-
 gle-tails !"
 Laughed Pietro as he opened—" Very
 near

" You made me brave the gutter's
roaring sea
" To carry off from roost old dove and
young,
" Trussed up in church, the cote, by
me, the kite !
" What do these priests mean, praying
folk to death
" On stormy afternoons, with Christ-
mas close
" To wash our sins off nor require the
rain ? "
Violante gave my hand a timely
squeeze,
Madonna saved me from immodest
speech,
I kissed him and was quiet, being a
bride.

When I saw nothing more, the next
three weeks,
Of Guido—" Nor the Church sees
Christ " thought I : [wine
" Nothing is changed however, wine is
" And water only water in our house.
" Nor did I see that ugly doctor since
" The cure of the illness : just as I was
cured,
" I am married,—neither scarecrow will
return."

Three weeks, I chuckled—" How would
Giulia stare,
" And Tecla smile and Tisbe laugh out-
right,
" Were it not impudent for brides to
talk ! "—
Until one morning, as I sat and sang
At the broidery-frame alone i' the
chamber,—loud
Voices, two, three together, sobbings
too,
And my name, " Guido," " Paolo,"
flung like stones
From each to the other ! In I ran to
see.
There stood the very Guido and the
priest
With sly face,—formal but nowise
afraid,—
While Pietro seemed all red and angry,
scarce
Able to stutter out his wrath in words ;
And this it was that made my mother
sob,
As he reproached her—" You have
murdered us,

" Me and yourself and this our
beside ! "
Then Guido interposed " Murderer
not,
" Be it enough your child is now
wife !
" I claim and come to take her."—
put in,
" Consider—kinsman, dare I term
so ?—
" What is the good of your sagacity
" Except to counsel in a strait
this ?
" I guarantee the parties man and
" Whether you like or loathe it, h
or ban.
" May spilt milk be put back wi
the bowl—
" The done thing, undone ? You
is, we look
" For counsel to, you fittest will
vise !
" Since milk, though spilt and sp
does marble good,
" Better we down on knees and sc
the floor,
" Than sigh, ' the waste would mal
syllabub ! '
" Help us so turn disaster to acco
" So predispose the groom, he ne
shall grace
" The bride with favour from the v
first,
" Not begin marriage an embitter
man ! "
He smiled,—the game so wholly in
hands !
While fast and faster sobbed Viola
—" Ay,
" All of us murdered, past avert
now !
" O my sin, O my secret ! " and su
like.
Then I began to half surmise the truth
Something had happened, low, mean
underhand,
False, and my mother was to blame
and I
To pity, whom all spoke of, none a
dressed :
I was the chattel that had caused
crime.
I stood mute,—those who tangled mu
untie
The embroilment. Pietro cried " Wit
draw, my child !

"She is not helpful to the sacrifice
 "At this stage,—do you want the vic-
 tim by
 "While you discuss the value of her
 blood?
 "For her sake, I consent to hear you
 talk:
 "Go, child, and pray God help the
 innocent!"

I did go and was praying God, when
 came

Violante, with eyes swollen and red
 enough,
 But movement on her mouth for make-
 believe

Matters were somehow getting right
 again.

She bade me sit down by her side and
 hear.

"You are too young and cannot under-
 stand,

"Nor did your father understand at
 first.

"I wished to benefit all three of us,

"And when he failed to take my mean-
 ing,—why,

"I tried to have my way at unaware—

"Obtained him the advantage he re-
 fused.

"As if I put before him wholesome
 food

"Instead of broken victual,—he finds
 change

"I the viands, never cares to reason
 why,

"But falls to blaming me, would fling
 the plate

"From window, scandalize the neigh-
 bourhood,

"Even while he smacks his lips,—
 men's way, my child!

"But either you have prayed him un-
 perverse

"Or I have talked him back into his
 wits:

"And Paolo was a help in time of
 need,—

"Guido, not much—my child, the way
 of men!

"A priest is more a woman than a man,

"And Paul did wonders to persuade.
 In short,

"Yes, he was wrong, your father sees
 and says;

"My scheme was worth attempting:
 and bears fruit,

"Gives you a husband and a noble
 name,

"A palace and no end of pleasant
 things.

"What do you care about a handsome
 youth?

"They are so volatile, and tease their
 wives!

"This is the kind of man to keep the
 house.

"We lose no daughter,—gain a son,
 that's all:

"For 'tis arranged we never separate,

"Nor miss, in our grey time of life,
 the tints

"Of you that colour eve to match with
 morn,

"In good or ill, we share and share
 alike,

"And cast our lots into a common lap,

"And all three die together as we lived!

"Only, at Arezzo,—that's a Tuscan
 town,

"Not so large as this noisy Rome, no
 doubt,

"But older far and finer much, say
 folks,—

"In a great palace where you will be
 queen,

"Know the Archbishop and the
 Governor,

"And we see homage done you ere we
 die.

"Therefore, be good and pardon!"—
 "Pardon what?

"You know things, I am very ignorant:

"All is right if you only will not cry!"

And so an end! Because a blank be-
 gins

From when, at the word, she kissed me
 hard and hot,

And took me back to where my father
 leaned

Opposite Guido—who stood eyeing
 him,

As eyes the butcher the cast panting ox
 That feels his fate is come, nor strug-
 gles more,—

While Paul looked archly on, pricked
 brow at whites

With the pen-point as to punish tri-
 umph there,—

And said "Count Guido, take your
 lawful wife

"Until death part you!"

All since is one blank,
 Over and ended; a terrific dream.
 It is the good of dreams—so soon they
 go!
 Wake in a horror of heart-beats, you
 may—
 Cry, "The dread thing will never from
 my thoughts!"
 Still, a few daylight doses of plain life,
 Cock-crow and sparrow-chirp, or bleat
 and bell
 Of goats that trot by, tinkling, to be
 milked;
 And when you rub your eyes awake
 and wide,
 Where is the harm o' the horror?
 Gone! So here.
 I know I wake,—but from what?
 Blank, I say!
 This is the note of evil: for good lasts.
 Even when Don Celestine bade "Search
 and find!"
 "For your soul's sake, remember what
 is past,
 "The better to forgive it,"—all in
 vain!
 What was fast getting indistinct be-
 fore,
 Vanished outright. By special grace
 perhaps,
 Between that first calm and this last,
 four years
 Vanish,—one quarter of my life, you
 know.
 I am held up, amid the nothingness,
 By one or two truths only—thence I
 hang,
 And there I live,—the rest is death or
 dream,
 All but those points of my support. I
 think
 Of what I saw at Rome once in the
 Square.
 O' the Spaniards, opposite the Spanish
 House:
 There was a foreigner had trained a
 goat,
 A shuddering white woman of a beast,
 To climb up, stand straight on a pile
 of sticks
 Put close, which gave the creature
 room enough:
 When she was settled there he, one by
 one,
 Took away all the sticks, left just the
 four
 Whereon the little hoofs did really rest,

There she kept firm, all undern
 was air.
 So, what I hold by, are my praye
 God,
 My hope, that came in answer to
 prayer,
 Some hand would interpose and
 me—hand
 Which proved to be my friend's ha
 and,—best bliss,—
 That fancy which began so faint
 first,
 That thrill of dawn's suffusion thro
 my dark,
 Which I perceive was promise of
 child,
 The light his unborn face sent long
 fore,—
 God's way of breaking the good n
 to flesh.
 That is all left now of those four
 years.
 Don Celestine urged "But remem
 more!
 "Other men's faults may help me
 your own.
 "I need the cruelty exposed,
 plained,
 "Or how can I advise you to forgive
 He thought I could not properly forg
 Unless I ceased forgetting,—which
 true:
 For, bringing back reluctantly to m
 My husband's treatment of me,—b
 light [v
 That 's later than my life-time, I
 And comprehend much and imag
 more,
 And have but little to forgive at last
 For now,—be fair and say,—is it
 true
 He was ill-used and cheated of his h
 To get enriched by marriage? M
 riage gave
 Me and no money, broke the comp
 so:
 He had a right to ask me on th
 terms,
 As Pietro and Violante to declare
 They would not give me: so the b
 gain stood:
 They broke it, and he felt himself
 grieved,
 Became unkind with me to pun
 them.
 They said 't was he began decept
 first,

Nor, in one point whereto he pledged himself,

Kept promise : what of that, suppose it were ?

Echoes die off, scarcely reverberate
For ever,—why should ill keep echoing ill,

And never let our ears have done with noise ?

Then my poor parents took the violent way

To thwart him,—he must needs retaliate,—wrong,

Wrong, and all wrong,—better say, all blind !

As I myself was, that is sure, who else
Had understood the mystery : for his wife

Was bound in some sort to help somehow there.

It seems as if I might have interposed,
Blunted the edge of their resentment so,

Since he vexed me because they first vexed him ;

" I will entreat them to desist, submit,
" Give him the money and be poor in peace,—

" Certainly not go tell the world : perhaps

" He will grow quiet with his gains."

Yes, say

Something to this effect and you do well !

But then you have to see first : I was blind.

That is the fruit of all such wormy ways,

The indirect, the unapproved of God :
You cannot find their author's end and aim,

Not even to substitute your good for Your open for the irregular ; you stand
Stupefied, profitless, as cow or sheep

That miss a man's mind ; anger him just twice

By trial at repairing the first fault.

Thus, when he blamed me, " You are a coquette,

" A lure-owl posturing to attract birds,
" You look love-lures at theatre and church,

" In walk, at window I"—that, I knew, was false :

But why he charged me falsely, whither sought

To drive me by such charge,—how could I know ?

So, unaware, I only made things worse.
I tried to soothe him by abjuring walk,
Window, church, theatre, for good and all,

As if he had been in earnest : that, you know,

Was nothing like the object of his charge.

Yes, when I got my maid to supplicate
The priest, whose name she read when she would read

Those feigned false letters I was forced to hear

Though I could read no word of,—he should cease

Writing,—nay, if he minded prayer of mine,

Cease from so much as even pass the street

Whereon our house looked,—in my ignorance

I was just thwarting Guido's true intent ;

Which was, to bring about a wicked change

Of sport to earnest, tempt a thoughtless man

To write indeed, and pass the house, and more,

Till both of us were taken in a crime.
He ought not to have wished me thus

act lies,
Simulate folly,—but,—wrong or right, the wish,—

I failed to apprehend its drift. How plain

It follows,—if I fell into such fault,
He also may have overreached the mark,

Made mistake, by perversity of brain,
In the whole sad strange plot, this same intrigue

To make me and my friend unself ourselves,

Be other man and woman than we
Think it out, you who have the time !

for me,—
I cannot say less ; more I will not say.

Leave it to God to cover and undo !
Only, my dulness should not prove too much !

—Not prove that in a certain other point

Wherein my husband blamed me,—and you blame,

If I interpret smiles and shakes of head,—
 I was dull too. Oh, if I dared but speak!
 Must I speak? I am blamed that I forwent
 A way to make my husband's favour come.
 This is true: I was firm, withstood, refused . . .
 —Women as you are, how can I find the words?

I felt there was just one thing Guido claimed
 I had no right to give nor he to take;
 We being in estrangement, soul from soul:
 Till, when I sought help, the Archbishop smiled,
 Inquiring into privacies of life,
 —Said I was blameable—(he stands for God)
 Nowise entitled to exemption there.
 Then I obeyed,—as surely had obeyed
 Were the injunction "Since your husband bids,
 "Swallow the burning coal he proffers you!"
 But I did wrong, and he gave wrong advice
 Though he were thrice Archbishop,—that, I know!—
 Now I have got to die and see things clear.
 Remember I was barely twelve years old—
 A child at marriage: I was let alone
 For weeks, I told you, lived my child-life still
 Even at Arezzo, when I woke and found
 First . . . but I need not think of that again—
 Over and ended! Try and take the sense
 Of what I signify, if it must be so.
 After the first, my husband, for hate's sake,
 Said one eve, when the simpler cruelty
 Seemed somewhat dull at edge and fit to bear,
 "We have been man and wife six months almost:
 "How long is this your comedy to last?
 "Go this night to my chamber, not your own!"

At which word, I did rush—most the charge—
 And gain the Archbishop's house—stands for God—
 And fall upon my knees and clasp feet,
 Praying him hinder what my estranged soul
 Refused to bear, though patient of rest:
 "Place me within a convent," I implored—
 "Let me henceforward lead the virgin life
 "You praise in Her you bid me taste!"
 What did he answer? "Folly and ignorance!
 "Know, daughter, circumstances may mar
 or mar
 "Virginity,—'t is virtue or 't is vice
 "That which was glory in the Mother of God
 "Had been, for instance, damnably Eve
 "Created to be mother of mankind
 "Had Eve, in answer to her Maker's speech
 "'Be fruitful, multiply, replenish the earth'—
 "Pouted 'But I choose rather to remain
 "'Single'—why, she had spared herself forthwith
 "Further probation by the apple and snake,
 "Been pushed straight out of Paradise! For see—
 "If motherhood be qualified impure
 "I catch you making God command Eve sin!
 "—A blasphemy so like these Monks'ists',
 "I must suspect you dip into their books."
 Then he pursued "'T was in your command!"
 No! There my husband never understood deceit.
 He never did by speech nor act imply
 "Because of our souls' yearning to meet
 "And mix in soul through flesh, with yours and mine
 "Wear and impress, and make their visible selves,

"—All which means, for the love of you and me,

"Let us become one flesh, being one soul!"

He only stipulated for the wealth; honest so far. But when he spoke as plain—

Dreadfully honest also—"Since our souls

"Stand each from each, a whole world's width between,

"Give me the fleshy vesture I can reach

"And rend and leave just fit for hell to burn!"—

Why, in God's name, for Guido's soul's own sake

Imperilled by polluting mine,—I say, I did resist; would I had overcome!

My heart died out at the Archbishop's smile;

—It seemed so stale and worn a way o' the world,

As though 't were nature frowning—

"Here is Spring,

"The sun shines as he shone at Adam's fall,

"The earth requires that warmth reach everywhere:

"What, must your patch of snow be saved forsooth

"Because you rather fancy snow than flowers?"

Something in this style he began with me.

Last he said, savagely for a good man,

"This explains why you call your husband harsh,

"Harsh to you, harsh to whom you love. God's Bread!

"The poor Count has to manage a mere child

Whose parents leave untaught the simplest things

"Their duty was and privilege to teach,—

"Goodwives' instruction, gossips' lore: they laugh

"And leave the Count the task,—or leave it me!"

Then I resolved to tell a frightful thing.

"I am not ignorant,—know what I say,

"Declaring this is sought for hate, not love.

"Sir, you may hear things like almighty God.

"I tell you that my housemate, yes—the priest

"My husband's brother, Canon Girolamo—

"Has taught me what depraved and misnamed love

"Means, and what outward signs denote the sin,

"For he solicits me and says he loves,

"The idle young priest with nought else to do.

"My husband sees this, knows this, and lets be.

"Is it your counsel I bear this beside?"

"—More scandal, and against a priest this time!

"What, 't is the Canon now?"—less snappishly—

"Rise up, my child, for such a child you are,

"The rod were too advanced a punishment!

"Let 's try the honeyed cake. A parable!

"Without a parable spake He not to them."

"There was a ripe round long black toothsome fruit,

"Even a flower-fig, the prime boast of May:

"And, to the tree, said . . either the spirit o' the fig.

"Or, if we bring in men, the gardener,

"Archbishop of the orchard—had I time

"To try o' the two which fits in best: indeed

"It might be the Creator's self, but then

"The tree should bear an apple, I suppose,— [said

"Well, anyhow, one with authority

"Ripe fig, burst skin, regale the fig-pecker—

"The bird whereof thou art a perquisite!"

"Nay, with a flounce, replied the restif fig.

"I much prefer to keep my pulp myself:

"He may go breakfastless and dinnerless,

"Supperless of one crimson seed, for me!"

"So, back she flopped into her bunch of leaves.

" He flew off, left her,—did the natural
lord,—
" And lo, three hundred thousand bees
and wasps
" Found her out, feasted on her to the
shuck :
" Such gain the fig's that gave its bird
no bite !
" The moral,—fools elude their proper
lot,
" Tempt other fools, get ruined all
alike.
" Therefore go home, embrace your
husband quick !
" Which if his Canon brother chance to
see,
" He will the sooner back to book
again."

So, home I did go ; so, the worst befell :
So, I had proof the Archbishop was just
man,
And hardly that, and certainly no
more.
For, miserable consequence to me,
My husband's hatred waxed nor waned
at all,
His brother's boldness grew effrontery
soon,
And my last stay and comfort in my-
self
Was forced from me : henceforth I
looked to God
Only, nor cared my desecrated soul
Should have fair walls, gay windows for
the world.
God's glimmer, that came through the
ruin-top,
Was witness why all lights were
quenched inside :
Henceforth I asked God counsel, not
mankind.

So, when I made the effort, saved my-
self,
They said—" No care to save appear-
ance here !
" How cynic,—when, how wanton,
were enough ! "
—Adding, it all came of my mother's
life—
My own real mother, whom I never
knew,
Who did wrong (if she needs must have
done wrong)
Through being all her life, not my four
years,

At mercy of the hateful,—every be-
O' the field was wont to break th-
fountain-fence,
Trample the silver into mud so mu-
Heaven could not find itself reflect-
there,—
Now they cry " Out on her, who, plas-
pool,
" Bequeathed turbidity and bitterness
" To the daughter-stream where Gui-
dipt and drank ! "

Well, since she had to bear this bra-
—let me !
The rather do I understand her now,
From my experience of what ha-
calls love,—
Much love might be in what their lo-
called hate.
If she sold . . what they call, sold
me her child—
I shall believe she hoped in her po-
heart [pu-
That I at least might try be good a-
Begin to live untempted, not
doomed
And done with ere once found in fau-
as she.
Oh and, my mother, it all came to thi-
Why should I trust those that speak
of you,
When I mistrust who speaks even w-
of them ?
Why, since all bound to do me goo-
did harm,
May not you, seeming as you harm-
me most,
Have meant to do most good—and
feed your child
From bramble-bush, whom not or-
orchard-tree
But drewback bough from, nor let or-
fruit fall ?
This it was for you sacrificed you-
babe ?
Gained just this, giving your heart-
hope away
As I might give mine, loving it as you-
If . . but that never could be asked o-
me !

There, enough ! I have my suppor-
again,
Again the knowledge that my babe wa-
is,
Will be mine only. Him, by death,
give

Outright to God, without a further
care,—

But not to any parent in the world,—
So to be safe: why is it we repine?
What guardianship were safer could we
choose?

All human plans and projects come to
naught,

My life, and what I know of other lives,
Prove that: no plan nor project! God
shall care!

And now you are not tired? How
I ^{patient} then

All o' you,—Oh yes, patient this long
while

Listening, and understanding, I am
sure!

Four days ago, when I was sound and
well

And like to live, no one would under-
stand.

People were kind, but smiled "And
what of him,

"Your friend, whose tonsure, the rich
dark-brown hides?

"There, there!—your lover, do we
dream he was?

"A priest too—never were such naugh-
tiness!

"Still, he thinks many a long think,
never fear,

"After the shy pale lady.—lay so light
"For a moment in his arms, the lucky
one!"

And so on: wherefore should I blame
you much?

So we are made, such difference in
minds,

Such difference too in eyes that see the
minds! [prise—

That man, you misinterpret and mis-
The glory of his nature, I had thought,
Shot itself out in white light, blazed
the truth

Through every atom of his act with
me:

Yet where I point you, through the
crystal shrine,

Purity in quintessence, one dew-drop,
You all decry a spider in the midst.

One says, "The head of it is plain to
see,"

And one, "They are the feet by which
I judge,"

All say, "Those films were spun by
nothing else."

Then, I must lay my babe away with
God,

Nor think of him again, for gratitude.
Yes, my last breath shall wholly spend
itself

In one attempt more to disperse the
stain,

The mist from other breath fond mouths
have made,

About a lustrous and pellucid soul:
So that, when I am gone but sorrow
stays,

And people need assurance in their
doubt

If God yet have a servant, man a
friend,

The weak a saviour and the vile a foe,—
Let him be present, by the name in-
voked,

Giuseppe-Maria Caponsacchi!

There,
Strength comes already with the utter-
ance!

I will remember once more for his sake
The sorrow: for he lives and is belied.

Could he be here, how he would speak
for me!

I had been miserable three drear years
In that dread palace and lay passive
now,

When I first learned there could be such
a man.

Thus it fell: I was at a public play,
In the last days of Carnival last March,

Brought there I knew not why, but
now know well. [front;

My husband put me where I sat, in
Then crouched down, breathed cold
through me from behind,

Stationed i' the shadow,—none in front
could see,—

I, it was, faced the stranger-throng be-
neath,

The crowd with upturned faces, eyes
one stare, [stage,

Voices one buzz. I looked but to the
Whereon two lovers sang and inter-
changed

"True life is only love, love only bliss:
"I love thee—thou I love!" then they
embraced.

I looked thence to the ceiling and the
walls,—

Over the crowd, those voices and those
eyes,—

My thoughts went through the roof
and out, to Rome
On wings of music, waft of measured
words,—
Set me down there, a happy child
again,
Sure that to-morrow would be festa-
day,
Hearing my parents praise past festas
more,
And seeing they were old if I was young,
Yet wondering why they still would
end discourse
With "We must soon go, you abide
your time,
"And,—might we haply see the proper
friend
"Throw his arm over you and make
you safe!"
Sudden I saw him; into my lap there
fell
A foolish twist of comfits, broke my
dream
And brought me from the air and laid
me low,
As ruined as the soaring bee that 's
reached
(So Pietro told me at the Villa once)
By the dust-handful. There the com-
fits lay:
I looked to see who flung them, and I
faced
This Caponsaechi, looking up in turn.
Ere I could reason out why, I felt sure,
Whoever flung them, his was not the
hand,—
Up rose the round face and good-na-
tured grin
Of him who, in effect, had played the
prank,
From covert close beside the earnest
face,—
Fat waggish Conti, friend of all the
world.
He was my husband's cousin, privi-
leged
To throw the thing: the other, silent,
grave,
Solemn almost, saw me, as I saw him.
There is a psalm Don Celestine recites,
"Had I a dove's wings, how I fain
would flee!"
The psalm runs not "I hope, I pray for
wings,"—
Not "If wings fall from heaven, I fix
them fast,"—

Simply "How good it were to fly
rest,
"Have hope now, and one day ex-
content!
"How well to do what I shall ne-
do!"
So I said "Had there been a man
that,
"To lift me with his strength out o-
strife
"Into the calm, how I could fly
rest!
"I have a keeper in the garden her-
"Whose sole employment is to str-
me low
"If ever I, for solace, seek the sun.
"Life means with me successful fei-
ing death,
"Lying stone-like, eluding notice
"Forgoing here the turf and there
sky.
"Suppose that man had been inste-
of this!"
Presently Conti laughed into my ear,
—Had tripped up to the raised pla-
where I sat—
"Cousin, I flung them brutishly a-
hard!
"Because you must be hurt, to lo-
austere
"As Caponsaechi yonder, my t-
friend
"A-gazing now. Ah, Guido, you
elose?
"Keep on your knees, do! Beg h-
to forgive! [ba
"My cornet battered like a canno-
"Good bye, I 'm gone!"—nor wait-
the reply.
That night at supper, out my husban-
broke,
"Why was that throwing, that bu-
foenery?
"Do you think I am your dupe-
What man would dare
"Throw comfits in a stranger lady-
lap?
"Twas knowledge of you bred suc-
insolence
"In Caponsaechi; he dared shoot th-
bolt,
"Using that Conti for his stalking
horse.
"How could you see him this once an-
no more,

- "When he is always haunting here—
about
"At the street corner or the palace
side,
"Publishing my shame and your im-
pudence?
"You are a wanton,—I a dupe, you
think?
"O Christ, what hinders that I kill
her quick?"
Whereat he drew his sword and feigned
a thrust.
- All this, now,—being not so strange to
me,
Used to such misconception day by day
And broken-in to bear,—I bore, this
time,
More quietly than woman should per-
haps;
Repeated the mere truth and held my
tongue.
- Then he said, "Since you play the
ignorant,
"I shall instruct you. This amour,—
commenced
"Or finished or midway in act, all's
one,—
"Tis the town-talk; so my revenge
shall be.
"Does he presume because he is a
priest?
"I warn him that the sword I wear
shall pink
"His lily-scented cassock through and
through,
"Next time I catch him underneath
your eaves!"
- But he had threatened with the sword
so oft
And, after all, not kept his promise.
All
I said was, "Let God save the inno-
cent!"
"Moreover, death is far from a bad
fate.
"I shall go pray for you and me, not
him;
"And then I look to sleep, come death
or, worse,
"Life," So, I slept.
- There may have elapsed a week,
When Margherita,—called my waiting-
maid,
- Whom it is said my husband found too
fair—
Who stood and heard the charge and
the reply,
Who never once would let the matter
rest
From that night forward, but rang
changes still
On this the thrust and that the shame,
and how
Good cause for jealousy cures jealous
fools,
And what a paragon was this same
priest
She talked about until I stopped my
ears,—
She said, "A week is gone; you comb
your hair,
"Then go mope in a corner, cheek on
palm,
"Till night comes round again,—so,
waste a week
"As if your husband nuzzled you in
sport.
"Have not I some acquaintance with
his tricks?
"Oh no, he did not stab the serving-
man
"Who made and sang the rhymes
about me once!
"For why? They sent him to the
wars next day.
"Nor poisoned he the foreigner, my
friend,
"Who wagered on the whiteness of my
breast,—
"The swarth skins of our city in dis-
pute:
"For, though he paid me proper com-
pliment,
"The Count well knew he was besotted
with
"Somebody else, a skin as black as ink,
"(As all the town knew save my for-
eigner)
"He found and wedded presently,—
'Why need
"Better revenge?'—the Count asked.
But what 's here?
"A priest, that does not fight, and can-
not wed,
"Yet must be dealt with! If the
Count took fire
"For the poor pastime of a minute,—
me—
"What were the conflagration for your-
self,

" Countess and lady-wife and all the rest ?
 " The priest will perish ; you will grieve too late :
 " So shall the city-ladies' handsomest
 " Frankest and liberalest gentleman
 " Die for you, to appease a scurvy dog
 " Hanging 's too good for. Is there no escape ?
 " Were it not simple Christian charity
 " To warn the priest be on his guard,
 —save him
 " Assured death, save yourself from causing it ?
 " I meet him in the street. Give me a glove,
 " A ring to show for token ! Mum's the word ! "

I answered, " If you were, as styled,
 my maid,
 " I would command you : as you are,
 you say,
 " My husband's intimate,—assist his wife
 " Who can do nothing but entreat ' Be still ! '
 " Even if you speak truth and a crime is planned,
 " Leave help to God as I am forced to do !
 " There is no other course, or we should craze,
 " Seeing such evil with no human cure.
 " Reflect that God, who makes the storm desist,
 " Can make an angry violent heart subside.
 " Why should we venture teach Him governance ?
 " Never address me on this subject more ! "

Next night she said, " But I went, all the same,
 " —Ay, saw your Caponsacchi in his house,
 " And come back stuffed with news I must outpour.
 " I told him, ' Sir, my mistress is a stone :
 " ' Why should you harm her for no good you get ?
 " ' For you do harm her—prowl about our place
 " ' With the Count never distant half the street,

" ' Lurking at every corner, wou look !
 " ' 'Tis certain she has witched yo a spell.
 " ' Are there not other beaut your beck ?
 " ' We all know, Donna This and na That
 " ' Die for a glance of yours, ye you gaze !
 " ' Go make them grateful, leav stone its cold ! "
 " And he—oh, he turned first and then red,
 " And then—' To her behest I bo self,
 " ' Whom I love with my body and soul :
 " ' Only, a word i' the bowing ! write
 " ' One little word, no harm to hear !
 " ' Then, fear no further ! ' T what he wrote.
 " I know you cannot read,—ther let me !
 " ' My idol ! ' "

But I took it from her
 And tore it into shreds. " Why the rest,
 " Who harm me ? Have I ever you wrong ?
 " People have told me 't is you w myself :
 " Let it suffice I either feel no wro
 " Or else forgive it,—yet you turn foe !
 " The others hunt me and you thr noose ! "

She muttered, " Have your wilful wa I slept.

Whereupon . . no, I leave my band out !
 It is not to do him more hurt, I sp
 Let it suffice, when misery was mos
 One day, I swooned and got a res so.
 She stooped as I was slowly coming
 This Margherita, ever on my trace,
 And wiuspered—" Caponsacchi ! "

If I drow
 But woke afloat i' the wave with turned eyes,

corner, would you
 watched you with
 other beauties at
 This and Mon-
 of yours, yet here
 ateful, leave the
 rned first white
 behest I bow my-
 my body and my
 bowing! See, I
 o harm to see or
 ther!' This is
 read,—therefore,
 from her hand
 ls. "Why join
 ave I ever done
 't is you wrong
 feel no wrong
 et you turn my
 and you throw a
 our wilful way!"
 leave my hus-
 e hurt, I speak.
 ery was most,
 d got a respite
 owly coming to,
 n my trace,
 onsacchi!"

If I drowned,
 wave with up-

And found their first sight was a star!
 I turned—
 For the first time, I let her have her
 will,
 Heard passively,—“The imposthume
 at such head,
 “One touch, one lancet-puncture would
 relieve,—
 “And still no glance the good physi-
 cian’s way
 “Who rids you of the torment in a
 trice!
 “Still he writes letters you refuse to
 hear.
 “He may prevent your husband, kill
 himself,
 “So desperate and all fordone is he!
 “Just hear the pretty verse he made
 to-day!
 “A sonnet from Mirtillo. ‘Peerless
 fair . . .’
 “All poetry is difficult to read,
 “—The sense of it is, anyhow, he seeks
 “Leave to contrive you an escape
 from hell,
 “And for that purpose asks an inter-
 view, [name,
 “I can write, I can grant it in your
 “Or, what is better, lead you to his
 house.
 “Your husband dashes you against
 the stones;
 “This man would place each fragment
 in a shrine:
 “You hate him, love your husband!”
 I returned,
 “It is not true I love my husband,—
 no,
 “Nor hate this man. I listen while
 you speak,
 “—Assured that what you say is false,
 the same:
 “Much as when once, to me a little
 child,
 “A rough gaunt man in rags, with eyes
 on fire,
 “A crowd of boys and idlers at his
 heels,
 “Rushed as I crossed the Square, and
 held my head
 “In his two hands, ‘Here’s she will
 let me speak!
 “‘You little girl, whose eyes do good
 to mine,
 “‘I am the Pope, am Sextus, now the
 Sixth:

“And that Twelfth Innocent, pro-
 claimed to-day,
 “‘Is Lucifer disguised in human flesh!
 “‘The angels, met in conclave,
 crowned me!’—thus
 “He gibbered and I listened; but I
 knew
 “All was delusion, ere folks interposed
 “‘Unfar ’n him, the maniac!’ Thus
 I know
 “All your report of Caponsacchi false,
 “Folly or dreaming; I have seen so
 much
 “By that adventure at the spectacle
 “The face I fronted that one first, last
 time:
 “He would belie it by such words and
 thoughts.
 “Therefore while you profess to show
 him me,
 “I ever see his own face. Get you
 gone!”
 “—That will I, nor once open mouth
 again,—
 “No, by Saint Joseph and the Holy
 Ghost!
 “On your head be the damage, so
 adieu!”
 And so more days, more deeds I must
 forget,
 Till . . . what a strange thing now is to
 declare!
 Since I say anything, say all if true!
 And how my life seems lengthened as
 to serve!
 It may be idle or inopportune,
 But, true?—why, what was all I said
 but truth,
 Even when I found that such as are un-
 true
 Could only take the truth in through
 a lie?
 Now—I am speaking truth to the
 Truth’s self:
 God will lend credit to my words this
 time.
 It had got half through April. I arose
 One vivid daybreak,—who had gone
 to bed
 In the old way my went those last
 three years,
 Careless until, the cup drained, I should
 die.
 The last sound in my ear, the over-
 night,

Had been a something let drop on the
sly
In prattle by Margherita, "Soon
enough
"Gaieties end, now Easter's past: a
week,
"And the Archbishop gets him back
to Rome,—
"Every one leaves the town for Rome,
this Spring,—
"Even Caponsacchi, out of heart and
hope,
"Resigns himself and follows with the
flock."
I heard this drop and drop like rain
outside
Fast-falling through the darkness while
she spoke:
So had I heard with like indifference,
"And Michael's pair of wings will
arrive first
"At Rome to introduce the company,
"Will bear him from our picture where
he fights
"Satan,—expect to have that dragon
loose
"And never a defender!"—my sole
thought
Being still, as night came, "Done, an-
other day!
"How good to sleep and so get nearer
death!"—
When, what, first thing at daybreak,
pierced the sleep
With a summons to me? Up I sprang
alive,
Light in me, light without me, every-
where
Change! A broad yellow sunbeam
was let fall
From heaven to earth,—a sudden draw-
bridge lay,
Along which marched a myriad merry
motes,
Mocking the flies that crossed them and
recrossed
In rival dance, companions new-born
too.
On the house-eaves, a dripping shag of
weed
Shook diamonds on each dull grey lat-
tice-square,
As first one, then another bird leapt by,
And light was off, and lo was back
again,
Always with one voice,—where are two
such joys?—

The blessed building-sparrow
stepped forth,
Stood on the terrace,—o'er the
such sky!
My heart sang, "I too am to go
"I too have something I must
about,
"Carry away with me to Rome
Rome!
"The bird brings hither stick
hairs and wool,
"And nowhere else i' the world;
fly breaks rank,
"Falls out of the procession that
"From window here to window
with all
"The world to choose,—so we
knows his course?
"I have my purpose and my m-
too,
"My march to Rome, like any b-
fly!
"Had I been dead! How right
alive!
"Last night I almost prayed for
to die,
"Wished Guido all his pleasure
the sword
"Or the poison,—poison, sword,
but a trick,
"Harmless, may God forgive him
poor jest!
"My life is charmed, will last
reach Rome!
"Yesterday, but for the sin,—ah, n-
less be
"The deed I could have dared ag-
myself!
"Now—see if I will touch an un-
fruit,
"And risk the health I want to
and use!
"Not to live, now, would be the w-
edness,—
"For life means to make haste and
to Rome
"And leave Arezzo, leave all woes
once!"
Now, understand here, by no means
mistake!
Long ago had I tried to leave the
house
When it seemed such procedure would
stop sin;
And still failed more the more I tried
at first

ling-sparrow ! I

,—o'er the roofs,

o am to go away,
ing I must care

me to Rome, to

ither sticks and

the world ; what

ession that befits,
to window there,

se,—so well he

and my motive

like any bird or

How right to be

prayed for leave

is pleasure with

son, sword, was

forgive him the

will last till I

sin,—ah, name-

re dared against

ouch an unripe

I want to have

uld be the wick-

ke haste and go

ave all woes at

by no means

to leave that

cedure would

more I tried—

The Archbishop, as I told you,—next,
our lord
The Governor,—indeed I found my
way,
I went to the great palace where he
rules,
Though I knew well 't was he who,—
when I gave
A jewel or two, themselves had given
me,
Back to my parents,—since they wanted
bread,
They who had never let me want a
nosegay,—he
Spoke of the jail for felons, if they kept
What was first theirs, then mine, so
doubly theirs,
Though all the while my husband's
most of all !
I knew well who had spoke the word
wrought this :
Yet, being in extremity, I fled
To the Governor, as I say,—scarce
opened lip
When—the cold cruel snicker close be-
hind—
Guido was on my trace, already there,
Exchanging nod and wink for shrug and
smile,
And I—pushed back to him and, for
my pains,
Paid with . . . but why remember what
is past ?
I sought out a poor friar the people call
The Roman, and confessed my sin
which came
Of their sin,—that fact could not be
repressed,—
The frightfulness of my despair in God :
And, feeling, through the grate, his
horror shake,
I implored him, " Write for me who can-
not write,
" Apprise my parents, make them
rescue me !
" You bid me be courageous and trust
God :
" Do you in turn dare somewhat, trust
and write
" Dear friends, who used to be my
parents once,
" And now declare you have no part
in me,
" This is some riddle I want wit to
solve,
" Since you must love me with no dif-
ference,

B.P

" Even suppose you altered,—there 's
your hate,
" To ask for : hate of you two dearest
ones
" I shall find liker love than love
found here,
" If husbands love their wives. Take
me away
" And hate me as you do the gnats
and fleas,
" Even the scorpions' How I shall
rejoice !
" Write that and save me ! " And he
promised—wrote
Or did not write ; things never changed
at all :
He was not like the Augustinian here !
Last, in a desperation I appealed
To friends, whoever wished me better
days,
To Guillichini, that 's of kin,—" What,
I—
" Travel to Rome with you ? A flying
gout
" Bids me deny my heart and mind my
leg ! "
Then I tried Conti, used to brave—
laugh back
The louring thunder when his cousin
scowled
At me protected by his presence :
" You—
" Who well know what you cannot
save me from,—
" Carry me off ! What frightens you,
a priest ? "
He shook his head, looked grave—
" Above my strength !
" Guido has claws that scratch, shows
feline teeth ;
" A formidabler foe than I dare fret :
" Give me a dog to deal with, twice the
size ! [too,
" Of course I am a priest and Canon
" But . . . by the bye . . . though both,
not quite so bold,
" As he, my fellow-Canon, brother-
priest,
" The personage in such ill odour here
" Because of the reports—pure birth o'
the brain—
" Our Caponsacchi, he's your true Saint
George
" To slay the monster, set the Princess
free,
" And have the whole High-Altar to
himself :

"I always think so when I see that
piece

"I' the Pieve, that 's his church and
mine, you know :

"Though you drop eyes at mention of
his name ! "

That name had got to take a half-gro-
tesque

Half-ominous, wholly enigmatic sense,
Like any bye-word, broken bit of song

Born with a meaning, changed by
mouth and mouth

That mix it in a sneer or smile, as
chance

Bids, till it now means naught but
ugliness

And perhaps shame.

—All this intends to say,
That, over-night, the notion of escape
Had seemed distemper, dreaming ; and
the name,—

Not the man, but the name of him,
thus made

Into a mockery and disgrace,—why,
she

Who uttered it persistently, had
laughed,

"I name his name, and there you start
and wince

"As criminal from the red tongs'
touch !"—yet now,

Now, as I stood letting morn bathe me
bright,

Choosing which butterfly should bear
my news,—

The white, the brown one, or that
tinier blue,—

The Margherita, I detested so,

In she came—"The fine day, the good
Spring time !

"What, up and out at window ? That
is best.

"No thought of Caponsacchi ?—who
stood there

"All night on one leg, like the sentry
crane,

"Under the pelting of your water-
spout—

"Looked last look at your lattice ere
he leave

"Our city, bury his dead hope at
Rome ?

"Ay, go to looking-glass and make you
fine,

"While he may die ere touch one
least loose hair

"You drag at with the comb in s-
rage ! "

I turned—"Tell Caponsacchi he
come ! "

"Tell him to come ? Ah, but
charity,

"A truce to fooling ! Come ? W-
—come this eve ?

"Peter and Paul ! But I see thr-
the trick—

"Yes, come, and take a flower-po-
his head

"Flung from your terrace ! No j-
sincere truth ? "

How plainly I perceived hell flash
fade

O' the face of her,—the doubt
first paled joy,

Then, final reassurance I indeed
Was caught now, never to be free ag-

What did I care ?—who felt myse-
force

To play with the silk, and spurn
horsehair-springs.

"But—do you know that I have b-
him come,

"And in your own name ? I p-
sumed so much,

"Knowing the thing you needed
your heart.

"But somehow—what had I to sh-
in proof ?

"He would not come : half-promis-
that was all,

"And wrote the letters you refused
read.

"What is the message that shall mo-
him now ? "

"After the Ave Maria, at first dar-
I will be standing on the terrace, say

"I would I had a good long lock of ha-
Should prove I was not lying ! Nev-

mind ! "

Off she went—"May he not refus-
that's all—

"Fearing a trick ! "

I answered, "He will come.
And, all day, I sent prayer like incens-

up
To God the strong, God the beneficen-

God ever mindful in all strife and strai-
Who, for our own good, makes the nee-

extreme,

Till at the last He puts forth might and
saves,
An old rhyme came into my head and
rang
Of how a virgin, for the faith of God,
Hid herself, from the Paynims that
pursued,
In a cave's heart; until a thunder-
stone,
Wrapped in a flame, revealed the
couch and prey:
And they laughed—"Thanks to light-
ning, ours at last!"
And she cried "Wrath of God, assert
His love!
"Servant of God, thou fire, befriend
His child!"
And lo, the fire she grasped at, fixed its
flash,
Lay in her hand a calm cold dreadful
sword
She brandished till pursuers strewed
the ground,
So did the souls within them die away,
As o'er the prostrate bodies, sworded,
safe,
She walked forth to the solitudes and
Christ:
So should I grasp the lightning and be
saved!
And still, as the day wore, the trouble
grew
Whereby I guessed there would be born
a star,
Until at an intense throe of the dusk,
I started up, was pushed, I dare to say,
Out on the terrace, leaned and looked
at last
Where the deliverer waited me: the
same
Silent and solemn face, I first descried
At the spectacle, confronted mine once
more.
So was that minute twice vouchsafed
me, so
The manhood, wasted then, was still at
watch
To save me yet a second time: no
change
Here, though all else changed in the
changing world!
I spoke on the instant, as my duty
bade,
In some such sense as this, whatever
the phrase.

"Friend, foolish words were borne
from you to me;
"Your soul behind them is the pure
strong wind,
"Not dust and feathers which its
breath may bear:
"These to the witless seem the wind it-
self,
"Since proving thus the first of it they
feel.
"If by mischance you blew offence my
way,
"The straws are dropt, the wind de-
sists no whit,
"And how such strays were caught up
in the street
"And took a motion from you, why in-
quire?
"I speak to the strong soul, no weak
disguise.
"If it be truth,—why should I doubt
it truth?—
"You serve God specially, as priests
are bound,
"And care about me, stranger as I am,
"So far as wish my good,—that mir-
acle
"I take to intimate He wills you serve
"By saving me,—what else can He
direct?
"Here is the service. Since a long
while now,
"I am in course of being put to death:
"While death concerned nothing but
me, I bowed
"The head and bade, in heart, my hus-
band strike.
"Now I imperil something more, it
seems,
"Something that 's trulier me than
this myself,
"Something I trust in God and you to
save.
"You go to Rome, they tell me: take
me there,
"Put me back with my people!"
He replied—
The first word I heard ever from his
lips,
All himself in it,—an eternity
Of speech, to match the immeasurable
depths
O' the soul that then broke silence—"I
am yours."
So did the star rise, soon to lead my
step,

Lead on, nor pause before it should
stand still
Above the House o' the Babe,—my
babe to be,
That knew me first and thus made me
know him,
That had his right of life and claim
on mine,
And would not let me die till he was
born,
But pricked me at the heart to save us
both,
Saying "Have you the will? Leave
God the way!"
And the way was Caponsacchi—
"mine," thank God!
He was mine, he is mine, he will be
mine.

No pause i' the leading and the light!
I know,
Next night there was a cloud came,
and not he:
But I prayed throu' the darkness till
it broke
And let him shine. The second night,
he came.

"The plan is rash; the project des-
perate:
"In such a flight needs must I risk
your life,
"Give food for falsehood, folly or mis-
take,
"Ground for your husband's rancour
and revenge"—
So he began again, with the same face.
I felt that, the same loyalty—one star
Turning now red that was so white be-
fore—
One service apprehended newly:—
A word of mine and there the white
was back!

"No, friend, for you will take me! 'Tis
yourself
"Risk all, not I,—who let you, for I
trust
"In the compensating great God:
enough!
"I know you: when is it that you will
come?"

"To-morrow at the day's dawn."
Then I heard
What I should do: how to prepare for
flight
And where to fly.

That night my husband
—"You, whom I loathe, beware
break my sleep
"This whole night! Couch beside
like the corpse
"I would you were!" The rest
know, I think—
How I found Caponsacchi and escaped

And this man, men call sinner?
Christ!
Of whom men said, with mouths
self mad'st once,
"He hath a devil"—say he was
saint,
My Caponsacchi! Shield and shroud
unshroud
In Thine own time the glory of the
If aught obscure,—if ink-spot, f
vile pens
Scribbling a charge against him—(I
glad
Then, for the first time, that I co
not write)—
Flirted his way, have flecked the bla

For
'Tis otherwise: let men take, sift
thoughts
—Thoughts I throw like the flax
sun to bleach!
I did think, do think, in the thoug
shall die,
That to have Caponsacchi for my gui
Ever the face upturned to mine, t
hand
Holding my hand across the world,—
sense
That reads, as only such can read, t
mark
God sets on woman, signifying so
She should—shall peradventure—
divine;
Yet 'ware, the while, how weaknes
mars the print
And makes confusion, leaves the thin
men see,
—Not this man,—who from his own
soul, re-writes
The obliterated charter,—love and
strength
Mending what's marred: "So kneel
a votarist,
"Weeds some poor waste traditionary
plot
"Where shrine once was, where temple
yet may be,

ny husband bade
the, beware you

Couch beside me

' The rest you

chi and escaped.

l sinner? Jesus

th mouths Thy-

say he was Thy

eld and show—

glory of the soul
ink-spot, from

nst him—(I was

e, that I could

cked the blaze!

For me,
ake, sift my

e the flax for

n the thought

i for my guide,
to mine, the

the world,—a

can read, the

ifying so
dventure—be

ow weakness

ves the thing

om his own

—love and

" So kneels

traditionary

here temple

" Purging the place but worshipping
the while,

" By faith and not by sight, sight clear-
est so,—

" Such way the saints work,"—says
Don Celestine.

But I, not privileged to see a saint
Of old when such walked earth with
crown and palm,

If I call " saint " what saints call some-
thing else—

The saints must bear with me, impute
the fault

To a soul i' the bud, so starved by ig-
norance,

Stinted of warmth, it will not blow this
year

Nor recognise the orb which Spring-
flowers know.

But if meanwhile some insect with a
heart

Worth floods of lazy music, spendthrift
joy—

Some firefly renounced Spring for my
dwarfed cup,

Crept close to me with lustre for the
dark,

Comfort against the cold,—what
though excess

Of comfort should miscall the creature
—sun?

What did the sun to hinder while harsh
hands

Petal by petal, crude and colourless,
Tore me? This one heart brought me

all the Spring!

Is all told? There's the journey: and
where's time

To tell you how that heart burst out in
shine?

Yet certain points do press on me too
hard.

Each place must have a name, though
I forget:

How strange it was—there where the
plain begins

And the small river mitigates its flow—
When eve was fading fast, and my soul

sank,

And he divined what surge of bitter-
ness,

In overtaking me, would float me back
Whence I was carried by the striding

day—
So,— " This grey place was famous
once," said he—

And he began that legend of the place
As if in answer to the unspoken fear,
And told me all about a brave man
dead,

Which lifted me and let my soul go on!
How did he know too,—at that town's
approach

By the rock-side,—that in coming near
the signs,

Of life, the house-roofs and the church
and tower,

I saw the old boundary and wall o' the
world

Rise plain as ever round me, hard and
cold,

As if the broken circlet joined again,
Tightened itself about me with no
break,—

As if the town would turn Arezzo's
self,—

The husband there,—the friends my
enemies,

All ranged against me, not an avenue
I try, but would be blocked and drive

me back
On him,—this other, . . . oh the heart
in that!

Did not he find, bring, put into my
arms

A new-born babe?—and I saw faces
beam

Of the young mother proud to teach me
joy,

And gossips round expecting my sur-
[prise

At the sudden hole through earth that
lets in heaven.

I could believe himself by his strong
will

Had woven around me what I thought
the world

We went along in, every circumstance,
Towns, flowers and faces, all things
helped so well!

For, through the journey, was it natural
Such comfort should arise from first to
last?

As I look back, all is one milky way;
Still bettered more, the more remem-
bered, so

Do new stars bud while I but search
for old,

And fill all gaps i' the glory, and grow
him—

Him I now see make the shine every-
where.

Even at the last when the bewildered
flesh,

The cloud of weariness about my soul
Clogging too heavily, sucked down all
sense,—

Still its last voice was, "He will watch
and care ;

"Let the strength go, I am content :
he stays !"

I doubt not he did stay and care for all—
From that sick minute when the head
swam round,

And the eyes looked their last and died
on him,

As in his arms he caught me and, you
say,

Carried me in, that tragical red eve,
And laid me where I next returned to
life

In the other red of morning, two red
plates

That crushed together, crushed the time
between,

And are since then a solid fire to me,—
When in, my dreadful husband and the
world

Broke,—and I saw him, master, by
hell's right,

And saw my angel helplessly held back
By Guards that helped the malice—the
lamb prone,

The serpent towering and triumphant
—then

Came all the strength back in a sudden
swell,

I did for once see right, do right, give
tongue

The adequate protest : for a worm
must turn

If it would have its wrong observed by
God.

I did spring up, attempt to thrust aside
That ice-block 'twixt the sun and me,
lay low

The neutraliser of all good and truth.

If I sinned so,—never obey voice more
O' the Just and Terrible, who bids us—
"Bear !"

Not—"Stand by, bear to see my angels
bear !"

I am clear it was on impulse to serve
God

Not save myself,—no—nor my child
unborn !

Had I else waited patiently till now ?—
Who saw my old kind parents, silly-
sooth

And too much trustful, for their worst
of faults,

Cheated, brow-beaten, stripped
starved, cast out

Into the kennel : I remonstrated,
Then sank to silence, for,—their w
at end,

Themselves gone,—only I was left
plague.

If only I was threatened and believ
What matter ? I could bear it and
bear ;

It was a comfort, still one lot for all
They were not persecuted for my s

And I, estranged, the single happy o
But when at last, all by myself I st

Obeys the clear voice which bade
rise,

Nor for my own sake but my b
unborn,

And take the angel's hand was sen
help—

And found the old adversary athw
the path—

Not my hand simply struck from
angel's, but

The very angel's self made foul i'
face

By the fiend who struck there,—th
would not bear,

That only I resisted ! So, my fir
And last resistance was invincible.

Prayers move God ; threats, a
nothing else, move men !

I must have prayed a man as he w
God

When I implored the Governor to ri
My parents' wrongs : the answer wa
smile.

The Archbishop,—did I clasp his
enough,

Hide my face hotly on them, whil
told

More than I dared make my o
mother know ?

The profit was—compassion and a j
This time, the foolish prayers were d
with, right

Used might, and solemnized the sp
at once.

All was against the combat : vanta
mine ?

The runaway avowed, the accompl
wife,

In company with the plan-contriv
priest ?

Yet, shame thus rank and patent
struck, bare,

At foe from head to foot in magic m

And off it withered, cobweb-armoury
Against the lightning! 'T was truth
 singed the lies
And saved me, not the vain sword nor
 weak speech!

You see, I will not have the service fail!
I say, the angel saved me: I am safe!
Others may want and wish, I wish nor
 want

One point o' the circle plainer, where I
 stand

Traced round about with white to front
 the world.

What of the calumny I came across,
What o' the way to the end?—the end
 crowns all.

The judges judged aright i' the main,
 gave me

The uttermost of my heart's desire, a
 truce

From torture and Arezzo, balm for hurt
With the quiet nuns,—God recom-
 pense the good!

Who said and sang away the ugly past.
And, when my final fortune was re-
 vealed,

What safety while, amid my parents'
 arms,

My babe was given me! Yes, he saved
 my babe:

It would not have peeped forth, the
 bird-like thing,

Through that Arezzo noise and
 trouble: back

Had it returned nor ever let me see!
But the sweet peace cured all, and let
 me live

And give my bird the life among the
 leaves

God meant him! Weeks and months
 of quietude,

I could lie in such peace and learn so
 much—

Begin the task, I see how needful now,
Of understanding somewhat of my
 past,—

Know life a little, I should leave so
 soon.

Therefore, because this man restored
 my soul,

All has been right; I have gained my
 gain, enjoyed

As well as suffered,—nay, got fore-
 taste too

Of better life beginning where this
 ends—

All through the breathing-while allowed
 me thus,

Which let good premonitions reach my
 soul

Unthwarted, and benignant influence
 flow

And interpenetrate and change my
 heart,

Uncrossed by what was wicked,—nay,
 unkind.

For, as the weakness of my time drew
 nigh,

Nobody did me one disservice more,
Spoke coldly or looked strangely, broke
 the love [born,

I lay in the arms of, till my boy was
Born all in love, with naught to spoil
 the bliss

A whole long fortnight: in a life like
 mine

A fortnight filled with bliss is long and
 much.

All women are not mothers of a boy,
Though they live twice the length of
 my whole life,

And, as they fancy, happily all the
 same.

There I lay, then, all my great fort-
 night long,

As if it would continue, broaden out
Happily more and more, and lead to
 heaven:

Christmas before me,—was not that a
 chance?

I never realised God's birth before—
How he grew likest God in being born.
This time I felt like Mary, had my babe
Lying a little on my breast like hers.
So all went on till, just four days ago—
The night and the tap.

O it shall be success
To the whole of our poor family! My
 friends

. . . Nay, father and mother,—give me
 back my word!

They have been rudely stripped of life,
 disgraced

Like children who must needs go
 clothed too fine,

Carry the garb of Carnival in Lent:
If they too much affected frippery,

They have been punished and submit
 themselves,

Say no word: all is over, they see God
Who will not be extreme to mark their
 fault

Or He had granted respite : they are
safe.

For that most woeful man my hus-
band once,
Who, needing respite, still draws vital
breath,
I—pardon him ? So far as lies in me,
I give him for his good the life he takes,
Praying the world will therefore ac-
quiesce.

Let him make God amends,—none,
none to me
Who thank him rather that, whereas
strange fate
Mockingly styled him husband and me
wife,
Himself this way at least pronounced
divorce,
Blotted the marriage-bond : this blood
of mine
Flies forth exultingly at any door,
Washes the parchment white, and
thanks the blow.

We shall not meet in this world nor the
next,
But where will God be absent ? In
His face
Is light, but in His shadow healing too :
Let Guido touch the shadow and be
healed !

And as my presence was importunate,—
My earthly good, temptation and a
snare,—
Nothing about me but drew somehow
down
His hate upon me,—somewhat so ex-
cused
Therefore, since hate was thus the truth
of him,—
May my evanishment for evermore
Help further to relieve the heart that
cast
Such object of its natural loathing
forth !

So he was made ; he nowise made him-
self :
I could not love him, but his mother
did.
His soul has never laid beside my soul ;
But for the unresisting body,—thanks !
He burned that garment spotted by
the flesh !
Whatever he touched is rightly ruined :
plague
It caught, and disinfection it had
craved

Still but for Guido ; I am safe
through him
So as by fire ; to him—thanks
farewell !

Even for my babe, my boy, the
safety thence—
From the sudden death of me, I mean
we poor
Weak souls, how we endeavour to
strong !

I was already using up my life,—
This portion, now, should do him some
a good,
This other go to keep off such an ill
The great life ; see, a breath and it
gone !

So is detached, so left all by itself
The little life, the fact which means
much.
Shall not God stoop the kindlier to
work,
His marvel of creation, foot work
crus'.

Now that the hand He trusted to
ceive
And hold it, lets the treasure fall p
force ?
The better ; He shall have in orpha
age
His own way all the clearer : if r
babe
Outlive the hour—and he has lived tw
weeks—
It is through God who knows I am n
by. [black
Who is it makes the soft gold hair tu
And sets the tongue, might lie so lo
at rest,
Trying to talk ? Let us leave G
alone !
Why should I doubt He will expla
in time
What I feel now, but fail to find th
words ?
My babe nor was, nor is, nor yet sha
be
Count Guido Franceschini's child a
all—
Only his mother's, born of love no
hate !
So shall I have my rights in after-time
It seems absurd, impossible to-day ;
So seems so much else not explain
but known.

Ah ! Friends, I thank and bless yo
every one !

No more now : I withdraw from earth
and man
To my own soul, compose myself for
God.

Well, and there is more ! Yes, my end
of breath

Shall bear away my soul in being true !
He is still here, not outside with the
world,

Here, here, I have him in his rightful
place !

'T is now, when I am most upon the
move,

I feel for what I verily find—again

The face, again the eyes, again, through
all,

The heart and its immeasurable love
Of my one friend, my only, all my own,
Who put his breast between the spears
and me.

Ever with Caponsacchi ! Otherwise
Here alone would be failure, loss to me—
How much more loss to him, with life
debarred

From giving life, love locked from love's
display,

The day-star stopped its task that
makes night morn !

O lover of my life, O soldier-saint,

No work begun shall ever pause for
death !

[more
Love will be helpful to me more and
I' the coming course, the new path I
must tread,

My weak hand in thy strong hand,
strong for that !

Tell him that if I seem without him
now,

That's the world's insight ! Oh, he
understands !

He is not Civita—do I once doubt

The world again is holding us apart ?

He had been here, displayed in my be-
half

The broad brow that reverberates the
truth,

And flashed the word God gave him,
back to man !

I know where the free soul is flown !
My fate

Will have been hard for even him to
bear :

Let it confirm him in the trust of God,
Showing how holily he dared the deed !

And, for the rest,—say, from the deed,
no touch

Of harm came, but all good, all happi-
ness,

Not one faint fleck of failure ! Why
explain ?

What I see, oh, he sees and how much
more !

Tell him,—I know not wherefore the
true word

Should fade and fall unuttered at the
last—

It was the name of him I sprang to
meet

When came the knock, the summons
and the end.

" My great heart, my strong hand are
back again ! "

I would have sprung to these, beckoning
across

Murder and hell gigantic and distinct
O' the threshold, posted to exclude me
heaven :

He is ordained to call and I to come !

Do not the dead wear flowers when
dressed for God ?

Say,—I am all in flowers from head to
foot !

Say,—not one flower of all he said and
did,

Might seem to flit unnoticed, fade un-
known,

But dropped a seed has grown a bal-
sam-tree

Whereof the blossoming perfumes the
place

At this supreme of moments ! He is a
priest ;

He cannot marry therefore, which is
right :

I think he would not marry if he could.

Marriage on earth seems such a coun-
terfeit,

Mere imitation of the inimitable :

In heaven we have the real and true
and sure.

'T is there they neither marry nor are
given

In marriage but are as the angels :
right,

Oh how right that is, how like Jesus
Christ

To say that ! Marriage-making for
the earth,

With gold so much,—birth, power,
repute so much,

Or beauty, youth so much, in lack of
these !

Be as the angels rather, who, apart

Know themselves into one, are found
at length
Married, but marry never, no, nor give
In marriage; they are man and wife at
once
When the true time is: here we have
to wait
Not so long neither! Could we by a
wish
Have what we will and get the future
now,
Would we wish aught done undone in
the past?
So, let him wait God's instant men call
years;
Meantime hold hard by truth and his
great soul,
Do out the duty! Through such souls
alone
God stooping shows sufficient of His
light
For us i' the dark to rise by. And I
rise.

VIII

DOMINUS HYACINTHUS DE
ARCHANGELIS,

PAUPERUM PROCURATOR

AH, my Giacinto, he 's no ruddy rogue,
Is not Cinone? What, to-day we're
eight?

Seven and one 's eight, I hope, old
curly-pate!

—Branches me out his verb-tree on
the slate,

Amo —as —*avi* —*atum* —*are* —*ans*,
Up to —*aturus*, person, tense, and mood,
Quies me cum subjunctivo (I could cry
And chews Corderius with his morning
crust!

Look eight years onward, and he 's
perched, he 's perched,

Dapper and deft on stool beside this
chair,

Cinozzo, Cinoncello, who but he?

—Trying his milk-teeth on some crusty
case

Like this, papa shall triturate full soon
To smooth Papinianian pulp!

It trots
Already through my head, though noon
be now,

Does supper-time and what belongs to
eve.

Dispose, O Don, o' the day, first work
then play!

—The proverb bids. And "t
means, won't we hold

Our little yearly lovesome frolic
Cinuolo's birth-night, Cinicello's
That makes gruff January grin
force!

For too contagious grows the m
the warmth

Escaping from so many hearts at o
When the good wife, buxom and b
yet,

Jokes the hale grandsire,—such ar
the sort

To go off suddenly,—he who hide
key

O' the box beneath his pillow
night,—

Which box may hold a parch
(some one thinks)

Will show a scribbled something
name

"Cinino, Ciniccino," near the end

"To whom I give and I bequeat
lands,

"Estates, tenements, hereditam

"When I decease as honest gran
ought:"

Wherefore—yet this one time
perhaps—

'an't my Orvieto fuddle his old m
Then, uncles, one or the other, w
the world,

May—drop in merely?—trudge thr
rain and wind,

Rather! The smell-feasts rouse t
at the hint

There's cookery in a certain dwe
place!

Gossips, too, each with keepsake i
Will pick the way, thrifid lane by
tern-light,

And so find door, put galligaskin
At entry of a decent domicile

Cornered in snug Condotti,—all
love,

All to crush cup with Cinucciato

Let others climb the heights o'
court, the camp!

How vain are chambering and wa
ness,

Revel and rout and pleasures
make mad!

Commend me to home joy, the fa
board,

Altar and hearth! These, with
brisk career,

And " then "
hold
ome frolic feast,
Ciniccello's own,
nuary grin per-
rows the mirth,
hearts at once—
uxom and bonny
e,—such are just
ne who hides the
his pillow every
d a parchment
something like a
ear the end,
I bequeath my
hereditaments,
honest grandsire
one time again
dle his old nose!
he other, well i'
—trudge through
asts rouse them
ertain dwelling-
[poke,
keepsake in his
rid lane by lan-
galligaskin off
omicile
ndotti,—all for
Cinucciatolo!
Well,
heights o' the
ing and wanton-
pleasures that
joy, the family
These, with a

A source of honest profit and good
fame,
Just so much work as keeps the brain
froun rust,
Just so much play as lets the heart ex-
pand,
Honouring God and serving man,—I
say,
These are reality, and all else,—fluff,
Nutshell and naught,—thank Flaccus
for the phrase!
Suppose I had been Fisc, yet bachelor!
Why, work with a will, then! Where-
fore lazy now?
Turn up the hour-glass, whence no
sand-grain slips
But should have done its duty to the
saint
O' the day, the son and heir that 's
eight years old!
Let law come dimple Cinoncino's cheek,
And Latin duple Cinarello's chin,
The while we spread him fine and toss
him flat
This pulp that makes the pancake, trim
our mass
Of matter into Argument the First,
Prime Pleading in defence of our ac-
cused,
Which, once a-waft on paper wing,
shall soar,
Shall signalise before applausive Rome
What study, and mayhap some mother-
wit,
Can do toward making Master fop and
Fisc
Old bachelor Bottinius bite his thumb.
Now, how good God is! How falls
plumb to point
This murder, gives me Guido to defend
Now, of all days i' the year, just when
the boy
Verges on Virgil, reaches the right age
For some such illustration from his
sire,
Stimulus to himself! One might wait
years
And never find the chance which now
finds me!
The fact is, there's a blessing on the
hearth,
A special providence for fatherhood!
Here 's a man, and what's more, a
noble, kills
—Not sneakingly but almost with
parade—

Wife's father and wife's mother and
wife's self
That's mother's self of son and heir
(like mine!)
—And here stand I, the favoured ad-
vocate,
Who pluck this flower o' the field, no
Solomon
Was ever clothed in glorious gold to
match,
And set the same in Cinoncino's cap!
I defend Guido and his comrades—I I
Pray God, I keep me humble: not to
me—
Non nobis, Domine, sed tibi laus!
How the fop chuckled when they made
him Fisc!
We'll beat you, my Bottinius, all for
love,
All for our tribute to Cinotto's day!
Why, 'sbuddikins, old Innocent him-
self
May rub his eyes at the bustle,—ask
"What 's this
"Rolling from out the rostrum, as a
gust
"O' the *Pro Milone* had been prisoned
there,
"And rattled Rome awake?" Awa-
ken Rome,
How can the Pope doze on in decency?
He needs must wake up also, speak his
word,
Have his opinion like the rest of Rome,
About this huge, this hurly-burly case:
He wants who can excogitate the truth,
Give the result in speech, plain black
and white,
To mumble in the mouth and make his
own
—A little changed, good man, a little
changed!
No matter, so his gratitude be moved,
By when my Giacintino gets of age,
Mindful of who thus helped him at a
pinch,
Archangelus *Procurator Pauperum*—
And proved *Hortensius Redivivus!*
Whew!
To earn the *Est-est*, merit the minced
herb
That mollifies the liver's leathery slice,
With here a goose-foot, there a cock's-
comb stuck,
Cemented in an element of cheese!
I doubt if dainties do the grandsire
good:

Last June he had a sort of strangling
... bah!

He 's his own master, and his will is
made.

So, liver fizz, law flit and Latin fly
As we rub hands o'er dish by way of
grace!

May I lose cause if I vent one word
more

Except,—with fresh-cut quill we ink
the white,—

P-r-o-pro Guidone et Sociis. There!

Count Guido married—or, in Latin due,
What? *Duxit in uxorem?*—common-
place!

Tædas jugales iniiit, subiit,—ha!

He underwent the matrimonial torch?

Connubio stabili sibi junxit,—hum!

In stable bond of marriage bound his
own?

That 's clear of any modern taint: and
yet . . .

Virgil is little help to who writes prose.
He shall attack me Terence with the
dawn,

Shall Cinuccino! Mum, mind business,
Sir!

Thus circumstantially evolve we facts,
Ita se habet ideo series facti:

He wedded,—ah, with owls for au-
gury!

Nupserat, heu sinistris avibus,

One of the blood Arezzo boasts her best,
Dominus Guido, nobili genere ortus,
Pompiliæ . . .

But the version afterward!

Curb we this ardour! Notes alone, to-
day,

The speech to-morrow and the Latin
last:

Such was the rule in Farinacci's time.
Indeed I hitched it into verse and good.

Unluckily, law quite absorbs a man,
Or else I think I too had poetised.

"Law is the pork substratum of the fry,
"Goose-foot and cocks-comb are Lat-
inity,"—

And in this case, if circumstance assist,
We'll garnish law with idiom, never
fear!

Out-of-the-way events extend our
scope:

For instance, when Bottini brings his
charge,

"That letter which you say Pom-
wrote,

"To criminate her parents and he
"And disengage her husband from
coil,—

"That, Guido Franceschini wrote,
we:

"Because Pompilia could nor read
write,

"Therefore he pencilled her such le-
first, [aga-

"Then made her trace in ink the s-
—ila, my Bottini, have I thee on h-

How will he turn this nor break Tu-
pate?

"*Existimandum*" (don't I hear
dog!)

"*Quod Guido designaverit elemen-*
"*Dictæ epistolæ, quæ fuerint*

"(*Superinducto ab ea calamo*)
"*Notata atramento*"—there's a style

"*Quia ipsa scribere nesciebat.*" B-
Now, my turn! Either, *Insulse*

outburst,
Stupidly put! Inane is the respo-

Inanis est responsio, or the like—
To wit, that each of all those cha-

ters,
Quod singula elementa epistolæ,

Had first of all been traced for her
him,

Fuerant per eum prius designata,
And then, the ink applied a-top-

that,
Et deinde, superinducto calamo,

The piece, she says, became her har-
work,

Per eam, efformata, ut ipsa asserit.
Inane were such response! (a sec-

time:)
Her husband outlined her the wh-

forsooth?
Vir ejus lineabat epistolam?

What, she confesses that she wrote
thing,

Fatetur eam scripsisse, (scorn th-
scathes!)

That she might pay obedience to l-
lord?

Ut viro obtemperaret, apices
(Here repeat charge with proper vari-

phrase)
Eo designante, ipsaque calamum

Super inducente? By such argumen-

Ita pariter, she seeks to show the san-
(Ay, by Saint Joseph and what sain-

you please)

u say Pompilia
ents and herself
usband from the

cluni wrote, say

ld nor read nor

l her such letter

[again."

in ink the same

I thee on hip?

or break Tully's

it I hear the

erit elementa

erint

alamo)

ere's a style!—

ciebat." Boh!

er, Insulse!—!

s the response,

the like—

l those charac-

pistolæ,

uced for her by

signata,

pled a-top of

aiamo,

ame her handi-

sa asserit.

se! (a second

her the whole,

m?

she wrote the

(scorn that

edience to her

ces

proper varied

lamum

ach argument,

how the same,

d what saints

Epistolam ostendit, medius fidius,
No voluntary deed but fruit of force!
Non voluntarie sed couete scriptam!
That 's the way to write Latin, friend
my Fisc!

Bottini is a beast, one barbarous:
Look out for him when he attempts to
say

"Armed with a pistol, Guido followed
her!"

Will not I be beforehand with my Fisc,
Cut away phrase by phrase from under-
foot!

Guido Pompilium—Guido thus his wife
Following with igneous engine, shall I
have?

Armis munitus igneis persequens—
Arma sulphurea gestans, sulphury arms,
Or, might one style a pistol—popping-
piece?

Armatus breviori sclopulo?
We'll let him have been armed so,
though it make

Somewhat against us: I had thought
to own—

Provided with a simple travelling-
sword,

Ense solummodo viatorio
Instructus: but we 'll grant the pistol
here:

Better we lost the cause than lacked
the gird

At the Fisc's Latin, lost the Judge's
laugh!

It's Venturini that decides for style.
Tommati rather goes upon the law.
So, as to law,—

Ah, but with law ne'er hope
To level the fellow,—don't I know his
trick!

How he draws up, ducks under, twists
aside!

He's a lean-gutted hectic rascal, fine
As pale-haired red-eyed ferret which
pretends

'T is ermine, pure soft snow from tail
to snout.

He eludes law by piteous looks aloft,
Lets Latin glance off as he makes ap-
peal

To the saint that 's somewhere in the
ceiling-top,—

Do you suppose that I don't see the
beast?

Plague of the ermine—vain! For it
takes,

It takes, and here 's the fellow Fisc,
you see,

And Judge, you 'll not be long in seeing
next!

Confound the fop—he 's now at work
like me:

Enter his study, as I seem to do,
Hear him read out his writing to him-
self!

I know he writes as if he spoke: I
hear

The hoarse shrill throat, see shut eyes,
neck shot-forth;

—I see him strain on tiptoe, soar and
pour

Eloquence out, nor stay nor stint at
all—

Perorate in the air, and so, to press
With the product! What abuse of
type is here!

He 'll keep clear of my cast, my logic-
throw, [swift

Let argument slide and then deliver
Some bowl from quite an unguessed
point of stand—

Having the luck o' the last word, the
reply!

A plaguy cast, a mortifying stroke:
You face a fellow—cries "So, there you
stand?"

"But I discourteous jump clean o'er
your head!

"You play ship-carpenter, not pilot so,
"Stop rat-holes, while a sea sweeps
through the breach,—

"Hammer and fortify at puny points!
"Do, clamp and tenon, make all tight
and safe!

"'Tis here and here and here you ship
a sea,

"No good of your stopped leaks and
littleness!"

Yet what do I name "little and a
leak?"

The main defence o' the murder 's used
to death,

By this time, dry bare bones, no scrap
to pick:

Safer I worked at the new, the unfore-
seen,

The nice bye-stroke, the fine and im-
provised,

Point that can titillate the brain o' the
Bench

Torpid with over-teaching, by this
time!

As if Tommati, that has heard, reheard
And heard again, first this side and then
that,—
Cuido and Pietro, Pietro and Guido din
And deafen, full three years, at each
long ear,—
Don't want amusement for instruc-
tion now,
Won't rather feel a flea run o'er his
ribs,
Than a daw settle heavily on his head !
Oh, I was young and had the trick of
fence,
Knew subtle pass and push with care-
less right—
The left arm ever quietly behind back
With the dagger in 't : not both hands
to blade !
Puff and blow, put the strength out,
Blunderbore !
That 's my subordinate, young Spreti,
now,
Pedant and prig—he 'll pant away at
proof,
That 's his way !
Now for mine—to rub some life
Into one's choppy fingers this cold day !
I trust Cinuzzo ties on tippet, guards
The precious throat on which so much
depends !
Guido must be all goose-flesh in his
hole,
Despite the prison-straw : bad Car-
nival
For captives ! no sliced fry for him,
poor Count !
Carnival-time,—another providence !
The town a-swarm with strangers to
amuse,
To edify, to give one's name and fame
In charge of, till they find, some future
day,
Cintino come and claim it, his name
too,
Pledge of the pleasantness they owe
papa—
Who else was it, cured Rome of her
great qualms,
When she must needs have her own
judgment ?—ay
Since all her topping wits had set to
work,
Pronounced already on the case : mere
boys,
Twice Cineruggiolo's age and half his
sense,

As good as tell me, when I cr
court,
" Master Arcangeli ! " (plucking
gown)
" We can predict, we comprehend
play,
" We 'll help you save your
Tra-la-la !
I 've travelled ground, from chi
till this hour,
To have the town anticipate my
The old fox takes the plain and
path,
The young hound's predilec
prints the dew,
Don't he, to suit their pulpy p
paw ?
No ! Burying nose deep down
briery bush,
Thus I defend Count Guido.
Where are we
First, which is foremost in adv
too,
Our murder,—we call, killing.
Confessed, defended, made a bo
good !
To think the Fisc claimed use
ture here,
And got thereby avowal plum
plain
That gives me just the chance I w
—scope
Not for brute-force but ingenuity
Explaining matters, not denying
One may dispute,—as I am bou
do,
And shall,—validity of process he
Inasmuch as a noble is exempt
From torture which plebeians un
In such a case : for law is lenient
Remits the torture to a nobleman
Unless suspicion be of twice
strength
Attaches to a man born vulgarly
We don't card silk with comb
dresses wool.
Moreover, 'twas severity undue
In this case, even had the lord
lout.
What utters, on this head, our o
Our Farinacci, my Gamaliel erst,
In those immortal " Question
What I quote :
" Of all the tools at Law's disposal,
" That named *Vigiliarum* is the be
" That is, the worst—to whoso ha
bear :

when I cross the

" (plucking at my

comprehend your

save your client."

d, from childhood

ticipate my track!

e plain and velvet

s predilection,—

air pulpy pads of

deep down i' the

Guido.

ere are we weak?

most in advantage

[fact

all, killing,—is a

made a boast of:

aimed use of tor-

owal plump and

chance I wanted,

at ingenuity,

ot denying them!

s I am bound to

f process here:

is exempt

lebeians undergo

aw is lenient, lax,

a nobleman

of twice the

n vulgarly:

with comb that

ity undue

d the lord been

head, our oracle,

amiel erst,

" Questions?"

w's disposal, sure

um is the best—

to whoso has to

" Lasting, as it may do, from some seven hours

" To ten, (beyond ten, we 've no precedent;

" Certain have touched their ten but, bah, they died!)

" It does so efficaciously convince

" That,—speaking by much observation here,—

" Out of each hundred cases, by my count,

" Never I knew of patients beyond four

" Withstand its taste, or less than ninety-six

" End by succumbing: only martyrs four, [against

" Of obstinate silence, guilty or no,—

" Ninety-six full confessors, innocent

" Or otherwise,—so shrew'd a tool have we!"

No marvel either: in unwary hands, Death on the spot is no rare consequence:

As indeed all but happened in this case To one of ourselves, our young tough peasant-friend

The accomplice called Baldeschi: they were rough,

Dosed him with torture as you drench a horse,

Not modify your treatment to a man: So, two successive days he fainted dead,

And only on the third essay, gave up, Confessed like flesh and blood. We

could reclaim,—

Blockhead Bottini giving cause enough! But no,—we'll take it as spontaneously

Confessed: we 'll have the murder beyond doubt.

Ah, fortunate (the poet's word reversed)

Inasmuch as we know our happiness! Had the antagonist left dubiety,

Here were we proving murder a mere myth,

And Guido innocent, ignorant, absent,—ay,

Absent! He was—why, where should Christian be?—

Engaged in visiting his proper church, The duty of us all at Christmas-time;

When Caponsacchi, the seducer, stung To madness by his relegation, cast

About him and contrived a remedy: To stave off what opprobrium broke afresh,

By the birth o' the babe, on him the imputed sire,

He came and quietly sought to smother up

His shame and theirs together,—killed the three,

And fled—(go seek him where you please to search)—

Just at the moment, Guido, touched by grace,

Devotions ended, hastened to the spot, Meaning to pardon his convicted wife,

" Neither do I condemn thee, go in peace!"—

Who thus arrived i' the nick of time to catch

The charge o' the killing, though greatly heartedly

He came but to forgive and bring to life. Doubt ye the force of Christmas on the

soul?

" Is thine eye evil because mine is good?"

So, doubtless, had I needed argue here But for the full confession round and

sound!

Thus would you have some kingly alchemist,—

Whose concern should not be with proving brass

Transmutable to gold, but triumphing, Rather, above his gold changed out of

brass,

Not vulgarly to the mere sight and touch,

But in the idea, the spiritual display, Proud apparition buoyed by winged

words [brain -

Hovering above its birth-place Here would you have this ex personage

Forced, by the gross need, to gird apron round,

Plant forge, light fire, ply bellows,—in a word,

Demonstrate—when a faulty pipkin's crack

May disconcert you his presumptive truth!

Here were I hanging to the testimony Of one of these poor rustics—four, ye

Gods!

Whom the first taste of friend the Fiscal's cord

Might drive into undoing my whole speech,

Shaming truth so !

I wonder, all the same,
Not so much at those peasants' lack of
heart ;

But—Guido Franceschini, nobleman,
Bear pain no better ! Everybody
knows

It used once, when my father was a
boy,

To form a proper, nay, important point
I' the education of our well-born youth,
To take the torture handsomely at
need,

Without confessing in this clownish
guise.

Each noble had his rack for private use,
And would, for the diversion of a guest,
Bid it be set up in the yard of arms,

To take thereon his hour of exercise,—
Command the varletty stretch, strain
their best,

While friends looked on, admired my
lord could smile

'Mid tugging which had caused an ox
to roar.

Men are no longer men !

—And advocates

No longer Farinacci, let men add,
If I one more time fly from point pro-
posed !

So, *Vindicatio*,—here begins the
same !—

Honoris causa ; so we make our stand :
Honour in us had injury, we shall
prove.

Or if we fail to prove such injury
More than misprision of the fact,—what
then ?

It is enough, authorities declare,
If the result, the deed in question now,
Be caused by confidence that injury
Is veritable and no figment : since,
What, though proved fancy afterward,
seemed fact

At the time, they argue shall excuse re-
sult.

That which we do, persuaded of good
For what we do, hold justifiable !—
The casuists bid : man, bound to do
his best,

They would not have him leave that
best undone

And mean to do the worst,—though
fuller light

Show best was worst and worst would
have been best.

Act by the present light, they a
man

Ultra quod hic non agitur, besides
It is not anyway our business here

De probatione adulterii,
To prove what we thought crime
crime indeed,

Ad irrogandum pœnam, and requ
Its punishment : such nowise d
seek :

Sed ad effectum, but 't is our con
Excusandi, here to simply find ex
Occisorem, for who did the killing—
Et ad illius defensionem, (mark
The difference !) and defend the
just that.

Quo casu levior probatio
Exuberaret, to which end far lig
proof

Suffices than the prior case w
claim :

It should be always harder to com
In short, than to establish innocen
Therefore we shall demonstrate fir
all

That Honour is a gift of God to m
Precious beyond compare,—which
tural scuse

Of human rectitude and purity,—
Which white, man's soul is born v
brooks no touch :

Therefore, the sensitivest spot of a
Woundable by a wafture breathed
black,

Is,—honour within honour, like the
Centred i' the ball,—the honour of
wife.

Touch us o' the pupil of our hon
then,

Not actually,—since so you slay
right,—

But by a gesture simulating touch,
Presuinable mere menace of
taint,

This were our warrant for eruptiv
" To whose dominion I impose no e

(Virgil, now, should not be too diff
To Cinoncinio,—say the early books
Pen, truce to further gambols ! *P
mur* !)

Nor can revenge of injury done be
To the honour proved the life and
of us,

Be too excessive, too extravagant
Such wrong seeks and must have c
plete revenge.

ght, they ask of

tur, besides
business here,

ought crime was

, and require
nowise do we

is our concern,
ply find excuse,
the killing-work,
n, (mark
defend the man,

o
end far lighter

or case would

order to convict,
ish innocence.
onstrate first of

f God to man
are,—which na-

d purity,—
ul is born with,

est spot of all,
e breathed from

our, like the eye
e honour of our

of our honour,

o you slay out-

ating touch,
enace of such

for eruptive ire
impose no end."

t be too difficult
early books . . .
mbols! *Posci-*

ary done here
the life and soul

extravagant:
must have com-

Show we this, first, on the mere natural
ground:

Begin at the beginning, and proceed
Incontrovertibly. Theodoric,
In an apt sentence Cassiodorus cites,
Propounds for basis of all household
law—

I hardly recollect it, but it ends,
"Bird mates with bird, beast genders
with his like,

"And brooks no interference: "bird
and beast?

The very insects . . . if they wive or
no,

How dare I say when Aristotle doubts?
But the presumption is they likewise
wive,

At least the nobler sorts; for take the
bee

As instance,—copying King Solomon,—
Why that displeasure of the bee to
aught

That savours of incontinency, makes
The unhaste a very horror to the hive?
Whence comes it bees obtain the
epithet

Of *castæ apes*? notably "the chaste?"
Because, ingeniously saith Scaliger,
(The young one—see his book of Table-
talk)

"Such is their hatred of immodest act,
"They fall upon the offender, sting to
death."

I mind a passage much confirmative
I the Idyllist (though I read him Latin-
ised) [unfit

"Why" asks a shepherd, "is this bank
"For celebration of our vernal loves?"

"Oh swain," returns the wiser shep-
herdess,

"Bees swarm here, and would quick
resent our warmth!"

Only cold-blooded fish lack instinct
here,

Nor gain nor guard connubiality:
But beasts, quadrupedal, mammiferous,

Do credit to their beasthood: witness
him,

That Ælian cites, the noble elephant,
(Or if not Ælian, somebody as sage)

Who seeing much offence beneath his
nose,

His master's friend exceed in courtesy
The due allowance to that master's

wife,
Taught them good manners and killed
both at once,

B. P.

Making his master and all men admire.
Indubitably, then, that master's self
Favoured by circumstance, had done
the same

Or else stood clear rebuked by his own
beast.

Adeo, ut qui honorem spernit, thus,
Who values his own honour not a
straw—

Et non recuperare curat, nor
Labours by might and main to salve
its wound,

Se ulciscendo, by revenging him,
Nil differat a belluis, is a brute,

Quinimo irrationabilior

Ipsismet belluis, nay, contrariwise,
Much more irrational than brutes
themselves,

Should be considered, *reputetur*! How?
If a poor animal feel honour smart,
Taught by blind instinct nature plants
in him,

Shall man,—confessed creation's mas-
ter-stroke,

Nay, intellectual glory, nay, a god,
Nay, of the nature of my Judges here,—

Shall man prove the insensible, the
block,

The bolt o' the earth he crawls on to
disgrace?

(Com . . . that's both solid and poetic)—
man

Derogate, live for the low tastes alone,
Mean creeping cares about the animal
life?

May Gigia have remembered, nothing
stings

Fried liver out of its monotony
Of richness like a root of fennel,

chopped

Fine with the parsley: parsley-sprigs,
I said—

Was there need I should say "and fen-
nel too?"

But no, she cannot have been so obtuse!
To our argument! The fennel will be
chopped.

From beast to man next mount we—ay
but, mind,

Still mere man, not yet Christian,—
that, in time!

Not too fast, mark you! 'Tis on
Heathen grounds

We next defend our act: then, fairly
urge—

If this were done of old, in a green tree,
Allowed in the Spring rawness of our
kind.

What man licensed in the Autumn
dry,

And ripe, the latter harvest-tide of
man?

If, with his poor and primitive half-
lights,

The Pagan, whom our devils served for
gods,

Could stigmatize the breach of mar-
riage-vow

As that which blood, blood only might
efface,—

Absolve the husband, outraged, whose
revenge

Anticipated law, plied sword himself,—
How with the Christian in full blaze
of day?

Shall not he rather double penalty,
Multiply vengeance, than, degenerate,

Let privilege be minished, droop,
decay?

Therefore set forth at large the ancient
law!

Superabundant the examples be
To pick and choose from. The Athen-
ian Code,

Solon's, the name is serviceable,—then,
The Laws of the Twelve Tables, that
fifteenth,—

"Romulus" likewise rolls out round
and large.

The Julian; the Cornelian; Gracchus'
Law:

So old a chime, the bells ring of them-
selves!

Spreti can set that going if he please,
I point you, for my part, the belfry out,
Intent to rise from dusk, *diluculum*,

Into the Christian day shall broaden
next.

First, the fit compliment to His Holi-
ness

Happily reigning: then sustain the
point—

All that was long ago declared as law
By the early Revelation stands con-
firmed

By Apostle and Evangelist and Saint,—
To wit—that Honour is the supreme
good.

Why should I baulk Saint Jerome of his
phrase?

Ubi honor non est, where no honour is,

Ibi contemptus est; and where
tempt,

Ibi injuria frequens; and where
The frequent injury, *ibi et indignitas*

And where the indignation, *ibi*
Nulla; and where there is no quietude

Why, *ibi*, there, the mind is often
Down from the heights where it
posed to dwell,

Mens a proposito sæpe dejicitur.
And naturally the mind is so cast down

Since harder 't is, *quum difficillimum*
Iram cohibere, to coerce one's wrath

Quam miracula facere, than work
acles,—

Saint Gregory smiles in his First
logue:

Whence we infer, the ingenuous
the man

Who makes esteem of honour and
Whenever honour and reputation
touched,

Arrives at term of fury and despair
Loses all guidance from the reason's
check:

As in delirium, or a frenzy-fit,
Nor fury nor despair he satiates,

Not even if he attain the impossible
O'erturn the hinges of the universe

To annihilate—not whoso caused
smart

Solely, the author simply of his pain
But the place, the memory, *vitiis*

O' the shame and scorn: *quia*,—
Solomon,

(The Holy Spirit speaking by his mouth
in Proverbs, the sixth chapter near
end)

—Because, the zeal and fury of a
Zelus et furor viri, will not spare,

Non parcat, in the day of his revenge
In die vindictæ, nor will acquiesce

Nec acquiescet, through a period of
prayers,

Cujusdam precibus,—*nec suscipiet*,
Nor yet take, *pro redemptione*, for

Redemption, *dona plurimum*, gifts
friends,

Nor money-payment to compound
ache.

Who recognises not my client's case
Whereto, as strangely consentant
here,

Adduce Saint Bernard in the Epistle
writ

To Robertulus, his nephew: Too much
grief

Dolor quippe nimius non deliberat,
Does not excogitate propriety,
Non verecundatur, nor knows shame at
all,

Non consulit rationem, nor consults
Reason, *non dignitatis metuit*
Damnum, nor dreads the loss of dig-
nity;

Modum et ordinem, order and the mode,
Ignorat, it ignores: why, trait for trait,
Was ever portrait limned so like the
life?

(By Cavalier Maratta, shall I say?
I hear he's first in reputation now.)

Yes, that of Samson in the Sacred
Text:

That's not so much the portrait as the
man!

Samson in Gaza was the antetype
Of Guido at Rome: for note the Naza-
rite!

Blinded he was,—an easy thing to bear,
Intrepidly he took imprisonment,
Gyves, stripes and daily labour at the
mill:

But when he found himself, i' the pub-
lic place,

Destined to make the common people
sport,

[tus
Disdain burned up with such an impe-
l' the breast of him that, all of him on
fire,

Moriatur, roared he, let my soul's self
die,

Anima mea, with the Philistines!

So, pulled down pillar, roof, and death
and all,

Multosque plures interfecit, ay,

And many more he killed thus, *moriens,*
Dying, *quam vivus,* than in his whole
life,

Occiderat, he ever killed before.

Are these things writ for no example,
Sirs?

One instance more, and let me see who
doubts!

Our Lord Himself, made up of man-
suetude,

Sealing the sum of sufferance up, re-
ceived

Opprobrium, contumely and buffeting
Without complaint: but when He
found Himself

Touched in His honour never so little
for once,

Then outbroke indignation pent be-
fore—

"*Honorem meum nemini dabo!*" "No,
"My honour I to nobody will give!"
And certainly the example so hath
wrought,

That whosoever, at the proper worth,
Apprises worldly honour and repute,
Esteems it nobler to die honoured man
Beneath Mannaia, than live centuries
Disgraced in the eye o' the world. We
find Saint Paul

No recreant to this faith delivered once:
"Far worthier were it that I died,"
cries he,

Expedit mihi magis mori, "than

"That any one should make my glory
void,"

Quam ut gloriam meam quis evacuet!
See, *ad Corinthienses*: whereupon

Saint Ambrose makes a comment with
much fruit,

Doubtless my Judges long since laid to
heart,

So I desist from bringing forward here—
(I can't quite recollect it.)

Have I proved

Satis superque, both enough and to
spare,

That Revelation old and new admits
The natural man may effervesce in ire,
O'erflood earth, o'erfroth heaven with
foamy rage,

At the first puncture to his self-respect?
Then, Sirs, this Christian dogma, this
law-bud

Full-blown now, soon to bask the
absolute flower

Of Papal doctrine in our blaze of day,—
Bethink you, shall we miss one promise-
streak,

One doubtful birth of dawn crepuscular,
One dew-drop comfort to humanity,

Now that the chalice teems with
noonday wine?

Yea, argue Molinists who bar revenge—
Referring just to what makes out our
case!

Under old dispensation, argue they,
The doom of the adulterous wife was
death,

Stoning by Moses' law. "Nay, stone
her not, [Lord;

"Put her away!" next legislates our
And last of all, "Nor yet divorce a
wife!"

Ordains the Church, "she typifies our-
self,

The Bride no fault shall cause to fall
from Christ."

Then, as no jot nor tittle of the Law
Has passed away—which who pre-
sumes to doubt?

As not one word of Christ is rendered
vain—

Which, could it be though heaven and
earth should pass?

—Where do I find my proper punish-
ment

For my adulterous wife, I humbly ask
Of my infallible Pope,—who now remits
Even the divorce allowed by Christ in
lieu

Of lapidation Moses licensed me?

The Gospel checks the Law which
throws the stone,

The Church tears the divorce-bill Gos-
pel grants,

The wife sins and enjoys impunity!

What profits me the fulness of the days,

The final dispensation, I demand,

Unless Law, Gospel, and the Church
subjoin

"But who hath barred thee primitive
revenge,

"Which, like fire damped and dammed
up, burns more fierce? [man,

"Use thou thy natural privilege of

"Else wert thou found like those old
ingrate Jews,

"Despite the manna-banquet on the
board,

"A-longing after melons, cucumbers

"And such like trash of Egypt left be-
hind!"

(There was one melon, had improved
our soup,

But did not Cinoncinio need the rind
To make a boat with? So I seem to
think.)

Law, Gospel and the Church—from
these we leap

To the very last revealment, easy rule
Befitting the well-born and thorough-
bred

O' the happy day we live in,—not the
dark

O' the early rude and acorn-eating race.

"Behold," quoth James, "we bridle
in a horse

"And turn his body as we would there-
by!"

Yea, but we change the bit to suit the
growth,

And rasp our colt's jaw with a rug
spike

We hasten to remit our managed s
Who wheels round at persuasion
touch.

Civilisation bows to decency,
The acknowledged use and wont,
manners,—mild

But yet imperative law,—which m
the man.

Thus do we pay the proper complim
To rank, and that society of Rome

Hath so oblige ' us by its interest,
Taken our client's part instinctively

As unaware defending its own cause
What *dictum* doth Society lay down

I' the case of one who hath a faith
wife?

Wherewithal should the husb
cleanse his way?

Be patient and forgive? Oh, langu
fails—

Shrinks from depicting his pun
ment!

For if wronged husband raise not
and cry,

Quod si maritus de adulterio non
Conquereretur, he 's presumed a—f

Presumitur leno: so, complain he m
But how complain? At your

bunal, lords?

Far weightier challenge suits your ser
I wot!

You sit not to have gentlemen prop
Questions gentility can itself discuss

Did not you prove that to our brot
Paul?

The Abate, *quum judicialiter*
Prosequeretur, when he tried the la

Guidonis causam, in Count Guido's ca
Accidit ipsi, this befell himself,

Quod risum moverit et cachinnos, th
He moved to mirth and cachinnati

all

Or nearly all, *fere in omnibus*
Etiam sensatis et cordatis, men

Strong-sensed, sound-hearted, nay, t
very Court,

Ipsismet in iudiciis, I might add,
Non tamen dicam. In a cause like th

So multiplied were reasons *pro* and *ca*
Delicate, intertwined and obscure,

That law were shamed to lend a fing
tip

To unravel, readjust the hopeless twi
While, half-a-dozen steps outside t

Court,

There stood a foolish tripler with a tool
 A-dangle to no purpose by his side,
 Had clearly cut the tangle in a trice.
Asserunt enim unanimiter
 Doctores, for the Doctors all assert,
 Thus husbands, *quod mariti*, must be
 held
Viles, cornuti reputantur, vile
 And branching forth a florid infamy,
Si propriis manibus, it with their own
 hands,
Non sumunt, they take not straightway
 revenge,
Indictam, but expect the deed be done
 By the Court—*expectant illam fieri*
Perjudices, qui summopere rident, which
 Gives an enormous gulfaw for reply,
Et cachinnantur. For he ran away,
Deliquit enim, just that he might
 'scape
 The censure of both counsellors and
 crowd,
Ut vulgi et Doctorum evitaret
Censuram, and lest so he superadd
 To loss of honour ignominy too,
Et sic ne istam quoque ignominiam
Amisso honori superadderet.
 My lords, my lords, the inconsiderate
 step [all !
 Was—we referred ourselves to law at
 Twit me not with, " Law else had pun-
 ished you ! "
 Each punishment of the extra-legal
 step,
 To which the high-born preferably re-
 vert,
 Is ever for some oversight, some slip
 I' the taking vengeance, not for ven-
 geance' self.
 A good thing done unhandsomely turns
 ill ;
 And never yet lacked ill the law's re-
 buke.
 For pregnant instance, let us contem-
 plate
 The luck of Leonardus,—see at large
 Of Sicily's Decisions sixty-first.
 This Leonard finds his wife is false :
 what then ?
 He makes her own son snare her, and
 entice
 Out of the town-walls to a private walk,
 Wherein he slays her with commodity.
 They find her body half-devoured by
 dogs :
 Leonard is tried, convicted, punished,
 sent

To labour in the galleys seven years
 long :
 Why ? For the murder ? Nay, but
 for the mode !
Malus modus occidendi, ruled the
 Court,
 An ugly mode of killing, nothing more !
 Another fructuous sample,—see " *De*
Re
 " *Criminali*," in Matthæus' divine
 piece.
 Another husband, in no better plight,
 Simulates absence, thereby tempts the
 wife ;
 On whom he falls, out of sly ambushade.
 Backed by a brother of his, and both of
 them
 Armed to the teeth with arms that law
 had blamed.
Nimis dolose, overwilyly,
Fuisse operatum, was it worked,
 Pronounced the law : had all been
 fairly done [did,
 Law had not found him worthy, as she
 Of four years' exile. Why cite more ?
 Enough
 Is good as a feast—(unless a birthday-
 feast
 For one's Cinuccio : so, we'll finish
 here)
 My lords, we rather need defend our-
 selves
 Inasmuch as for a twinkling of an eye
 We hesitatingly appealed to law,—
 Rather than deny that, on mature
 advice,
 We blushing bethought us, bade re-
 venge
 Back to the simple proper private way
 Of decent self-dealt gentlemanly death.
 Judges, there is the law, and this be-
 side,
 The testimony ! Look to it !
 Pause and breathe !
 So far is only too plain ; we must
 watch,
 Bottini will scarce hazard an attack
 Here : let 's anticipate the fellow's
 play,
 And guard the weaker places—warily
 ask,
 What if considerations of a sort,
 Reasons of a kind, arise from out the
 strange
 Peculiar unforeseen new circumstance
 Of this our (candour owns) abnormal
 act,

To bar the right of us revenging so ?
 " Impunity were otherwise your meed :
 " Go slay your wife and welcome,"—
 may be urged,—
 " But why the innocent old couple
 slay,
 " Pietro, Violante ? You may do
 enough,
 " Not too much, not exceed the golden
 mean :
 " Neither brute-beast nor Pagan, Gen-
 tile, Jew,
 " Nor Christian, no nor votarist of the
 mode,
 " Were free at all to push revenge so
 far !"

No, indeed ? Why, thou very sciolist !
 The actual wrong, Pompilia seemed to
 do,
 Was virtual wrong done by the parents
 here—
 Imposing her upon us as their child—
 Themselves allow : then, her fault was
 their fault,
 Her punishment be theirs accordingly !
 But wait a little, sneak not off so soon !
 Was this cheat solely harm to Guido,
 pray ?
 The precious couple you call innocent,—
 Why, they were felons that law failed
 to clutch,
Qui ut fraudarent, who that they might
 rob,
Legitimè vocatos, folks law called,
Ad fidei commissum, true heirs to the
 Trust,
Partum supposuerunt, feigned this
 birth,
Immemores reos factos esse, blind
 To the fact that, guilty, they incurred
 thereby,
Ultimi supplicii, hanging or aught
 worse.
 Do you blame us that we turn law's
 instruments
 Not mere self-seekers,—mind the public
 weal,
 Nor make the private good our sole con-
 cern ?
 That having—shall I say—secured a
 thief,
 Not simply we recover from his pouch
 The stolen article our property,
 But also pounce upon our neighbour's
 purse
 We opportunely find reposing there,

And do him justice while we right
 selves ?
 He owes us, for our part, a dru-
 say,
 But owes our neighbour just a da-
 the air
 Under the gallows : so we throttle
 The neighbour 's Law, the couple
 the Thief,
 We are the over-ready to help L-
 Zeal of her house hath eaten us up
 which,
 Can it be, Law intends to eat up
Crudum Priamum, devour poor P-
 raw,
 ('T was Jupiter's own joke) with b-
 to boot,
Priamique pisinnos, in Homeric ph-
 Shame !—and so ends the pe-
 prettily.
 But even,—prove the pair not c-
 able,
 Free as unborn babe from conniv-
 at,
 Participation in, their daughter's fa-
 Ours the mistake. Is that a
 event ?
Non semel, it is anything but rare,
In contingentia facti, that by chance
Impunes evaserunt, go scot-free,
Qui, such well-meaning people as
 selves,
Iusto dolore moti, who aggrrieved
 With cause, *apposuerunt manus*, la-
 Rough hands, *in innocentes*, on wr-
 heads.
 Cite we an illustrative case in poi-
Mulier Smirnea quædam, good
 lords,
 A gentlewoman lived in Smyrna on
Virum et filium ex eo conceptum, w-
 Both husband and her son begot
 him,
 Killed, *interfecerat, ex quo*, because
Vir filium suum perdididerat, her spo-
 Had been beforehand with her, kill-
 her son,
Matrimonii primi, of a previous bed.
Deinde accusata, then accused,
Apud Dolabellam, before him that s-
Proconsul, nec duabus cædibus
Contaminatam liberare, nor
 To liberate a woman doubly-dyed
 With murder, *voluit*, made he up h-
 mind,
Nec condemnare, nor to doom to death

Justo dolore impulsam, one impelled
By just grief, *sed remisit*, but sent her
up
Ad Areopagum, to the Hill of Mars,
Sapientissimorum judicium
Cætum, to that assembly of the sage
Paralleled only by my judges here ;
Ubi, cognita de causa, where, the cause
Well weighed, *responsum est*, they gave
reply,
Ut ipsa et accusator, that both sides
O' the suit, *redirent*, should come back
again,
Post centum annos, after a hundred
years,
For judgment ; *et sic*, by which sage
deeree,
Duplici parricidio rea, one
Convicted of a double parricide,
Quamvis etiam innocentem, though in
truth
Out of the pair, one innocent at least
She, *occidisset*, plainly had put to death,
Undequaque, yet she altogether
'scaped,
Evasit impunis. See the case at length
In Valerius, fittingly styled *Maximus*,
That eighth book of his Memorable
Facts.
Nor Cyriacus cites beside the mark :
Similiter uxor quæ mandaverat,
Just so, a lady who had taken care,
Homicidium viri, that her lord be killed,
Ex denegatione debiti,
For denegation of a certain debt,
Matrimonialis, he was loth to pay,
Fuit pecuniaria mulcta, was
Amerced in a pecuniary mulct,
Punita, et ad pœnam, and to pains,
Temporalem, for a certain space of time,
In monasterio, in a convent.

Ay,

In monasterio ! How he manages
In with the ablative, the accusative !
I had hoped to have hitched the vil-
lain into verse
For a gift, this very day, a complete list
O' the prepositions each with proper
case,
Telling a story, long was in my head.
What prepositions take the accusa-
tive ?
Ad to or at—who saw the cat ?—down to
Ob, for, because of, *keep her claws off !*
Ah,
Law in a man takes the whole liberty !

The muse is fettered,—just as Ovid
found !
And now, sea widens and the coast is
clear.
What of the dubious act you bade ex-
cuse ?
Surely things brighten, brighten, till at
length
Remains—so far from act that needs
defence—
Apology to make for act delayed
One minute, let alone eight mortal
months
Of hesitation ! “ Why procrastinate ? ”
(Out with it my Bottinius, ease thy-
self !)
“ Right, promptly done, is twice right :
right delayed
“ Turns wrong. We grant you should
have killed your wife,
“ But on the moment, at the meeting
her
“ In company with the priest : then
did the tongue
“ O' the Brazen Head give licence,
' Time is now ! '
“ You make your mind up : ' Time is
past ' it peals.
“ Friend, you are competent to mas-
tery
“ O' the passions that confessedly ex-
plain
“ An outbreak,—yet allow an interval,
“ And then break out as if time's clock
still clanged.
“ You have forfeited your chance, and
flat you fall
“ Into the commonplace category
“ Of men bound to go softly all their
days,
“ Obeying law.”
Now, which way make response ?
What was the answer Guido gave, him-
self ?
—That so to argue came of ignorance
How honour bears a wound : “ For,
wound,” said he,
“ My body, and the smart is worst at
first.
“ While, wound my soul where honour
sits and rules,
“ Longer the sufferance, stronger grows
the pain,
“ 'T is *ex incontinenti*, fresh as first.”
But try another tack, calm common
sense

By way of contrast : as—Too true, my
 lords !
 We did demur, awhile did hesitate :
 Yet husband sure should let a scruple
 speak
 Ere he slay wife,—for his own safety,
 lords !
 Carpers abound in this misjudging
 world.
 Moreover, there 's a nicety in law
 That seems to justify them should they
 carp :
 Suppose the source of injury a son,—
 Father may slay such son yet run no
 risk :
 Why graced with such a privilege ?
 Because
 A father so incensed with his own child,
 Or must have reason, or believe he has :
Quia semper, seeing that in such event,
Presumitur, the law is bound suppose
Quod capiat pater, that the sire must
 take,
Bonum consilium pro filio,
 The best course as to what befits his
 boy,
 Through instinct, *ex instinctu*, of mere
 love,
Amoris, and, *paterni*, fatherhood ;
Quam confidentiam, which confidence,
Non habet, law declines to entertain,
De viro, of the husband : where has he
 An instinct that compels him love his
 wife ?
 Rather is he presumably her foe :
 So, let him ponder long in this bad
 world
 Ere do the simplest act of justice,<

But

Again—and here we brush Bottini's
 breast—
 Object you, " See the danger of delay !
 " Suppose a man murdered my friend
 last month :
 " Had I come up and killed him for his
 pains
 " In rage, I had done right, allows the
 law :
 " I meet him now and kill him in cold
 blood,
 " I do wrong, equally allows the law :
 " Wherein do actions differ, yours and
 mine ? "

In plenitudine intellectus es ?
 Hast thy wits, Fisc ? To take such
 slayer's life,

Returns it life to thy slain friend a
 Had he stolen ring instead of slain
 friend,—
 To-day, to-morrow or next century
 Meeting the thief, thy ring upon
 thumb,
 Thou justitiously hadst wrung it the
 So, couldst thou wrench thy friend
 life back again,
 Though prisoned in the bosom of
 foe,
 Why, law would look complacent
 thy rush.
 Our case is, that the thing we lost
 found :
 The honour, we were robbed of
 months since,
 Being recoverable at any day
 By death of the delinquent. Go
 ways !
 " Ere thou hast learned law, will be m
 to do,
 As said the rustic while he shod
 goose.

Nay, if you urge me, interval was no
 From the inn to the villa—blank
 else a bar
 Of adverse and contrarious incident
 Solid between us and our just revenge
 What with the priest who flourishes
 blade,
 The wife who like a fury flings at us
 The crowd—and then the capture,
 appeal
 To Rome, the journey thence, the jo
 ney thence, [it
 The shelter at the House of Conve
 The visits to the Villa, and so forth,
 Where was one minute left us all t
 while
 To put in execution that revenge
 We planned o' the instant ?—as it we
 plumped down
 A round sound egg, o' the spot, son
 eight months since,
 Rome, more propitious than our ne
 should hatch !
 Object not, " You reached Rome o
 Christmas-eve,
 " And, despite liberty to act at once,
 " Waited a week—indecorous delay !
 Hath so the Molinism-canker, lords,
 Eaten to the bone ? Is no religio
 left ?
 No care for aught held holy by th
 Church ?

What, would you have us skip and miss
those Feasts

O' the Natal Time, must we go prose-
cute

Secular business on a sacred day?

Should not the merest charity expect,
Setting our poor concerns aside for
once,

We hurried to the song matutinal
I' the Sistine, and pressed forward for
the Mass

The Cardinal that 's Camerlengo
chants,

Then rushed on to the blessing of the
Hat

And Rapier, which the Pope sends to
what prince

Has done most detriment to the Infidel—

And thereby whet our courage if 't
were blunt?

Meantime, allow we kept the house a
week,

Suppose not we were idle in our mew:
Picture Count Guido raging here and
there—

" 'Money?' I need none—'Friends?'
The word is null.

"Match me the white was on that
shield of mine

"Borne at" . . . wherever might be
shield to bear;

"I see my grandsire, he who fought so
well

"At" . . . here find out and put in
time and place

Of what might be a fight his grandsire
fought:

"I see this—I see that—"

See to it all,
Or I shall scarce see lamb's fry in an
hour!

—Nod to the uncle, as I bid advance
The smoking dish, "This, for your
tender teeth!

"Behoves us care a little for our kin—
"You, Sir,—who care so much for
cousinship

"As come to your poor loving nephew's
feast!"

He has the reversion of a long lease yet—
Land to bequeath! He loves lamb's
fry, I know!

Here fall to be considered those same
six

Qualities; what Bottini needs must
call

So many aggravations of our crime,
Parasite-growth upon mere murder's
back,

We summarily might dispose of such
By some off-hand and jaunty fling,
some skit—

"So, since there's proved no crime to
aggravate,

"A fico for your aggravations, Fisc!"
No,—handle mischief rather,—play
with spells

Were meant to raise a spirit, and laugh
the while

We show that did he rise we are his
match!

Therefore, first aggravation: we made
up—

Over and above our simple murdering
selves—

A regular assemblage of armed men,
Coadunatio armatorum,—ay,

Unluckily it was the very judge
Who sits in judgment on our cause to-
day

That passed the law as Governor of
Rome:

"Four men armed,"—though for law-
ful purpose, mark!

Much more for an acknowledged crime,
—"shall die."

We five were armed to the teeth, meant
murder too?

Why, that 's the very point that saves
us, Fisc!

Let me instruct you. Crime nor done
nor meant,—

You punish still who arm and con-
gregate:

For why have used bad means to a
good end?

Crime being meant not done,—you
punish still

[upon,
The means to crime, you haply pounce
Though circumstance have baulked you
of their end:

But crime not only compassed but com-
plete,

Meant and done too? Why, since
you have the end,

Be that your sole concern, nor mind
those means

No longer to the purpose! Murdered
we?

(—Which, that our luck was in the
present case,

Quod contigesse in presenti casu,
 Is palpable, *manibus palpatum est—*)
 Make murder out against us, nothing
 less!
 Of many crimes committed with a view
 To one main crime, you overlook the
 less,
 Intent upon the large. Suppose a
 man
 Having in view commission of a theft,
 Climb the town-wall: 't is for the theft
 he hangs,
 Suppose you can convict him of such
 theft,
 Remitted whipping due to who climbs
 wall
 For bravery or wantonness alone,
 Just to dislodge a daw's nest and no
 more.
 So I interpret you the manly mind
 Of him the Judge shall judge both you
 and me,—
 O' the Governor, who, being no babe,
 my Fisc,
 Cannot have blundered on ineptitude!
 Next aggravation,—that the arms
 themselves
 Were specially of such forbidden sort
 Through shape or length or breadth, as,
 prompt, law plucks
 From single hand of solitary man,
 And makes him pay the carriage with
 his life:
Delatio armorum, arms against the rule,
Contra formam constitutionis, of
 Pope Alexander's blessed memory.
 Such are the poignard with the double
 prong,
 Horn-like, when tines make bold the
 antlered buck, [stab
 And all of brittle glass—for man to
 And break off short and so 'let fragment
 stick
 Fast in the flesh to baffle surgery:
 And such the Genoese blade with hooks
 at edge
 That did us serviec at the Villa here.
Sed parcat mihi tam eximius vir,
 But, let so rare a personage forgive,
 Fisc, thy objection is a foppery!
 Thy charge runs, that we killed three
 innocents:
 Killed, dost see? Then, if killed, what
 matter how?—
 By stick or stone, by sword or dagger,
 tool

Long or tool short, round or tri-
 lar—
 Poor folks, they find small comfort
 choice!
 Means to an end, means to an end
 Fisc!
 Nature cries out "Take the first
 you find!"
Furor ministrat arma; where
 stone?
Unde mi lapidem, where darts for
Unde sagittas? But subdue the
 And rationalise a little: eight in
 since,
 Had we, or had we not, incurred
 blame
 For letting 'scape unpunished thi-
 pair?
 I think I proved that in last parag-
 Why did we so? Because our eco-
 failed.
 Wherefore? Through lack of arm-
 fight the foe:
 We had no arms or merely lawful
 An unimportant sword and blu-
 buss,
 Against a foe, pollent in potency.
 The *amasi*, and our vixen of a wi-
 Well then, how culpably do we giro
 And once more undertake the high
 prise,
 Unless we load ourselves this sec-
 time
 With handsome superfluity of arm-
 Since better say "too much"
 "not enough,"
 And "*plus non vitiat*," too much
 no harm,
 Except in mathematics, sages say.
 Gather instruction from the para-
 At first we are advised—"A lad I
 here
 "Seven barley loaves and two s-
 fishes: what
 "Is that among so many?" Ap-
 asked:
 But put that question twice and, q-
 as apt
 The answer is "Fragments, two
 baskets full!"
 And, while we speak of superabundan-
 sling
 A word by the way to fools that c-
 their flout
 On Guido—"Punishment exceeds
 fence:

" 't might be just but you were cruel too!"

If so you stigmatize the stern and strict,

Still, he is not without excuse—may plead

Transgression of his mandate, over-zeal
O' the part of his companions: all he craved

Was, they should fray the faces of the three:

Solummodo fassus est, he owns no more,
Dedisse mandatum, than that he desired,

Ad sphisandum, dicam, that they lack
And hew, i' the customary phrase, his wife,

Uxorem tantum, and no harm beside.

If his instructions then be misconceived,

Nay, disobeyed, impute you blame to him?

Cite me no Panicollus to the point,
As adverse! Oh, I quite expect his case—

How certain noble youths of Sicily
Having good reason to mistrust their wives,

Killed them and were absolved in consequence:

While others who had gone beyond the need

By mutilation of the paramour
(So Galba in the Horatian satire grieved)

—These were condemned to the galleys,
as for guilt

Exceeding simple murder of a wife.

But why? Because of ugliness, and not

Cruelty, in the said revenge, I trow!

Ex causa abscissionis partium;

Quia nempe id facientes reputantur

Naturæ inimici, man revolts

Against such as the natural enemy.

Pray, grant to one who meant to slit
the nose

And slash the cheek and slur the mouth,
at most,

A somewhat more humane award than these!

Objectum funditus corruit, flat you fall,

My Fisc! I waste no kick on you but pass.

Third aggravation: that our act was done—

Not in the public street, where safety lies,

Not in the bye-place, caution may avoid,

Wood, cavern, desert, spots contrived for crime,—

But in the very house, home, nook and nest,

O' the victims, murdered in their dwelling-place,

In domo ac habitatione propria,

Where all presumably is peace and joy.

The spider, crime, pronounce we twice a pest

When, creeping from congenial cottage, she

Taketh hold with her hands, to horrify
His household more, i' the palace of the king.

All three were housed and safe and confident.

Moreover, the permission that our wife
Should have at length *domum pro*

carcere,
Her own abode in place of prison—why,

We ourselves granted, by our other self

And proxy Paolo: did we make such grant,

Meaning a lure?—clude the vigilance

O' the jailor, lead her to commodious death,

While we ostensibly relented?

Just so did we, nor otherwise, my Fisc!

Is vengeance lawful? We demand our right,

But find it will be questioned or refused

By jailor, turnkey, hangdog,—what know we?

Pray, how is it we should conduct ourselves?

To gain our private right—break public peace,

Do you bid us?—trouble order with our broils?

Endanger . . shall I shrink to own . . ourselves?—

Who want no broken head nor bloody nose

(While busied slitting noses, breaking heads)

From the first tipstaff shall please interfere!

Nam quicquid sit, for howsoever it be,
An de consensu nostro, if with leave

Or not, a *monasterio*, from the nuns,
Educta esset, she had been led forth,
Potuiinus id dissimulare, we
 May well have granted leave in pure
 pretence,
Ut adiutorem habere, that thereby
 An entry we might compass, a free
 move
Potuissemus, to her easy death,
Ad eam occidendam. Privacy
 O' the hearth, and sanctitude of home,
 say you?
 Would you give man's abode more
 privilege
 Than God's?—for in the churches
 where He dwells,
In quibus assistit Regum Rex, by means
 Of His essence, *per essentiam*, all the
 same,
Et nihilominus, therein, *in eis*,
Ex justa via delinquens, whoso dares
 To take a liberty on ground enough,
 Is pardoned, *excusatur*: that's our
 case—
 Delinquent through befitting cause.
 You hold,
 To punish a false wife in her own house
 Is graver than, what happens every day,
 To hale a debtor from his hiding-place
 In church protected by the Sacrament?
 To this conclusion have I brought my
 Fisc?
 Foxes have holes, and fowls o' the air
 their nests;
 Praise you the impiety that follows,
 Fisc?
 Shall false wife yet have where to lay
 her head?
 “*Contra Fiscum definitum est!*” He's
 done,
 “*Surge et scribe*,” make a note of it!
 —If I may dally with Aquinas' word.
 Or in the death-throe does he mutter
 still?
 Fourth aggravation, that we changed
 our garb,
 And rusticated ourselves with uncouth
 hat,
 Rough vest and goatskin wrappage;
 murdered thus
Mutatione vestium, in disguise,
 Whereby mere murder got complexed
 with wile,
 Turned *homicidium ex insidiis*. Fisc,
 How often must I round thee in the
 ears—

All means are lawful to a lawful end
 Concede he had the right to kill
 wife:
 The Count indulged in a traves-
 why?
De illa ut vindictam sumeret,
 That on her he might lawful vengea-
 take,
Commodius, with more ease, *et tutius*
 And safer: wants he warrant for
 step?
 Read to thy profit how the Apo-
 once
 For ease and safety, when Damas-
 raged,
 Was let down in a basket by the w
 To 'scape the malice of the governor
 (Another sort of Governor boar-
 Rome!)
 —Many are of opinion,—covered clo-
 Concealed with—what except that ve-
 cloak
 He left behind at Troas afterward?
 I shall not add a syllable: Molinis
 may!
 Well, have we more to manage? A
 indeed!
 Fifth aggravation, that our wife r-
 posed
Sub potestate iudicis, beneath
 Protection of the judge,—her hou-
 was styl'd
 A prison, and his power became i-
 guard
 In lieu of wall and gate and bolt an-
 bar.
 This a tough point, shrewd, redoubt-
 able:
 Because we have to supplicate th-
 judge
 Shall overlook wrong done the judg-
 ment-seat.
 Now, I might suffer my own nose b-
 pulled,
 As man—but then as father . . if th-
 Fisc
 Touched one hair of my boy who hel-
 my hand
 In confidence he could not come to
 harm
 Crossing the Corso, at my own desire
 Going to see those bodies in the church—
 What would you say to that. Dom-
 if yacinth?
 This is the sole and single knotty point:
 For, bid Tommati blink his interest,

lawful end ?
ought to kill his
in a travesty ;

erret,
ful vengeance

ease, *et tutius*,
varrant for the

v the Apostle

en Damascus

t by the wall,
he governor
ernor boasts

covered close,
cept that very

afterward ?
le : Molinists

anage ? Ay,

our wife re-

ath
—her house

r became its

and bolt and

wd, redoubt-

pplicate the

ne the judg-

own nose be

er . . if the

oy who held

ot come to

own desire,

he church—

that. Don

otty po'et :

interest,

You laud his magnanimity the while :
But baulk Tommati's office,—he talks
big !

" My predecessors in the place,—those
sons

" O' the prophets that may hope suc-
ceed me here,—

" Shall I diminish their prerogative ?

" Count Guido Franceschini's honour !
—well,

" Has the Governor of Rome none ? "

You perceive,

The cards are all against us. Make a
push,

Kick over table, as our gamesters do !

We, do you say, encroach upon the
rights,

Deny the omnipotence o' the Judge
forsooth ?

We, who have only been from first to
last

Intent on that his purpose should pre-
vail,

Nay, more, at times, anticipating both
At risk of a rebuke ?

But wait awhile !

Cannot we lump this with the sixth and
last

Of the aggravations—that the Majesty
O' the Sovereign here received a wound,
to wit,

Læsa Majestas, since our violence
Was out of envy to the course of law,
In odium litis ? We cut short thereby
Three pending suits, promoted by our-
selves

I' the main,—which worsens crime,
accedit ad

Exasperationem criminis !

Yes, here the eruptive wrath with full
effect !

How—did not indignation chain my
tongue—

Could I repel this last, worst charge of
all !

(There is a porcupine to barbacue ;
Gigia can jug a rabbit well enough,
With sour-sweet sauce and pine-pips ;
but, good Lord,

Suppose the devil instigate the wench
To stew, not roast him ? Stew my por-
cupine ?

If she does, I know where his quills
shall stick !

Come, I must go myself and see to
things :

I cannot stay much longer stewing
here)

Our stomach . . I mean, our soul—is
stirred within,

And we want words. We wounded
Majesty ?

Fall under such a censure, we,—who
yearned

So much that Majesty dispel the cloud
And shine on us with healing on its
wings,

We prayed the Pope, *Majestas*' very
To anticipate a little the tardy pack,

Bell us forth deep the authoritative
bay

Should start the beagles into sudden
yelp

Unisonous,—and, Gospel leading Law,
Grant there assemble in our own behoof

A Congregation, a particular Court,
A few picked friends of quality and
place,

To hear the several matters in dispute,
Causes big, little and indifferent,

Bred of our marriage like a mushroom-
growth,

All at once (can one brush off such too
soon ?)

And so with laudable dispatch decide
Whether we, in the main (to sink de-
tail)

Were one the Church should hold fast
or let go.

" What, take the credit from the
Law ? " you ask ?

Indeed, we did ! Law ducks to Gospel
here :

Why should Law gain the glory and
pronounce

A judgment shall immortalise the Pope ?
Yes : our self-abnegating policy

Was Joab's—we would rouse our
David's sloth,

Bid him encamp against a city, sack
A place whereto ourselves had long laid
siege,

Lest, taking it at last, it take our name
And be not *Innocentinopolis*.

But no ! The modesty was in alarm,
The temperance refused to interfere,

Returned us our petition with the word
" *Ad iudices suos*, " " Leave him to his
Judge ! "

As who should say—" Why trouble my
repose ?

"Why consult Peter in a simple case,
 "Peter's wife's sister in her fever-fit
 "Might so—as readily as the Apostle's
 self?
 "Are my Tribunals posed by aught so
 plain?
 "Hath not my Court a conscience?
 It is of age,
 "Ask it!"
 We do ask,—but, inspire reply
 To the Court thou bidst me ask, as I
 have asked—
 Oh thou, who vigilantly dost attend
 To even the few, the ineffectual words
 Which rise from this our low and mun-
 dane sphere
 Up to thy region out of smoke and
 noise,
 Seeking corroboration from thy nod
 Who art all justice—which means
 mercy too,
 In a low noisy smoky world like ours
 Where Adam's sin made peccable his
 seed!
 We venerate the father of the flock,
 Whose last faint sands of life, the frit-
 tered gold,
 Fall noiselessly, yet all too fast, o' the
 cone
 And tapering heap of those collected
 years,—
 Never have these been hurried in their
 flow,
 Though justice fain would jog reluctant
 arm,
 In eagerness to take the forfeiture
 Of guilty life: much less shall mercy
 sue
 In vain that thou let innocence survive,
 Precipitate no minim of the mass
 O' the all-so precious moments of thy
 life,
 By pushing Guido into death and doom!
 (Our Cardinal engages read my speech:
 They say, the Pope has one half-hour,
 in twelve,
 Of something like a moderate return
 Of the intellectuals,—never much to
 lose!—
 If I adroitly plant this passage there,
 The Fisc will find himself forestalled, I
 think,
 Though he stand, beat till the old car-
 drum break!
 —Ah, boy of my own bowels, Hyacinth,

Wilt ever catch the knack,—requisite
 pains
 Of poor papa, become proficient t
 I' the how and why and when-
 time to laugh,
 The time to weep, the time, again
 pray,
 And all the times prescribed by
 Writ?
 Well, well, we fathers can but care,
 cast
 Our bread upon the waters!)
 In a w
 These secondary charges go to grow
 Since secondary, so superfluous
 motes
 Quite from the main point: we dic
 and some,
 Little and much, adjunct and pri
 pal,
Causa honoris. Is there such a ca
 As the sake of honour? By that
 test try
 Our action, nor demand if more or l
 Because of the action's mode, we m
 blame
 Or maybe deserve praise. The Co
 decides.
 Is the end lawful? It allows
 means:
 What we may do we may with saf
 And what means "safety" we o
 selves must judge.
 Put case a person wrongs me past c
 pute:
 If my legitimate vengeance be a blo
 Mistrusting my bare arm can deal t
 same,
 I claim co-operation of a stick;
 Doubtful if stick be tough, I crave
 sword;
 Diffident of ability in fence,
 I fee a friend, a swordsman to assis
 Take one—who may be coward, fool
 knave—
 Why not take fifty?—and if these e
 ceed
 I' the due degree of drubbing, who
 accuse
 But the first author of the afores
 wrong
 Who put poor me to such a world
 pains?
 Surgery would have just excised
 wart;
 The patient made such pother, struggle
 so

That the sharp instrument sliced nose
and all.
Taunt us not that our friends performed for pay!
For us, enough were simple honour's sake:
Give country clowns the dirt they comprehend,
The piece of gold! Our reasons, which suffice
Ourselves, be ours alone; our piece of gold
Be, to the rustic, reason and to spare!
We must translate our motives like our speech
Into the lower phrase that suits the sense
O' the limitedly apprehensive. Let
Each level have its language! Heaven speaks first
To the angel, then the angel tames the word
Down to the ear of Tobit: he, in turn,
Diminishes the message to his dog,
And finally that dog finds how the flea
(Which else, importunate, might check his speed)
Shall learn its hunger must have holiday,—
How many varied sorts of language here,
Each following each with pace to match the step,
Haud passibus aquis!

Talking of which flea
Reminds me I must put in special word
For the poor humble following,—the four friends,
Sicarii, our assassins in your charge.
Ourselves are safe in your approval now:
Yet must we care for our companions, plead
The cause o' the poor, the friends (of old-world faith)
Who are in tribulation for our sake.
Pauperum Procurator is my style:
I stand forth as the poor man's advocate:
And when we treat of what concerns the poor,
Et cum agatur de pauperibus,
In bondage, *carceratis*, for their sake,
In eorum causis, natural piety,
Pietas, ever ought to win the day,
Triumphare debet, quia ipsi sunt,

Because those very paupers constitute,
Thesaurus Christi, all the wealth of Christ.
Nevertheless I shall not hold you long
With multiplicity of proofs, nor burn
Candle at noon-tide, clarify the clear.
There beams a case refulgent from our books—
Castrensis, Butringarius, everywhere
I find it burn to dissipate the dark.
'T is this: a husband had a friend,
which friend
Seemed to him over-friendly with his wife
In thought and purpose,—I pretend no more.
To justify suspicion or dispel,
He bids his wife make show of giving heed,
Semblance of sympathy—propose, in fine,
A secret meeting in a private place.
The friend, enticed thus, finds an ambushade,
To wit, the husband posted with a pack
Of other friends, who fall upon the first
And beat his love and life out both at once.
These friends were brought to question for their help.
Law ruled "The husband being in the right,
"Who helped him in the right can scarce be wrong"—
Opinio, an opinion every way,
Multum tenenda cordi, heart should hold!
When the inferiors follow as befits
The lead o' the principal, they change their name,
And, *non dicuntur*, are no longer called
His mandatories, *mandatorii*,
But helpmates, *sed auxiliares*; since
To that degree does honour's sake lend aid,
Adeo honoris causa est efficax,
That not alone, *non solum*, does it pour
Itself out, *se diffundat*, on mere friends,
We bring to do our bidding of this sort,
In mandatorios simplices, but sucks
Along with it in wide and generous whirl,
Sed etiam assassinii qualitate
Qualificatos, people qualified
By the quality of assassination's self,
Dare I make use of such neologism,
Ut utar verbo.

Haste we to conclude :
 Of the other points that favour, leave
 some few
 For Spreti ; such as the delinquents'
 youth :
 One of them falls short, by some months,
 of age
 Fit to be managed by the gallows ; two
 May plead exemption from our law's
 award,
 Being foreigners, subjects of the Gran-
 duke—
 I spare that bone to Spreti and reserve
 Myself the juicier breast of argument—
 Flinging the breast-blade i' the face o'
 the Fisc,
 Who furnished me the tid-bit : he must
 needs [clowns—
 Play off his armoury and rack the
 And they, at instance of the rack, con-
 fessed
 All four unanimously did resolve,—
 That night o' the murder, in brief min-
 utes snatched
 Behind the back of Guido as he fled,—
 That, since he had not kept his prom-
 ise, paid
 The money for the murder on the spot,
 And, reaching home again, might even
 ignore
 The past or pay it in improper coin,
 They one and all resolved, these hope-
 ful friends,
 They would inaugurate the morrow's
 light,
 Having recruited strength with needful
 rest,
 By killing Guido as he lay asleep
 Pillowed by wallet which contained
 their fee.

I thank the Fisc for knowledge of this
 fact :
 What fact could hope to make more
 manifest
 Their rectitude, Guido's integrity ?
 For who fails recognise apparent here,
 That these poor rustics bore no envy,
 hate,
 Malice nor yet uncharitableness
 Against the people they had put to
 death ?
 In them, did such an act reward itself ?
 All done was to deserve their simple
 pay,
 Obtain the bread they earned by sweat
 of brow :

Missing this pay, they missed of eve-
 thing—
 Hence claimed it, even at expense
 life
 To their own lord, so little warp
 were they
 By prepossession, such the absolute
 instinct of equity in rustic souls !
 While he the Count, the cultivat-
 mind,
 He, wholly rapt in his serene regard
 Of honour, as who contemplates the sun
 And hardly minds what tapers blin-
 below,
 He, dreaming of no argument for death,
 Except the vengeance worthy nob-
 hearts,
 Would he so desecrate the deed for
 sooth,
 Vulgarise vengeance, as defray its cost
 By money dug out of the dirty earth
 Mere irritant, in Maro's phrase, to ill
 What though he lured base minds by
 lucre's hope,—
 The only motive they could masticate
 Milk for babes, not strong meat which
 men require ?
 The deed done, those coarse hands were
 soiled enough,
 He spared them the pollution of the
 pay.
 So much for the allegement, thine, my
 Fisc,
Quo nil absurdius, than which naught
 more mad,
Excogitari potest, may be squeezed
 From out the cogitative brain of thee !
 And now, thou excellent the Governor !
 (Push to the peroration) *cæterum*
Enixe supplico, I strive in prayer,
Ut dominis meis, that unto the Court,
Bemigna fronte, with a gracious brow,
Et oculis serenis, and mild eyes,
Perpendere placeat, it may please them
 weigh,
Quod dominus Guido, that our noble
 Count,
Occidit, did the killing in dispute,
Ut ejus honor tumultus, that
 The honour of him buried fathom-deep
 In infamy, in *infamia*, might arise,
Resurgeret, as ghosts break sepulchre !
Occidit, for he killed *uxorem*, wife,
Quia illi fuit, since she was to him,
Opprobrio, a disgrace and nothing more !
Et genitores, killed her parents too,

Qui, who, *postposita verecundia*,
Having thrown off all sort of decency,
Filiam repudiarunt, had renounced
Their daughter, *atque declarare non*
Erubuerunt, nor felt blush tinge cheek,
Declaring, *meretricis genitam*
Esse, she was the offspring of a drab,
Ut ipse dehonestaretur, just
That so himself might lose his social
rank!

Cujus mentem, and which daughter's
heart and soul,

They, *perverterunt*, turned from the
right course,

Et ad illicitos amores non

Dumtaxat pellexerunt, and to love

Not simply did alluringly incite,
Sed vi obedientiæ, but by force

O' the duty, *filialis*, daughters owe,

Coegerunt, forced and drove her to the
deed:

Occidit, I repeat he killed the clan,
Ne scilicet amplius in dedecore,
Lest peradventure longer life might
trail,

Viveret, link by link his turpitude,

Invisus consanguineis, hateful so

To kith and kindred, *a nobilibus*

Notatus, shunned by men of quality,

Relictus ab amicis, left i' the lurch

By friends, *ab omnibus derisus*, turned
A common hack-block to try edge of
jokes.

Occidit, and he killed them here in
Rome,

In Urbe, the Eternal City, Sirs,

Nempe quæ alias spectata est,

The appropriate theatre which wit-
nessed once,

Matronam nobilem, Lucretia's self,

Abluere pudicitiae maculas,

Wash off the spots of her pudicity,

Sanguine proprio, with her own pure
blood;

Quæ vidit, and which city also saw,

Patrem, Virginius, *undequaque*, quite,

Impunem, with no sort of punishment,

Nor, *et non i' laudatum*, lacking praise,

Sed polluentem parricidio,

Imbrue his hands with butchery, *filiae*,

Of chaste Virginia, to avail a rape,

Ne raperetur ad stupra; so to heart,

Tanti illi cordi fuit, did he take,

Suspicio, the mere fancy men might
have,

Honoris amittendi, of fame's loss,

Ut potius voluerit filia

B.P.

Orbati, that he chose to lose his child,
Quam illa incederet, rather than she
walk

The ways an, *inhonesta*, child disgraced,
Licet non sponte, though against her
will.

Occidit—killed them, I reiterate—

In propria domo, in their own abode,

Ut adultera et parentes, that each wretch,
Conscii agnoscerent, might both see and
say,

Nullum locum, there's no place, *mul-
lumque esse*

Asylum, nor yet refuge of escape,

Impenetrabilem, shall serve as bar,

Honori læso, to the wounded one

In honour; *neve ibi opprobria*

Continuarentur, killed them on the spot

Moreover, dreading lest within those
walls

The opprobrium peradventure be pro-
longed,

Et domus quæ testis fuit turpium,

And that the domicile which witnessed
crime,

Esset et pœnæ, might watch punish-
[ment:]

Occidit, killed, I round you in the ears,

Quia alio modo, since by other mode,

Non poterat ejus existimatio,

There was no possibility his fame,

Læsa, gashed griesly, *tam enormiter*,

Ducere cicatrices, might be healed:

Occidit ut exemplum præberet

Uxoribus, killed her so to lesson wives

Jura conjugii, that the marriage-oath,

Esse servanda, must be kept henceforth:

Occidit denique, killed her, in a word,

Ut pro posse honestus viveret,

That he, please God, might creditably
live,

Sin minus, but if fate willed otherwise,

Proprii honoris, of his outraged fame,

Offensi, by Mannaia, if you please,

Commiseranda victima caderet,

The pitiable victim he should fall!

Done! I' the rough, i' the rough! But
done! And, lo,

Landed and stranded lies my very own,
My miracle, my monster of defence—

Leviathan into the nose whereof
I have put fish-hook, pierced his jaw
with thorn,

And given him to my maidens for a
play!

I' the rough,—to-morrow I review my
piece,

Tame here and there undue floridity,—
 It 's hard: you have to plead before
 these priests
 And poke at them with Scripture, or
 you pass
 For heathen and, what's worse, for
 ignorant
 O' the quality o' the Court and what it
 likes
 By way of illustration of the law:
 To-morrow stick in this, and throw out
 that,
 And, having first ecclesiastieised,
 Regularise the whole, next emphasise,
 Then latinise and lastly Cicero-ise,
 Giving my Fisce his finish. There's
 my speech—
 And where's my fry, and family and
 friends?
 Where's that old Hyacinth I mean to
 hug
 Till he cries out, " *Jam satis!* Let me
 breathe!"
 Oh, what an evening have I earned to-
 day!
 Hail, ye true pleasures, all the rest are
 false!
 Oh, the old mother, oh, the fattish wife!
 Rogue Hyacinth shall put on paper
 toque,
 And wrap himself around with mam-
 ma's veil
 Done up to imitate papa's black robe,
 (I 'm in the secret of the comedy,—
 Part of the program leaked out long
 ago!)
 And call himself the Advocate o' the
 Poor,
 Mimic Don father that defends the
 Count,
 And for reward shall have a small full
 glass
 Of manly red rosolio to himself,
 —Always provided that he conjugate
Bibo, I drink, correctly—nor be found
 Make the *perfectum*, *bipsi*, as last year!
 How the ambitious do so harden heart
 As lightly hold by these home-sancti-
 tudes,
 To me is matter of bewilderment—
 Bewilderment! Because ambition's
 range
 Is nowise tethered by domestic tie:
 Am I refused an outlet from my home
 To the world's stage?—whereon a man
 should play
 The man in public, vigilant for law,
 Zealous for truth, a credit to his
 Nay,—through the talent so em-
 as yield
 The Lord has own again with us
 A satisfaction, yea, to God His
 Well, I have modelled me by
 wish,
 " Remove far from me vanity and
 " Feed me with food convenient
 me!" What
 I' the world should a wise man re-
 beyond?
 Can I but coax the good fat little v
 To tell her fool of a father of the
 His scapegrace nephew played
 time last year
 At Carnival,—he could not choo
 think,
 But modify that inconsiderate gif
 O' the eup and cover (somewhere i
 will
 Under the pillow, someone see
 guess)
 —Correct that elause in favour of a
 The trifle ought to grace with nam
 graved
 (Would look so well produced in y
 to come
 To pledge a memory when
 papa
 Latin and law are long since lai
 rest)
Hyacintho dono dedit avus,—wh
 The wife should get a necklace for
 pains,
 The very pearls that made Viol
 proud,
 And Pietro pawned for half their v
 once,—
 Redeemable by somebody—*ne sit*
Marita quæ rotundioribus
Onusta mammis . . . baccis amb
 Her bosom shall display the big ro
 balls,
 No braver should be borne by wed
 wife!
 With which Horatian promise I
 clude.
 Into the pigeon-hole with thee,
 speech!
 Off and away, first work then p
 play, play!
 Bottini, burn your books, you bla
 ass!
 Sing " Tra-la-la, for, lambkins, we m
 live!"

IX

JURIS DOCTOR JOHANNES-BAPTISTA BOTTINIUS,

FISCI ET REV. CAM. APOSTOL. ADVOCATUS.

HAD I God's leave, how I would alter things!

If I might read instead of print my speech,—

Ay, and enliven speech with many a flower

Refuses obstinately blow in print As wildings planted in a prim parterre,—

This scurvy room were turned an immense hall;

Opposite, fifty judges in a row;

This side and that of me, for audience—

Rome: And, where yon window is, the Pope should be—

Watch, curtained, but yet visibly enough.

A buzz of expectation! Through the crowd,

Jingling his chain and stumping with his staff,

Up comes an usher, louts him low, "The Court

"Requires the allocution of the Fisc!"

I rise, I bend, I look about me, pause O'er the hushed multitude! I count—

One, two—

Have ye seen, Judges, have ye, lights of law,—

When it may hap some painter, much in vogue

Throughout our city nutritive of arts,

Ye summon to a task shall test his worth,

And manufacture, as he knows and can,

A work may decorate a palace-wall, Afford my lords their Holy Family,—

Hath it escaped the acumen of the Court

How such a painter sets himself to paint?

Suppose that Joseph, Mary and her Babe

A-journeying to Egypt prove the piece: Why, first he sedulously practiseth,

This painter,—girding loin and lighting lamp,—

On what may nourish eye, make facile hand;

Getteth him studies (styled by draughts, men so)

From some assistant corpse of Jew or Turk

Or, haply, Molinist, he cuts and carves,— This Luca or this Carlo or the like:

To him the bones their inmost secret yield,

Each notch and nodule signify their use, On him the muscles turn, in triple tier,

And pleasantly entreat the entrusted man,—

"Familiarise thee with our play that

"Thus, and thus lowers again, leg, arm and foot!"

—Ensuring due correctness in the nude. Which done, is all done? Not a whit,

ye know! He,—to art's surface rising from her

depth,— If some flax-poll'd soft-bearded sire be

found, Maysimulate a Joseph, (happy chance!)

Limneth exact each wrinkle of the brow,

Loseth no involution, cheek or chap, Till lo, in black and white, the senior

lives! Is it a young and comely peasant-nurse

That poseth? (be the phrase accorded me!)

Each feminine delight of florid lip, Eyes brimming o'er and brow bowed

down with love, Marmoreal neck and bosom uberous,—

Glad on the paper in a trice they go To help his notion of the Mother-Maid:

Methinks I see it, chalk a little stumped! Yea and her babe—that flexure of soft

limbs, That budding face imbued with dewy

sleep, Contribute each an excellence to Christ.

Nay, since he humbly lent companionship,

Even the poor ass, unpanniered and elate

Stands, perks an ear up, he a model too;

While clouted shoon, staff, scrip and water-gourd,—

Aught may betoken travel, heat and haste,—

No jot nor tittle of these but in its turn Ministers to perfection of the piece:

Till now, such piece before him, part by part,—

Such prelude ended,—pause our painter may,
 Submit his fifty studies one by one,
 And in some sort boast "I have served my lords."

But what? And hath he painted once this while?
 Or when ye cry "Produce the thing required,
 "Show us our picture shall rejoice its niche,
 "Thy Journey through the Desert done in oils!"—
 What, doth he fall to shuffling 'mid his sheets, [fact
 Fumbling for first this, then the other
 Consigned to paper,—"studies," bear the term!—
 And stretch a canvas, mix a pot of paste,
 And fasten here a head and there a tail,
 (The ass hath one, my Judges!) so dove-tail
 Or, rather, ass-tail in, piece sorrowfully out—
 By bits of reproduction of the life—
 The picture, the expected Family?
 I trow not! do I miss with my conceit
 The mark, my lords?—not so my lords were served!
 Rather your artist turns abrupt from these,
 And preferably buries him and broods
 (Quite away from aught vulgar and external)
 On the inner spectrum, filtered through the eye,
 His brain-deposit, bred of many a drop,
E pluribus unum: and the wiser he!
 For in that brain,—their fancy sees at work,
 Could my lords peep indulged,—results alone,
 Not processes which nourish the result,
 Would they discover and appreciate,—life
 Fed by digestion, not raw food itself,
 No gobbets but smooth comfortable chyme
 Secreted from each snapped-up crudity,—
 Less distinct, part by part, but in the whole
 Truer to the subject,—the main central truth
 And soul o' the picture, would my Judges spy,—

Not those mere fragmentary facts
 Which answer to the outward and flesh—
 Not this nose, not that eyebrow
 other fact
 Of man's staff, woman's stole
 fant's clout,
 But lo, a spirit-birth conceived of
 Truth rare and real, not transcend
 fact and false.
 The studies—for his pupils and self!
 The picture be for our eximious
 And—who knows?—satisfy its God
 nor,
 Whose new wing to the villa he bought
 (God give him joy of it) by Cap
 soon [b
 ('T is bruited) shall be glowing with
 Of who hath long surpassed the
 entine,
 The Urbinat and . . what if I d
 add,
 Even his master, yea the Cortones
 I mean the accomplished Ciro F
 Sirs!
 (—Did not he die? I'll see before
 print.)

End we exordium, Phœbus plucks
 ear!
 Thus then, just so and no whit ot
 wise,
 Have I,—engaged as I were Ciro's s
 To paint a parallel, a Family,
 The patriarch Pietro with his wise
 wife
 To boot (as if one introduced Sa
 Anne
 By bold conjecture to complete
 group)
 And juvenile Pompilia with her ba
 Who, seeking safety in the wilderne
 Were all surprised by Herod, wh
 outstretched
 In sleep beneath a palm-tree by
 spring,
 And killed—the very circumstance
 paint,
 Moving the pity and terror of my lords
 Exactly so have I, a month at least,
 Your Fiscal, made me cognisant
 facts,
 Searched out, pried into, pressed th
 meaning forth

Of every piece of evidence in point,
How bloody Herod slew these innocents,—
Until the glad result is gained, the group
Demonstrably presented in detail,
Their slumber and his onslaught,—like
as life.
Yea and, availing me of help allowed
By law, discreet provision lest my lords
Be too much troubled by effrontery,—
The rack, law plies suspected crime
withal—
(Law that hath listened while the lyrist
sang
" *Lene tormentum ingenio admoveo,*"
Gently thou joggest by a twinge the
wit,
" *Plerumque duro,*" else were slow to
blab!)
Through this concession my full cup
runs o'er:
The guilty owns his guilt without re-
serve.
Therefore by part and part I clutch
my case
Which, in entirety now,—momentous
task,—
My lords demand, so render them I
must,
Since, one poor pleading more and I
have done.
But shall I ply my papers, play my
proofs,
Parade my studies, fifty in a row,
As though the Court were yet in pupil-
age
And not the artist's ultimate appeal?
Much rather let me soar the height pre-
scribed
And, bowing low, proffer my picture's
self!
No more of proof, disproof,—such vir-
tue was,
Such vice was never in Pompilia, now!
Far better say "Behold Pompilia!"
—(for
I leave the family as unmanageable,
And stick to just one portrait, but life-
size.)
Hath calumny imputed to the fair
A blemish, mole on cheek or wart on
chin,
Much more, blind hidden horrors best
unnamed?
Shall I descend to prove you, point by
point,

Never was knock-knee known nor
splay-foot found
In Phryne? (I must let the portrait
go,
Content me with the model, I believe).—
—I prove this? An indignant sweep
of hand,
Dash at and doing away with drapery,
And,—use your eyes, Athenians,
smooth she smiles!
Or,—since my client can no longer
smile,
And more appropriate instances
abound,—
What is this Tale of Tarquin, how the
slave
Was caught by him, preferred to Colla-
tine?
Thou, even from thy corpse-clothes
virginal,
Look'st the lie dead, Lucretia!
Thus at least
I, by the guidance of antiquity,
(Our one infallible guide) now operate,
Sure that the innocency shown is safe;
Sure, too, that, while I plead, the
echoes cry
(Lend my weak voice thy trump, sono-
rous Fame!)
"Monstrosity the Phrynean shape
shall mar,
"Lucretia's soul comport with Tarquin's
lie,
"When thistles grow on vines or thorns
yield figs,
"Or oblique sentence leave this judg-
ment-seat!"
A great theme: may my strength be
adequate!
For—paint Pompilia, dares my feeble-
ness?
How did I unaware engage so much
—Find myself undertaking to produce
A faultless nature in a flawless form?
What's here? Oh, turn aside nor
dare the blaze
Of such a crown, such constellation,
say,
As jewels here thy front, Humanity!
First, infancy, pellucid as a pearl;
Then, childhood—stone which, dew-
drop at the first,
(An old conjecture) sucks, by dint of
gaze,
Blue from the sky and turns to sap-
phire so:

Yet both these gems eclipsed by, last
and best,
Womanliness and wifehood opaline,
Its milk-white pallor,—chastity,—suf-
fused
With here and there a tint and hint of
flame,—
Desire,—the lapidary loves to find.
Such jewels bind conspicuously thy
brow,
Pompilia, infant, child, maid, woman,
wife—
Crown the ideal in our earth at last !
What should a faculty like mine do
here ?
Close eyes, or else, the rashier hurry
hand !

Which is to say,—lose no time but be-
gin !
Sermocinando ne declamem, Sirs,
Ultra clepsydrum, as our preachers say,
Lest I exceed my hour-glass. Where-
upon,
As Flaccus prompts, I dare the epic
plunge—
Begin at once with marriage, up till
when
Little or nothing would arrest your
love,
In the easeful life o' the lady ; lamb
and lamb,
How do they differ ? Know one, you
know all
Manners of maidenhood : mere maiden
she.
And since all lambs are like in more
than fleece,
Prepare to find that, lamb-like, she too
frisks—
O' the weaker sex, my lords, the weaker
sex !
To whom, the Teian teaches us, for
gift,
Not strength,—man's dower,—but
beauty, nature gave,
"Beauty in lieu of spears, in lieu of
shields !"
And what is beauty's sure concomitant,
Nay, intimate essential character,
But melting wiles, deliciousest deceits,
The whole redoubted armoury of love ?
Therefore of vernal pranks, dishevel-
lings
O' the hair of youth that dances April
in,
And easily-imagined Hebe-slips

O'er sward which May makes o
smooth for foot—
These shall we pry into?—or wise
wink,
Though numerous and dear they n
have been ?

For lo, advancing Hymen and
pomp !
Discedunt nunc amores, loves, farewe
Maneat amor, let love, the sole, rema
Farewell to dewiness and prime of li
Remains the rough determined da
dance done,
To work, with plough and harrow
What comes next ?
'Tis Guido henceforth guides Pompili
step,
Cries "No more friskings o'er the foo
ful glebe,
"Else, 'ware the whip!" Accordi
ingly,—first crack
O' the thong,—we hear that his you
wife was barred,
Cohibita fuit, from the old free life,
Vitam liberiores ducere.
Demur we ? Nowise : heifer bra
the hind ?
We seek not there should lapse th
natural law,
The proper piety to lord and king
And husband : let the heifer bear th
yoke !
Only, I crave he cast not patience o
This hind ; for deem you she endure
the whip,
Nor winces at the goad, nay, restive
kicks ?
What if the adversary's charge be just
And all untowardly she pursue her wa
With groan and grunt, though him
strike ne'er so hard ?
If petulant remonstrance made appeal
Unseasonable, o'erprotracted,—if
Importunate challenge taxed the publi
ear [served
When silence more decorously ha
For protestation,—if Pompilian plain
Wrought but to aggravate Guidonian
ire,—
Why, such mishaps, ungainly though
they be,
Ever companion change, are incident
To altered modes and novelty of life :
The philosophic mind expects no less,
Smilingly knows and names the crisis,
sits

Waiting till old things go and new arrive.
Therefore, I hold a husband but inept
Who turns impatient at such transit-
time,
As if this running from the rod would last!

Since, even while I speak, the end is reached
Success awaits the soon-disheartened man,
The parents turn their backs and leave the house,
The wife may wail but none shall inter-
vene,
He hath attained his object, groom and bride
Partake the nuptial bower no soul to see,
Old things are passed and all again is new,
Over and gone the obstacles to peace,
Novorum—tenderly the Mantuan turns
The expression, some such purpose in his eye—
Nascitur ordo! Every storm is laid,
And forth from plain each pleasant herb may peep,
Each bloom of wifehood in abeyance late:
(Confer a passage in the Canticles.)

But what if, as 't is wont with plant and wife,
Flowers,—after a suppression to good end,
Still, when they do spring forth,—sprout here, spread there,
Anywhere likelier than beneath the foot
O' the lawful good-man gardener of the ground?
He dug and dibbled, sowed and watered,—still
'T is a chance wayfarer shall pluck the increase.
Just so, respecting persons not too much,
The lady, foes allege, put forth each charm
And proper floweret of femininity
To whosoever had a nose to smell
Or breast to deck: what if the charge be true?
The fault were graver had she looked with choice,

Fastidiously appointed who should grasp,
Who, in the whole tower, go without the prize!
To nobody she destined donative,
But, first come was first served, the accuser saith
Put case her sort of . . . in this kind . . . escapes
Were many and oft and indiscriminate—
Impute ye as the action were prepense,
The gift particular, arguing malice so?
Which butterfly of the wide air shall brag
"I was preferred to Guido"—when 'tis clear
The cup, he quaffs at, lay with olent breast
Open to gnat, midge, bee and moth as well?
One chalice entertained the company;
And if its peevish lord object the more,
Mistake, misname such bounty in a wife,
Haste we to advertise him—charm of cheek,
Lustre of eye, allowance of the lip,
All womanly components in a spouse.
These are no household-bread each stranger's bite
Leaves by so much diminished for the mouth
O' the master of the house at supper-time:
But rather like a lump of spice they lie,
Morsel of myrrh, which scents the neighbourhood
Yet greets its lord no lighter by a grain.
Nay, even so, he shall be satisfied!
Concede we there was reason in his wrong,
Grant we his grievance and content the man!
For lo, Pompilia, she submits herself;
Ere three revolving years have crowned their course,
Off and away she puts this same reproach
Of lavish bounty, inconsiderate gift
O' the sweet of wifehood stored to other ends:
No longer shall he blame "She none excludes,"
But substitute "She laudably sees all,
"Searches the best out and selects the same."

For who is here, long sought and latest
found,
Waiting his turn unmoved amid the
whirl,
" *Constans in levitate*,"—Ha, my lords?
Calm in his levity,—indulge the quip!—
Since 'tis a Levite bears the bell away,
Parades him henceforth as Pompilia's
choice.
'Tis no ignoble object, husband!
Doubt'st?
When here comes tripping Flaccus with
his phrase
"Trust me, no miscreant singled from
the mob,
" *Crede non illum tibi de scelestis*
" *Plebe delectum*," but a man of mark,
A priest, dost hear? Why then, sub-
mit thyself!
Priest, ay and very phoenix of such
fowl,
Well-born, of culture, young and vigor-
ous,
Comely too, since precise the precept
points—
On the selected Levite be there found
Nor mole nor scar nor blemish, lest the
mind
Come all uncandid through the thwart-
ing flesh!
Was not the son of Jesse ruddy, sleek,
Pleasant to look on, pleasant every
way?
Since well he smote the harp and
sweetly sang,
And danced till Abigail came out to see,
And seeing smiled and smiling minis-
tered
The raisin-cluster and the cake of figs,
With ready meal refreshed the gifted
youth,
Till Nabal, who was absent shearing
sheep,
Felt heart sink, took to bed (discreetly
done—
They might have been beforehand with
him else)
And died—would Guido had behaved
as well!
But ah, the faith of early days is gone,
Heu prisca fides! Nothing died in him
Save courtesy, good sense and proper
trust,
Which, when they ebb from souls they
should o'erflow,
Discover stub, weed, sludge and ugliness.

(The Pope, you know, is Neapolitan
And relishes a sea-side simile.)
Deserted by each charitable way
Guido, left high and dry, shows jeal-
ousy now!
Jealous avouched, paraded: tax
fool
With any peccadillo, he responds
"Truly I beat my wife through jealousy"
"Imprisoned her and punished out-
wise,
"Being jealous: now would threaten
sword in hand,
"Now manage to mix poison in
sight,
"And so forth: jealously I dealt
fine."
Concede the fact and what remain
prove?
Have I to teach my masters what ef-
ficiency hath jealousy and how, befooling me
It makes false true, abuses eye and ear
Turns the mist adamantine loads w-
sound
Silence, and into void and vacancy
Crowds a whole phalanx of conspir-
ing foes?
Therefore who owns "I watched with
jealousy [world]
"My wife" adds "for no reason in the
What need that who says "madman"
should remark
"The thing he thought a serpent proved
an eel?"—
Perchance the right Comacchian, s-
foot length,
And not an inch too long for that sar-
apie
(Master Arcangeli has heard of such)
Whose succulence makes fasting be-
arable;
Meant to regale some moody splenet-
Who pieces to mistake the donor's gift
And spies—I know not what Lernaean
snake
I' the luscious Lenten creature, stamp-
forsooth
The dainty in the dust.
Enough! Prepar-
His lunes announced, for downright
lunacy!
Insanit homo, threat succeeds to threat
And blow redoubles blow,—his wife
the block,
But, if a block, shall not she jar the
hand

That buffets her? The injurious idle
stone
Rebounds and firs the head of him who
flung.
Causeless rage breeds, i' the wife now,
rageful cause,
Tyranny wakes rebellion from its sleep.
Religion, say I?—rather, self-defence.
Laudable wish to live and see good
days,
Pricks our Pompilia on to fly the foe
By any means, at any price,—nay,
more,
Nay, most of all, i' the very interest
Of the foe that, baffled of his blind
desire
At any price, is truest victor so.
Shall he effect his crime and lose his
soul?
No, dictates duty to a loving wife.
Far better that the unconsummated blow,
Adroitly baulked by her, should back
again,
Correctively admonish his own pate!
Crime then,—the Court is with me?—
she must crush;
How crush it? By all efficacious
means;
And these,—why, what in womans should
they be?
“With horns the bull, with teeth the
lion fights,
“To woman,” quoth the lyrist quoted
late,
“Nor teeth, nor horns, but beauty,
Nature gave!”
Pretty i' the Pagan! Who dares blame
the use
Of the armoury thus allowed for
natural,—
Exclaim against a seeming-dubious
play
O' the sole permitted weapon, spear and
shield
Alike, resorted to i' the circumstance
By poor Pompilia? Grant she some-
what plied
Arts that allure, the magic nod and
wink,
The witchery of gesture, spell of word,
Whereby the likelier to enlist this
friend,
Yet stranger, as a champion on her
side?
Such, being but mere man, ('t was all
she knew),

Must be made sure by beauty's silken
bond,
The weakness that subdues the strong,
and bows
Wisdom alike and folly. Grant the
tale
O' the husband, which is false, for
proved and true
To the letter,—or the letters, I should
say,
The abominations he professed to find
And fix upon Pompilia and the priest,—
Allow them hers—for though she could
not write,
In early days of Eve-like innocence
That plucked no apple from the know-
ledge-tree,
Yet, at the Serpent's word, Eve plucks
and eats
And knows—especially how to read
and write:
And so Pompilia,—as the move o' the
maw,
Quoth Persius, makes a parrot bid
“Good-day!”
A crow salute the concave, and a pie
Endeavour at proficiency in speech,—
So she, through hunger after fellow-
ship,
May well have learned, though late,
to play the scribe:
As indeed, there's one letter on the list
Explicitly declares did happen here.
“You thought my letters could be none
of mine,”
She tells her parents—“mine, who
wanted skill;
“But now I have the skill, and write,
you see!”
She needed write love-letters, so she
learned,
“*Negatus artifex sequi voces*”—though
This letter nowise 'scapes the common
lot,
But lies i' the condemnation of the rest,
Found by the husband's self who
forged them all.
Yet, for the sacredness of argument,
For this once an exemption shall it
plead—
Anything, anything to let the wheels
Of argument run glibly to their goal:
Concede she wrote (which were pre-
posterous)
This and the other epistle,—what of it?
Where does the figment touch her can-
did name?

Being in peril of her life—"my life,
 "Not an hour's purchase," as the let-
 ter runs,—
 And having but one stay in this ex-
 tremie,
 And out of the wide world a single
 friend—
 What could she other than resort to
 him,
 And how with any hope resort but
 thus?
 Shall modesty dare bid a stranger
 brave
 Danger, disgrace, nay death in her be-
 half—
 Think to entice the sternness of the
 steel
 Save by the magnet moves the manly
 mind?
 —Most of all when such mind is ham-
 pered so
 By growth of circumstance athwart the
 life
 O' the natural man, that decency for-
 bids
 He stoop and take the common privi-
 lege,
 Say frank "I love," as all the vulgar
 do.
 A man is wedded to philosophy,
 Married to statesmanship; a man is
 old;
 A man is fettered by the foolishness
 He took for wisdom and talked ten
 years since;
 A man is, like our friend the Canon
 here,
 A priest, and wicked if he break his
 vow:
 He dare to love, who may be Pope one
 Suppose this man could love, though,
 all the same—
 From what embarrassment she sets
 him free
 Should one, a woman he could love,
 speak first—
 "'T is I who break reserve, begin ap-
 peal,
 "Confess that, whether you love me
 or no,
 "I love you!" What an ease to dig-
 nity,
 What help of pride from the hard high-
 backed chair
 Down to the carpet where the kittens
 bask,
 All under the pretence of gratitude!

From all which, I deduce—the
 here
 Was bound to proffer nothing she
 love
 To the priest whose service was to
 her. What?
 Shall she propose him lucre, du-
 the mine,
 Rubbish o' the rock, some diam-
 muckworms prize,
 Or pearl secreted by a sickly fish?
 Scarcely! She caters for a gene-
 taste.
 'T is love shall beckon, beauty bi-
 breast,
 Till all the Samson sink into the sn-
 Because, permit the end—per-
 therewith
 Means to the end!
 How say you, good my lord
 I hope you heard my adversary rin-
 The changes on this precept: now
 me
 Reverse the peal! *Quia dato li-*
fine,
Ad illum assequendu ordinata
Non sunt damnanda n. a.,—licit en-
 Enough was the escape from death
 hope,
 To legalise the means illicit else
 Of feigned love, false allurement, f-
 cied fact.
 Thus Venus losing Cupid on a day,
 (See that *Idyllium Moschi*) seek
 help,
 In the anxiety of motherhood,
 Allowably promised "Who shall bri-
 report [bal-
 "Where he is wandered to, my wing
 "I give him for reward a nectared ki-
 "But who brings safely back the tr-
 ant's self,
 "His be a super-sweet makes kiss sec-
 cold!"
 Are not these things writ for example
 sake?
 To such permitted motive, then, ref-
 All those professions, else were har-
 explain,
 Of hope, fear, jealousy, and the rest o-
 love!
 He is Myrtillus, Amaryllis she,
 She burns, he freezes,—all a mere de-
 vice
 To catch and keep the man may save
 her life,

Whom otherwise nor catches she nor keeps !
 Worst, once, is best now : in all faith, she feigns :
 Feigning,—the liker innocence to guilt, The truer to the life is what she feigns !
 How if Ulysses,—when, for public good He sunk particular qualms and played the spy,
 Entered Troy's hostile gate in beggar's garb—
 How if he first had boggled at this clout,
 Grown dainty o'er that clack-dish ? Grime is grace
 To whoso gropes amid the dung for gold.
 Hence, beyond promises, we praise each proof
 That promise was not simply made to break,—
 No moonshine-structure meant to fade at dawn :
 So call—(proofs consequent and requisite)—
 What enemies allege of—more than words,
 Deeds—meeting at the window, twilight tryst,
 Nocturnal entertainment in the dim Old labyrinthine palace ; lies, we know—
 Inventions we, long since, turned inside out.
 Would such external semblance of intrigue
 Demonstrate that intrigue must lurk perdué ?
 Does every hazel-sheath disclose a nut ?
 He were a Molinist who dared maintain That midnight meetings in a screened alcove
 Must argue folly in a matron—since
 So would he bring a sh— on Judith's self,
 Commended beyond women that she lured
 The lustful to destruction through his lust,
 Pompilia took not Judith's liberty,
 No faulchion find you in her hand to smite,—
 No damsel to convey the head in dish, Of Holophernes,—style the Canon so—
 Or is it the Count ? If I entangle me With my similitudes,—if wax wings melt,

And earthward down I drop, not mine the fault :
 Blame your beneficence, O Court, O sun,
 Whereof the beamy smile affects my flight !
 What matter, so Pompilia's fame revive
 I' the warmth that proves the bane of Icarus ?
 Yea, we have shown it lawful, necessary
 Pompilia leave her husband, seek the house
 O' the parents : and because 'twixt home and home
 Lies a long road with many a danger rife,
 Lions by the way and serpents in the path,
 To rob and ravish,—much behoves she keep
 Each shadow of suspicion from fair fame,
 For her own sake much, but for his sake more,
 The ingrate husband ! Evidence shall be,
 Some witness to the world how white she walks
 I' the mire she wanders through ere Rome she reach.
 And who so proper witness as a priest ?
 Gainsay ye ? Let me hear who dares gainsay !
 I hope we still can punish heretics !
 " Give me the man " I say with him of Gath,
 " That we may fight together ! " None, I think :
 The priest is granted me.
 Then, if a priest,
 One juvenile and potent : else, mayhap,
 That dragon, our Saint George would slay, slays him.
 And should fair face accompany strong hand,
 The more complete equipment : nothing mars
 Work, else praiseworthy, like a bodily flaw
 I' the worker : as 't is said Saint Paul himself
 Deplored the check o' the puny presence, still

Cheating his fulmination of its flash,
Albeit the bolt therein went true to oak.
Therefore the agent, as prescribed, she
takes,—

A priest, juvenile, potent, handsome
too,—

In all obedience: "good," you grant
again.

Do you? I would ye were the hus-
band, lords!

How prompt and facile might depart-
ure be!

How boldly would Pompilia and the
priest

March out of door, spread flag at beat
of drum,

But that inapprehensive Guido grants
Neither remiss nor yet conclusion here,
And, perblind, dreads a bear in every
bush!

For his own quietude and comfort, then,
Means must be found for flight in mas-
querade

At hour when all things sleep.—"Save
jealousy!"

Right, judges! Therefore shall the
lady's wit

Supply the boon thwart nature baulks
him of,

And do him service with the potent
drug

(Helen's nepenthe, as my lords opine)
Shall respite blessedly each frittered
nerve

O' the much-enduring man: accord-
ingly,

There lies he, duly dosed and sound
asleep,

Relieved of woes, or real or raved about.
While soft she leaves his side, he shall
not wake;

Nor stop who steals away to join her
friend,

Nor do him mischief should he catch
that friend

Intent on more than friendly office,—
nay,

Nor get himself raw head and bones
laid bare

In payment of his apparition!

Would I defend the step,—were the
thing true

Which is a fable,—see my former
That Guido slept (who never slept a
wink)

Through treachery, an opiate from h
wife,
Who not so much as knew what opiate
mean.

Now she may start: but hie,—a stop
page still!

A journey is an enterprise which costs
As in campaigns, we fight and other
pay,

Suis expensis, nemo militat.

'T is Guido's self we guard from acci-
ent,

Ensuring safety to Pompilia, versed
Nowise in misadventures by the way

Hard riding and rough quarters, th
rude fare,

The unready host. What magic mit-
gates

Each plague of travel to the unprac-
tised wife?

Money, sweet Sirs! And were the fi-
tion fact,

She helped herself thereto with libera-
hand

From out the husband's store,—wha-
fitter use

Was ever husband's money destined to
With bag and baggage thus did Did-
once

Decamp,—for more authority, a queen

So is she fairly on her route at last,
Prepared for either fortune: nay and
if

The priest, now all a-glow with enter-
prise,

Cool somewhat presently when faded
the flush

O' the first adventure, clouded o'er
belike

By doubts, misgivings how the da-
may die,

Though born with such auroral brilli-
ance,—if

The brow seem over-peevish and the li-
'Gin lag and lose the prattle lightsom-
late,—

Vanquished by tedium of a prolonged
jaunt

In a close carriage o'er a jolting road
With only one young female substitut-

For seventeen other Canons of ripe ag-
Were wont to keep him company in
church,—

Shall not Pompilia haste to dissipate
The silent cloud that, gathering, bode

her bale?—

Prop the irresoluteness may portend
 Suspension of the project, check the
 flight,
 Bring ruin on them both?—use every
 means,
 Since means to the end are lawful?
 What i' the way
 Of wile should have allowance like a
 kiss
 Sagely and sisterly administered,
Sororia saltem oscula? We find
 Such was the remedy her wit applied
 To each incipient scruple of the priest,
 If we believe,—as, while my wit is mine
 I cannot,—what the driver testifies,
 Borsi, called Venerino, the mere tool
 Of Guido and his friend the Governor,—
 The avowal I proved wrung from out
 the wretch,
 After long rotting in imprisonment,
 As price of liberty and favour: long
 They tempted, he at last succumbed,
 and lo
 Counted them out full tale each kiss
 required,—
 “The journey was one long embrace,”
 quoth he.
 Still, though we should believe the
 driver's lie,
 Nor even admit as probable excuse,
 Right reading of the riddle,—as I
 urged
 in my first argument, with fruit per-
 haps—
 That what the owl-like eyes (at back of
 head!)
 O' the driver, drowsed by driving night
 and day,
 Supposed a vulgar interchange of love,
 This was but innocent jog of head
 'gainst head,
 Cheek meeting jowl as apple may touch
 pear
 From branch and branch contiguous
 in the wind,
 When Autumn blusters and the orchard
 rocks.
 The rapid run and the rough road were
 cause
 O' the casual ambiguity, no harm
 I' the world to eyes awake and pene-
 trative.
 Yet,—not to grasp a truth I can forge
 And safely fight without and conquer
 still,—
 Say, she kissed him, and he kissed her
 again!

Such osculation was a potent means,
 A very efficacious help, no doubt:
 This with a third part of her nectar did
 Venus imbue: why should Pompilia
 fling
 The poet's declaration in his teeth?—
 Pause to employ what,—since it had
 success,
 And kept the priest her servant to the
 end,—
 We must presume of energy enough,
 No whit superfluous, so permissible?
 The goal is gained: day, night and yet
 a day
 Have run their round: a long and
 devious road
 Is traversed,—many manners, various
 men
 Passed in review, what cities did they
 see,
 What hamlets mark, what profitable
 food
 For after-meditation cull and store!
 Till Rome, that Rome whereof—this
 voice,
 Would it might make our Molinists
 observe,
 That she is built upon a rock nor shall
 Their powers prevail against her!—
 Rome, I say,
 Is all but reached; one stag: ore and
 they stop
 Saved: pluck up heart, ye pair, and
 forward, then!
 Ah,—Nature—baffled she recurs, alas!
 Nature imperiously exacts her due,
 Spirit is willing but the flesh is weak,
 Pompilia needs must acquiesce and
 swoon,
 Give hopes alike and fears a breathing-
 while.
 The innocent sleep soundly: sound she
 sleeps.
 So let her slumber, then, unguarded
 save
 By her own chastity, a triple mail,
 And his good hand whose stalwart arms
 have borne
 The sweet and senseless burthen like a
 babe
 From coach to couch,—the serviceable
 man!
 Nay, what and if he gazed rewardedly
 On the pale beauty prisoned in em-
 brace,

Stooped over, stole a balmy breath per-
haps
For more assurance sleep was not de-
cease—
" *Ut vidi*," " how I saw ! " succeeded
by
" *Ut perii*," " how I sudden lost my
brains ! "
—What harm ensued to her uncon-
scious quite ?
For, curiosity—how natural !
Importunateness—what a privilege
In the ardent sex ! And why curb
ardour here ?
How can the priest but pity whom he
saved ?
And pity is how near to love, and love
How neighbourly to unreasonableness !
And for love's object, whether love
were sage
Or foolish, could Pompilia know or
care,
Being still sound asleep, as I premised ?
Thus the philosopher absorbed by
thought,
Even Archimedes, busy o'er a book
The while besiegers sacked his Syra-
cuse, [point
Was ignorant of the imminence o' the
O' the sword till it surprised him : let
it stab,
And never knew himself was dead at all.
So sleep thou on, secure whate'er be-
tide !
For thou, too, hast thy problem hard
to solve—
How so much beauty is compatible
With so much innocence !

Fit place, methinks,
While in this task she rosily is lost,
To treat of and repel objection here
Which,—frivolous, I grant,—but, still
misgives
My mind, it may have flitted, gadfly-
like,
And teased the Court at times—as if, all
said
And done, there still seemed, one might
nearly say,
In a certain acceptance, somewhat
more
Of what may pass for insincerity,
Falsehood, throughout the course Pom-
pilia took,
Than befits Christian. P^agians held,
we know,

We always ought to aim at good and
truth,
Not always put one thing in the same
words :
Non idem semper dicere sed spectare
Debemus. But the Pagan yoke was
light ;
" Lie not at all," the exacter precept
bids :
Each least lie breaks the law,—is sin,
ye hold.
I humble me, but venture to submit—
What prevents sin, itself is sinless, sure ;
And sin, which hinders sin of deeper
dye,
Softens itself away by contrast so.
Conceive me ! Little sin, by none at
all,
Were properly condemned for great :
but great,
By greater, dwindles into small again.
Now, what is greatest sin of woman-
hood ?
That which unwomans it, abolishes
The nature of the woman,—impudence.
Who contradicts me here ? Concede
me, then,
Whatever friendly fault may interpose
To save the sex from self-abolishment
Is three-parts on the way to virtue's
rank !
Now, what is taxed here as duplicity,
Feint, vile and trick,—admitted for
the nonce,—
What worse do one and all than inter-
pose,
Hold, as it were, a deprecating hand,
Statuesquely, in the Medicean mode,
Before some shame which modesty
would veil ?
Who blames the gesture prettily per-
verse ?
Thus,—lest ye miss a point illustrative,
Admit the husband's calumny—allow
That the wife, having penned the epistle
fraught
With horrors, charge on charge of
crime, she heaped
O' the head of Pietro and Violante—
(still
Presumed her parents)—and des-
patched the thing
To their arch-enemy Paolo, through
free choice
And no sort of compulsion in the
world—
Put case that she discards simplicity

For craft, denies the voluntary act,
 Declares herself a passive instrument
 I' the hands of Guido; duped by
 knavery,
 She traced the characters, she could not
 write,
 And took on trust the unread sense
 which, read,
 Were recognised but to be spurned at
 once.
 Allow this calumny, I reiterate !
 Who is so dull as wonder at the pose
 Of our Pompilia in the circumstance ?
 Who sees not that the too-ingenuous
 soul,
 Repugnant even at a duty done
 Which brought beneath too scrutinis-
 ing glare
 The misdemeanours,—buried in the
 dark,—
 Of the authors of her being, she be-
 lieved,—
 Stung to the quick at her impulsive
 deed,
 And willing to repair what harm it
 worked,
 She—wise in this beyond what Nero
 proved,
 Who, when needs were the candid
 juvenile
 Should sign the warrant, doom the
 guilty dead,
 “ Would I had never learned to write,”
 quoth he ! [cried
 —Pompilia rose above the Roman,
 “ To read or write I never learned at
 all ! ”
 O splendidly (mendacious !

But time fleets :
 Let us not linger : hurry to the end,
 Since end does flight and all disas-
 trously.
 Beware ye blame desert for unsuccess,
 Disparage each expedient else to praise,
 Call failure folly ! Man's best effort
 fails.
 After ten years' resistance Troy fell
 flat :
 Could valour save a town, Troy still
 had stood.
 Pompilia came off halting in no point
 Of courage, conduct, the long journey
 through :
 But nature sank exhausted at the close,
 And, as I said, she swooned and slept
 all night.

Morn breaks and brings the husband :
 we assist
 At the spectacle. Discovery succeeds.
 Ha, how is this ? What moonstruck
 rage is here ?
 Though we confess to partial frailty
 now,
 To error in a woman and a wife,
 Is 't by the rough way she shall be re-
 claimed ?
 Who bursts upon her chambered priv-
 acy ?
 What crowd profanes the chaste *cubi-
 culum* ?
 What outeries and lewd laughter, scur-
 ril gibe
 And ribald jest to scare the ministrant
 Good angels that commerce with souls
 in sleep ?
 Why, had the worst crowned Guido to
 his wish,
 Confirmed his most irrational surmise,
 Yet there be bounds to man's emotion,
 checks
 To an immoderate astonishment.
 'Tis decent horror, regulated wrath,
 Befit our dispensation : have we back
 The old Pagan licensee ? Shall a Vul-
 can elap
 His net o' the sudden and expose the
 pair
 To the unquenehable universal mirth ?
 A feat, antiquity saw scandal in
 So clearly, that the nauseous tale
 thereof—
 Demodceus his lugatory song—
 Hath ever been concluded modern
 stuff
 Impossible to the mouth of the grave
 Mus',
 So, foisted into that Eighth Odyssey
 By some impertinent pickthank. O
 thou fool,
 Count Guido Franceschini, what were
 gained
 By publishing thy shame thus to the
 world ?
 Were all the precepts of the wise a
 waste—
 Bred in thee not one touch of rever-
 ence ?
 Why, say thy wife—admonish we the
 fool,—
 Were false, and thou bid chronicle
 thy shame,
 Much rather should thy teeth bite out
 thy tongue,

Dumb lip consort with desecrated brow,
 Silence become historiographer,
 And thou—thine own Cornelius Tacitus !
 But virtue, barred, still leaps the barrier, lords !
 —Still, moon-like, penetrates the encroaching mist
 And bursts, all broad and bare, on night, ye know !
 Surprised, then, in the garb of truth, perhaps,
 Pompilia, thus opposed, breaks obstacle,
 Springs to her feet, and stands Thalassian-pure,
 Confronts the foe,—nay, catches at his sword
 And tries to kill the intruder, he complains.
 Why, so she gave her lord his lesson back,
 Crowned him, this time, the virtuous woman's way,
 With an exact obedience ; he brought sword,
 She drew the same, since swords are meant to draw.
 Tell not me 'tis sharp play with tools on edge ! [here.
 It was the husband chose the weapon
 Why did not he inaugurate the game
 With some gentility of apophthegm
 Still pregnant on the philosophic page,
 Some captivating cadence still a-lisp
 O' the poet's lyre ? Such spells subdue the surge,
 Make tame the tempest, much more mitigate
 The passions of the mind, and probably
 Had moved Pompil' a to a smiling blush.
 No, he must needs prefer the argument
 O' the blow : and she obeyed, in duty bound,
 Returned him buffet ratiocinative—
 Ay, in the reasoner's own interest,
 For wife must follow whither husband leads,
 Vindicate honour as himself prescribes,
 Save him the very way himself bids save !
 No question but who jumps into a quag
 Should stretch forth hand and pray one
 " Pull me out
 " By the hand ! " such were the customary cry :
 But Guido pleased to bid " Leave hand alone !

" Join both feet, rather, jump upon head,
 " I extricate myself by the rebound
 And dutifully as enjoined she jumped
 Drew his own sword and menaced own life,
 Anything to content a wilful spouse
 And so he was contented—one must
 Justice to the expedient which succeeds,
 Strange as it seem : at flourish of blade,
 The crowd drew back, stood breathless and abashed,
 Then murmured " This should be wanton wife,
 " No conscience-stricken creature caught i' the act,
 " And patiently awaiting our first stone :
 " But a poor hard-pressed all-bewildered thing,
 " Has rushed so far, misguidedly perhaps,
 " Meaning no more harm than a frightened sheep.
 " She sought for aid ; and if she made mistake
 " I' the man could aid most, why—mortals do :
 " Even the blessed Magdalen mistook
 " Far less forgivably : consult the place—
 " Supposing him to be the gardener,
 " " Sir," said she, and so following.
 Why more words ?
 Forthwith the wife is pronounced innocent :
 What would the husband more than gain his cause,
 And find that honour flash in the world's eye,
 His apprehension was lest soil had smirched ?
 So, happily the adventure comes to close
 Whereon my fat opponent grounds his charge
 Preposterous : at mid-day he groans
 " How dark ! "
 Listen to me, thou Archangelic swine !
 Where is the ambiguity to blame,
 The flaw to find in our Pompilia ? Safe
 She stands, see ! Does thy comment follow quick

" Safe, inasmuch as at the end proposed ;
 " But thither she picked way by devious path—
 " Stands dirtied, no dubiety at all !
 " I recognise success, yet, all the same,
 " Importunately will suggestion prick—
 " What, had Pompilia gained the right to boast
 " " No devious path, no doubtful patch was mine,
 " " I saved my head nor sacrificed my foot ? "
 " Why, being in a peril, show mistrust
 " Of the angels set to guard the innocent ?
 " Why rather hold by obvious vulgar help
 " Of stratagem and subterfuge, excused
 " Somewhat, but still no less a foil, a fault,
 " Since low with high, and good with bad is linked ?
 " Methinks I view some ancient bas-relief.
 " There stands Hesione thrust out by Troy,
 " Her father's hand has chained her to a crag,
 " Her mother's from the virgin plucked the vest,
 " At a safe distance both distressful [watch,
 " While near and nearer comes the snorting orc.
 " I look that, white and perfect to the end,
 " She wait till Jove despatch some demigod ;
 " Not that,—impatient of celestial club
 " Alcmena's son should brandish at the beast,—
 " She daub, disguise her dainty limbs with pitch,
 " And so elude the purblind monster !
 Ay,
 " The trick succeeds, but 't is an ugly trick,
 " Where needs have been no trick ! "

My answer ? Faugh !
Nimis incongrue ! Too absurdly put !
Sententiam ego teneo contrariam,
 Trick, I maintain, had no alternative.
 The heavens were bound with brass,—
 Jove far at feast

B.P.

(No feast like that thou didst not ask me to,
 Arcangeli,—I heard of thy regale !)
 With the unblamed Æthiop,—Hercules spun wool
 I' the lap of Omphale, while Virtue shrieked—
 The brute came paddling all the faster.
 You
 Of Troy, who stood at distance, where's the aid
 You offered in the extremity ? Most and least,
 Gentle and simple, here the Governor,
 There the Archbishop, everywhere the friends,
 Shook heads and waited for a miracle,
 Or went their way, left Virtue to her fate.
 Just this one rough and ready man leapt forth !
 —Was found, sole anti-Fabius (dare I say)
 To restore things, with no delay at all,
Qui, haud cunctando, rem restituit ! He,
 He only, Caponsacchi 'mid a crowd,
 Caught Virtue up, carried Pompilia off
 Thro' the gaping impotence of sympathy
 In ranged Arezzo : what you take for pitch,
 Is nothing worse, belike, than black and blue,
 Mere evanescent proof that hardy hands
 Did yeoman's service, cared not where the gripe
 Was more than duly energetic : bruised,
 She smarts a little, but her bones are saved [sleek.
 A fracture, and her skin will soon show
 How it disgusts when weakness, false-refined,
 Censures the honest rude effective strength,—
 When sickly dreamers of the impossible
 Decry plain sturdiness which does the feat
 With eyes wide open !

Did occasion serve,
 I could illustrate, if my lords allow ;
Quid vetet, what forbids, I aptly ask
 With Horace, that I give my anger vent,

While I let breathe, no less, and re-
create
The gravity of my Judges, by a tale—
A case in point—what though an apo-
logue
Graced by tradition,—possibly a fact?
Tradition must precede all scripture,
words
Serve as our warrant ere our books can
be:
So, to tradition back we needs must go
For any fact's authority: and this
Hath lived so far (like jewel hid in
nuck)
O' the page of that old lying vanity
Called "Sepher Toldoth Yeschu:"
God be praised,
I read no Hebrew,—take the thing on
trust:
But I believe the writer meant no good
(Blind as he was to truth in some re-
spects)
To our pestiferous and schismatic . .
well,
My lords' conjecture be the touchstone,
show
The thing for what it is! The author
lacks
Discretion, and his zeal exceeds: but
zeal,—
How rare in our degenerate day!
Enough!
Here is the story,—fear not, I shall
chop
And change a little, else my Jew would
press
All too unmannerly before the Court.
It happened once,—begins this foolish
Jew,
Pretending to write Christian history,—
That three, held greatest, best and
worst of men,
Peter and John and Judas, spent a day
In toil and travel through the country-
side
On some sufficient business—I suspect,
Suppression of some Molinism i' the
bud.
Foot-sore and hungry, dropping with
fatigue,
They reached by nightfall a poor lonely
grange,
Hovel or inn: so, knocked and en-
tered there.
"Your pleasure, great ones?"—
"Shelter, rest and food!"

For shelter, there was one bare
above;
For rest therein, three beds of bur-
straw:
For food, one wretched starveling,
no more—
Meat for one mouth, but mocker
three.
"You have my utmost." How sh
supper serve?
Peter broke silence. "To the
with fowl!"
"And while 't is cooking, slee
since beds there be,
"And, so far, satisfaction of a wa
"Sleep we an hour, awake at sup
time,
"Then each of us narrate the drea
had,
"And he whose dream shall prove
happiest, point
"The clearliest out the dreamer a
dained
"Beyond his fellows to receive
fowl,
"Him let our shares be cheerful tri
to,
"His the entire meal, may it do
good!"
Who could dispute so plain a co
quence?
So said, so done: each hurried to
straw,
Slept his hour's-sleep and dreamed
dream, and woke.
"I," commenced John, "drea
that I gained the prize
"We all aspire to: the proud place
mine,
"Throughout the earth and to the
of time
"I was the Loved Disciple: mine
meal!"
"But I," proceeded Peter, "drea
a word
"Gave me the headship of our c
pany,
"Made me the Vicar and Vice-reg
gave
"The keys of Heaven and Hell i
my hand,
"And o'er the earth, dominion: m
the meal!"
"While I," submitted in soft un
tone
The Iscariot—sense of his unwor
ness

Turning each eye up to the inmost
white—

With long-drawn sigh, yet letting both
lips smack,

"I have had just the pitifullest dream

"That ever proved man meanest of his
mates,

"And born foot-washer and foot-wiper,
nay

"Foot-kisser to each comrade of you
all!

"I dreamed I dreamed; and in that
minic dream

"(Impalpable to dream as dream to
fact)

"Methought I meanly chose to sleep
no wink

"But wait until I heard my brethren
breathe;

"Then stole from couch, slipped noise-
less to the door,

"Slid downstairs, furtively approached
the hearth,

"Found the fowl duly brown, both
back and breast,

"Hissing in harmony with the cricket's
chirp,

"Grilled to a point; said no grace but
fell to,

"Nor finished till the skeleton lay bare.

"In penitence for which ignoble dream,
"Lo, I renounce my portion cheerfully!

"Fie on the flesh—be mine the ether-
ial gust,

"And yours the sublunary susten-
ance! [poor!

"See, that whate'er be left, ye give the
Down the two scuttled, one on other's
heel,

Stung by a fell surmise; and found,
alack,

A goodly savour, both the drumstick-
bones,

And that which henceforth took the
appropriate name

O' the merry-thought, in memory of
the fact

That to keep wide awake is our best
dream.

So,—as was said once of Thucydides
And his sole joke, "The lion, lo, hath
laughed!"—

Just so, the Governor and all that 's
great

I' the city, never meant that Inno-
cence

Should starve thus while Authority sat
at meat.

They meant to fling a bone at ban-
quet's end,

Wished well to our Pompilia—in their
dreams,

Nor bore the secular sword in vain—
asleep:

Just so the Archbishop and all good
like him

Went to bed meaning to pour oil and
wine

I' the wounds of her, next day,—but
long ere day,

They had burned the one and drunk the
other: while

Just so, again, contrariwise, the priest
Sustained poor Nature in extremity

By stuffing barley-bread into her
mouth,

Saving Pompilia (grant the parallel)

By the plain homely and straightfor-
ward way

Taught him by common-sense. Let
others shriek

"Oh what refined expedients did we
dream

"Proved us the only fit to help the
fair!"

He cried "A carriage waits, jump in
with me!"

And now, this application pardoned,
lords,—

This recreative pause and breathing-
while,—

Back to beseeemingness and gravity I
For Law steps in: Guido appeals to
Law,

Demands she arbitrate,—does well for
once.

O Law, of thee how neatly was it said
By that old Sophocles, thou hast thy
seat

I' the very breast of Jove, no meanlier
throned!

Here is a piece of work now, hitherto
Begun and carried on, concluded near,

Without an eye-glance cast thy scorp-
tre's way;

And, lo the stumbling and discomfit-
ure!

Well may you call them "lawless,"
means men take

To extricate themselves through
mother-wit

When tangled haply in the toils of life!

Guido would try conclusions with his
 foe,
 Whoe'er the foe was and whate'er the
 offence ;
 He would recover certain dowry-dues :
 Instead of asking Law to lend a hand,
 What pother of sword drawn and pistol
 cocked,
 What peddling with forged letters and
 paid spies,
 Politic circumvention !—all to end
 As it began—by loss of the fool's head,
 First in a figure, presently in a fact.
 It is a lesson to mankind at large,
 How other were the end, would men be
 sage
 And bear confidingly each quarrel
 straight,
 O Law, to thy recipient mother-knees !
 How would the children light come and
 prompt go,
 This, with a red-cheeked apple for re-
 ward,
 The other, peradventure red-cheeked
 too
 I' the rear, by taste of birch for punish-
 ment.
 No foolish brawling murders any more !
 Peace for the household, practice for
 the Fisc,
 And plenty for the exchequer of my
 lords !
 Too much to hope, in this world : in the
 next,
 Who knows ? Since, why should sit
 the Twelve enthroned
 To judge the tribes, unless the tribes be
 judged ?
 And 't is impossible but offences come :
 So, all 's one lawsuit, all one long leet-
 day !
 Forgive me this digression—that I
 stand
 Entranced awhile at Law's first beam,
 outbreak
 O' the business, when the Count's good
 angel bade
 " Put up thy sword, born enemy to
 the ear,
 " And let Law listen to thy difference ! "
 And Law does listen and compose the
 strife,
 Settle the suit, how wisely and how
 well !
 On our Pompilia, faultless to a fault,
 Law bends a brow maternally severe,

Implies the worth of perfect chastity
 By fancying the flaw she cannot find
 Superfluous sifting snow, nor helps
 harms :
 'T is safe to censure levity in youth
 Tax womanhood with indiscretion
 sure !
 Since toys, permissible to-day, become
 Follies to-morrow : prattle shock
 church :
 And that curt skirt which lets a man
 skip,
 The matron changes for a trailing robe
 Mothers may risk thus much with
 shut eyes
 Nodding above their spindles by
 fire,
 On the chance to hit some hidden fault
 else safe.
 Just so, Law hazarded a punishment
 If applicable to the circumstance,
 Why, well—if not so apposite, well
 " Quit the gay range o' the world,
 hear her cry,
 " Enter, in lieu, the penitential poultice
 " Exchange the gauds of pomp
 ashes, dust :—
 " Leave each mollitious haunt of
 ury,
 " The golden-garnished silken-couch
 alcove, [tem
 " The many-columned terrace that
 " Feminine soul put foot forth,
 stop ear
 " To fluttering joy of lover's serenades
 " Leave these for cellular seclusion
 mask
 " And dance no more, but fast
 pray ; avaunt—
 " Be burned, thy wicked townsmen
 sonnet-book !
 " Welcome, mild hymnal by
 some better scribe !
 " For the warm arms, were wont entice
 thy flesh,
 " Let wire-shirt plough and whip-cane
 discipline "
 If such an exhortation proved, perhaps
 chance,
 Inapplicable, words bestowed in waste
 What harm, since law has store, to
 spend nor miss ?
 And so, our paragon submits herself
 Goes at command into the holy house
 And, also at command, comes out
 again ;

For, could the effect of such obedience
 prove
 Too certain, too immediate? Being
 healed,
 Go blaze abroad the matter, blessed
 one!
 Art thou sound forthwith? Speedily
 vacate
 The step by pool-side, leave Bethesda
 free
 To patients plentifully posted round,
 Since the whole need not the physician!
 Brief,
 She may betake her to her parents'
 place.
 Welcome her, father, with wide arms
 once more,
 Motion her, mother, to thy breast
 again!
 For why? The law relinquishes its
 charge,
 Grants to your dwelling-place a prison's
 style,
 But gives you back Pompilia; golden
 days,
Redeunt Saturnia regna! Six weeks
 slip, [home
 And she is domiciled in house and
 As though she thence had never budged
 at all.
 And thither let the husband, joyous—
 ay,
 But contrite also—quick betake him-
 self,
 Proud that his dove which lay among
 the pots
 Hath mewed those dingy feathers,—
 moulted now,
 Shows silver bosom clothed with yel-
 low gold.
 Quick, he shall tempt her to the perch
 she fled,
 Bid to domestic bliss the truant back!
 O let him not delay! Time fleets how
 fast,
 And opportunity, the irrevocable,
 One flown will flout him! Is the
 furrow traced?
 If field with corn ye fail preoccupy,
 Darnel for wheat and thistle-beards for
 grain,
Infelix lolium, carduus horridus,
 Will grow apace in combination prompt,
 Defraud the husbandman of his desire.
 Already—hist—what murmurs 'mon-
 ish now

The laggard?—doubtful, nay, fantastic
 bruit
 Of such an apparition, such return
Interdum, to anticipate the spouse,
 Of Caponsacchi's very self! 'T is said
 When nights are lone and company is
 rare,
 His visitations brighten winter up.
 If so they did—which nowise I believe—
 How can I?—proof abounding that the
 priest,
 Once fairly at his relegation-place
 Never once left it—still, admit he stole
 A midnight march, would fain see friend
 again,
 Find matter for instruction in the past,
 Renew the old adventure in such chat
 As cheers a fireside! He was lonely
 too,
 He, too, must need his recreative hour.
 Should it amaze the philosophic mind
 If one, was wont the empurpled cup to
 quaff,
 Have feminine society at will,
 Being debarred abruptly from all drink
 Save at the spring which Adam used
 for wine,
 Dread harm to just the health he hoped
 to guard, [lady?
 And, meaning abstinence, gain ma-
 Ask Tozzi, now physician to the Pope!
 "Little by little break"—(I hear he
 bids
 Master Arcangeli my antagonist,
 Who loves good cheer—and may in-
 dulse too much—
 So I explain the logic of the plea
 Wherewith he opened our proceedings
 late)—
 "Little by little break a habit, Don!
 "Become necessity to feeble flesh!"
 And thus, nocturnal taste of intercourse
 (Which never happened,—but, suppose
 it did)
 May have been used to dishabituare
 By sip and sip this drainer to the dregs
 O' the draught of conversation,—heady
 stuff,
 Brewage which broached, it took two
 days and nights
 To properly discuss o' the journey, Sirs!
 Such is the second-nature, men call use,
 That undelightful objects get to charm
 Instead of chafe: the daily colocynth
 Tickles the palate by repeated dose,
 Old sores scratch kindly, the ass makes
 a push,

Although the mill-yoke would be smarting yet,
 For mill-door bolted on a holiday—
 And must we marvel if the impulse urge
 To talk the old story over now and then,
 The hopes and fears, the stoppage and the haste,—
 Subjects of colloquy to surfeit once ?
 "Here did you bid me twine a rosy wreath !"
 "And there you paid my lips a compliment !"
 "There you admired the tower could be so tall !"
 "And there you likened that of Lebanon
 To the nose o' the beloved !"—
 Trifles—still,
 "*Forsan et hæc olim*,"—such trifles serve
 To make the minutes pass in winter-time.

Husband, return then, I re-counsel thee !
 For, finally, of all glad circumstance
 Should make a prompt return imperative,
 What i' the world awaits thee, dost suppose ?
 O' the sudden, as good gifts are wont befall,
 What is the hap of the unconscious Count ? [a-tilt,
 That which lights bonfire and sets cask
 Dissolves the stubborn'st heart in jollity.

O admirable, there is born a babe,
 A son, an heir, a Franceschini last
 And best o' the stock ! Pompilia,
 thine the palm !
 Repaying incredulity with faith,
 Ungenerous thrift of each marital debt
 With bounty in profuse expenditure,
 Pompilia will not have the old year end
 Without a present shall ring in the new—
 Bestows upon her parsimonious lord
 An infant for the apple of his eye,
 Core of his heart, and crown completing life,
 The *summum bonum* of the earthly lot !
 "We," saith ingeniously the sage, "are born
 "Solely that others may be born of us."

So, father, take thy child, for that
 that child,
 Oh nothing doubt ! In wedlock bond
 law holds
 Baseness impossible, since "*filius*
Quem nuptiæ demonstrant," twits
 text
 Whoever dares to doubt.

Yet doubt he dare
 O faith where art thou flown from
 the world ?
 Already on what an age of doubt
 fall !
 Instead of each disputing for the prize
 The babe is banded here from that
 this.

Whose the babe ? "*Cujum pecus*
 Guido's lamb ?
 "*An Melibæi* ?" Nay, but of the
 priest !
 "*Non sed Egonis* !" Someone must
 be sire :

And who shall say, in such a puzzling
 strait,
 If there were no vouchsafed some
 miracle
 To the wife who had been harassed and
 abused
 More than enough by Guido's family
 For non-production of the promised
 fruit [mand
 Of marriage ? What if Nature, I de
 Touched to the quick by taunts upon
 her sloth,
 Had roused herself, put forth *recondite*
 power,
 Bestowed this birth to vindicate her
 sway ?
 Like to the favour, Maro memorised,
 Was granted Aristæus when his hive
 Lay empty of the swarm, not one more
 bee—
 Not one more babe to Franceschini's
 house—
 And lo, a new birth filled the air with
 joy,
 Sprung from the bowels of the gener-
 ous steed !
 Just so a son and heir rejoiced the
 Count !
 Spontaneous generation, need I prove
 Were facile feat to Nature at a pinch ?
 Let whoso doubts, steep horsehair
 certain weeks,
 In water, there will be produced a
 snake ;

A second product of the horse, which horse

Happens to be the representative—
Now that I think on 't—of Arezzo's self

The very city our conception blessed !
Is not a prancing horse the City arms ?
What sane eye sees not such coincidence ?
Cur ego, boast thou, my Pompilia, then,
Desperem fieri sine conjuge

Mater—how well the Ovidian distich suits !—

Ut parere intacto dummodo

Casta viro ? but language baffles here.

Note, further, as to mark the prodigy,
The babe in question neither took the name

Of Guido, from the sire presumptive, nor

Giuseppe, from the sire potential, but
Gaetano—last saint of the hierarchy,
And newest namer for a thing so new :
What other motive could have prompted choice ?

Therefore be peace again : exult, ye hills !

Ye vales rejoicingly break forth in song !

Incipe, parve puer, begin, small boy,
Risu cognoscere patrem, with a smile
To recognise thy parent ! Nor do thou

Boggle, oh parent, to return the grace—
Nec anceps hære, pater, puero
Cognoscendo—one might well eke out the prayer !

In vain ! The perverse Guido doubts his eyes,

Distrusts assurance, lets the devil drive ;

Because his house is swept and garnished now,

He, having summoned seven like himself,

Must hurry thither, knock and enter in,
And make the last worse than the first, indeed !

Is he content ? We are. No further blame

O' the man and murder ! They were stigmatized

Befittingly : the Court heard long ago
My mind o' the matter, which, outpouring full,

Has long since swept, like surge i' the simile

Of Homer, overborne both dyke and dam,

And whelmed alike client and advocate :

His fate is sealed, his life as good as gone,

On him I am not tempted to waste word.

Yet though my purpose holds,—which was and is

And solely shall be to the very end,

To draw the true *effigiem* of a saint,

Do justice to perfection in the sex,—

Yet, let not some gross pamp'erer o' the flesh

And niggard in the spirit's nourishment,

Whose feeding hath offuscated his wit
Rather than law,—he never had, to lose—

Let not such advocate object to me

I leave my proper function of attack !

"What's this to Bacchus ?"—(in the classic phrase,

Well used, for once) he hiccups probably.

O Advocate o' the Poor, thou born to make

Their blessing void—*beati pauperes* !

By painting saintship I depicture sin,
Beside the pearl, I prove how black the jet,

And through Pompilia's virtue, Guido's [crime.

Back to her, then,—with but one beauty more,

End we our argument,—one crowning grace

Pre-eminent 'mid agony and death.
For to the last Pompilia played her part,

Used the right means to the permissible end,

And, wily as an eel that stirs the mud
Thick overhead, so baffling spearman's thrust,

She, while he stabbed her, simulated death,

Delayed, for his sake, the catastrophe,
Obtained herself a respite, four days' grace,

Whereby she told her story to the world,

Enabled me to make the present speech,
And, by a full confession, saved her soul.

Yet hold, even here would malice leer its last,

Gurgle its choked remonstrance :
 snake, hiss free !
 Oh, that 's the objection ? And to
 whom ?—not her
 But me, forsooth—as, 'n the very act
 Of both confession and, what followed
 close,
 Subsequent talk, chatter and gossipry,
 Babble to sympathizing he and she
 Whoever chose besiege her dying bed,—
 As this were found at variance with
 my tale,
 Falsified all I have adduced for truth,
 Admitted not one peccadillo here,
 Pretended to perfection, first and last,
 O' the whole procedure—perfect in the
 end,
 Perfect i' the means, perfect in every-
 thing,
 Leaving a lawyer nothing to excuse,
 Reason away and show his skill about !
 —A flight, impossible to Adamic flesh,
 Just to be fancied, scarcely to be
 wished,
 And, anyhow, unpleadable in court !
 " How reconcile " gasps Malice " that
 with this ? "
 Your " this," friend, is extraneous to
 the law,
 Comes of men's outside meddling, the
 unskilled
 Interposition of such fools as press
 Out of their province. Must I speak
 my mind ?
 Far better had Pompilia died o' the
 spot
 Than found a tongue to wag and shame
 the law,
 Shame most of all herself,—did friend-
 ship fail,
 And advocacy lie less on the alert.
 Listen how these protect her to the end !
 Do I credit the alleged narration ? No !
 Lied our Pompilia then, to laud her-
 self ?
 Still, no ;—clear up what seems dis-
 crepancy ?
 The means abound,—art 's long, though
 time is short,
 So, keeping me in compass, all I urge
 Is—since, confession at the point of
 death,
Nam in articulo mortis, with the Church
 Passes for statement honest and sin-
 cere,
Nemo presumitur reus esse,—then,

If sure that all affirmed would be
 lieved,
 'T was charity, in one so circumstance
 To spend her last breath in one effort
 more
 For universal good of friend and foe,
 And,—by pretending utter innocence
 Nay, freedom from each foible we fo-
 give,—
 Re-integrate—not solely her own fam-
 But do the like kind office for the prie-
 Whom the crude truth might treat le-
 courteously,
 Indeed, expose to peril, abbreviate
 The life and long career of usefulness
 Presumably before him : while he
 lord,
 Whose fleeting life is forfeit to the law,—
 What mercy to the culprit if, by just
 The gift of such a full certificate
 Of his immitigable guiltiness,
 She stifled in him the absurd conceit
 Of murder as it were a mere revenge !
 —Stopped confirmation of that jea-
 ousy
 Which, had she but acknowledged the
 first flaw,
 The faintest foible, might embolden
 him
 To battle with his judge, baulk peni-
 tence,
 Bar preparation for impending fate.
 Whereas, persuade him he has slain a
 saint
 Who sinned not in the little she did sin
 You urge him all the brisklier to repent
 Of most and least and aught and every-
 thing !
 Next,—if this view of mine, content ye
 not,
 Lords, nor excuse the genial falsehood
 here,
 'T is come to our *Triarii*, last resource,
 We fall back on the *inexpugnable*,
 Submit you,—she confessed before she
 talked !
 The sacrament obliterates the sin :
 What is not,—was not, in a certain
 sense.
 Let Molinists distinguish, " Souls
 washed white
 " Were red once, still show pinkish to
 the eye ! "
 We say, abolishment is nothingness
 And nothingness has neither head nor
 tail
 End nor beginning ;—better estimate

Exorbitantly, than disparage aught
Of the efficacy of the act, I hope !

Solvuntur tabulae ? May we laugh and
go ?

Well,—not before (in filial gratitude
To Law, who, mighty mother, waves
adieu)

We take on us to vindicate Law's self—
For,—yea, Sirs,—curb the start, cur-
tail the stare !—

Remains that we apologize for haste
I' the Law, our lady who here bristles
up

" And my procedure ? Did the Court
mistake ?

" (Which were indeed a misery to
think)

" Did not my sentence in the former
stage

" O' the business bear a title plain
enough ?

" *Decretum* "—I translate it word for
word—

" Decreed : the priest, for his com-
plicity

" I' the flight and deviation of the
dame.

" As well as for unlawful intercourse,
" Is banished three years : ' crime and
penalty,

" Declared alike. If he be taxed with
guilt

" How can you call Pompilia innocent ?
" If they be innocent, have I been
just ? "

Gently, O mother, judge men !—whose
mistake

Is in the poor misapprehensiveness.
The *Titulus* a-top of your decree

Was but to ticket there the kind of
charge

You in good time would arbitrate upon.
Title is one thing,—arbitration's self,

Probatio, quite another possibly.
Substitui, there holds good the old re-
sponse,

Responsio tradita, we must not stick,
Quod non . . . attendendus Titulus,

To the Title, *sed Probatio*, but to Proof,
Resultans ex processu, and result

O' the Trial, and the style of punish-
ment,

Et poena per sententiam imposita :
All is tentative, till the sentence come,
Mere indication of what men expect,

And nowise an assurance they shall
find.

Lords, what if we permissibly relax
The tense bow, as the law-god Phœbus
bids,

Relieve our gravity at close of speech ?
I traverse Rome, feel thirsty, need a
draught,

Look for a wine-shop, find it by the
bough

Projecting as to say " Here wine is
sold ! "

So much I know,—" sold : " but what
sort of wine ?

Strong, weak, sweet, sour, home-made
or foreign drink ?

That much must I discover by myself.
" Wine is sold," quoth the bough, " but
good or bad,

" Find, and inform us when you smack
your lips ! "

Exactly so, Law hangs her title forth,
To show she entertains you with such
case

About such crime : come in ! she
pours, you quaff.

You find the Priest good liquor in the
main,

But heady and provocative of brawls.
Remand the residue to flask once more,
Lay it low where it may deposit lees,

I' the cellar : thence produce it pres-
ently,

Three years the brighter and the better !

Thus,
Law's son, have I bestowed my filial
help,

And thus I end, *tenax propositi* :
Point to point as I purposed have I
drawn

Pompilia, and implied as terribly
Guido : so, gazing, let the world crown
Law—

Able once more, despite my impotence,
And helped by the acumen of the
Court,

To eliminate, display, make triumph
truth !

What other prize than truth were worth
the pains ?

There 's my oration—much exceeds in
length

That famed Panegyric of Isocrates,
They say it took him fifteen years to
pen.

But all those ancients could say any-
thing !
He put in just what rushed into his
head,
While I shall have to prune and pare
and print.
This comes of being born in modern
times
With priests for auditory. Still, it
pays.

X

THE POPE

LIKE to Ahasuerus, that shrewd prince,
I will begin,—as is, these seven years
now,
My daily wont,—and read a History
(Written by one whose deft right hand
was dust
To the last digit, ages ere my birth)
Of all my predecessors, Popes of Rome:
For though mine ancient early dropped
the pen,
Yet others picked it up and wrote it
dry.
Since of the making books there is no
end.
And so I have the Papacy complete
From Peter first to Alexander last ;
Can question each and take instruc-
tion so.
Have I to dare,—I ask, how dared this
Pope ?
To suffer ? Suchanone, how suffered
he ?
Being about to judge, as now, I seek
How judged once, well or ill, some
other Pope ;
Study some signal judgment that sub-
sists
To blaze on, or else blot, the page which
seals
The sum up of what gain or loss to God
Came of His one more Vicar in the
world.
So, do I find example, rule of life ;
So, square and set in order the next
page,
Shall be stretched smooth o'er my own
funeral cyst.
Eight hundred years exact before the
year
I was made Pope, men made Formosus
Pope,
Say Sigebert and other chroniclers.

Ere I confirm or quash the Trial
Of Guido Franceschini and his frier
Read,—how there was a ghastly
once
Of a dead man by a live man, and b
Popes :
Thus—in the antique penman's v
phrase.

" Then Stephen, Pope and seventh
the name,
" Cried out, in synod as he sat in st
" While choler quivered on his b
and beard,
" ' Come into court, Formosus, th
lost wretch,
" ' That claimedst to be late the P
as I !'

" And at the word, the great door
the church
" Flew wide, and in they brought F
mosus' self,
" The body of him, dead, even as e
balded
" And buried duly in the Vatican
" Eight months before, exhumed th
for the nonce.
" They set it, that dead body of a Pop
" Clothed in pontific vesture now agai
" Upright on Peter's chair as if alive.
" And Stephen, springing up, cri
furiously
" ' Bishop of Porto, wherefore did
presume
" ' To leave that see and take th
Roman see,
" ' Exchange the lesser for the great
see,
" ' —A thing against the canons of th
Church ?'

" Then one, (a Deacon who, observin
forms,
" Was placed by Stephen to repel th
charge,
" Be advocate and mouthpiece of th
corpse)
" Spoke as he dared, set stammeringl
forth
" With white lips and dry tongue,—as
but a youth,
" For frightful was the corpse-face to
behold,—
" How nowise lacked there precedent
for this.
" But when, for his last precedent of
all,

the Trial here
and his friends,
a ghastly Trial

man, and both,

penman's very

and seventh of

he sat in state,
on his brow

ormosus, thou

late the Pope

great door of

brought For-

, even as em-

Vatican
exhumed thus

body of a Pope,
re now again,
as if alive.

g up, cried

efore didst

d take this

r the greater

anons of the

o, observing

to repel the

piece of the

ammeringly

tongue,—as

pse-face to

precedent

ecedent of

" Emboldened by the Spirit, out he blurts

" And, Holy Father, didst not thou thyself

" Vacate the lesser for the greater see,

" Half a year since change Arago for Rome ?

" —Ye have the sin's defence now, synod mine !

" Shrieks Stephen in a beastly froth of rage :

" Judge now betwixt him dead and me alive !

" Hath he intruded or do I pretend ?

" Judge, judge ! —breaks wavelike one whole foam of wrath.

" Whereupon they, being friends and followers,

" Said ' Ay, thou art Christ's Vicar, and not he !

" Away with what is frightful to behold !

" ' This act was uncanonic and a fault.'

" Then, swallowed up in rage, Stephen exclaimed

" ' So, guilty ! So, remains I punish guilt !

" He is unpoped, and all he did I damn :

" The Bishop, that ordained him, I degrade :

" Depose to laics those he raised to priests :

" What they have wrought is mischief nor shall stand,

" It is confusion, let it vex no more !

" Since I revoke, annul and abrogate

" All his decrees in all kinds : they are void !

" In token whereof and warning to the world,

" Strip me yon miscreant of those robes usurped,

" And clothe him with vile serge befitting such !

" Then hale the carrion to the market-place ;

" Let the town-hangman chop from his right hand

" Those same three fingers which he blessed withal ;

" Next cut the head off, once was crowned forsooth :

" And last go fling all, fingers, head and trunk,

" ' In Tiber that my Christian fish may sup !'

" —Either because of IXΘΥΣ which means Fish

" And very aptly symbolizes Christ,

" Or else because the Pope is Fisher-man

" And seals with Fisher's-signet. Any-way,

" So said, so done : himself, to see it done,

" Following the corpse, they trailed from street to street

" Till into Tiber wave they threw the thing.

" The people, crowded on the banks to see,

" Were loud or mute, wept or laughed, cursed or jeered,

" According as the deed addressed their sense ;

" A scandal verily : and out spake a Jew

" ' Wot ye your Christ had vexed our Herod thus ? ' [year,

" Now when, Formosus being dead a

" His judge Pope Stephen tasted death in turn,

" Made captive by the mob and strangled straight,

" Ronianus, his successor for a month, Did make protest Formosus was with God,

" Holy, just, true in thought and word and deed.

" Next Theodore, who reigned but twenty days,

" Therein convoked a synod, whose decree

" Did reinstate, repope the late unpoped,

" And do away with Stephen as accursed.

" So that when presently certain fisher-folk

" (As if the queasy river could not !)

" Its swallowed Jonas, but discharged the meal)

" Produced the timely product of their nets,

" The mutilated man, Formosus,—saved

" From putrefaction by the embalmer's spice,

" Or, as some said, by sanctity of flesh,

" ' Why, lay the body again ' bade Theodore

- " 'Among his predecessors, in the church
 " 'And burial-place of Peter!' which was done.
 " 'And' addeth Luitprand 'many of repute,
 " 'Pious and still alive, avouch to me
 " 'That as they bore the body up the aisle
 " 'The saints in imaged row bowed each his head
 " 'For welcome to a brother-saint come back.'
 " 'As for Romanus and this Theodore,
 " 'These two Popes, through the brief reign granted each,
 " 'Could but initiate what John came to close
 " 'And give the final stamp to: he it was,
 " 'Ninth of the name, (I follow the best guides)
 " 'Who,—in full synod at Ravenna held
 " 'With Bishops seventy-four, and present too
 " 'Eude King of France with his Archbishopry,—
 " 'Did condemn Stephen, anathematize
 " 'The disinterment, and make all blots blank.
 " 'For,' argueth here Auxilius in a *De Ordinationibus*, 'precedents
 " 'Had been, no lack, before Formosus long,
 " 'Of Bishops so transferred from see to see,—
 " 'Marinus, for example': read the tract.
 " 'But, after John, came Sergius, reaffirmed
 " 'The right of Stephen, cursed Formosus, nay
 " 'Cast out, some say, his corpse a second time.
 " 'And here,—because the matter went to ground,
 " 'Fretted by new griefs, other cares of the age,—
 " 'Here is the last pronouncing of the Church,
 " 'Her sentence that subsists unto this day.
 " 'Yet constantly opinion hath prevailed
 " 'I' the Church, Formosus was a holy man."
- Which of the judgments was infallible?
 Which of my predecessors spoke for God?
 And what availed Formosus that he was cursed,
 That blessed, and then this cursed again?
 "Fear ye not those whose power is to kill the body
 "And not the soul," saith Christ, rather those
 "Can cast both soul and body into hell!"
- John judged thus in Eight Hundred and Ninety-Eight,
 Exact eight hundred years ago to-day
 When, sitting in his stead, Vice-governor here,
 I must give judgment on my own hoof.
 So worked the predecessor: now, turn!
- In God's name! Once more on the earth of God's,
 While twilight lasts and time wherewith to work,
 I take His staff with my uncertain hand,
 And stay my six and fourscore years on my due
 Labour and sorrow, on His judgment-seat,
 And forthwith think, speak, act, in the place of Him—
 The Pope for Christ. Once more the appeal is made
 From man's assize to mine: I sit and see
 Another poor weak trembling human wretch
 Pushed by his fellows, who pretend to be right,
 Up to the gulf which, where I gaze, begins
 From this world to the next,—give way and way,
 Just on the edge over the awful darkness
 With nothing to arrest him but my feeble arm
 He catches at me with convulsive fingers
 Cries "Leave to live the natural mind I have
 ute more!"
 While hollowly the avengers echo
 "Leave?"
 "None! So has he exceeded man's
 due share

" In man's fit licence, wrung by Adam's
 fail,
 " To sin and yet not surely die,—that
 we,
 " All of us sinful, all with need of grace,
 " All chary of our life,—the minute
 more
 " Or minute less of grace which saves a
 soul,—
 " Bound to make common cause with
 who craves time,
 " —We yet protest against the exor-
 bitance
 " Of sin in this one sinner, and demand
 " That his poor sole remaining piece of
 time
 " Be plucked from out his clutch : put
 him to death !
 " Punish him now ! As for the weal or
 woe
 " Hereafter, God grant mercy ! Man
 be just,
 " Nor let the felon boast he went scot-
 free ! "
 And I am bound, the solitary judge,
 To weigh the worth, decide upon the
 plea,
 And either hold a hand out, or with-
 draw
 A foot and let the wretch drift to the
 fall.
 Ay, and while thus I dally, dare per-
 chance [calm
 Put fancies for a comfort 'twixt this
 And yonder passion that I have to
 bear,—
 As if reprieve were possible for both
 Prisoner and Pope,—how easy were
 reprieve !
 A touch o' the hand-bell here, a hasty
 word
 To those who wait, and wonder they
 wait long,
 I' the passage there, and I should gain
 the life !—
 Yea, though I flatter me with fancy
 thus,
 I know it is but nature's craven-trick.
 The case is over, judgment at an end,
 And all things done now and irrevoc-
 able :
 A mere dead man is Franceschini here,
 Even as Formosus centuries ago.
 I have worn through this sombre win-
 try day,
 With winter in my soul beyond the
 world's,

Over these dismaldest of documents
 Which drew night down on me ere eve
 befell,—
 Pleadings and counter-pleadings, fig-
 ure of fact
 Beside fact's self, these summaries to
 wit,—
 How certain three were slain by certain
 five :
 I read here why it was, and how it went.
 And how the chief o' the five preferred
 excuse,
 And how law rather chose defence
 should lie,—
 What argument he urged by wary word
 When free to play off wile, start subter-
 fuge,
 And what the unguarded groan told,
 torture's feat
 When law grew brutal, outrooke, over-
 bore
 And glitt'ring hunger on the truth, at
 last,—
 No matter for the flesh and blood be-
 tween.
 All 's a clear rede and no more riddle
 now.
 Truth, nowhere, lies yet everywhere in
 these—
 Not absolutely in a portion, yet
 E-able from the whole : evolved at
 last
 Painfully, held tenaciously by me.
 Therefore there is not any doubt to
 clear
 When I shall write the brief word pres-
 ently
 And chink the hand-bell, which I pause
 to do.
 Irresolute ? Not I more than the
 mound
 With the pine-trees on it yonder !
 Some surmise,
 Perchance, that since man's wit is fall-
 ible,
 Mine may fail here ? Suppose it so,—
 what then ?
 Say,—Guido, I count guilty, there 's no
 babe
 So guiltless, for I misconceive the man !
 What 's in the chance should move me
 from my mind ?
 If, as I walk in a rough country-side,
 Peasants of mine cry " Thou art he can
 help,
 " Lord of the land and counted wise to
 boot :

" Look at our brother, strangling in his foam,
 " He fell so where we find him,—prove thy worth ! "
 I may presume, pronounce, " A frenzy-fit,
 " A falling-sickness or a fever-stroke !
 " Breathe a vein, copiously let blood at once ! "
 So perishes the patient, and anon
 I hear my peasants—" All was error, lord !
 " Our story, thy prescription : for there crawled
 " In due time from our hapless brother's breast
 " The serpent which had stung him : bleeding slew
 " Whom a prompt cordial had restored to health."
 What other should I say than " God so willed :
 " Mankind is ignorant, a man am I :
 " Call ignorance my sorrow not my sin ! "
 So and not otherwise, in after-time,
 If some acuter wit, fresh probing, sound
 This multifarious mass of words and deeds
 Deeper, and reach through guilt to innocence,
 I shall face Guido's ghost nor blench a jot.
 " God who set me to judge thee, meted out
 " So much of judging faculty, no more:
 " Ask Him if I was slack in use thereof ! "
 I hold a heavier fault imputable
 Inasmuch as I changed a chaplain once,
 For no cause,—no, if I must bare my heart,—
 Save that he snuffled somewhat saying mass.
 For I am 'ware it is the seed of act,
 God holds appraising in His hollow palm,
 Not act grown great thence on the world below,
 Leafage and branchage, vulgar eyes admire.
 Therefore I stand on my integrity,
 Nor fear at all : and if I hesitate,
 It is because I need to breathe awhile,
 Rest, as the human right allows, review
 Intent the little seeds of act, the tree,—

The thought, to clothe in deed, and give the world
 At chink of bell and push of arra door.
 O pale departure, dim disgrace of day
 Winter 's in wane, his vengeful work art thou,
 To dash the boldness of advance March !
 Thy chill persistent rain has purged the streets
 Of gossipry ; pert tongue and idle co
 By this, consort 'neath archway, porch.
 But wheresoe'er Rome gathers in the grey,
 Two names now snap and flash from mouth to mouth—
 (Sparks, flint and steel strike) Guido and the Pope.
 By this same hour to-morrow eve—ah
 How do they call him ?—the sagacious Swede
 Who finds by figures how the chance prove,
 Why one comes rather than another thing,
 As, say, such dots turn up by throw dice,
 Or, if we dip in Virgil here and there
 And prick for such a verse, when such shall point.
 Take this Swede, tell him, hiding name and rank,
 Two men are in our city this dull eve
 One doomed to death,—but hundred in such plight
 Slip aside, clean escape by leave of law
 Which leans to mercy in this latter time ;
 Moreover in the plenitude of life
 Is he, with strength of limb and brain adroit,
 Presumably of service here : beside,
 The man is noble, backed by noble friends :
 Nay, for who wish him well, the city's self
 Makes common cause with the household magistrate,
 The lord of hearth and home, domestic judge
 Who ruled his own and let men cavil
 Die ?
 He 'll bribe a gaoler or break prison first !

Nay, a sedition may be helpful, give
 Hint to the mob to batter wall, burn
 gate,
 And bid the favourite malefactor
 march.
 Calculate now these chances of escape!
 "It is not probable, but well may be."
 Again, there is another man, weighed
 now
 By twice eight years beyond the seven-
 times-ten,
 Appointed overweight to break our
 branch.
 And this man's loaded branch lifts,
 more than snow,
 All the world's cark and care, though a
 bird's nest
 Were a superfluous burthen: notably
 Hath he been pressed, as if his age were
 youth,
 From to-day's dawn till now that day
 departs,
 Trying one question with true sweat
 of soul
 "Shall the said doomed man fitlier die
 or live?"
 When a straw swallowed in his posset,
 stool
 Stumbled on where his path lies, any
 puff
 That's incident to such a smoking flax,
 Hurries the natural end and quenches
 him!
 Now calculate, thou sage, the chances
 here,
 Say, which shall die the sooner, this or
 that?
 "That, possibly, this in all likelihood."
 I thought so: yet thou tripp'st, my
 foreign friend!
 No, it will be quite otherwise,—to-
 day
 Is Guido's last: my term is yet to run.
 But say the Swede were right, and I
 forthwith
 Acknowledge a prompt summons and
 lie dead: [face
 Why, then I stand already in God's
 And hear "Since by its fruit a tree is
 judged,
 "Show me thy fruit, the latest act of
 thine!
 "For in the last is summed the first and
 all,—
 "What thy life last put heart and soul
 into,

"There shall I taste thy product." I
 must plead
 This condemnation of a man to-day.
 Not so! Expect nor question nor
 reply
 At what we figure as God's judgment-
 bar!
 None of this vile way by the barren
 words
 Which, more than any deed, charac-
 terize
 Man as made subject to a curse: no
 speech—
 That still bursts o'er some lie which
 lurks inside,
 As the split skin across the coppery
 snake,
 And most denotes man! since, in all
 beside,
 In hate, or lust, or guile, or unbelief,
 Out of some core of truth the excres-
 cence comes,
 And, in the last resort, the man may
 urge
 "So was I made, a weak thing that
 gave way
 "To truth, to impulse only strong since
 true,
 "And hated, lusted, used guile, for-
 went faith."
 But when man walks the garden of this
 world
 For his own solace, and, unchecked by
 law,
 Speaks or keeps silence as himself sees
 fit,
 Without the least incumbency to lie,
 —Why, can he tell you what a rose is
 like,
 Or how the birds fly, and not slip to
 false
 Though truth serve better? Man
 must tell his mate
 Of you, me and himself, knowing he
 lies,
 Knowing his fellow knows the same,—
 will think
 "He lies, it is the method of a man!"
 And yet will speak for answer "It is
 truth"
 To him who shall rejoin "Again a
 lie!"
 Therefore this filthy rags of speech, this
 coil
 Of statement, comment, query and re-
 sponse,

Tatters all too contaminate for use,
Have no renewing: He, the Truth, is,
too,
The Word. We men, in our degree,
may know
There, simply, instantaneously, as here
After long time and amid many lies,
Whatever we dare think we know in-
deed

—That I am I, as He is He,—what
else?

But be man's method for man's life at
least!

Wherefore, Antonio Pignatelli, thou
My ancient self, who wast no Pope so
long

But studied God and man, the many
years

I' the school, i' the cloister, in the dio-
cese

Domestic, legate-rule in foreign lands,—
Thou other force in those old busy days
Than this grey ultimate decrepitude,—
Yet sensible of fire: that more and
more

Visit a soul, in passage to the sky,
Left nakeder than when flesh-robe was
new—

Thou, not Pope but the mere old man
o' the world,

Supposed inquisitive and dispassionate,
Wilt thou, the one whose speech I
somewhat trust,

Question the after-me, this self now
Pope,

Hear his procedure, criticise his work?
Wise in its generation is the world.

This is why Guido is found reprobate.
I see him furnished forth for his career,
On starting for the life-chance in our
world,

With nearly all we count sufficient
help:

[frame,
Body and mind in balance, a sound
A solid intellect: the wit to seek,
Wisdom to choose, and courage where-
withal

To deal with whatsoever circumstance
Should minister to man, make life suc-
ceed.

Oh, and much drawback! what were
earth without?

Is this our ultimage stage, or starting-
place

To try man's foot, if it will creep or
climb,

'Mid obstacles in seeming, points to
prove

Advantage for who vaults from low
high

And makes the stumbling-block a sto-
ping-stone?

So, Guido, born with appetite, lac-
food,

Is poor, who yet could deftly play-
wealth,

Straitened, whose limbs are restless
at large:

And, as he eyes each outlet of t
cirque,

The narrow penfold for probatio
pines

After the good things just outside t
grate,

With less monition, fainter conscienc
twitch,

Rarer-instinctive qualm at the fir
feel

Of the unseemly greed and grasp u
due,

Than nature furnishes the main man
kind,—

Making it harder to do wrong tha
right

The first time, careful lest the commo
Break measure, miss the outstep o
life's march.

Wherein I see a trial fair and fit
For one else too unfairly fenced about

Set above sin, beyond his fellows here
Guarded from the arch-tempter, a
must fight,

By a great birth, traditionary name,
Diligent culture, choice companionship

Above all, conversancy with the fait
Which puts forth for its base of doc-
trine just

"Man is born nowise to content him-
self

"But please God." He accepted such
a rule,

Recognised man's obedience; and the
Church,

Which simply is such rule's embodi-
ment,

He clave to, he held on by,—nay, in
deed,

Near pushed inside of, deep as laymen
durst,

Professed so much of priesthood as
might sue

For priest's-exemption where the lay-
man sinned,—

Got his arm frocked which, bare, the
law would bruise.
Hence, at this moment, what 's his last
resource,
His extreme stay and utmost stretch
of hope
But that,—convicted of such crime as
law
Wipes not away save with a worldling's
blood,—
Guido, the three-parts consecrate, may
'scape ?
Nay, the portentous brothers of the
man
Are veritably priests, protected each
May do his murder in the Church's
pale,
Abate Paul, Canon Girolamo !
This is the man proves irreligiousest
Of all mankind, religion's parasite !
This may forsooth plead dinned ear,
jaded sense,
The vice o' the watcher who bides near
the beil,
Sleeps sound because the clock is vigil-
ant,
And cares not whether it be shade or
shine,
Doling out day and night to all men
else !
Why was the choice o' the man to
niche himself
Perversely 'neath the tower where
Time's own tongue
Thus undertakes to sermonise the
world ?
Why, but because the solemn is safe
too,
The belfry proves a fortress of a sort,
Has other uses than to teach the hour,
Turns sunscreen, paravent and ombri-
fuge
To whoso seeks a shelter in its pale,
—Ay, and attractive to unwary folk
Who gaze at storied portal, statued
spire,
And go home with full head but empty
purse
Nor dare suspect the sacristan the
thief !
Shall Judas,—hard upon the donor's
heel,
To filch the fragments of the basket,—
plead
He was too near the preacher's mouth,
nor sat
Attent with fifties in a company ?

B.P.

No,—closer to promulgated decree,
Clearer the censure of default. Pro-
ceed !
I find him bound, then, to begin life
well ;
Fortified by propitious circumstance,
Great birth, good breeding, with the
Church for guide.
How lives he ? Cased thus in a coat of
proof,
Mailed like a man-at-arms, though all
the while
A puny starveling,—does the breast
pant big.
The limbs swell to the limit, emptiness
Strive to become solidity indeed ?
Rather, he shrinks up like the ambigu-
ous fish,
Detaches flesh from shell and outside
show,
And steals by moonlight (I have seen
the thing)
In and out, now to prey and now to
skulk.
Armour he boasts when a wave breaks
on beach,
Or bird stoops for the prize : with peril
igh,—
The man of rank, the much-befriended
man,
The man almost affiliate to the Church,
Such is to deal with, let the world be-
ware !
Does the world recognise, pass pru-
dently ?
Do tides abate and sea-fowl hunt i' the
deep ?
Already is the slug from out its mew,
Ignobly faring with all loose and free,
Sand-fly and slush-worm at their gar-
bage-feast,
A naked blotch no better than they all :
Guido has dropped nobility, slipped
the Church,
Plays trickster if not cut-purse, body
and soul
Prostrate among the filthy feeders—
faugh !
And when Law takes him by surprise
at last,
Catches the foul thing on its carrion-
prey,
Behold, he points to shell left high and
dry,
Pleads " But the case out yonder is my-
self ! "

Nay, it is thou, Law prongs amid thy
peers,
Congenial vermin; that was none of
thee,
Thine outside,—give it to the soldier-
crab!

For I find this black mark impinge the
man,
That he believes in just the vile of life.
Low instinct, base pretension, are these
truth?

Then, that aforesaid armour, probity
He figures in, is falsehood scale on scale;
Honour and faith,—a lie and a disguise,
Probably for all livers in this world,
Certainly for himself! All say good
words
To who will hear, all do thereby bad
deeds
To who must undergo; so thrive man-
kind!

See this habitual creed exemplified
Most in the last deliberate act; as last,
So, very sum and substance of the soul
Of him that planned and leaves one
perfect piece,
The sin brought under jurisdiction now,
Even the marriage of the man: this
act

I sever from his life as sample, show
For Guido's self, intend to test him by,
As, from a cup filled fairly at the fount,
By the components we decide enough
Or to let flow as late, or staunch the
source.

He purposes this marriage, I remark,
On no one motive that should prompt
thereto—
Farthest, by consequence, from ends
alleged
Appropriate to the action; so they
were:

The best, he knew and feigned, the
worst he took.
Not one permissible impulse moves the
man,
From the mere liking of the eye and ear,
To the true longing of the heart that
loves,
No trace of these: but all to instigate,
Is what sinks man past level of the
brute,
Whose appetite if brutish is a truth.
All is the lust for money: to get gold—
Why, lie, rob, if it must be, murder!
Make

Body and soul wring gold out, lurk
within
The clutch of hate by love, the tra-
pretence!
What good else get from bodies a-
from souls?
This got, there were some life to le-
thereby,
—What, where or how, apprecia-
those who tell
How the toad lives: it lives,—enough
for me!
To get this good,—with but a groan
so,
Then, silence of the victims,—were t-
feat.
He foresaw, made a picture in his
mind,—
Of father and mother stunned and ech-
less
To the blow, as they lie staring at fate
jaws
Their folly danced into, till the woe fe-
Edged in a month by strenuous cruel-
From even the poor nook whence the
watched the wolf
Feast on their heart, the lamb-like chi-
his prey;
Plundered to the last remnant of the
wealth,
(What daily pittance pleased the plun-
derer dole)
Hunted forth to go hide head, starve
and die,
So leave the pale awe-stricken wife
past hope
Of help i' the world now, mute and
motionless,
His slave, his chattel, to use and then
destroy:
All this, he bent mind how to bring
about,
Put this in act and life, as painted
plain,
And have success, the crown of earthl-
good,
In this particular enterprise of man,
A marriage—undertaken in God's fac-
With all those lies so opposite God's
truth,
For ends so other than man's end.

Thus scheme
Guido, and thus would carry out his
scheme:
But when an obstacle first blocks the
path,

When he finds there is no monopoly
Of lies and trick i' the tricking lying
world,—

That sorry timid natures, even this sort
O' the Comparini, want nor trick nor lie
Proper to the kind,—that as the gor-
crow treats

The bramble-finch so treats the finch
the moth,

And the great Guido is minutely
matched

By this same couple,—whether true or
false

The revelation of Pompilia's birth,
Which in a moment brings his scheme
to nought,—

Then, he is piqued, advances yet a
stage,

Leaves the low region to the finch and
fly,

Soars to the zenith whence the fiercer
fowl

May dare the inimitable swoop. I see,
He draws now on the curious crime,
the fine

Felicity and flower of wickedness;
Determines, by the utmost exercise
Of violence, made safe and sure by
craft,

To satiate malice, pluck one last arch-
pang

From the parents, else would triumph
out of reach,

By punishing their child, within reach
yet,

Who nowise could have wronged,
thought, word or deed,

I' the matter that now moves him. So
plans he,

Always subordinating (note the point!)
Revenge, the manlier sin, to interest

The meaner,—would pluck pang forth,
but unclench

No gripe in the act, let fall no money-
piece.

Hence a plan for so plaguing, body and
soul,

His wife, so putting, day by day and
hour by hour,

The untried torture to the untouched
place,

As must precipitate an end foreseen,
Goad her into some plain revolt, most
like

Plunge upon patent suicidal shame,
Death to herself, damnation by re-
bound

To those whose hearts he, holding hers,
holds still:

Such a plan as, in its completeness,
shall

Ruin the three together and alike,
Yet leave himself in luck and liberty,
No claim renounced, no right a forfeit-
ure,

His person unendangered, his good
fame

Without a flaw, his pristine worth in-
tact,—

While they, with all their claims and
rights that cling,

Shall forthwith crumble off him every
side,

Scorched into dust, a plaything for the
winds.

As when, in our Campagna, there is
fired

The nest-like work that lets a peasant
house;

And, as the thatch burns here, there,
everywhere,

Even to the ivy and wild vine, that
bound

And blessed the hut where men were
happy once,

There rises gradual, black amid the
blaze,

Some grim and unscathed nucleus of
the nest,—

Some old malicious tower, some ob-
scene tomb

They thought a temple in their ignor-
ance,

And cling about and thought to lean
upon—

There laughs it o'er their ravage,—
where are they?

So did his cruelty burn life about,
And lay the ruin bare in dreadful-
ness,

Try the persistency of torment so
O' the wife, that, at some fierce ex-
tremity,

Some crisis brought about by fire and
flame,

The patient stung to frenzy should
break loose,

Fly anyhow, find refuge anywhere,
Even in the arms of who might front
her first,

No monster but a man—while nature
shrieked

"Or thus escape, or die!" The spasm
arrived,

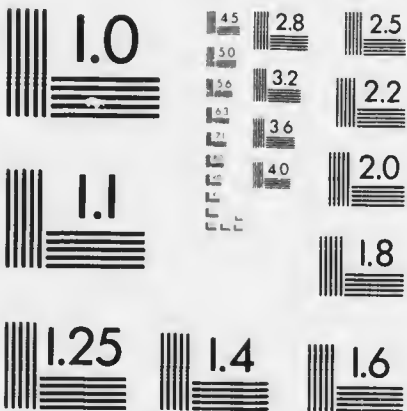
Not the escape by way of sin,—O God,





MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



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Who shall pluck sheep Thou holdest,
 from Thy hand ?
 Therefore she lay resigned to die,—so
 far
 The simple cruelty was foiled. Why
 then,
 Craft to the rescue, craft should supple-
 ment
 Cruelty and show hell a masterpiece !
 Hence this consummate lie, this love-
 intrigue,
 Unmanly simulation of a sin,
 With place and time and circumstance
 to suit—
 These letters false beyond all forgery—
 Not just handwriting and mere author-
 ship,
 But false to body and soul they figure
 forth—
 As though the man had cut out shape
 and shape
 From fancies of that other Aretine,
 To paste below—incorporate the filth
 With cherub faces on a missal-page !

 Whereby the man so far attains his end
 That strange temptation is permitted,
 —see !
 Pompilia, wife, and Caponsacchi, priest,
 Are brought together as nor priest nor
 wife
 Should stand, and there is passion in
 the place,
 Power in the air for evil as for good,
 Promptings from heaven and hell, as if
 the stars
 Fought in their courses for a fate to be.
 Thus stand the wife and priest, a spec-
 tacle,
 I doubt not, to unseen assemblage
 there.
 No lamp will mark that window for a
 shrine,
 No tablet signalise the terrace, teach
 New generations which succeed the old,
 The pavement of the street is holy
 ground ;
 No bard describe in verse how Christ
 prevailed
 And Satan fell like lightning ! Why
 repine ?
 What does the world, told truth, but lie
 the more ?

 A second time the plot is foiled ; nor,
 now,
 By corresponding sin for countercheck,

 No wile and trick to baffle trick
 wile,—
 The play of the parents ! Here
 blot is blanch'd
 By God's gift of a purity of soul,
 That will not take pollution, ern-
 like
 Armed from dishonour by its own
 snow.
 Such was this gift of God who shone
 for once
 How He would have the world
 white : it seems
 As a new attribute were born of each
 Champion of truth, the priest and
 I praise,—
 As a new safeguard sprang up in
 fence
 Of their new noble nature : so a truth
 Comes to the aid of and completes
 rose—
 Courage to wit, no woman's gift
 priest's,
 I' the crisis ; might leaps vindictive
 See how the strong aggressor, bad and
 bold,
 With every vantage, preconcerts strike
 prise,
 Flies of a sudden at his victim's throat
 In a byeway,—how fares he when face
 to face
 With Caponsacchi ? Who fights, who
 fears now ?
 There quails Count Guido, armed to the
 chattering teeth,
 Cowers at the steadfast eye and quiet
 word
 O' the Canon at the Fieve ! There
 skulks crime
 Behind law called in to back cowardice
 While out of the poor trampled woman
 the wife,
 Springs up a serpent !

 But anon of these
 Him I judge now,—of him proceed to
 note,
 Failing the first, a second chance be-
 friends
 Guido, gives pause ere punishment
 arrive.
 The law he called, comes, hears, adjudi-
 cates,
 Nor does amiss i' the main,—secludes
 the wife
 From the husband, respites the op-
 pressed one, grants

Probation to the oppressor, could he
 know
 The mercy of a minute's fiery purge !
 The furnace-coals alike of public scorn,
 Private remorse, heaped glowing on his
 head,
 What if,—the force and guile, the ore's
 alloy,
 Eliminate, his baser soul refined—
 The lost be saved even yet, so as by
 fire ?
 Let him, rebuked, go softly all his days
 And, when no graver musings claim
 their due,
 Meditate on a man's immense mistake
 Who, fashioned to use feet and walk,
 deigns crawl—
 Takes the unmanly means—ay, though
 to end
 Man scarce should make for, would but
 reach thro' wrong,—
 May sin, but must not needs shame
 manhood so :
 Since fowlers hawk, shoot, nay and
 snare the game,
 And yet eschew vile practice, nor find
 sport
 In torch-light treachery or the luring
 owl.
 But how hunts Guido ? Why, the
 fraudful trap—
 Late spurned to ruin by the indignant
 feet
 Of fellows in the chase who loved fair
 play—
 Here he picks up the fragments to the
 least,
 Lades him and hies to the old lurking-
 place
 Where haply he may patch again, refit
 The mischief, file its blunted teeth
 anew,
 Make sure, next time, a snap shall
 break the bone.
 Craft, greed and violence complot re-
 venge :
 Craft, for its quota, schemes to bring
 about
 And seize occasion and be safe withal :
 Greed craves its act may work both far
 and near,
 Crush the tree, branch and trunk and
 root beside,
 Whichever twig or leaf arrests a streak
 Of possible sunshine else would coin it-
 self,

And drop down one more gold piece in
 the path.
 Violence stipulates " Advantage provid-
 " And safety sure, be pain the overplus !
 " Murder with jagged knife ! Cut but
 tear too !
 " Foiled oft, starved long, glut malice
 for amends ! "
 And, last, craft schemes,—scheme sor-
 rowful and strange
 As though the elements, whom mercy
 checked,
 Had mustered hate for one eruption
 more,
 One final deluge to surprisè the Ark
 Cradled and sleeping on its mountain-
 top :
 The outbreak-signal—what but the
 dove's coos
 Back with the olive in her bill for news
 Sorrow was over ? 'T is an infant's
 birth,
 Guido's first born, his son and heir,
 that gives
 The occasion : other men cut free their
 souls
 From care in such a case, fly up in
 thanks
 To God, reach, recognise His love for
 once : [thine !
 Guido cries " Soul, at last the mire is
 " Lie there in likeness of a money-bag,
 " This babe's birth so pins down past
 moving now,
 " That I dare cut adrift the lives I late
 " Scrupled to touch lest thou escape
 with them !
 " These parents and their child my
 wife,—touch one
 " Lose all ! Their rights determined
 on a head
 " I could but hate, not harm, since
 from each hair
 " Dangled a hope for me : now—
 chance and change !
 " No right was in their child but passes
 now
 " To that child's child and through
 such child to me.
 " I am the father now,—come what,
 come will,
 " I represent my child ; he comes be-
 tween—
 " Cuts sudden off the sunshine of this
 life
 " From those three : why, the gold is
 in his curls !

"Not with old Pietro's, Violante's
 head,
 "Not his grey horror, her more hideous
 black—
 "Go these, devoted to the knife!"
 'T is done:
 Wherefore should mind misgive, heart
 hesitate?
 He calls to counsel, fashions certain
 four
 Colourless natures counted clean till
 now,
 —Rustie simplicity, uncorrupted youth,
 Ignorant virtue! Here's the gold o'
 the prime
 When Saturn ruled, shall shock our
 leaden day—
 The clown abash the courtier! Mark
 it, bards!
 The courtier tries his hand on clown-
 ship here,
 Speaks a word, names a crime, appoints
 a price,—
 Just breathes on what, suffused with all
 himself,
 Is red-hot henceforth past distinction
 now
 I' the common glow of hell. And thus
 they break
 And blaze on us at Rome, Christ's
 Birthnight-eve!
 Oh angels that sang erst "On the earth,
 peace!
 "To man, good will!"—such peace
 finds earth to-day!
 After the seventeen hundred years, so
 man
 Wills good to man, so Guido makes
 complete
 His murder! what is it I said?—cuts
 loose
 Three lives that hitherto he suffered
 cling,
 Simply because each served to nail
 secure,
 By a corner of the money-bag, his soul—
 Therefore, lives saered till the babe's
 first breath
 O'erweights them in the balance,—off
 they fly!
 So is the murder managed, sin con-
 ceived
 To the full: and why not crowned with
 triumph too?
 Why must the sin, conceived thus,
 bring forth death?

I note how, within hair's-breadth
 escape,
 Impunity and the thing supposed
 eess,
 Guido is found when the check co-
 the echange,
 The monitory touch o' the tether—
 By few, not marked by many, na-
 by none
 At the moment, only recognised as
 I' the fulness of the days, for God's
 sin
 Exceed the service, leap the line:
 check—
 A secret which this life finds har-
 keep,
 And, often guessed, is never quite
 vealed.
 Guido must needs trip on a stumb-
 block
 Too vulgar, too absurdly plain i'
 path!
 Study this single oversight of care,
 This hebetude that mars sagacity,
 Forgetfulness of what the man
 knew!
 Here is a stranger who, with need
 fly,
 Needs but to ask and have the man
 of flight.
 Why, the first urchin tells you, to le-
 Rome,
 Get horses, you must show the warr-
 just
 The banal serap, clerk's scribble, a
 word buys,
 Or foul one, if a ducat sweeten word
 And straight authority will back
 mand,
 Give you the piek o' the post-house
 in such wise,
 The resident at Rome for thirty ye-
 Guido, instructs a stranger! A
 himself
 Forgets just this poor paper scri-
 wherewith
 Armed, every door he knocks at op-
 wide
 To save him: horsed and mann-
 with such advance
 Q' the hunt behind, why 't were
 easy task
 Of hours told on the fingers of one ha-
 To reach the Tuscan Frontier, laugh-
 home,
 Light-hearted with his fellows of
 place,—

Prepared by that strange shameful
 judgment, that
 Satire upon a sentence just pronounced
 By the Rota and confirmed by the
 Granduke,—
 Ready in a circle to receive their peer,
 Appreciate his good story how, when
 Rome,
 The Popc-King and the populace of
 priests
 Made common cause with their con-
 federate
 The other priestling who seduced his
 wife,
 He, all unaided, wiped out the affront
 With decent bloodshed and could face
 his friends,
 Frolic it in the world's eye. Ay, such
 tale
 Missed such applause, all by such over-
 sight !
 So, tired and footsore, those blood-flus-
 tered five
 Went reeling on the road through dark
 and cold,
 The few permissible miles, to sink at
 length,
 Wallow and sleep in the first wayside
 straw,
 As the other herd quenched, i' the wash
 o' the wave,
 —Each swine, the devil inside him : so
 slept they,
 And so were caught and caged—all
 through one trip,
 Touch of the fool in Guido the astute !
 He curses the omission, I surmise,
 More than the murder. Why, thou
 fool and blind,
 It is the merey-stroke that stops thy
 fate,
 Hamstrings and holds thee to thy hurt,
 —but how ?
 On the edge o' the precipice ! One
 minute more,
 Thou hadst gone farther and fared
 worse, my son,
 Fathoms down on the flint and fire
 beneath !
 Thy comrades each and all were of one
 mind
 Straightway, thy murder done, to mur-
 der thee
 In turn, because of promised pay with-
 held.
 So, to the last, greed found itself at
 odds

With craft in thee, and, proving con-
 queror,
 Had sent thee, the same night that
 crowned thy hope,
 Thither where, this same day, I see
 thee not,
 Nor, through God's mercy, need, to
 morrow, see.
 Such I find Guido, midmost blotch of
 black
 Discernible in this group of clustered
 crimes
 Huddling together in the cave they call
 Their palace, outraged day thus pene-
 trates.
 Around him ranged, now close and now
 remote,
 Prominent or obscure to meet the needs
 O' the mage and master, I detect each
 shape
 Subsidiary i' the scene nor loathed the
 less,
 All alike coloured, all descried akin
 By one and the same pitchy furnace
 stirred
 At the centre : see, they lick the mas-
 ter's hand,—
 This fox-faced horrible priest, this
 brother-brute
 The Abate,—why, mere wolfishness
 looks well, [flame,
 Guido stands honest in the red o' the
 Beside this yellow that would pass for
 white,
 This Guido, all craft but no violence,
 This copier of the mien and gait and
 garb
 Of Peter and Paul, that he may go dis-
 guised,
 Rob halt and lame, sick folk i' the
 temple-porch !
 Armed with religion, fortified by law,
 A man of peace, who trims the mid-
 night lamp
 And turns the classic page—and all for
 craft,
 All to work harm with, yet incur no
 scratch !
 While Guido brings the struggle to a
 close,
 Paul steps back the due distance, clear
 o' the trap
 He builds and baits. Guido I catch
 and judge ;
 Paul is past reach in this world and my
 time :

That is a case reserved. Pass to the
next,
The boy of the brood, the young Giro-
lamo
Priest, Canon, and what more? nor
wolf nor fox,
Eut hybrid, neither craft nor violence
Wholly, part violence part craft: such
cross
Tempt speculation—will both blend
one day,
And prove hell's better product? Or
subside
And let the simple quality emerge,
Go on with Satan's service the old way?
Meanwhile, what promise,—what per-
formance too!
For there's a new distinctive touch, I
see,
Lust—lacking in the two—hell's own
blue tint [man
That gives a character and marks the
More than a match for yellow and red.
Once more,
A case reserved: why should I doubt?
Then comes
The gaunt grey nightmare in the fur-
thest smoke,
The hag that gave these three abortions
birth,
Unmotherly mother and unwomanly
Woman, that near turns motherhood
to shame,
Womanliness to loathing: no one word,
No gesture to curb cruelty a whit
More than the she-pard thwarts her
playsome whelps
Trying their milk-teeth on the soft o'
the throat
O' the first fawn, flung, with those be-
seeching eyes,
Flat in the covert! How should she
but couch,
Lick the dry lips, unsheathe the
blunted claw,
Catch 'twixt her placid eyewinks at
what chance
Old bloody half-forgotten dream may
flit,
Born when herself was novice to the
taste,
The while she lets youth take its
pleasure. Last,
These God-abandoned wretched lumps
of life,
These four companions,—country-folk
this time,

Not tainted by the unwholesome
breath,
Much less the curse o' the court!
striplings too,
Fit to do human nature justice
Surely when impudence in Gu-
shape
Shall propose crime and proffer mon-
worth
To these stout tall bright-eyed
black-haired boys,
The blood shall bound in answer to
cheek
Before the indignant outcry b-
from lip!
Are these i' the mood to murder, ha-
loosed
From healthy autumn-finish,
ploughed glebe,
Grapes in the barrel, work at ha-
end,
And winter come with rest and Chr-
mas play?
How greet they Guido with his fi-
task— [m
(As if he but proposed "One viney-
"To dig, ere frost come, then re-
indeed!")
"Anywhere, anyhow and anyway,
"Murder me some three people, o-
and young,
"Ye never heard the names of,—a-
be paid
"So much!" And the whole fo-
accede at once.
Demur? As cattle would, bid mar-
or halt!
Is it some lingering habit, old fond fai-
I' the lord of the land, instructs the-
—birthright-badger
Of feudal tenure claims its slaves again
Not so at all, thou noble human hear-
All is done purely for the pay,—which
earned,
And not forthcoming at the instan-
makes
Religion heresy, and the lord o' the
land
Fit subject for a murder in his turn.
The patron with cut throat and rifle
purse,
Deposited i' the roadside-ditch, his du-
Nought hinders each good fellow trud-
ing home,
The heavier by a piece or two in pok-
And so with new zest to the commo-
life,

Mattock and spade, plough-tail and
waggon-shaft,
Till some such other piece of luck be-
tide,
Who knows? Since this is a mere
start in life,
And none of them exceeds the twen-
tieth year.

Nay, more i' the background, yet?
Unnoticed forms
Claim to be classed, subordinately vile?
Complacent lookers-on that laugh,—
perchance
Shake head as their friend's horse-play
grows too rough
With the mere child he manages amiss—
But would not interfere and make bad
worse
For twice the fractious tears and
prayers: thou know'st
Civility better, Marzi-Medici,
Governor for thy kinsman the Gran-
duke!

Fit representative of law, man's lamp
I' the magistrate's grasp full-flare, no
rushlight-end
Sputtering 'twixt thumb and finger of
the priest!
Whose answer to these Comparini's cry
Is a threat,—whose remedy of Pom-
pilia's wrong
A shrug o' the shoulder, a facetious
word
Or wink, traditional with Tuscan wits,
To Guido in the doorway. Laud to
law! [he
The wife is pushed back to the husband,
Who knows how these home-squab-
blings persecute
People who have the public good to
mind,
And work best with a silence in the
court!

Ah, but I save my word at least for
thee,
Archbishop, who art under me in the
Church,
As I am under God,—thou, chosen by
both
To do the shepherd's office, feed the
sheep—
How of this lamb that panted at thy
foot
While the wolf pressed on her within
crook's reach?

Wast thou the hireling that did turn
and flee?
With thee at least anon the little word I
Such denizens o' the cave now cluster
round
And heat the furnace sevenfold: time
indeed
A bolt from heaven should cleave roof
and clear place,
Transfix and show the world, suspiring
flame,
The main offender, scar and brand the
rest
Hurrying, each miscreant to his hole:
then flood
And purify the scene with outside day—
Which yet, in the absolute drench of
dark,
Ne'er wants a witness, some stray
beauty-beam
To the despair of heli.

First of the first,
Such I pronounce Pompilia, then as
now
Perfect in whiteness—stoop thou down,
my child,
Give one good moment to the poor old
Pope
Heart-sick at having all his world to
blame—
Let me look at thee in the flesh as erst,
Let me enjoy the old clean linen garb,
Not the new splendid vesture! Armed
and crowned,
Would Michael, yonder, be, nor crowned
nor armed,
The less pre-eminent angel? Every-
where
I see in the world the intellect of man,
That sword, the energy his subtle spear,
The knowledge which defends him like
a shield—
Everywhere; but they make not up,
I think,
The marvel of a soul like thine, earth's
flower
She holds up to the softened gaze of
God!
It was not given Pompilia to know
much,
Speak much, to write a book, to move
mankind,
Be memorised by who records my time.
Yet if in purity and patience, if
In faith held fast despite the plucking
fiend,

Safe like the signet-stone with the new
 name
 That saints are known by,—if in right
 returned
 For wrong, most pardon for worst in-
 jury,
 If there be any virtue, any praise,—
 Then will this woman-child have proved
 —who knows?—
 Just the one prize vouchsafed unworthy
 me,
 Ten years a gardener of the untoward
 ground,
 I till,—this earth, my sweat and blood
 manure
 All the long day that barrenly grows
 dusk:
 At least one blossom makes me proud
 at eve
 Born 'mid the briers of my enclosure!
 Still
 (Oh, here as elsewhere, nothingness of
 man!)
 Those be the plants, embedded yonder
 South
 To mellow in the morning, those made
 fat
 By the master's eye, that yield such
 timid leaf,
 Uncertain bud, as product of his pains!
 While—see how this mere chance-sown,
 cleft-nursed seed,
 That sprang up by the wayside 'neath
 the foot
 Of the enemy, this breaks all into blaze,
 Spreads itself, one wide glory of desire
 To incorporate the whole great sun it
 loves
 From the inch-height whence it looks
 and longs! My flower,
 My rose, I gather for the breast of God,
 This I praise most in thee, where all I
 praise,
 That having been obedient to the end
 According to the light allotted, law
 Prescribed thy life, still tried, still
 standing test,—
 Dutiful to the foolish parents first,
 Submissive next to the bad husband,—
 nay,
 Tolerant of those meaner miserable
 That did his hests, eked out the dole of
 pain,—
 Thou, patient thus, could rise from law
 to law,
 The old to the new, promoted at one
 cry
 O' the trump of God to the new serv-
 not
 To longer bear, but henceforth fi-
 be found
 Sublime in new impatience with the f-
 Endure man and obey God: plant f-
 foot
 On neck of man, tread man into
 hell
 Meet for him, and obey God all
 more!
 Oh child that didst despise thy life
 much
 When it seemed only thine to keep
 lose,
 How the fine ear felt fall the first l-
 word
 "Value life, and preserve life for l-
 sake!"
 Thou didst . . . how shall I say?
 receive so long
 The standing ordinance of God
 earth,
 What wonder if the novel claim h-
 clashed
 With old requirement, seemed to sup-
 sede [brav
 Too much the customary law? But
 Thou at first prompting of what I c-
 God,
 And fools call Nature, didst hear, con-
 prehend,
 Accept the obligation laid on thee,
 Mother elect, to save the unborn chil-
 As brute and bird do, reptile and th-
 fly,
 Ay and, I nothing doubt, even tro-
 shrub, plant
 And flower o' the field, all in a comm-
 pact
 To worthily defend that trust of trust
 Life from the Ever Living:—didst r-
 sist—
 Anticipate the office that is mine—
 And with his own sword stay the up-
 raised arm,
 The endeavour of the wicked, and d-
 fend
 Him who,—again in my default,—
 was there
 For visible providence: one less tru-
 than thou
 To touch, i' the past, less practised i-
 the right,
 Approved so far in all docility
 To all instruction,—how had such a
 one

Made scruple "Is this motion a decree?"

It was authentic to the experienced ear
O' the good and faithful servant. Go
past me

And get thy praise,—and be not far to seek

Presently when I follow if I may!

And surely not so very much apart
Need I place thee, my warrior-priest,—
in whom

What if I gain the other rose, the gold,
We grave to imitate God's miracle,
Greet monarchs with, good rose in its
degree?

Irregular noble scapegrace—son the
same!

Faulty—and peradventure ours the
fault

Who still misteach, mislead, throw
hook and line

Thinking to land leviathan forsooth,
Tame the scaled neck, play with him as
a bird,

And bind him for our maidens! Better
bear

The King of Pride go wantoning awhile,
Unplagued by cord in nose and thorn
in jaw,

Through deep to deep, followed by all
that shine,

Churning the blackness hoary: He
who made

The comely terror, He shall make the
sword

To match that piece of netherstone his
heart,

Ay, nor miss praise thereby; who else
shut fire

I' the stone, to leap from mouth at
sword's fist stroke,

In lamps of love and faith, the chivalry
That dares the right and disregards
alike

The yea and nay o' the world? Self-
sacrifice,—

What if an idol took it? Ask the
Church

Why she was wont to turn each Venus
here,—

Poor Rome perversely lingered round,
despite

Instruction, for the sake of purblind
love,—

Into Madonna's shape, and waste no
whit

Of aught so rare on earth as gratitude!
All this sweet savour was not ours but
thine,

Nard of the rock, a natural wealth we
name

Incense, and treasure up as food for
saints,

When flung to us—whose function was
to give

Not find the costly perfume. Do I
smile?

Nay, Caponsacchi, much I find amiss,
Blameworthy, punishable in this freak

Of thine, this youth prolonged though
age was ripe,

This masquerade in sober day, with
change

Of motley too,—now hypocrite's-dis-
guise,

Now fool's-costume: which lie was
least like truth,

Which the ungainlier, more discordant
garb

With that symmetric soul inside my
son,

The churchman's or the worldling's,—
let him judge,

Our Adversary who enjoys the task!
I rather chronicle the healthy rage,—

When the first moan broke from the
martyr-maid

At that uncaging of the beasts,—made
bare

My athlete on the instant, gave such
good

Great undisguised leap over post and
pale

Right into the mid-cirque, free fighting-
place.

There may have been rash stripping—
every rag

Went to the winds,—infringement
manifold

Of laws prescribed pudicity, I fear,
In this impulsive and prompt self-
display!

Ever such tax comes of the foolish
youth;

Men mulet the wiser manhood, and sus-
pect

No veritable star swims out of cloud:
Bear thou such imputation, undergo

The penalty I nowise dare relax,—
Conventional chastisement and rebuke.

But for the outcome, the brave starry
birth

Conciliating earth with all that cloud,

Thank heaven as I do! Ay, such
 championship
 Of God at first blush, such prompt
 cheery thud
 Of glove on ground that answers ring-
 ingly
 The challenge of the false knight,—
 watch we long,
 And wait we vainly for its gallant like
 From those appointed to the service,
 sworn
 His bodyguard with pay and privi-
 lege—
 White-cinet, because in white walks
 sanctity,
 Red-socked, how else proclaim fine
 scorn of flesh,
 Unchariness of blood when blood faith
 begs?
 Where are the men-at-arms with cross
 on coat?
 Aloof, bewraying their attire: whilst
 thou
 In mask and motley, pledged to dance
 not fight,
 Sprang'st forth the hero! In thought,
 word and deed,
 How throughout all thy warfare thou
 wast pure,
 I find it easy to believe: and if
 At any fateful moment of the strange
 Adventure, the strong passion of that
 strait,
 Fear and surprise, may have revealed
 too much,—
 As when a thundrous midnight, with
 black air
 That burns, rain-drops that blister,
 breaks a spell,
 Draws out the excessive virtue of some
 sheathed
 Shut unsuspected flower that hoards
 and hides
 Immensity of sweetness,—so, per-
 chance,
 Might the surprise and fear release too
 much [soul]
 The perfect beauty of the body and
 Thou savedst in thy passion for God's
 sake,
 He who is Pity: was the trial sore?
 Temptation sharp? Thank God a
 second time!
 Why comes temptation but for man to
 meet
 And master and make crouch beneath
 his foot,

And so be pedestalled in triumph
 Pray
 "Lead us into no such temptation
 Lord!"
 Yea, but, O Thou whose servants
 the bold,
 Lead such temptations by the hand
 and hair,
 Reluctant dragons, up to who dares
 fight,
 That so he may do battle and have
 praise!
 Do I not see the praise?—that which
 thy mates
 Bound to deserve in the matter, pro-
 at need
 Unprofitable through the very pains
 We gave to train them well and stand
 them fair,—
 Are found too stiff, with standing
 ranked and ranged,
 For onset in good earnest, too obtuse
 Of ear, through iteration of command
 For catching quick the sense of the re-
 cry,—
 Thou, whose sword-hand was used
 strike the lute,
 Whose sentry-station graced some
 wanton's gate,
 Thou didst push forward and show
 mettle, shame
 The laggards, and retrieve the day
 Well done!
 Be glad thou hast let light into this
 world,
 Through that irregular breach o' the
 boundary,—see
 The same upon thy path and march
 assured,
 Learning anew the use of soldiery
 Self-abnegation, freedom from all fear
 Loyalty to the life's end! Ruminating
 Deserve the initiatory spasm,—once
 more
 Work, be unhappy but bear life, my
 son!
 And troop you, somewhere 'twixt the
 best and worst,
 Where crowd the indifferent products
 all too poor
 Makeshift, starved samples of hu-
 manity!
 Father and mother, huddle there and
 hide!
 A gracious eye may find you! Foul
 and fair,

Sadly mixed natures : self-indulgent,
 --yet
 Self-sacrificing too : how the love
 soars,
 How the craft, avarice, vanity and
 spite
 Sink again ! So they keep the middle
 course,
 Slide into silly crime at unaware,
 Slip back upon the stupid virtue, stay
 Nowhere enough for being classed, I
 hope
 And fear. Accept the swift and rueful
 death,
 Taught, somewhat sternlier than is
 wont, what waits
 The ambiguous creature,—how the one
 black tuft
 Steadies the aim of the arrow just as
 well
 As the wide faultless white on the bird's
 breast.
 Nay, you were punished in the very
 part
 That looked most pure of speck,—the
 honest love
 Betrayed you,—did love seem most
 worthy pains,
 Challenge such purging, as ordained
 survive
 When all the rest of you was done with?
 Go !
 Never again elude the choice of tints !
 White shall not neutralise the black,
 nor good
 Compensate bad in man, absolve him
 so :
 Life's business being just the terrible
 choice.

So do I see, pronounce on all and some
 Grouped for my judgment now,—pro-
 fess no doubt
 While I pronounce : dark, difficult
 enough
 The human sphere, yet eyes grow sharp
 by use,
 I find the truth, dispart the shine from
 shade,
 As a mere man may, with no special
 touch
 O' the lynx-gift in each ordinary orb :
 Nay, if the popular notion class me
 right,
 One of well nigh decayed intelligence,—
 What of that ? Through hard labour
 and good will,

And habitude that gives a blind man
 sight
 At the practised finger-ends of him, I do
 Discern, and dare decree in conse-
 quence,
 Whatever prove the peril of mistake.
 Whence, then, this quite new quick
 cold thrill,—cloud-like,
 This keen dread creeping from a quar-
 ter scarce
 Suspected in the skies I nightly scan ?
 What slacks the tense nerve, saps the
 wound-up spring
 Of the act that should and shall be,
 sends the mount
 And mass o' the whole man's-strength,
 ---conglobed so late—
 Shudderingly into dust, a moment's
 work ?
 While I stand firm, go fearless, in this
 world,
 For this life recognise and arbitrate,
 Touch and let stay, or else remove a
 thing,
 Judge " This is right, this object out of
 place,"
 Candle in hand that helps me and to
 spare,— [pry !
 What if a voice deride me, " Perk and
 " Brighten each nook with thine intel-
 ligence !
 " Play the good householder, ply man
 and maid
 " With tasks prolonged into the mid-
 night, test
 " Their work and nowise stint of the
 due wage
 " Each worthy worker : but with
 gyves and whip
 " Pay thou misprision of a single point
 " Plain to thy happy self who lift'st
 the light,
 " Lament'st the darkling,—bold to all
 beneath !
 " What if thyself adventure, now the
 place
 " Is purged so well ? Leave pavement
 and mount roof,
 " Look round thee for the light of the
 upper sky,
 " The fire which lit thy fire which finds
 default
 " In Guido Franceschini to his cost !
 " What if, above in the domain of
 light,
 " Thou miss the accustomed signs,
 remark eclipse ?

"Shalt thou still gaze on ground nor
lift a lid,—

"Steady in thy superb prerogative,

"Thy inch of inkling,—nor once face
the doubt

"T' the sphere above thee, darkness to
be felt?"

Yet my poor spark had for its source,
the sun;

Thither I sent the great looks which
compel

Light from its fount: all that I do and
am,

Comes from the truth, or seen or else
surmised,

Remembered or divined, as mere man
may:

I know just so, nor otherwise. As I
know,

I speak,—what should I know, then,
and how speak

Were there a wild mistake of eye or
brain

In the recorded governance above?

If my own breath, only, blew coal alight

I called celestial and the morning-star?

I, who in this world act resolvedly,

Dispose of men, the body and the soul,

As they acknowledge or gainsay this
light

I show them,—shall I too lack courage?
—leave

I, too, the post of me, like those I
blame?

Refuse, with kindred inconsistency,

Grapple with danger whereby souls
grow strong?

I am near the end; but still not at the
end;

All till the very end is trial in life:

At this stage is the trial of my soul

Danger to face, or danger to refuse?

Shall I dare try the doubt now, or not
dare?

O Thou,—as represented here to me

In such conception as my soul allows,—

Under Thy measureless my atom
width!

Man's mind—what is it but a convex
glass

Wherein are gathered all the scattered
points

Picked out of the immensity of sky,

To reunite there, be our heaven on
earth,

Our known unknown, our God revealed
to man?

Existent somewhere, somehow, a
whole;

Here, as a whole proportioned to
sense,—

There, (which is nowhere, speech m
babble thus!)

In the absolute immensity, the whole

Appreciable solely by Thyself,—

Here, by the little mind of man,
duced

To littleness that suits his faculty,

Appreciable too in the degree;

Between Thee and ourselves—n
even, again,

Below us, to the extreme of the minu

Appreciable by how many and wh
diverse

Modes of the life Thou makest b
(why live

Except for love,—how love unless th
know?)

Each of them, only filling to the edge

Insect or angel, his just length an
breath,

Due facet of reflection,—full, no less,
Angel or insect, as Thou framed

things,—

I it is who have been appointed here
To represent Thee, in my turn, o
earth,

Just as, if new philosophy know augh

This one earth, out of all the multitud

Of peopled worlds, as stars are now sup
posed,—

Was chosen, and no sun-star of th
swarm,

For stage and scene of Thy transcend
ent act

Beside which even the creation fades

Into a puny exercise of power.

Choice of the world, choice of the thing
I am,

Both emanate alike from the dread
play

Of operation outside this our sphere

Where things are classed and counted
small or great,—

Incomprehensibly the choice is Thine!

I therefore bow my head and take Thy
place.

There is, beside the works, a tale of
Thee

In the world's mouth which I find
credible:

I love it with my heart: unsatisfied,

I try it with my reason, nor disceit
From any point I probe and pronounce
sound.

Mind is not matter nor from matter, but
Above,—leave matter then, proceed
with mind :

Man's be the mind recognised at the
height,—

Leave the inferior minds and look at
man.

Is he the strong, intelligent and good
Up to his own conceivable height ? No-
wise.

Enough o' the low,—soar the conceiv-
able height,

Find cause to match the effect in evi-
dence,

Works in the world, not man's, then
God's ; leave man :

Conjecture of the worker by the work :
Is there strength there ?—enough : in-
telligence ?

Ample : but goodness in a like degree ?
Not to the human eye in the present
state,

This isoscele deficient in the base.
What lacks, then, of perfection fit for
God

But just the instance which this tale
supplies

Of love without a limit ? So is strength,
So is intelligence ; then love is so,
Unlimited in its self-sacrifice :

Then is the tale true and God shows
complete.

Beyond the tale, I reach into the dark,
Feel what I cannot see, and still faith
stands :

I can believe this dread machinery
Of sin and sorrow, would confound me
else,

Devised,—all pain, at most expendi-
ture

Of pain by Who devised pain,—to
evolve,

By new machinery in counterpart,
The moral qualities of man—how
else ?—

To make him love in turn and be be-
loved,

Creative and self-sacrificing too,
And thus eventually God-like, (ay,

" I have said ye are Gods,"—shall it be
said for nought ?)

Enable man to wring, from out all pain,
All pleasure for a common heritage

To all eternity : this may be surmised,

The other is revealed,—whether a fact,
Absolute, abstract, independent truth,
Historic not reduced to suit man's
mind,—

Or only truth reverberate, changed,
made pass

A spectrum into mind, the narrow
eye,—

The same and not the same, else un-
conceived—

Though quite conceivable to the next
grade

Above it in intelligence,—as truth
Easy to man were blindness to the beast

By parity of procedure,—the same
truth

In a new form, but changed in either
case :

What matter so the intelligence be
filled ?

To the child, the sea is angry, for it
roars ;

Frost bites, else why the tooth-like fret
on face ?

Man makes acoustics deal with the sea's
wrath,

Explains the choppy check by chymic
law,—

To both, remains one and the same
effect

On drum of ear and root of nose, change
cause

Never so thorough'y : so our heart be
struck,

What care I,—by God's gloved hand or
the bare ?

Nor do I much perplex me with aught
hard,

Dubious in the transmitting of the
tale,—

No, nor with certain riddles set to solve.
This life is training and a passage ;

pass,—

Still, we march over some flat obstacle
We made give way before us ; solid

truth

In front of it, were motion for the
world ?

The moral sense grows but by exercise.
'T is even as man grew probatively

Initiated in Godship, set to make
A fairer moral world than this he finds,

Guess now what shall be known here-
after. Thus,

O' the present problem : as we see and
speak,

A faultless creature is destroyed, and sin

Has had its way i' the world where God
 should rule.
 Ay, but for this irrelevant circumstance
 Of inquisition after blood, we see
 Pompilia lost and Guido saved: how
 long?
 For his whole life: how much is that
 whole life?
 We are not babes, but know the min-
 ute's worth,
 And feel that life is large and the world
 small,
 So, wait till life have passed from out
 the world.
 Neither does this astonish at the end,
 That, whereas I can so receive and trust,
 Men, made with hearts and souls the
 same as mine,
 Reject and disbelieve,—subordinate
 The future to the present,—sin, nor
 fear.
 This I refer still to the foremost fact,
 Life is probation and this earth no goal
 But starting-point of man: compel
 him strive,
 Which means, in man, as good as reach
 the goal,—
 Why institute that race, his life, at all?
 But this does overwhelm me with sur-
 prise,
 Touch me to terror,—not that faith,
 the pearl, [food,—
 Should be let lie by fishers wanting
 Nor, seen and handled by a certain few
 Critical and contemptuous, straight
 consigned
 To shore and shingle for the pebble it
 proves,—
 But that, when haply found and known
 and named
 By the residue made rich for evermore,
 These,—ay, these favoured ones, should
 in a trice
 Turn, and with double zest go dredge
 for whelks,
 Mud-worms that make the savoury
 soup. Enough
 O' the disbelievers, see the faithful few!
 How do the Christians here deport
 them, keep
 Their robes of white unspotted by the
 world?
 What is this Aretine Archbishop, this
 Man under me as I am under God,
 This champion of the faith, I armed
 and deked,

Pushed forward, put upon a pinnac
 To show the enemy his victor,—see
 What 's the best fighting when
 couple close?
 Pompilia cries, "Protect me from
 fiend!"
 "No, for thy Guido is one hea
 strong,
 "Dangerous to disquiet: let him bi
 "He needs some bone to mumble, h
 amuse
 "The darkness of his den with: so, t
 fawn
 "Which limps up bleeding to my fo
 and lies,
 "—Come to me, daughter,—thus
 throw him back!"
 Have we misjudged here, over-arm
 the knight,
 Given gold and silk where the pla
 steel serves best,
 Enfeebled whom we sought to fortifi
 Made an archbishop and undone
 saint?
 Well then, descend these heights, th
 pride of life,
 Sit in the ashes with the barefoot mor
 Who long ago stamped out the world
 sparks.
 Fasting and watching, stone cell an
 wire scourge,
 —No such indulgence as unknots th
 strength—
 These breed the tight nerve and toug
 cuticle,
 Let the world's praise or blame ru
 rillet-wise
 Off the broad back and brawny breast
 we know!
 He meets the first cold sprinkle of th
 world
 And shudders to the marrow, "Save
 this child?
 "Oh, my superiors, oh, the Archbishop
 here!
 "Who was it dared lay hand upon the
 ark
 "His betters saw fall nor put finger
 forth?
 "Great ones could help yet help not:
 why should small?
 "I break my promise: let her break
 her heart!"
 These are the Christians not the world-
 lings, not
 The seepies, who thus battle for the
 faith!

If foolish virgins disobey and sleep,
 What wonder? But the wise that
 watch, this time
 Sell lamps and buy lutes, exchange oil
 for wine,
 The mystic Spouse betrays the Bride-
 groom here.
 To our last resource, then! Since all
 flesh is weak,
 Bind weaknesses together, we get
 strength:
 The individual weighed, found wanting,
 try
 Some institution, honest artifice
 Whereby the units grow compact and
 firm:
 Each props the other, and so stand is
 made
 By our embodied cowards that grow
 brave.
 The Monastery called of Convertites,
 Meant to help women because these
 helped Christ,—
 A thing existent only while it acts,
 Does as designed, else a nonentity,
 For what is an idea unrealised?—
 Pompilia is consigned to these for help.
 They do help; they are prompt to tes-
 tify
 To her pure life and saintly dying days.
 She dies, and lo, who seemed so poor,
 proves rich!
 What does the body that lives through
 helpfulness
 To women for Christ's sake? The kiss
 turns bite,
 The dove's note changes to the crow's
 cry: judge!
 "Seeing that this our Convent claims of
 right
 "What goods belong to those we suc-
 cour, be
 "The same proved women of dishonest
 life,—
 "And seeing that this Trial made ap-
 pear
 "Pompilia was in such predicament,—
 "The Convent hereupon pretends to
 said
 "Succession of Pompilia, issues writ,
 "And takes possession by the Fisc's
 advice."
 Such is their attestation to the cause
 Of Christ, who had one saint at least,
 they hoped:
 But, is a title-deed to filch, a corpse
 To slander, and an infant-heir to cheat?

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Christ must give up his gains then!
 They unsay
 All the fine speeches—who was saint is
 whore.
 Why, Scripture yields no parallel for
 this!
 The soldiers only threw dice for Christ's
 coat;
 We want another legend of the Twelve
 Disputing if it was Christ's coat at all,
 Claiming as prize the woof of price—for
 why?
 The Master was a thief, purloined the
 same,
 Or paid for it out of the common bag!
 Can it be this is end and outcome, all
 I take with me to show as stewardship's
 fruit,
 The best yield of the latest time, this
 year
 The seventeen-hundredth since God
 died for man?
 Is such effect proportionate to cause?
 And still the terror keeps on the increase
 When I perceive . . . how can I blink
 the fact?
 That the fault, the obduracy to good,
 Lies not with the impracticable stuff
 Whence man is made, his very nature's
 fault,
 As if it were of ice, the moon may gild
 Not melt, or stone, 't was meant the
 sun should warm
 Not make bear flowers,—nor ice nor
 stone to blame:
 But it can melt, that ice, and bloom,
 that stone,
 Impassible to rule of day and night!
 This terrifies me, thus compelled per-
 ceive,
 Whatever love and faith we looked
 should spring
 At advent of the authoritative star,
 Which yet lie sluggish, curdled at the
 source,—
 These have leapt forth profusely in old
 time,
 These still respond with promptitude
 to-day,
 At challenge of—what unacknowledged
 powers
 O' the air, what uncommissioned me-
 teors, warmth
 By law, and light by rule should super-
 sede?
 For see this priest, this Caponsacchi,
 stung

At the first summons,—“ Help for hon-
our's sake,
“ Play the man, pity the oppressed ! ”
—no pause,
How does he lay about him in the midst,
Strike any foe, right wrong at any risk,
All blindness, bravery and obedience !
—blind ?
Ay, as a man would be inside the sun,
Delirious with the plenitude of light
Should interfuse him to the finger-
ends—
Let him rush straight, and how shall he
go wrong ?
Where are the Christians in their pan-
oply ?
The foins we girt about with truth, the
breasts
Righteousness plated round, the shield
of faith,
The helmet of salvation, and that sword
O' the Spirit, even the word of God,—
where these ?
Slunk into corners ! Oh, I hear at once
Hubbub of protestation ! “ What, we
monks,
“ We friars, of such an order, such a
rule,
“ Have not we fought, bled, left our
martyr-mark
“ At every point along the boundary-
line
“ Twixt true and false, religion and
the world,
“ Where this or the other dogma of our
Church [myself,
“ Called for defence ? ” And I, despite
How can I but speak loud what truth
speaks low,
“ Or better than the best, or nothing
serves !
“ What boots deed, I can cap and cover
straight
“ With such another doughtiness to
match,
“ Done at an instinct of the natural
man ? ”
Immolate body, sacrifice soul too,—
Do not these publicans the same ?
Outstrip !
Or else stop race, you boast run neck
and neck,
You with the wings, they with the feet,
—for shame !
Oh, I remark your diligence and zeal !
Five years long, now, rounds faith into
my ears,
“ Help thou, or Christendom is do-
death ! ”
Five years since, in the Province of
kien,
Which is in China as some people k
Maigrot, my Vicar Apostolic there,
Having a great qualm, issues a de
Alack, the converts use as God's n
not
Tien-chu but plain Tien or else
Shang-ti,
As Jesuits please to fancy politic,
While, say Dominicans, it calls d
fire,—
For Tien means heaven, and Shan
supreme prince,
While Tien-chu means the lord of
ven : all cry,
“ There is no business urgent for
patch
“ As that thou send a legate, speci
“ Cardinal Tournon, straight to Pel
there [ence
“ To settle and compose the dif
So have I seen a potentate all fume
For some infringement of his reali
just right,
Some menace to a mud-built stra
thatched farm
O' the frontier, while inside the ma
land lie,
Quite undisputed-for in solitude,
Whole cities plague may waste or fa
ine sap :
What if the sun crumble, the sands e
croach,
While he looks on sublimely at his eas
How does their ruin touch the empire
bound ?
And is this little all that was to be ?
Where is the gloriously-decisive chang
The immeasurable metamorphosis
Of human clay to divine gold, we look
Should, in some poor sort, justify th
price ?
Had a mere adept of the Rosy Cross
Spent his life to consummate the Grea
Work,
Would not we start to see the stuff i
touched
Yield not a grain more than the vulga
got
By the old smelting-process years ago
If this were sad to see in just the sage
Who should profess so much, perform
no more,

What is it when suspected in that Power
Who undertook to make and made the
world,

Devised and did effect man, body and
soul,

Ordained salvation for them both, and
yet . . .

Well, is the thing we see, salvation ?

I

Put no such dreadful question to myself,
Within whose circle of experience burns
The central truth, Power, Wisdom,
Goodness,—God :

I must outlive a thing ere know it dead :
When I outlive the faith there is a sun,
When I lie, ashes to the very soul,—
Some one, not I, must wail above the
heap,

" He died in dark whence never morn
arose."

While I see day succeed the deepest
night—

How can I speak but as I know ?—my
speech

Must be, throughout the darkness, " It
will end : "

" The light that did burn, will burn ! "

Clouds obscure— [bright ?

But for which obscurity all were
Too hastily concluded ! Sun-suffused,
A cloud may soothe the eye made blind
by blaze,—

Better the very clarity of Heaven :
The soft streaks are the beautiful and
dear.

What but the weakness in a faith sup-
plies

The incentive to humanity, no strength
Absolute, irresistible, comports ?

How can man love but what he yearns
to help ?

And that which men think weakness
within strength,

But angels know for strength and
stronger yet—

What were it else but the first things
made new,

But repetition of the miracle,
The divine instance of self-sacrifice

That never ends and aye begins for
man ?

So, never I miss footing in the maze,
No,—I have light nor fear the dark at
all.

But are mankind not real, who pace
outside

My petty circle, the world measured
me ?

And when they stumble even as I
stand, [cry,

Have I a right to stop ears when they
As they were phantoms, took the clouds
for crags,

Tripped and fell, where the march of
man might move ?

Beside, the cry is other than a ghost's,
When out of the old time there pleads
some bard,

Philosopher, or both and—whispers
not,

But words it boldly. " The inward
work and worth

" Of any mind, what other mind may
judge

" Save God who only knows the thing
He made,

" The veritable service He exacts ?

" It is the outward product men ap-
praise. [aloft :

" Behold, an engine hoists a tower
" " I looked that it should move the
mountain too ! "

" Or else ' Had just a turret toppled
down,

" Success enough ! '—may say the
Machinist

" Who knows what less or more result
might be : [do,

" But we, who see that done we cannot
" " A feat beyond man's force, ' we men
must say.

" Regard me and that shake I gave the
world !

" I was born, not so long before Christ's
birth,

" As Christ's birth haply did precede
thy day,—

" But many a watch, before the star
of dawn :

" Therefore I lived,—it is thy creed
affirms,

" Pope Innocent, who art to answer
me !—

" Under conditions, nowise to escape,
" Whereby salvation was impossible.

" Each impulse to achieve the good and
fair,

" Each aspiration to the pure and true,
" Being without a warrant or an air,

" Was just as sterile a felicity
" As if the insect, born to spend his life

" Soaring his circles, stopped them to
describe

- " (Painfully motionless in the mid-air)
 " Some word of weighty counsel for
 man's sake,
 " Some ' Know thyself ' or ' Take the
 golden mean !'
 " — Forwent his happy dance and the
 glad ray,
 " Died half an hour the sooner and was
 dust.
 " I, born to perish like the brutes, or
 worse,
 " Why not live brutishly, obey my law ?
 " But I, of body as of soul complete,
 " A gymnast at the games, philosopher
 " I' the schools, who painted, and made
 music,—all
 " Glories that met upon the tragic stage
 " When the Third Poet's tread sur-
 prised the Two,—
 " Whose lot fell in a land where life was
 great
 " And sense went free and beauty lay
 profuse,
 " I, untouched by one adverse circum-
 stance,
 " Adopted virtue as my rule of life,
 " Waived all reward, and loved for
 loving's sake,
 " And, what my heart taught me, I
 taught the world,
 " And have been teaching now two
 thousand years.
 " Witness my work,—plays that should
 please, forsooth !
 " ' They might please, they may dis-
 please, they shall teach,
 " ' For truth's sake,' so I said, and did,
 and do.
 " Five hundred years ere Paul spoke,
 Felix heard,—
 " How much of temperance and right-
 eousness, [for,
 " Judgment to come, did I find reason
 " Corroborate with my strong style
 that spared
 " No sin, nor swerved the more from
 branding brow
 " Because the sinner was called Zeus
 and God ?
 " How nearly did I guess at that Paul
 knew ?
 " How closely come, in what I repre-
 sent
 " As duty, to his doctrine yet a blank ?
 " And as that limner not untruly limns
 " Who draws an object round or square,
 which square
- " Or round seems to the unassisted
 " Though Galileo's tube display
 same
 " Oval or oblong,—so, who contro-
 verged
 " I rendered rightly what pro-
 wrongly wrought
 " Beside Paul's picture ? Mine
 true for me.
 " I saw that there are, first and ab-
 all,
 " The hidden forces, blind necessit-
 ies
 " Named Nature, but the thing's
 unconceived :
 " Then follow,—how dependent up-
 these,
 " We know not, how imposed ab-
 ourselves,
 " We well know,—what I name
 gods, a power
 " Various or one ; for great and stro-
 and good
 " Is there, and little, weak and b-
 there too,
 " Wisdom and folly : say, these ma-
 no God,—
 " What is it else that rules outside man
 self ?
 " A fact then,—always, to the naked
 eye,—
 " And, so, the one revealment possib-
 le
 " Of what were unimagined else by man
 criticise,
 " Therefore, what gods do, man may
 Applaud, condemn,—how should I
 fear the truth ?
 " But likewise have in awe because
 power,
 " Venerate for the main munificence
 And give the doubtful deed its due
 excuse
 " From the acknowledged creature of
 day [bold
 " To the Eternal and Divine. Thus
 himself,
 " Yet self-mistrusting, should man be-
 himself,
 " Most assured on what now concerns
 him most—
 " The law of his own life, the path he
 prints,—
 " Which law is virtue and not vice, I
 say,—
 " And least inquisitive where least
 search skills,
 " I' the nature we best give the clouds
 to keep.
 " What could I paint beyond a scheme
 like this

" Out of the fragmentary truths where
 light
 " Lay fitful in a tenebri^{fic} time ?
 " You have the sunrise now, joins truth
 to truth,
 " Shoots life and substance into death
 and void ;
 " Themselves compose the whole we
 made before :
 " The forces and necessity grow God,—
 " The beings so contrarious that
 seemed gods,
 " Prove just His operation manifold
 " And multiform, translated, as must
 be,
 " Into intelligible shape so far
 " As suits our sense and sets us free to
 feel :
 " What if I let a child think, childhood-
 long,
 " That lightning, I would have him
 spare his eye,
 " Is a real arrow shot at naked orb ?
 " The man knows more, but shuts his
 lids the same :
 " Lightning's cause comprehends nor
 man nor child.
 " Why then, my scheme, your better
 knowledge broke,
 " Presently readjusts itself, the small
 " Proportioned largelier, parts and
 whole named new :
 " So much, no more two thousand
 years have done !
 " Pope, dost thou dare pretend to pun-
 ish me, [night,
 " For not deserving sunshine at mid-
 " Me who crept all-fours, found my
 way so far—
 " While thou rewardest teachers of the
 truth,
 " Who miss the plain way in the blaze
 of noon,—
 " Though just a word from that strong
 style of mine,
 " Grasped honestly in hand as guiding-
 staff,
 " Had pricked them a sure path across
 the bog,
 " That mire of cowardice and slush of
 lies
 " Wherein I find them wallow in wide
 day ? "

How should I answer this Euripides ?
 Paul,—t is a legend,—answered Sene-
 ca,

But that was in the day-spring ; noon
 is now
 We have got too familiar with the light.
 Shall I wish back once more that thrill
 of dawn ?
 When the whole truth-touched man
 burned up, one fire ?
 —Assured the trial, fiery, fierce, but
 fleet,
 Would, from his little heap of ashes,
 lend
 Wings to the conflagration of the world
 Which Christ awaits ere He make all
 things new—
 So should the frail become the perfect,
 rapt
 From glory of pain to glory of joy ; and
 so,
 Even in the end,—the act renouncing
 earth,
 Lands, houses, husbands, wives and
 children here,—
 Begin that other act which finds all,
 lost,
 Regained, in this time even, a hundred-
 fold,
 And, in the next time, feels the finite
 love
 Blent and embalmed with its eternal
 life.
 So does the sun ghastlily seem to sink
 In those north parts, lean all but out of
 life,
 Desist a dread mere breathing-stop,
 then slow
 Reassert day, begin the endless rise.
 Was this too easy for our after-stage ?
 Was such a lighting-up of faith, in life,
 Only allowed initiate, set man's step
 In the true way by help of the great
 glow ?
 A way wherein it is ordained he walk,
 Bearing to see the light from heaven
 still more [earth,
 And more encroached on by the light of
 Tentatives earth puts forth to rival
 heaven,
 Earthly incitements that mankind
 serve God.
 For man's sole sake, not God's and
 therefore man's,
 Till at last, who distinguishes the sun
 From a mere Druid fire on a far mount ?
 More praise to him who with his subtle
 prism
 Shall decompose both beams and name
 the true.

In such sense, who is last proves first
indeed;
For how could saints and martyrs fail
see truth
Streak the night's blackness? Who is
faithful now,
Untwists heaven's pure white from the
yellow flare
O' the world's gross torch, without a
foil to help
Produce the Christian act, so possible
When in the way stood Nero's cross and
stake,—
So hard now that the world smiles
"Rightly done!
"It is the politic, the thrifty way,
"Will clearly make you in the end re-
turns
"Beyond our fool's-sport and improvi-
dence:
"We fools go thro' the cornfield of this
life,
"Pluck ears to left and right and swal-
low raw,
"—Nay, tread, at pleasure, a sheaf
underfoot,
"To get the better at some poppy-
flower,—
"Well aware we shall have so much
wheat less
"In the eventual harvest: you mean-
time
"Waste not a spike,—the richlier will
you reap!
"What then? There will be always
garnered meal
"Sufficient for our comfortable loaf,
"While you enjoy the undiminished
prize!"
Is it not this ignoble confidence,
Cowardly hardihood, that dulls and
damps,
Makes the old heroism impossible?
Unless . . . what whispers me of times
to come?
What if it be the mission of that age,
My death will usher into life, to shake
This torpor of assurance from our creed,
Re-introduce the doubt discarded,
bring
The formidable danger back, we drove
Long ago to the distance and the dark?
No wild beast now prowls round the in-
fant camp;
We have built wall and sleep in city
safe:

But if the earthquake try the tower
that laugh
To think they once saw lions rule
side,
Till man stand out again, pale, resolute
Prepared to die,—that is, alive at last
As we broke up that old faith of
world,
Have we, next age, to break up this
new—
Faith, in the thing, grown faith in
report—
Whence need to bravely disbelieve
port
Through increased faith in thing report
belie?
Must we deny,—do they, these Moh-
ists,
At peril of their body and their soul,
Recognised truths, obedient to some
truth
Unrecognised yet, but perceptible?
Correct the portrait by the living fact
Man's God, by God's God in the mirror
of man?
Then, for the few that rise to the new
height,
The many that must sink to the old
depth,
The multitude found fall away!
few,
E'en ere the new law speak clear, keep
the old,
Preserve the Christian level, call good
good
And evil evil, (even though raised and
blank
The old titles stand,) thro' custom
habitude,
And all they may mistake for finer
sense
O' the fact than reason warrants,—as
before,
They hope perhaps, fear not impos-
sibly.
Surely some one Pompilia in the world
Will say "I know the right place by
foot's feel,
"I took it and tread firm there; where-
fore change?"
But what a multitude will fall, per-
chance,
Quite through the crumbling truth sub-
jacent late,
Sink to the next discoverable base,
Rest upon human nature, take their
stand

On what is fact, the lust and pride of life!
 The mass of men, whose very souls even now
 Seem to need re-creating,—so they slink
 Worm-like into the mud light now lays bare,—
 Whose future we dispose of with shut eyes
 "They are baptized,—grafted, the barren twigs,
 "Into the living stock of Christ: may bear
 "One day, till when they lie death-like, not dead,"—
 Those who with all the aid of Christ lie thus,
 How, without Christ, whither, unaided, sink?
 What but to this rehearsed before my eyes?
 Do not we end, the century and I?
 The impatient antimasque treads close on kibe
 O' the very masque's self it will mock,—on me,
 Last lingering personage, the impatient mime
 Pushes already,—will I block the way?
 Will my slow trail of garments ne'er leave space
 For pantaloons, sock, plume and castanet?
 Here comes the first experimentalist
 In the new order of things,—he plays a priest;
 Does he take inspiration from the Church,
 Directly make her rule his law of life?
 Not he: his own mere impulse guides the man—
 Happily sometimes, since ourselves admit
 He has danced, in gaiety of heart, i' the main
 The right step in the maze we bade him foot.
 What if his heart had prompted to break loose
 And mar the measure? Why, we must submit
 And thank the chance that brought him safely through.
 Will he repeat the prodigy? Perhaps.
 Can he teach others how to quit themselves,
 Prove why this step was right, while that were wrong?
 How should he? "Ask your hearts as I asked mine,
 "And get discreetly through the morrice so;
 "If your hearts misdirect you,—quit the stage,
 "And make amends,—be there amends to make."
 Such is, for the Augustine that was once,
 This Canon Caponsacchi we see now.
 "And my heart answers to another tune,"
 Puts in the Abate, second in the suite,
 "I have my taste too, and tread no such step!
 "You choose the glorious life, and may, for me,
 "Who like the lowest of life's appetites,—
 "What you judge,—but the very truth of joy
 "To my own apprehension which must judge.
 "Call me knave and you get yourself called fool!
 "I live for greed, ambition, lust, revenge;
 "Attain these ends by force, guile: hypocrite, [nised
 "To-day, perchance to-morrow recognise
 "The rational man, the type of common sense."
 There 's Loyola adapted to our time!
 Under such guidance Guido plays his part,
 He also influencing in due turn
 These last clods where I track intelligence
 By any glimmer, those four at his beck
 Ready to murder any, and, at their own,
 As ready to murder him,—these are the world!
 And, first effect of the new cause of things,
 There they lie also duly,—the old pair
 Of the weak head and not so wicked heart,
 And the one Christian mother, wife and girl,
 —Which three gifts seem to make an angel up,—
 The first foot of the dance is on their heads!

Still, I stand here, not off the stage
 though close
 On the exit: and my last act, as my
 first,
 I owe the scene, and Him who armed
 me thus
 With Paul's sword as with Peter's key.
 I smite
 With my whole strength once more,
 then end my part,
 Ending, so far as man may, this of-
 fence.
 And when I raise my arm, what plucks
 my sleeve?
 Who stops me in the righteous func-
 tion,—foe
 Or friend? O, still as ever, friends are
 they
 Who, in the interest of outraged truth,
 Deprecate such rough handling of a lie!
 The facts being proved and incontest-
 able,
 What is the last word I must listen to?
 Is it "Spare yet a term this barren
 stock,
 "We pray thee dig about and dung
 and dress
 "Till he repent and bring forth fruit
 even yet?"
 Is it "So poor and swift a punishment
 "Shall throw him out of life with all
 that sin?"
 "Let mercy rather pile up pain on pain
 "Till the flesh expiate what the soul
 pays else?"
 Nowise! Remonstrance on all sides
 begins
 Instruct me, there 's a new tribunal
 now
 Higher than God's,—the educated
 man's!
 Nice sense of honour in the human
 breast
 Supersedes here the old coarse oracle—
 Confirming handsomely a point or so
 Wherein the predecessor worked aright
 By rule of thumb: as when Christ said,
 —when, where?
 Enough, I find it in a pleading here,—
 "All other wrongs done, patiently I
 take:
 "But touch my honour and the case is
 changed!
 "I feel the due resentment,—*nemini*
 "*Honorem trado*, is my quick retort."
 Right of Him, just as if pronounced to-
 day!

Still, should the old authority be new,
 Or doubtful, or in speaking clash with
 new,
 The younger takes permission to decide
 At last we have the instinct of
 world
 Ruling its household without tutelage
 And while the two laws, human and
 divine,
 Have busied finger with this tang-
 case,
 In the brisk junior pushes, cuts the
 knot,
 Pronounces for acquittal. How
 trips
 Silverly o'er the tongue! "Remit the
 death!
 "Forgive, . . . well, in the old way,
 thou please,
 "Decency and the relics of routine
 "Respected,—let the Count go free
 air!
 "Since he may plead a priest's im-
 munity,—
 "The minor orders help enough for
 that,
 "With Farinacci's licence,—who de-
 cides [man]
 "That the mere implication of such
 "So privileged, in any cause, before
 "Whatever court except the Spiritual
 "Straight quashes the procedure,—
 quash it, then!
 "It proves a pretty loophole of escape
 "Moreover, that, beside the patent
 fact
 "O' the law's allowance, there 's in-
 volved the weal
 "O' the Popedom: a son's privilege at
 stake,
 "Thou wilt pretend the Church's in-
 terest,
 "Ignore all finer reasons to forgive!
 "But herein lies the proper cogency—
 " (Let thy friends teach thee while thou
 tellest beads)
 "That in this case the spirit of culture
 speaks,
 "Civilisation is imperative.
 "To her shall we remand all delicate
 points
 "Henceforth, nor take irregular advice
 "O' the sly, as heretofore: she used to
 hint
 "Apologies when law was out of sorts
 "Because a saucy tongue was put to
 rest,

" An eye that roved was cured of arrogance :
 " But why be forced to mumble under breath
 " What soon shall be acknowledged the plain fact,
 " Outspoken, say, in thy successor's time ?
 " Methinks we see the golden age return !
 " Civilisation and the Emperor
 " Succeed thy Christianity and Pope.
 " One Emperor then, as one Pope now :
 meanwhile,
 " She anticipates a little to tell thee
 ' Take
 " ' Count Guido's life, and sap society,
 " ' Whereof the main prop was, is, and shall prove
 " ' —Supremacy of husband over wife !'
 " Shall the man rule i' the house, or may his mate
 " Because of any plea dispute the same ?
 " Oh, pleas of all sorts shall abound, be sure,
 " If once allowed validity,—for, harsh
 " And savage, for, inept and silly-sooth,
 " For, this and that, will the ingenious sex
 " Demonstrate the best master e'er graced slave :
 " And there 's but one short way to end the evil,—
 " By giving right and reason steadily
 " To the man and master : then the wife submits.
 " There it is broadly stated,—nor the time
 " Admits we shift—a pillar ? nay, a stake
 " Out of its place i' the tenement, one touch
 " Whereto may send a shudder through the heap
 " And bring it toppling on our heads perchance.
 " Moreover, if this breed a qualm in thee,
 " Give thine own feelings play for once,—deal death ?
 " Thou, whose own life winks o'er the socket-edge,
 " Would'st thou it went out in such ugly snuff
 " As dooming sons to death, though justice bade ?

" Why, on a certain feast, Barabbas' self
 " Was set free not to cloud the general cheer.
 " Neither shalt thou pollute thy Sabbath close !
 " Mercy is safe and graceful. How one hears
 " The howl begin, scarce the three little taps
 " O' the silver mallet ended on thy brow,—
 " ' His last act was to sacrifice a Count
 " ' And thereby screen a scandal of the Church !
 " ' Guido condemned, the Canon justified
 " ' Of course,—delinquents of his cloth go free !'
 " And so the Luthers and the Calvins come,
 " So thy hand helps Molinos to the chair
 " Whence he may hold forth till doom's day on just
 " These *petit-maitre* priestlings,—in the choir,
 " *Sanctus et Benedictus*, with a brush
 " Of soft guitar-strings that obey the thumb,
 " Touched by the bedside, for accompaniment !
 " Does this give umbrage to a husband : Death
 " To the fool, and to the priest impunity !
 " But no impunity to any friend
 " So simply over-loyal as these four
 " Who made religion of their patron's cause,
 " Believed in him and did his bidding straight,
 " Asked not one question but laid down the lives
 " This Pope took,—all four lives together made
 " Just his own length of days,—so dead they lie,
 " As these were times when loyalty 's a drug,
 " And zeal in a subordinate too cheap
 " And common to be saved when we spend life !
 " Come, 't is too much good breath we waste in words :
 " The pardon, Holy Father ! Spare grimace,

" Shrugs and reluctance ! Are not we
the world,
" Bid thee, our Priam, let soft culture
plead
" Hecuba-like, ' *non tali* ' (Virgil serves)
" ' *Auxilio*, ' and the rest ! Enough, it
works !
" The Pope relaxes, and the Prince is
loth,
" The father's bowels yearn, the man's
will bends,
" Reply is apt. Our tears on tremble,
hearts
" Big with a benediction, wait the word
" Shall circulate thro' the city in a
trice,
" Set every window flaring, give each
man
" O' the mob his torch to wave for
gratitude.
" Pronounce it, for our breath and pa-
tience fail ! "

I will, Sirs : for a voice other than yours
Quickens my spirit. " *Quis pro Domi-
no ?*
" Who is upon the Lord's side ? " asked
the Count.
I, who write—
" On receipt of this command,
" Acquaint Count Guido and his fel-
lows four
" They die to-morrow : could it be to-
night,
" The better, but the work to do, takes
time.
" Set with all diligence a scaffold up,
" Not in the customary place, by Bridge
" Saint Angelo, where die the common
sort ;
" But since the man is noble, and his
peers
" By predilection haunt the People's
Square,
" There let him be beheaded in the
midst,
" And his companions hanged on either
side :
" So shall the quality see, fear and
learn.
" All which work takes time : till to-
morrow, then,
" Let there be rayer incessant for the
five ! "

For the main criminal I have no hope
Except in such a suddenness of fate.

I stood at Naples once, a night so dark
I could have scarce conjectured that
was earth
Anywhere, sky or sea or world at
But the night's black was burst thro'
by a blaze—
Thunder struck blow on blow, earth
groaned and bore,
Through her whole length of mountain
visible :
There lay the city thick and plain with
spires.
And, like a ghost disshrouded, white
the sea.
So may the truth be flashed out by a
blow,
And Guido see, one instant, and
saved.
Else I avert my face, nor follow him
Into that sad obscure sequestered sta-
Where God unmakes but to remake the
soul
He else made first in vain ; which man
not be.
Enough, for I may die this very night
And how should I dare die, this man I
live ?

Carry this forthwith to the Governor

XI

GUIDO

You are the Cardinal Acciaiuoli, and
you,
Abate Panciatichi—two good Tuscan
names :
Acciaiuoli—ah, your ancestor it was,
Built the huge battlemented convent
block
Over the little forkly flashing Greve
That takes the quick turn at the foot of
the hill
Just as one first sees Florence : oh
those days !
'T is Ema, though, the other rivulet,
The one-arched, brown brick bridge
yawns over,—yes,
Gallop and go five minutes, and you
gain
The Roman Gate from where the
Ema's bridged.
Kingfishers fly there : how I see the
bend
O'erturned by Certosa which he built,
That Senescal (we styled him) of your
House !

I do adjure you, help me, Sirs! My blood
 Comes from as far a source: ought it
 to end
 This way, by leakage through their
 scaffold-planks
 Into Rome's sink where her red refuse
 runs?
 Sirs, I beseech you by blood-sympathy,
 If there be any vile experiment
 In the air,—if this your visit simply
 prove,
 When all 's done, just a well-intentioned
 trick,
 That tries for truth truer than truth
 itself,
 By startling up a man, ere break of day,
 To tell him he must die at sunset,—
 pshaw!
 That man 's a Franceschini; feel his
 pulse,
 Laugh at your folly, and let 's all go
 sleep!
 You have my last word,—innocent am I
 As Innocent my Pope and murderer,
 Innocent as a babe, as Mary's own,
 As Mary's self,—I said, say and re-
 peat,
 And why, then, should I die twelve
 hours hence? I—
 Whom, not twelve hours ago, the gaoler
 bade
 Turn to my straw-truss, settle and
 sleep sound
 That I might wake the sooner, prompt-
 lier pay
 His dues of meat-and-drink-indulgence,
 cross
 His palm with fee of the good-hand,
 beside,
 As gallants use who go at large again!
 For why? All honest Rome approved
 my part;
 Whoever owned wife, sister, daughter,
 —nay,
 Mistress,—had any shadow of any
 right
 That looks like right, and, all the more
 resolved,
 Held it with tooth and nail,—these
 manly men
 Approved! I being for Rome, Rome
 was for me!
 Then, there 's the point reserved, the
 subterfuge
 My lawyers held by, kept for last re-
 source,

Firm should all else,—the impossible
 fancy!—fail,—
 And sneaking burgess-spirit win the
 day:
 The knaves! One plea at least would
 hold, they laughed,
 One grappling-iron scratch the bottom-
 rock
 Even should the middle mud let anchor
 go—
 And look my cause on to the Clergy's,
 —plea
 Which, even if law tipped off my hat
 and plume,
 Would show my priestly tonsure, save
 me so,—
 The Pope moreover, this old Innocent,
 Being so meek and mild and merciful,
 So fond o' the poor and so fatigued of
 earth,
 So . . . fifty thousand devils in deepest
 hell! [conceit
 Why must he cure us of our strange
 Of the angel in man's likeness, that we
 loved
 And looked should help us at a pinch?
 He help?
 He pardon? Here 's his mind and
 message—death,
 Thank the good Pope! Now, is he
 good in this,
 Never mind, Christian,—no such stuff's
 extant,—
 But will my death do credit to his reign,
 Show he both lived and let live, so was
 good?
 Cannot I live if he but like? "The
 law!"
 Why, just the law gives him the very
 chance,
 The precise leave to let my life alone,
 Which the angelic soul of him (he says)
 Yearns after! Here they drop it in
 his palm,
 My lawyers, capital o' the cursed
 kind,—
 A life to take and hold and keep: but
 no!
 He sighs, shakes head, refuses to shut
 hand,
 Motions away the gift they bid him
 grasp,
 And of the coyness comes that off I run
 And down I go, he best knows whither,
 —mind,
 He knows, and sets me rolling all the
 same!

Disinterested Vicar of our Lord,
 This way he abrogates and disallows,
 Nullifies and ignores,—reverts in fine
 To the good and right, in detriment of
 me!
 Talk away! Will you have the naked
 truth?
 He 's sick of his life's supper,—swal-
 lowed lies:
 So, hobbling bedward, needs must ease
 his maw
 Just where I sit o' the door-sill. Sir
 Abate,
 Can you do nothing? Friends, we
 used to frisk:
 What of this sudden slash in a friend's
 face,
 This cut across our good companion-
 ship
 That showed its front so gay when both
 were young?
 Were not we put into a beaten path,
 Bid pace the world, we nobles born and
 bred,
 The body of friends with each his
 scutcheon full
 Of old achievement and impunity,—
 Taking the laugh of morn and Sol's
 salute
 As forth we fared, pricked on to breathe
 our steeds
 And take equestrian sport over the
 green [care?
 Under the blue, across the crop,—what
 So we went prancing up hill and down
 dale,
 In and out of the level and the straight,
 By the bit of pleasant byeway, where
 was harm?
 Still Sol salutes me and the morning
 laughs:
 I see my grandsire's hoof-prints,—
 point the spot
 Where he drew rein, slipped saddle, and
 stabbed knave
 For daring throw gibe—much less,
 stone—from pale,
 Then back, and on, and up with the
 calvalcade;
 Just so wend we, now canter, now con-
 verse,
 Till, 'mid the jauncing pride and jaunty
 port,
 Something of a sudden jerks at some-
 body—
 A dagger is out, a flashing cut and
 thrust,

Because I play some prank my gr
 sire played,
 And here I sprawl: where is the
 pany? Gone!
 A trot and a trample! only I
 trapped,
 Writhe in a certain novel springe
 set
 By the good old Pope: I'm first pr
 Warn me? Why?
 Apprise me that the law o' the gam
 changed?
 Enough that I'm a warning, as I wri
 To all and each my fellows of the
 And make law plain henceforward p
 mistak
 "For such a prank, death is the p
 alty!"
 Pope the Five Hundredth . . what
 I know or care?
 Deputes your Eminence and Abates
 To announce that, twelve hours fro
 this time, he needs
 I just essay upon my body and soul
 The virtue of his bran new-engin
 prove
 Represser of the pranksome! I'm th
 first!
 Thanks. Do you know what teet
 you mean to try
 The sharpness of, on this soft neck an
 throat?
 I know it,—I have seen and hate it,—
 ay,
 As you shall, while I tell you: let m
 talk,
 Or leave me, at your pleasure! talk
 must:
 What is your visit but my lure to
 talk?
 You have a something to disclose?—a
 smile,
 At end of the forced sternness, means
 to noek
 The heart-beats here? I call your
 two hearts stone!
 Is your charge to stay with me till I die?
 Be tacit as your bench, then! Use
 your ears,
 I use my tongue: how glibly yours
 will run
 At pleasant supper-time . . God's
 curse! . . to-night
 When all the guests jump up, begin so
 brisk
 "Welcome, his Eminence who shrived
 the wretch!

"Now we shall have the Abate's story!"
Life!

How I could spill this overplus of mine
Among those hoar-haired, shrunk-
shanked, odds and ends
Of body and soul, old age is chewing
dry!

Those windle-straws that stare white
purlind death

Mows here, mows there, makes hay of
juicy me,

And misses, just the bunch of withered
weed,

Would brighten hell and streak its
smoke with flame!

How the life I could shed yet never
shrink,

Would drench their stalks with sap like
grass in May!

Is it not terrible, I entreat you, Sirs?
Such manifold and plenitudinous life,

Prompt at death's menace to give blow
for threat,

Answer his "Be thou not!" by "Thus
I am!"—

Terrible so to be alive yet die?

How I live, how I see! so,—how I
speak!

Lucidity of soul unlocks the lips:
I never had the words at will before.

How I see all my folly at a glance!
"A man requires a woman and a wife!"

There was my folly; I believed the
saw:

I knew that just myself concerned my-
self,

Yet needs must look for what I seemed
to lack,

In a woman,—why, the woman's in the
man!

Fools we are, how we learn things when
too late!

Overmuch life turns round my woman-
side;

The male and female in me, mixed be-
fore,

Settle of a sudden: I'm my wife out-
right

In this unmanly appetite for truth,
This careless courage as to consequence,

This instantaneous sight through things
and through,

This voluble rhetoric, if you please,—
't is she!

Here you have that Pompilia whom I
slew,

Also the folly for which I slew her!

Fool!

And, fool-like, what is it I wander from?
What, of the sharpness of your iron

tooth?

Ah,—that I know the hateful thing:
this way.

I chanced to stroll forth, many a good
year gone,

One swarm Spring eve in Rome, and
unaware

Looking, mayhap, to count what stars
were out,

Came on your huge axe in a frame, that
falls

[neath,

And so cuts off a man's head under-
Mannaia,—thus we made acquaint-
ance first,

Out of the way, in a bye-part o' the
town,

At the Mouth-of-Truth o' the river-side,
you know:

One goes by the Capitol: and where-
fore coy,

Retiring out of crowded noisy Rome?
Because a very little time ago

It had done service, chopped off head
from trunk,

Belonging to a fellow whose poor house
The thing had made a point to stand
before,

Felice Whatsoever-was-the-name
Who stabled buffaloes and so gained
bread,

(Our clowns unyoke them in the ground
hard by)

And, after use of much improper speech,
Had struck at Duke Some-title-or-
other's face,

Because he kidnapped, carried away
and kept

Felice's sister that would sit and sing
I' the filthy doorway while she plaited
fringe

To deck the brutes with,—on their gear
it goes,—

[voice.

The good girl with the velvet in her
So did the Duke, so did Felice, so

Did Justice, intervening with her axe.
There the man-mutilating engine stood

At ease, both gay and grim, like a
Swiss guard

Off duty,—purified itself as well,
Getting dry, sweet and proper for next
week,—

And doing incidental good, 't was
hoped

To the rough lesson-lacking populace
 Who now and then, forsooth, must
 right their wrongs !
 There stood the twelve-foot-square of
 scaffold, railed
 Considerately round to elbow-height:
 (Suppose an officer should tumble
 thence
 And sprain his ankle and be lame a
 month,
 Through starting when the axe fell and
 head too ?)
 Railed likewise were the steps whereby
 't was reached.
 All of it painted red : red, in the midst,
 Ran up two narrow tall beams barred
 across,
 Since from the summit, some twelve
 feet to reach,
 The iron plate with the sharp shearing
 edge
 Had . . slammed, jerked, shot or slid,
 —I shall find which !
 There it lay quiet, fast in its fit place,
 The wooden half-moon collar, now
 eclipsed
 By the blade which blocked its curva-
 ture : apart,
 The other half,—the under half-moon
 board
 Which, helped by this, completes a
 neck's embrace,—
 Joined to a sort of desk that wheels
 aside
 Out of the way when done with,—down
 you kneel,
 In you 're wheeled, over you the other
 drops,
 Tight you are clipped, whiz, there 's
 the blade on you,
 Out trundles body, down flops head on
 floor,
 And where 's your soul gone ? That,
 too, I shall find !
 This kneeling-place was red, red, never
 fear !
 But only slimy-like with paint, not
 blood,
 For why ? a decent pitcher stood at
 hand,
 A broad dish to hold sawdust, and a
 broom
 By some unnamed utensil,—scraper-
 rake,—
 Each with a conscious air of duty done.
 Underneath, loungers,—boys and some
 few men,—

Discoursed this platter and the other
 tool,
 Just as, when grooms tie up and dress
 steed,
 Boys lounge and look on, and cluck
brate
 What the round brush is used for, where
 the square,—
 So was explained—to me the skill-
 le-
 man—
 The manner of the grooming for ne-
 world
 Undergone by Felice What's-his-name
 There 's no such lovely month in Rome
 as May—
 May's crescent is no half-moon of re-
 plank,
 And came now tilting o'er the wave
 the west,
 One greenish-golden sea, right 'twixt
 those bars
 Of the engine—I began acquaintanceship
 with,
 Understood, hated, hurried from be-
 fore,
 To have it out of sight and cleanse my
 soul !
 Here it is all again, conserved for use
 Twelve hours hence I may know more,
 not hate worse.
 That young May-moon-month ! Devils
 of the deep !
 Was not a Pope then Pope as much as
 now ?
 Used not he chirrup o'er the Merry
 Tales,
 Chuckle,—his nephew so exact the wag
 To play a jealous cullion such a trick
 As wins the wife i' the pleasant story !
 Well ?
 Why do things change ? Wherefore is
 Rome un-Romed ?
 I tell you, ere Felice's corpse was cold,
 The Duke, that night, threw wide his
 palace-doors,
 Received the compliments o' the
 quality,
 For justice done him,—bowed and
 smirked his best,
 And in return passed round a pretty
 thing,
 A portrait of Felice's sister's self,
 Florid old rogue Albano's masterpiece,
 As—better than virginity in rags—
 Bouncing Europa on the back o' the
 bull :

They laughed and took their road the
safelier home.
Ah, but times echange, there 's quite
another Pope,
I do the Duke's deed, take Felice's
place,
And, being no Felice, lout and elout,
Stomach but ill the phrase " I lost my
head ! "
How euphemistic ! Lose what ? Lose
your ring,
Your snuff-box, tablets, kerechief !—but,
your head ?
I learnt the proecess at an early age ;
'T was useful knowledge in those
same old days,
To know the way a head is set on neck.
My fencing-master urged " Would you
excel ?
" Rest not content with mere bold give-
and-guard,
" Nor pink the antagonist somehow-
anyhow,—
" See me dissect a little, and know your
game !
" Only anatomy makes a thrust the
thing."
Oh Cardinal, those lithe live necks of
ours !
Here go the vertebræ, here's *Atlas*, here
Axis, and here the symphyses stop
short,
So wisely and well,—as, o'er a corpse,
we cant,—
And here 's the silver cord which . . .
what 's our word ?
Depends from the gold bowl, which
loosed (not "lost")
Lets us from heaven to hell,—one chop,
we 're loose !
" And not much pain i' the proecess,"
quoth the sage :
Who told him ? Not Felice's ghost, I
think !
Such " losing " is scaree Mother Na-
ture's mode.
She fain would have cord ease itself
away,
Won to a thread by threescore years
and ten,
Snap while we slumber : that seems
bearable :
I'm told one clot of blood extravasate
finds one as certainly as Roland's
sword,—
One drop of lymph suffused proves
Oliver's mace,—

Intruding, either of the pleasant pair,
On the arachnoid tunie of my brain.
That 's Nature's way of loosing cord !—
but Art,
How of Art's process with the engine
here ?
When bowl and cord alike are crushed
across,
Bored between, bruised through ? Why,
if Fago- 's self,
The Frenel Court's pride, that famed
praetitioner,
Would pass his cold pale lightning of a
knife,
Pistoja-ware, adroit 'twixt joint and
joint,
With just a " See how facile, gentle-
folks ! "—
The thing were not so bad to bear,
Brute force
Cuts as he comes, breaks in, breaks on,
breaks out
O' the hard and soft of you : is that the
same ?
A lithe snake thrids the hedge, makes
throb no leaf :
A heavy ox sets chest to brier and
branch,
Bursts somehow through, and leaves
one hideous hole
Behind him !
And why, why must this needs be ?
Oh, if men were but good ! They are
not good,
Nowise like Peter : people called him
rough,
But if, as I left Rome, I spoke the Saint,
—" *Petrus, quo vadis ?* "—doubtless, I
should hear,
" To free the prisoner and forgive his
fault !
" I plucked the absolute dead from
God's own bar,
" And raised up Doreas,—why not res-
cue thee ? "
What would cost one such nullifying
word ?
If Innocent succeeds to Peter's place,
Let him think Peter's thought, speak
Peter's speech !
I say, he is bound to it : friends, how
say you ?
Concede I be all one bloodguiltiness
And mystery of murder in the flesh,
Why should that fact keep the Pope's
mouth shut fast ?

He execrates my crime,—good!—sees
 hell yawn
 One inch from the red plank's end
 which I press,—
 Nothing is better! What's the conse-
 quence?
 How does a Pope proceed that knows
 his cue?
 Why, leaves me linger out my minute
 here,
 Since close on death come judgment
 and the doom,
 Nor cribs at dawn its pittance from a
 sheep
 Destined ere dewfall to be butcher's-
 meat!
 Think, Sirs, if I had done you any harm,
 And you require the natural revenge,
 Suppose, and so intend to poison me,
 —Just as you take and send into my
 draught [scores,
 The paperful of powder that clears
 You notice on my brow a certain blue:
 How you both overset the wine at once!
 How you both smile! "Our enemy
 has the plague!"
 "Twelve hours hence he'll be scraping
 his bones bare
 "Of that intolerable flesh, and die,
 "Frenzied with pain: no need for pois-
 on here!
 "Step aside and enjoy the spectacle!"
 Tender for souls are you, Pope Inno-
 cent!
 Christ's maxim is—one soul outweighs
 the world:
 Respite me, save a soul, then, curse the
 world!
 "No," venerable sire, I hear you smirk,
 "No: for Christ's gospel changes
 names, not things,
 "Renews the obsolete, does nothing
 more!
 "Our fire-new gospel is retinkered law,
 "Our mercy, justice,—Jove's re-
 christened God,—
 "Nay, whereas, in the popular conceit,
 "'T is pity that old harsh Law some-
 how limps,
 "Lingers on earth, although Law's day
 be done,—
 "Else would benignant Gospel inter-
 pose,
 "Not furtively as now, but bold and
 frank
 "O'erflutter us with healing in her
 wings,—

"Law is all harshness, Gospel were
 love!—
 "We like to put it, on the contrary
 "Gospel takes up the rod which Law
 lets fall;
 "Mercy is vigilant when justice sleeps
 "Does Law let Guido taste the Gospel
 grace?
 "The secular arm allow the spiritual
 power
 "To act for once?—what compliments
 so fine
 "As that the Gospel should so harshly
 harsh,
 "Thrust back Law's victim on the neck
 and coy?"
 Yes, you do say so,—else you would for-
 give
 Me, whom Law dares not touch but
 tosses you!
 Do n't think to put on the professional
 face!
 You know what I know,—casuists as
 you are,
 Each nerve must creep, each hair start-
 sting and stand,
 At such illogical inconsequence!
 Dear my friends, do but see! A mur-
 der's tried,
 There are two parties to the cause:
 I'm one,
 —Defend myself, as somebody must do:
 I have the best o' the battle: that's a
 fact, [side:
 Simple fact,—fancies find no place be-
 What though half Rome condemned
 me? Half approved:
 And, none disputes, the luck is mine at
 last,
 All Rome, i' the main, acquits me:
 whereupon
 What has the Pope to ask but "How
 finds Law?"
 "I find," replies Law, "I have erred
 this while:
 "Guilty or guiltless, Guido proves a
 priest,
 "No layman: he is therefore yours,
 not mine:
 "I bound him: loose him, you whose
 will is Christ's!"
 And now what does this Vicar of the
 Lord,
 Shepherd o' the flock,—one of whose
 charge bleats sore
 For crook's help from the quag wherein
 it drowns?

Law suffers him put forth the crumpled
end,—
His pleasure is to turn staff, use the
point,
And thrust the shuddering sheep he
calls a wolf,
Ba . . . and back, down and down to
where hell gapes !
"Guiltless," cries Law—"Guilty" cor-
rects the Pope !
"Guilty," for the whim's sake !
"Guilty," he somehow thinks,
And anyhow says : 't is truth ; he
dares not lie !
Others should do the lying. That's
the cause
Brings you both here : I ought in de-
cency
Confess to you that I deserve my fate,
Am guilty, as the Pope thinks,—ay, to
the end,
Keep up the jest, lie on, lie ever, lie
I' the latest gasp of me ! What rea-
son, Sirs ?
Because to-morrow will succeed to-day
For you, though not for me : and if I
stick
Still to the truth, declare with my last
breath,
I die an innocent and murdered man,—
Why, there 's the tongue of Rome will
wag apace
This time to-morrow.—don't I hear
the talk !
"So, to the last he proved impenitent ?
"Pagans have said as much of mar-
tyred saints !
"Law demurred, washed her hands of
the whole case.
"Prince Somebody said this, Duke
Something, that.
"Doubtless the man's dead, dead
enough, don't fear !
"But, hang it, what if there have been
a spice,
"A touch of . . . eh ? You see, the
Pope 's so old, [slips
"Some of us add, obtuse,—age never
"The chance of shoving youth to face
death first !"
And so on. Therefore to suppress such
talk
You two come here, entreat I tell you
lies,
And end, the edifying way. I end,
Telling the truth ! Your self-styled
shepherd thieves !

B.P.

A thief—and how thieves hate the
wolves we know :
Damage to theft, damage to thrift, all's
one !
The red hand is sworn foe of the black
jaw !
That's only natural, that's right
enough :
But why the wolf should compliment
the thief
With the shepherd's title, bark out life
in thanks,
And, spiteless, lick the prong that spits
him,—eh,
Cardinal ? My Abate, scarcely thus !
There, let my sheepskin-garb, a curse
on 't, go—
Leave my teeth free if I must show my
shag !
Repent ? What good shall follow ? If
I pass
Twelve hours repenting, will that fact
hook fast
The thirteenth at the horrid dozen's
end ?
If I fall forthwith at your feet, gnash,
tear,
Foam, rave, to give your story the due
grace,
Will that assist the engine half-way
back
Into its hiding-house ?—boards, shak-
ing now,
Bone against bone, like some old skele-
ton bat
That wants, now winter 's dead, to wake
and prey !
Will howling put the spectre back to
sleep ?
Ah, but I misconceive your object, Sirs !
Since I want new life like the creature,—
life
Being done with here, begins i' the
world away :
I shall next have "Come, mortals, and
be judged !"
There 's but a minute betwixt this and
then :
So, quick, be sorry since it saves my
soul !
Sirs, truth shall save it, since no lies as-
sist !
Hear the truth, you, whatever you style
yourselves,
Civilisation and society !
Come, one good grapple, I with all the
world !

Dying in cold blood is the desperate thing;
 The angry heart explodes, bears off in blaze
 The indignant soul, and I'm combustion-ripe.
 Why, you intend to do your worst with me!
 That 's in your eyes! You dare no more than death,
 And mean no less. I must make up my mind!
 So Pietro,—when I chased him here and there,
 Morsel by morsel cut away the life
 I loathed,—cried for just respite to confess
 And save his soul: much respite did I grant!
 Why grant me respite who deserve my doom?
 Me—when engaged to play a prize, fight you,
 Knowing your arms, and foil you, trick for
 At rapier-fence, your match and, maybe, more.
 I knew that if I chose sin certain sins,
 Solace my lusts out of the regular way
 Prescribed me, I should find you in the path,
 Have to try skill with a redoubted foe;
 You would lunge, I would parry, and make end.
 At last, occasion of a murder comes:
 We cross blades, I, for all my brag, break guard,
 And in goes the cold iron at my breast,
 Out at my back, and end is made of me.
 You stand confessed the adroiter swordsman,—ay,
 But on your triumph you increase, it seems,
 Want more of me than lying flat on face:
 I ought to raise my ruined head, allege
 Not simply I pushed worse blade o' the pair,
 But my antagonist dispensed with steel!
 There was no passage of arms, you looked me low,
 With brow and eye abolished cut-and-thrust
 Nor used the vulgar weapon! This chance scratch,
 This incidental hurt, this sort of hole

I' the heart of me? I stumpled so!
 Fell on my own sword as a bungler
 Yourself proscribe such heathen and trust
 To the naked virtue: it was stood
 Unarmed and awed me,—on my there burned
 Crime out so plainly, intolerably
 That I was fain to cry—"Down dust
 "With me, and bury there brow, and all!"
 Law had essayed the adventure what 's Law?
 Morality exposed the Gorgon-shield
 Morality and Religion conquer me
 If Law sufficed would you come entreat
 I supplement law, and confess force
 Did not the Trial show things enough?
 "Ah, but a word of the man's ver
 "Would somehow put the keystone its place
 "And crown the arch!" Then the word you want!
 I say that, long ago, when things b
 All the world made agreement, and such
 Were pleasure-giving profit-be-acts,
 But henceforth extra-legal, nor to
 You must not kill the man whose c
 would please
 And profit you, unless his life stop y
 Plainly, and need so be put aside:
 Get the thing by a public course law,
 Only no private bloodshed as of old
 All of us, for the good of everyone,
 Renounced such licence and confor to law:
 Who breaks law, breaks pact, theret helps himself
 To pleasure and profit over and ab the due,
 And must pay forfeit,—pain bey his share:
 For pleasure is the sole good in world,
 Anyone's pleasure turns to someo
 So, let law watch for everyone,—say
 Who call things wicked that give much joy,

I stumbled, got it
 l as a bungler may!
 uch heathen tools,
 e: it was virtue
 me,—on my brow
 intolerably, red,
 y—"Down to the
 there brow, brand
 adventure,—but
 Gorgon-shield!
 conquer me.
 l you come here,
 confess forsooth?
 ow things plain
 e man's very self
 t the keystone in
 !!" Then take
 t l
 en things began,
 agreement, such
 profit-bearing
 egal, nor to be;
 an whose death
 is life stop yours
 put aside:
 ublic course, by
 ned as of old!
 everyone,
 and conformed
 pact, therefore,
 ver and above
 —pain beyond
 e good in the
 [pain,
 s to someone's
 yne,—say we,
 that give too

And nickname the reprisal, envy makes,
 Punishment: quite right! thus the
 world goes round.
 l, being well aware such pact there was,
 Who in my time have found advantage
 too
 In law's observance and crime's pen-
 alty,—
 Who, but for wholesome fear law bred
 in friends,
 Had doubtless given example long ago,
 Furnished forth some friend's pleasure
 with my pain,
 An l, by my death, pieced out his scanty
 life,—
 I could not, for that foolish life of me,
 Help risking law's infringement,—I
 broke bond,
 And needs must pay price,—where-
 fore, here 's my head,
 Flung with a flourish! But, repent-
 ance too?
 But pure and simple sorrow for law's
 breach
 Rather than blunderer's ineptitude?
 Cardinal, no! Abate, scarcely thus!
 'T is the fault, not that I dared try a
 fall
 With Law and straightway am found
 undermost,
 But that I fail to see, above man's law,
 God's precept you, the Christians, recog-
 nise? [dinal!
 Colly my cow! Don't fidget, Car-
 Abate, cross your breast and count
 your beads
 And exorcise the devil, for here he
 stands
 And stiffens in the bristly nape of neck,
 Daring you drive him hence! You,
 Christians both?
 I say, if ever was such faith at all
 Born in the world, by your community
 Suffered to live its little tick of time,
 'T is dead of age now, ludicrously dead;
 Honour its ashes, if you be discreet,
 In epitaph only! For, concede its
 death,
 Allow extinction, you may boast un-
 checked
 What feats the thing did in a crazy land
 At a fabulous epoch,—treat your faith,
 that way,
 Just as you treat your relics: "Here's
 a shred
 "Of saintly flesh, a scrap of blessed
 bone,

"Raised King Cophetua, who was
 dead, to life
 "In Mesopotamy twelve centuries
 since,
 "Such was its virtue!"—twangs the
 Sacristan,
 Holding the shrine-box up, with hands
 like feet
 Because of gout in every finger-joint:
 Does he bethink him to reduce one
 knob,
 Allay one twinge by touching what he
 vaunts?
 I think he half uncrooks fist to catch fee,
 But, for the grace, the quality of cure,—
 Cophetua was the man put that to
 proof!
 Not otherwise, your faith is shrined
 and shown
 And shamed at once: you banter while
 you bow!
 Do you dispute this? Come, a mon-
 ster-laugh,
 A madman's laugh, allowed his Car-
 nival
 Later ten days than when all Rome,
 but he,
 Laughed at the candle-contest: mine's
 alight,
 'T is just it sputter till the puff o' the
 Pope
 End it to-morrow and the world turn
 Ash.
 Come, thus I wave a wand and bring to
 pass
 In a moment, in the twinkle of an eye,
 What but that—feigning everywhere
 grows fact,
 Professors turn possessors, realise
 The faith they play with as a fancy now,
 And bid it operate, have full effect
 On every circumstance of life, to-day,
 In Rome,—faith's flow set free at foun-
 tain-head!
 Now, you 'll own, at this present when
 I speak,
 Before I work the wonder, there 's no
 man
 Woman or child in Rome, faith's foun-
 tain-head,
 But might, if each were minded, realise
 Conversely unbelief, faith's opposite—
 Set it to work on life unflinchingly,
 Yet give no symptom of an outward
 change:
 Why should things change because men
 disbelieve?

What's incompatible, in the whited
 tomb,
 With bones and rottenness one inch be-
 low ?
 What saintly act is done in Rome to-
 day
 But might be prompted by the devil,—
 "is"
 I say not,—“has been, and again may
 be,”—
 I do say, full i' the face o' the crucifix
 You try to stop my mouth with ! Off
 with it !
 Look in your own heart, if your soul
 have eyes !
 You shall see reason why, though faith
 were fled,
 Unbelief still might work the wires and
 move
 Man, the machine, to play a faithful
 part.
 Preside your college, Cardinal, in your
 cape,
 Or,—having got above his head, grown
 Pope,— [feet !
 Abate, gird your loins and wash my
 Do you suppose I am at loss at all
 Why you crook, why you cringe, why
 fast or feast ?
 Praise, blame, sit, stand, lie or go !—all
 of it,
 In each of you, purest unbelief may
 prompt,
 And wit explain to who has eyes to see.
 But, lo, I wave wand, make the false the
 true !
 Here 's Rome believes in Christianity !
 What an explosion, how the fragments
 fly
 Of what was surface, mask and make-
 believe !
 Begin now,—look at this Pope's-hal-
 berdier
 In wasp-like black and yellow foolery !
 He, doing duty at the corridor,
 Wakes from a muse and stands con-
 vinced of sin !
 Down he flings halbert, leaps the pas-
 sage-length,
 Pushes into the presence, pantingly
 Submits the extreme peril of the case
 To the Pope's self,—whom in the world
 beside ?—
 And the Pope breaks talk with ambas-
 sador,
 Bids aside bishop, wills the whole world
 wait
 Till he secure that prize, outweigh
 world,
 A soul, relieve the sentry of his q
 His Altitude the Referendary,—
 Robed right, and ready for the
 word
 To pay devoir,—is, of all times
 then
 'Ware of a master-stroke of arg
 Will cut the spinal cord . . ough
 . . I mean,
 Paralyse Molinism for evermore
 Straight he leaves lobby, trundle
 and two,
 Down steps, to reach home, wr
 but a word
 Shall end the impudence : he
 who likes
 Go pacify the Pope : there's Chr
 serve !
 How otherwise would men di
 their zeal ?
 If the same sentry had the least su
 A powder-barrel 'neath the pave
 lay
 In neighbourhood with what r
 prove a match,
 Meant to blow sky-high Pope and
 ence both—
 Would he not break through cour
 rank and file,
 Bundle up, bear off and save body
 O' the Pope, no matter for his prie
 soul ?
 There 's no fool's-freak here, nough
 soundly swinge,
 Only a man in earnest, you 'll so p
 And pay and prate about, that e
 shall ring !
 Had thought possessed the Refer
 ary
 His jewel-case at home was left aja
 What would be wrong in running, r
 awry,
 To be beforehand with the pilferer
 What talk then of indecent has
 Which means,
 That both these, each in his deg
 would do
 Just that,—for a comparative nothin
 sake,
 And thereby gain approval and
 ward,—
 Which, done for what Christ says
 worth the world,
 Procures the doer curses, cuffs a
 kicks.

ize, outweighs the
 aty of his qualm !
 rendary,—
 dy for the usher's
 of all times, just
 roke of argument
 ord . . ugh, ugh !
 r evermore !
 by, trundles, two
 home, write if
 ence : he leaves
 there's Christ to
 ld men display
 the least surmise
 h the pavement
 th what might
 h Pope and pres-
 rough courtiers,
 save body so,
 for his priceless
 here, nought to
 you 'll so praise
 out, that earth
 the Referend-
 was left ajar,
 i running, robes
 the pilferer ?
 decent haste ?
 in his degree,
 ative nothing's
 roval and re-
 Christ says is
 es, cuffs and

I call such difference 'twixt act and act,
 Sheer lunacy unless your truth on lip
 Be recognised a lie in heart of you !
 How do you all act, promptly or in
 doubt,
 When there 's a guest poisoned at sup-
 per-time
 And he sits chatting on with spot on
 cheek ?
 " Pluck him by the skirt, and round
 him in the ears,
 " Have at him by the beard, warn any-
 how ! "
 Good, and this other friend that 's cheat
 and thief
 And dissolute,—go stop the devil's
 feast,
 Withdraw him from the imminent hell-
 fire !
 Why, for your life, you dare not tell
 your friend
 " You lie, and I admonish you for
 Christ ! "
 Who yet dare seek that same man at
 the Mass
 To warn him—on his knees, and tinkle
 near,—
 He left a cask a-tilt, a tap unturned,
 The Trebbian running : what a giate-
 ful jump
 Out of the Church rewards your vigil-
 ance !
 Perform that self-same service just a
 thought
 More maladroitly,—since a bishop sits
 At function !—and he budges not, bites
 lip,—
 " You see my case : how can I quit my
 post ?
 " He has an eye to any such default.
 " See to it, neighbour, I beseech your
 love ! "
 He and you know the relative worth of
 things,
 What is permissible or inopportune.
 Contort your brows ! You know I
 speak the truth :
 Gold is called gold, and dross called
 dross, i' the Book :
 Gold you let lie and dross pick up and
 prize !
 —Despite your muster of some fifty
 monks
 And nuns a-maundering here and
 mumping there,
 Who could, and on occasion would,
 spurn dross,

Clutch gold, and prove their faith a
 fact so far,—
 I grant you ! Fifty times the number
 squeak
 And gibber in the madhouse—firm of
 faith,
 This fellow, that his nose supports the
 moon,
 The other, that his straw hat crowns
 him Pope :
 Does that prove all the world outside
 insane ?
 Do fifty miracle-mongers match the
 mob
 That acts on the frank faithless prin-
 ciple,
 Born - baptized - and - bred Christian-
 atheists, each
 With just as much a right to judge as
 you,—
 As many senses in his soul, or nerves
 I' neck of him as I,—whom, soul and
 sense,
 Neck and nerve, you abolish presently,
 I being the unit in creation now
 Who pay the Maker, in this speech of
 mine,
 A creature's duty, spend my last of
 breath
 In bearing witness, even by my worst
 fault
 To the creature's obligation, absolute,
 Perpetual : my worst fault protests,
 " The faith
 " Claims all of me : I would give all she
 claims,
 " But for a spice of doubt : the risk 's
 too rash :
 " Double or quits, I play, but, all or
 naught,
 " Exceeds my courage : therefore, I
 descend
 " To the next faith with no dubiety—
 " Faith in the present life, made last as
 long
 " And prove as full of pleasure as may
 hap,
 " Whatever pain it cause the world."
 I 'm wrong ?
 I 've had my life, whate'er I lose : I 'm
 right ?
 I 've got the single good there was to
 gain.
 Entire faith, or else complete unbelief,—
 Aught between has my loathing and
 contempt,
 Mine and God's also, doubtless : ask
 yourself,

Cardinal, where and how you like a
man!
Why, either with your feet upon his
head,
Confessed your caudatory, or at large
The stranger in the crowd who caps to
you
But keeps his distance,—why should he
presume?
You want no hanger-on and dropper-
off,
Now yours, and now not yours but
quite his own,
According as the sky looks black or
bright.
Just so I capped to and kept off from
faith—
You promised trudge behind through
fair and foul,
Yet leave i' the lurch at the first spit of
rain.
Who holds to faith whenever rain be-
gins? [dead,
What does the father when his son lies
The merchant when his money-bags
take wing,
The politician whom a rival ousts?
No case but has its conduct, faith pre-
scribes:
Where 's the obedience that shall edify?
Why, they laugh frankly in the face of
faith
And take the natural course,—this
rends his hair
Because his child is taken to God's
breast,
That gnashes teeth and raves at loss of
trash
Which rust corrupts and thieves break
through and steal,
And this, enabled to inherit earth,
Through meekness, curses till your
blood runs cold!
Down they all drop to my low level,
ease
Heart upon dungy earth that 's warm
and soft,
And let who will, attempt the altitudes.
We have the prodigal son of heavenly
sire,
Turning his nose up at the fatted calf,
Fain to fill belly with the husks we
swine
Did eat by born depravity of taste!
Enough of the hypocrites. But you,
Sirs, you—

Who never budged from litter wh
lay,
And buried snout i' the draff-box
I fed,
Cried amen to my creed's one arti
"Get pleasure, 'scape pain,—give
preference
"To the immediate good, for tin
brief,
"And death ends good and ill
everything:
"What's got is gained, what's ga
soon is gained twice,
"And,—inasmuch as faith gains m
—feign faith!"
So did we brother-like pass word ab
—You, now,—like bloody drunk
but half-drunk,
Who fool men yet perceive men
them fools,
And that a titter gains the gra
mouth,—
O' the sudden you must needs r
troduce
Solemnity, must sober undue mirth
By a blow dealt your boon compan
here
Who, using the old licence, dreame
harm
No more than snow in harvest: ye
falls!
You check the merriment effectual
By pushing your abrupt machine i'
midst,
Making me Rome's example: blood
wine!
The general good needs that you cl
and change!
I may dislike the hocus-pocus,—Rom
The laughter-loving people, won't th
stare
Chap-fallen!—while serious natu
sermonise
"The magistrate, he beareth not
sword
"In vain; who sins may taste
edge, we see!"
Why my sin, drunkards? Who
have I abused
Liberty, scandalised you all so much
Who called me, who crooked finger til
came,
Fool that I was, to join companio
ship?
I knew my own mind, meant to li
my life,
Elude your envy, or else make a stan

Take my own part and sell you my life
 dear :
 But it was " Fie ! No prejudice in the
 world
 " To the proper manly instinct ! Cast
 your lot
 " Into our lap, one genius ruled our
 births,
 " We 'll compass joy by concert ; take
 with us
 " The regular irregular way i' the wood ;
 " You 'll miss no game through riding
 breast by breast,
 " In this preserve, the Church's park
 and pale,
 " Rather than outside where the world
 is waste ! "
 Come, if you said not that, did you say
 this ?
 Give plain and terrible warning, " Live,
 enjoy ?
 " Such life begins in death and ends in
 hell !
 " Dare you bid us assist you to your
 sins
 " Who hurry sin and sinners from the
 earth ?
 " No such delight for us, why then for
 you ?
 " Leave earth, seek heaven or find its
 opposite ! "
 Had you so warned me, not in lying
 words
 But veritable deeds with tongues of
 flame,
 That had been fair, that might have
 struck a man,
 Silenced the squabble between soul and
 sense,
 Compelled him make his mind up, take
 one course
 Or the other, peradventure !—wrong
 or right,
 Foolish or wise, you would have been at
 least
 Sincere, no question,—forced me
 choose, indulge
 Or else renounce my instincts, still play
 wolf
 Or find my way submissive to the fold,
 Be red-crossed on the fleece, one sheep
 the more.
 But you as good as bade me wear
 sheep's wool
 Over wolf's skin, suck blood and hide
 the noise
 By mimicry of something like a bleat,—

Whence it comes that because, despite
 my care,
 Because I smack my tongue too loud
 for once,
 Drop baaing, here 's the village up in
 arms !
 Have at the wolf's throat, you who
 hate the breed !
 Oh, were it only open yet to choose—
 One little time more—whether I'd be
 free
 Your foe, or subsidised your friend for-
 sooth !
 Should not you get a growl through the
 white fangs
 In answer to your beckoning ! Car-
 dinal,
 Abate, managers o' the multitude,
 I'd turn your gloved hands to account,
 be sure !
 You should manipulate the coarse rough
 mob :
 'Tis you I'd deal directly with, not
 them,—
 Using your fears : why touch the thing
 myself
 When I could see you hunt and then
 cry " Shares !
 " Quarter the carcass or we quarrel ;
 come,
 " Here 's the world ready to see justice
 done ! "
 Oh, it had been a desperate game, but
 game
 Wherein the winner's chance were
 worth the pains
 To try conclusions !—at the worst,
 what's worse
 Than this Mannaia-machine, each min-
 ute's talk,
 Helps push an inch the nearer me ?
 Fool, fool !
 You understand me and forgive, sweet
 Sirs ?
 I blame you, tear my hair and tell my
 woe—
 All's but a flourish, figure of rhetoric !
 One must try each expedient to save
 life.
 One makes fools look foolisher fiftyfold
 By putting in their place the wise like
 you
 To take the full force of an argument
 Would buffet their stolidity in vain.
 If you should feel aggrieved by the mere
 wind

O' the blow that means to miss you and
 maul them,
 That's my success! Is it not folly,
 now,
 To say with folks, "A plausible de-
 fence—
 "We see through notwithstanding,
 and reject?"
 Reject the plausible they do, these
 fools,
 Who never even make pretence to show
 One point beyond its plausibility
 In favour of the best belief they hold!
 "Saint Somebody-or-other raised the
 dead;"
 Did he? How do you come to know
 as much?
 "Know it, what need? The story's
 plausible,
 "Avouched for by a martyrologist,
 "And why should good men sup on
 cheese and leeks
 "On such a saint's day, if there were no
 saint?"
 I praise the wisdom of these fools, and
 straight
 Tell them my story—"plausible, but
 false!"
 False, to be sure! What else can
 story be [st. use,
 That runs—a young wife tired of an old
 Found a priest whom she fled away
 with,—both
 Took their full pleasure in the two-
 days' flight,
 Which a grey-headed greyer-hearted
 pair,
 (Whose best boast was, their life had
 been a lie)
 Helped for the love they bore all liars.
 Oh,
 Here incredulity begins! Indeed?
 Allow then, were no one point strictly
 true,
 There 's that i' the tale might seem like
 truth at least
 To the unlucky husband,—jaundiced
 patch,—
 Jealousy maddens people, why not
 him?
 Say, he was maddened, so, forgivable!
 Humanity pleads that though the wife
 were true,
 The priest true, and the pair of liars
 true,
 They might seem false to one man in
 the world!

A thousand gnats make up a ser-
 sting,
 And many sly soft stimulants to
 Compose a formidable wrong at la-
 That gets called easily by some
 name
 Not applicable to the single parts
 And so draws down a general rev-
 Excessive if you take crime, fault,
 fault.
 Jealousy! I have known a sec-
 Were listened to and laughed at i-
 time
 As like the everyday-life on all sid-
 Wherein the husband, mad as a M-
 hare,
 Suspected all the world contrived
 shame;
 What did the wife? The wife k-
 both eyes blind,
 Explained away ambiguous circ-
 stance,
 And while she held him captive by
 hand,
 Crowned his head,—you know wh-
 the mockery,—
 By half her body behind the cur-
 That's
 Nature now! That's the subject
 piece
 I saw in Vallombrosa Convent, mar-
 Expressly to teach men what marr-
 was!
 But say "Just so did I misapprehen-
 Or "Just so she deceived me to
 face!"
 And that's pretence too easily s-
 through!
 All those eyes of all husbands in
 plays,
 At stare like one expanded peaco-
 tail,
 Are laughed at for pretending to
 keen
 While horn-blind: but the momer-
 step forth—
 Oh, I must needs o' the sudden prov-
 lynx
 And look the heart, that stone-w-
 through and through!
 Such an eye, God's may be,—not yo-
 nor mine.
 Yes, presently . . . what hour is fle-
 ing now?
 When you cut earth away from un-
 me,

I shall be left alone with, pushed beneath
 Some such an apparitional dread orb ;
 I fancy it go filling up the void
 Above my mote-self it devours, or what
 Immensity please wreak on nothingness.
 Just so I felt once, couching through the dark,
 Hard by Vittiano ; young I was, and gay,
 And wanting to trap fieldfares : first a spark
 Tipped a bent, as a mere dew-globule might
 Any stiff grass-stalk on the meadow,—this
 Grew fiercer, flamed out full, and proved the sun.
 What do I want with proverbs, precepts here ?
 Away with man ! What shall I say to God ?
 This, if I find the tongue and keep the mind—
 “ Do Thou wipe out the being of me, and smear
 “ This soul from off Thy white of things, I blot !
 “ I am one huge and sheer mistake,—whose fault ?
 “ Not mine at least, who did not make myself ! ”
 Someone declares my wife excused me so !
 Perhaps she knew what argument to use
 Grind your teeth, Cardinal, Abate, writhe !
 What else am I to cry out in my rage,
 Unable to repent one particle
 O’ the past ? Oh, how I wish some cold wise man
 Would dig beneath the surface which you scrape,
 Deal with the depths, pronounce on my desert
 Groundedly ! I want simple sober sense,
 That asks, before it finishes with a dog,
 Who taught the dog that trick you hang him for ?
 You both persist to call that act a crime,
 Sense would call . . . yes, I do assure you, Sirs, . . .
 A blunder ! At the worst, I stood in doubt

On cross-road, took one path of many paths :
 It leads to the red thing, we all see now,
 But nobody at first saw one primrose
 In bank, one singing-bird in bush, the less,
 To warn from wayfare : let me prove you that !
 Put me back to the cross-road, start afresh !
 Advise me when I take the first false step !
 Give me my wife : how should I use my wife,
 Love her or hate her ? Prompt my action now !
 There she stands, there she is alive and pale,
 The thirteen-years’-old child, with milk for blood,
 Pompilia Comparini, as at first,
 Which first is only four brief years ago !
 I stand too in the little ground-floor room
 O’ the father’s house at Via Vittoria : see
 Her so-called mother,—one arm round the waist
 O’ the child to keep her from the toys—let fall,
 At wonder I can live yet look so grim,—
 Ushers her in, with deprecating wave
 Of the other,—there she fronts me loose, at large,
 Held only by the mother’s finger-tip—
 Struck dumb, for she was white enough before !
 She eyes me with those frightened balls of black,
 As heifer—the old simile comes pat—
 Eyes tremblingly the altar and the priest :
 The amazed look, all one insuppressive prayer,—
 Might she but be set free as heretofore,
 Have this cup leave her lips unblistered, bear
 Any cross anywhither anyhow,
 So but alone, so but apart from me !
 You are touched ? So am I, quite otherwise,
 If ’t is with pity. I resent my wrong,
 Being a man : we only show man’s soul
 Through man’s flesh, she sees mine, it strikes her thus !
 Is that attractive ? To a youth perhaps—

Calf-creature, one-part boy to three-
 parts girl,
 To whom it is a flattering novelty
 That he, men use to motion from their
 path,
 Can thus impose, thus terrify in turn
 A chit whose terror shall be changed
 apace
 To bliss unbearable when, grace and
 glow,
 Prowess and pride descend the throne
 and touch
 Esther in all that pretty tremble, cured
 By the dove o' the sceptre! But my-
 self am old,
 O' the wane at least, in all things:
 what do you say
 To her who frankly thus confirms my
 doubt?
 I am past the prime, I scare the woman-
 world,
 Done-with that way: you like this
 piece of news?
 A little saucy rosebud minx can strike
 Death-damp into the breast of doughty
 king
 Though 't were French Louis,—soul I
 understand,—
 Saying, by gesture of repugnance, just
 "Sire, you are regal, puissant and so
 forth,
 "But—young you have been, are not,
 nor will be!"
 In vain the mother nods, winks, bustles
 up
 "Count, girls incline to mature worth
 like you!
 "As for Pompilia, what 's flesh, fish or
 fowl
 "To one who apprehends no difference,
 "And would accept you even were you
 old
 "As you are . . . youngish by her
 father's side?
 "Trim but your beard a little, thin
 your bush
 "Of eyebrow; and for presence, port-
 liness
 "And decent gravity, you beat a boy!"
 Deceive you for a second, if you may,
 In presence of the child that so loves
 age,
 Whose neck writhes, cords itself
 against your kiss,
 Whose hand you wring stark, rigid
 with despair!
 Well, I resent this; I am young in soul,

Nor old in body,—thews and sin-
 here,—
 Though the vile surface be not sm-
 as once,—
 Far beyond the first wheelwork
 went wrong
 Through the untempered iron ere 't
 proof:
 I am the steel man worth ten times
 crude,—
 Would woman see what this decline
 see,
 Declines to say "I see,"—the offici-
 word
 That makes the thing, pricks on
 soul to shoot
 New fire into the half-used cin-
 flesh!
 Therefore 't is she begins with wro-
 ing me,
 Who cannot but begin with hating h-
 Our marriage follows: there we sta-
 again!
 Why do I laugh? Why, in the ve-
 gripe
 O' the jaws of death's gigantic skull d-
 Grin back his grin, make sport of n-
 own pangs?
 Why from each clashing of his molar
 ground [gris-
 To make the devil bread from out m-
 Leaps out a spark of mirth, a hellis-
 toy?
 Take notice we are lovers in a church
 Waiting the sacrament to make us one
 And happy! Just as bid, she bear-
 herself,
 Comes and kneels, rises, speaks, is si-
 lent,—goes:
 So have I brought my horse, by wor-
 and blow,
 To stand stock-still and front the fir-
 he dreads.
 How can I other than remember this
 Resent the very obedience? Gain-
 thereby?
 Yes, I do gain my end and have my
 will,—
 Thanks to whom? When the mother
 speaks the word,
 She obeys it—even to enduring me!
 There had been compensation in
 revolt—
 Revolt 's to quell: but martyrdom re-
 hearsed,
 But predetermined saintship for the
 sake

O' the mother?—"Go!" thought I:
 "we meet again!"
 Pass the next weeks of dumb contented
 death,
 She lives,—wakes up, installed in house
 and home,
 Is mine, mine all day-long, all night-
 long mine.
 Good folks begin at me with open
 mouth
 "Now, at least, reconcile the child to
 life!"
 "Study and make her love . . . that is,
 endure
 "The . . . hem! the . . . all of you
 though somewhat old,
 "Till it amount to something, in her
 eye,
 "As good as love, better a thousand
 times,—
 "Since nature helps the woman in such
 strait,
 "Makes passiveness her pleasure: fail-
 ing which,
 "What if you give up boys' and girls'
 fools'-play [once?
 "And go on to wise friendship all at
 "Those boys and girls kiss themselves
 cold, you know,
 "Toy themselves tired and slink aside
 full soon
 "To friendship, as they name satiety:
 "Thither go you and wait their com-
 ing!" Thanks,
 Considerate advisers,—but, fair play!
 Had you and I but started fair at first,
 We, keeping fair, might reach it, neck
 by neck,
 This blessed goal, whenever fate so
 please:
 But why am I to miss the daisied mile
 The course begins with, why obtain the
 dust
 Of the end precisely at the starting-
 point?
 Why quaff life's cup blown free of all
 the beads,
 The bright red froth wherein our beard
 should steep
 Before our mouth essay the black o'
 the wine?
 Foolish, the love-fit? Let me prove it
 such
 Like you, before like you I puff things
 clear!
 "The best 's to come, no rapture but
 content!"

"Not the first glory but a sober glow,
 "Nor a spontaneous outburst in pure
 boon,
 "So much as, gained by patience, care
 and toil!"
 Go preach that to your nephews, not
 to me
 Who, tired i' the midway of my life,
 would stop
 And take my first refreshment in a rose:
 What 's this coarse woolly hip, worn
 smooth of leaf,
 You counsel I go plant in garden-pot,
 Water with tears, manure with sweat
 and blood,
 In confidence the seed shall germinate
 And, for its very best, some far-off day,
 Grow big, and blow me out a dog-rose
 bell?
 Why must your nephews begin breath-
 ing spice [dify?
 O' the hundred-petalled Provence pro-
 Nay, more and worse,—would such my
 root bear rose—
 Prove really flower and favourite, not
 the kind
 That 's queen, but those three leaves
 that make one cup
 And hold the hedge-bird's breakfast,—
 then indeed
 The prize though poor would pay the
 care and toil!
 Respect we Nature that makes least as
 most,
 Marvellous in the minim! But this
 bud,
 Bit through and burned black by the
 tempter's tooth,
 This bloom whose best grace was the
 slug outside
 And the wasp inside its bosom,—call
 you "rose?"
 Claim no immunity from a weed's fate
 For the horrible present! What you
 call my wife
 I call a nullity in female shape,
 Vapid disgust, soon to be pungent
 plague,
 When mixed with, made confusion and
 a curse
 By two abominable nondescripts,
 That father and that mother: think
 you see
 The dreadful bronze our boast, we
 Aretines,
 The Etruscan monster, the three-
 headed thing,

Bellerophon's foe ! How name you
 the whole beast ?
 You choose to name the body from one
 head,
 That of the simple kid which droops the
 eye,
 Hangs the neck and dies tenderly
 enough :
 I rather see the griesly lion belch
 Flame out i' the midst, the serpent
 writhe her rings,
 Grafted into the common stock for tail,
 And name the brute, Chimæra, which I
 slew !
 How was there ever more to be—/con-
 cede
 My wife's insipid harmless nullity)—
 Dissociation from that pair of plagues—
 That mother with her cunning and her
 cant— [ceit,
 The eyes with first their twinkle of con-
 Then, dropped to earth in mock-de-
 mureness,—now,
 The smile self-satisfied from ear to ear,
 Now, the prim pursed-up mouth's pro-
 truded lips,
 With deferential duck, slow swing of
 head,
 Tempting the sudden fist of man too
 much,—
 That owl-like screw of lid and rock of
 ruff !
 As for the father,—Cardinal, you know,
 The kind of idiot !—rife are such in
 Rome,
 But they wear velvet commonly, such
 fools,
 At the end of life, can furnish forth
 young folk
 Who grin and bear with imbecility,
 Since the stalled ass, the joker, sheds
 from jaw
 Corn, in the joke, for those who laugh
 or starve :
 But what say we to the same solemn
 beast
 Wagging his ears and wishful of our pat,
 When turned, with hide in holes and
 bones laid bare,
 To forage for himself i' the waste o' the
 world,
 Sir Dignity i' the dumps ? Pat him ?
 We drub
 Self-knowledge, rather, into frowzy
 pate,
 Teach Pietro to get trappings or go
 hang !

Fancy this quondam oracle in vog
 At Via Vittoria, this personified
 Authority when time was,—Pant
 Flaunting his tom-fool tawdry jus
 same
 As if Ash-Wednesday were mid-C
 val !
 That 's the extreme and unforgiv
 Of sins, as I account such. Have
 stooped
 For your own ends to bestialise y
 By flattery of a fellow of this stamp
 The ends obtained, or else shown o
 reach,
 He goes on, takes the flattery for
 truth,—
 " You love and honour me, of cou
 what next ? "
 What, but the trifle of the stabl
 friend ?—
 Which taught you how one wor
 when the shrine
 Has lost the relic that we bent be
 Angry ? And how could I be o
 wise ?
 'T is plain : this pair of old pretent
 fools
 Meant to fool me : it happens, I fo
 them.
 Why could not these who sought to
 and sell
 Me,—when they found themse
 were bought and sold,
 Make up their mind to the proved
 of right,
 Be chattel and not chapman any m
 Miscalculation has its consequence
 But when the shepherd crooks a sh
 like thing
 And meaning to get wool, disloo
 fleece
 And finds the veritable wolf beneath
 (How that staunch image serves
 every turn !)
 Does he, by way of being politic,
 Pluck the first whisker grimly visible
 Or rather grow in a trice all gratitu
 Protest this sort-of-what-one-nig
 name sheep
 Beats the old other curly-coated ki
 And shall share board and bed, if s
 deign,
 With its discoverer, like a royal ra
 Ay, thus, with chattering teeth a
 knocking knees,
 Would wisdom treat the adventu
 these, forsooth,

oracle in vogue
personified
was,—Pantaloon
tawdry just the

were mid-Carni-

and unforgiveable
uch. Have you
[self
bestialise your-
of this stamp?
else shown out of

attery for pure

me, of course:

f the stabbing,

w one worships

we bent before.
uld I be other-

old pretentious

appens, I fooled

o sought to buy

nd themselves
old,
the proved rule

man any more?
onsequence;
crooks a sheep-

wool, dislodges

wolf beneath,
age serves at

ng politic,
imly visible?—
e all gratitude,
hat-one-night-

y-coated kin!
nd bed, if so it

a royal ram?
ing teeth and

he adventure:

Tried whisker-plucking, and so found
what trap

The whisker kept perdue, two rows of
teeth—

Sharp, as too late the prying fingers
felt.

What would you have? The fools
transgress, the fools

Forthwith receive appropriate punish-
ment:

They first insult me, I return the blow,
There follows noise enough: four hub-
bub months,

Now hue and cry, now whimpering and
wail—

A perfect goose-yard cackle of com-
plaint [oats,—

Because I do not gild the geese their
I have enough of noise, ope wicket wide

Sweep out the couple to go whine else-
where,

Frightened a little, hurt in no respect,
And am just taking thought to breathe
again,

Taste the sweet sudden silence all
about,

When, there they are at it, the old noise
I know,

At Rome i' the distance! "What, be-
gun once more?

"Whine on, wail ever, 't is the loser's
right!"

But eh, what sort of voice grows on the
wind?

Triumph it sounds and no complaint
at all!

And triumph it is! My boast was pre-
mature:

The creatures, I turned forth, clapped
wing and crew

Fighting - cock - fashion,—they had
filched a pearl

From dung-heap, and might boast
with cause enough!

I was defrauded of all bargained for,—
You know, the Pope knows, not a soul
but knows

My dowry was derision, my gain—
muck,

My wife, (the Church declared my flesh
and blood)

The nameless bastard of a common
whore:

My old name turned henceforth to . .
shall I say

"He that received the ordure in his
face?"

And they who planned this wrong,
performed this wrong—

And then revealed this wrong to the
wide world,

Rounded myself in the ears with my
own wrong,—

Why, these were . . note hell's lucky
malice, now! . .

These were just they, and they alone,
could act

And publish in this wise their infamy,
Secure that men would in a breath be-
lieve

Compassionate and pardon them,—for
why?

They plainly were too stupid to invent,
Too simple to distinguish wrong from
right,—

Ineonscious agents they, the silly-sooth,
Of heaven's retributive justice on the
strong

Proud cunning violent oppressor—me!
Follow them to their fate and help your
best, [of mine,

You Rome, Arezzo, foes called friends
They gave the good long laugh to at
my cost!

Defray your share o' the cost since you
partook

The entertainment! Do!—assured the
while,

That not one stab, I dealt to right and
left,

But went the deeper for a fancy—this—
That each might do me twofold ser-
vice, find

A friend's face at the bottom of each
wound,

And scratch its smirk a little!

Panciatelli!
There 's a report at Firenze,—is it
true?—

That when your relative the Cardinal
Built, only the other day, that barrack-
bulk,

The palace in Via Larga, someone
picked

From out the street a saucy quip enough
That fell there from its day's flight
through the town,

About the flat front and the windows
wide

And ugly heap of cornice,—hitched the
joke

Into a sonnet, signed his name thereto,
And forthwith pinned on post the
pleasantry.

For which he 's at the galleys, rowing
 now
 Up to his waist in water,—just because
Panciatric and *lymphatic* rhymed so pat :
 I hope, Sir, those who passed this joke
 on me
 Were not unduly punished ? What
 say you,
 Prince of the Church, my patron ?
 Nay, indeed !
 I shall not dare insult your wits so much
 As think this problem difficult to solve !
 This Pietro and Violante, then, I say,
 These two ambiguous insects, changing
 name
 And nature with the season's warmth
 or chill,—
 Now, grovelled, grubbing toiling moil-
 ing ants,
 A very synonym of thrift and peace,—
 Anon, with lusty June to prick their
 heart,
 Soared i' the air, winged flies for more
 offence,
 Circled me, buzzed me deaf and stung
 me blind,
 And stunk me dead with feter in the
 face
 Until I stopped the nuisance : there 's
 my crime !
 Pity I did not suffer them subside
 Into some further shape and final form
 Of execrable life ? My masters, no !
 I, by one blow, wisely cut short at once
 Them and their transformations of dis-
 gust
 In the snug little Villa out of hand.
 " Grant me confession, give bare time
 for that ! "—
 Shouted the sinner till his mouth was
 stopped.
 His life confessed !—that was enough
 for me,
 Who came to see that he did penance,
 'S death !
 Here 's a coil raised, a pother and for
 what ?
 Because strength, being provoked by
 weakness, fought
 And conquered,—the world never
 heard the like !
 Pah, how I spend my breath on them,
 as if
 'T was their fate troubled me, too hard
 to range
 Among the right and fit and proper
 things !

Ay, but Pompilia,—I await your w
 She, unimpeached of crime, unin
 cate
 In folly, one of alien blood to these
 I punish, why extend my claim, e
 Her portion of the penalty ?
 friends,
 I go too fast : the orator 's at fault
 Yes, ere I lay her, with your leave,
 them
 As she was laid at San Lorenzo late
 I ought to step back, lead her by
 grees,
 Recounting at each step some fr
 offence,
 Up to the red bed,—never fear, I wi
 Gaze at her, where you place her, to
 gin,
 Confound me with her gentleness a
 worth !
 The horrible pair have fled and left b
 now,
 She has her husband for her sole co
 cern,
 His wife, the woman fashioned for h
 help,
 Flesh of his flesh, bone of his bone, th
 bride
 To groom as is the Church and Spous
 to Christ :
 There she stands in his presence,—
 " Thy desire
 " Shall be to the husband, o'er thee sha
 he rule ! "
 —" Pompilia, who declare that you
 love God,
 " You know who said that : then, de
 sire my love,
 " Yield me contentment and be ruled
 aright ! "
 She sits up, she lies down, she comes
 and goes,
 Kneels at the couch-side, overleans the
 sill
 O' the window, cold and pale and mute
 as stone,
 Strong as stone also. " Well, are they
 not fled ?
 " Am I not left, am I not one for all ?
 " Speak a word, drop a tear, detach a
 glance,
 " Bless me or curse me of your own ac-
 cord !
 " Is it the ceiling only wants your soul,
 " Is worth your eyes ? " And then the
 eyes descend
 And do look at me. Is it at the meal ?

"Speak!" she obeys, "Be silent!"
 she obeys,
 Counting the minutes till I cry "De-
 part,"
 As brood-bird when you saunter past
 her eggs.
 Departed, just the same through door
 and wall
 I see the same stone strength of white
 despair.
 And all this will be never otherwise!
 Before, the parents' presence lent her
 life:
 She could play off her sex's armoury,
 Entreat, reproach, be female to my
 male,
 Try all the shrieking doubles of the hare,
 Go clamour to the Commissary, bid
 The Archbishop hold my hands and
 stop my tongue,
 And yield fair sport so: but the tactics
 change,
 The hare stands stock-still to enrage
 the hound!
 Since that day when she learned she
 was no child
 Of those she thought her parents,—
 that their trick
 Had tricked me whom she thought sole
 trickster late,—
 Why, I suppose she said within herse'
 "Then, no more struggle for my pa-
 ents' sake,
 "And, for my own sake, why needs
 struggle be?"
 But is there no third party to the pact?
 What of her husband's relish or dislike
 For this new game of giving up the
 game,
 This worst offence of not offending
 more?
 I'll not believe but instinct wrought in
 this,
 Set her on to conceive and execute
 The preferable plague . . . how sure
 they probe,—
 These jades, the sensitivest soft of man!
 The long black hair was wound now in
 a wisp,—
 Crowned sorrow better than the wild
 web late:
 No more soiled dress, 'tis trimness tri-
 umphs now,
 For how should malice go with negli-
 gence?
 The frayed silk looked the fresher for
 her spite!

There was an end to springing out of
 bed,
 Praying me, with face buried on my
 feet,
 Be hindered of my pastime,—so an end
 To my rejoinder, "What, on the
 ground at last?
 "Vanquished in fight, a supplicant for
 life?
 "What if I raise you? 'Ware the
 casting down
 "When next you fight me!" Then,
 she lay there, mine:
 Now, mine she is if I please wring her
 neck,—
 A moment of disquiet, working eyes,
 Protruding tongue, a long sigh, then no
 more—
 As if one killed the horse one could not
 ride!
 Had I enjoined "Cut off the hair!"—
 why, snap
 The scissors, and at once a yard or so
 Had fluttered in black serpents to the
 floor:
 But till I did enjoin it, how she combs,
 Uncurls and draws out to the complete
 length,
 Plaits, places the insulting rope on head
 To be an eyesore past dishevelment!
 Is all done? Then sit still again and
 stare!
 I advise—no one think to bear that
 look
 Of steady wrong, endured as steadily,
 —Through what sustainment of delud-
 ing hope?
 Who is the friend i' the background
 that notes all?
 Who may come presently and close ac-
 counts?
 This self-possession to the uttermost,
 How does it differ in aught, save degree,
 From the terrible patience of God?
 "All which just means,
 "She did not love you!" Again the
 word is launched
 And the fact fronts me! What, you
 try the wards
 With the true key and the dead lock
 flies ope?
 No, it sticks fast and leaves you fumb-
 ling still!
 You have some fifty servants, Car-
 dinal,—
 Which of them loves you? Which
 subordinate

But makes parade of such off-iousness
 That,—if there's no love prompts it,—
 love, the sham,
 D—twice the service done by love, the
 true.
 God bless us liars, where's one touch of
 truth
 In what we tell the world, or world tells
 us,
 Of how we like each other? All the
 same,
 We calculate on word and deed, nor err,
 Bid such a man do such a loving act,
 Sure of effect and negligent of cause,
 Just as we bid a horse, with cluck of
 tongue,
 Stretch his legs arch-wise, crouch his
 saddled back
 To foot-reach of the stirrup—all for
 love,
 And some for memory of the smart of
 switch
 On the inside of the foreleg—what care
 we?
 Yet where's the bond obliges horse to
 man
 Like that which binds fast wife to hus-
 band? God
 Laid down the law: gave man the
 brawny arm
 And ball of fist—woman the beardless
 cheek
 And proper place to suffer in the side:
 Since it is he can strike, let her obey!
 Can she feel no love? Let her show
 the more,
 Sham the worse, damn herself praise-
 worthily!
 Who's that soprano Rome went mad
 about
 Last week while I lay rotting in my [straw
 The very jailor gossiped in his praise—
 How,—dressed up like Armida, though
 a man;
 And painted to look pretty, though a
 fright,—
 He still made love so that the ladies
 swooned,
 Being an eunuch. "Ah, Rinaldo mine!
 "But to breathe by thee while Jove
 slays us both!"
 All the poor bloodless creature never
 felt,
 Si, do, re, mi, fa, squeak and squall—
 for what?
 Two gold zecchines the evening! Here's
 my slave,
 Whose body and soul depend upon
 nod,
 Can't falter out the first note in
 scale
 For her life! Why blame me if I
 the life?
 All women cannot give men love,
 sooth!
 No, nor all pullets lay the henwife egg
 Whereat she bids them remedy
 fault,
 Brood on a chalk-ball: soon the ne-
 stocked—
 Otherwise, to the plucking and the s-
 This wife of mine was of another mo-
 Would not begin the lie that ends v-
 truth,
 Nor feign the love that brings real
 about:
 Wherefore I judged, sentenced
 punished her.
 But why particularise, defend the de-
 Say that I hated her for no one cause
 Beyond my pleasure so to do,—w-
 then?
 Just on as much incitement acts
 world,
 All of you! Look and like! You
 your one,
 Browbeat another, leave alone
 third,
 Why should you master natural [ric
 Pure nature! Try—plant elm by a
 in file;
 Both unexceptionable trees enough,
 They ought to overlean each other, pa-
 At top and arch across the avenue
 The whole path to the pleasaunce: c-
 they so—
 Or loathe, lie off abhorrent each fro-
 each?
 Lay the fault elsewhere, since we mu-
 have faults:
 Mine shall have been,—seeing there
 ill in the end
 Come of my course,—that I fare some-
 how worse
 For the way I took,—my fault . . a
 God's my judge
 I see not where the fault lies, that's th-
 truth!
 I ought . . oh, ought in my own inter-
 est
 Have let the whole adventure go un-
 tried,
 This chance by marriage,—or else, try-
 ing it,

Ought to have turned it to account
 some one
 O' the hundred otherwises? Ay, my
 friend,
 Easy to say, easy to do,—step right
 Now you've stepped left and stumbled
 on the thing,
 —The red thing! Doubt I any more
 than you
 That practice makes man perfect?
 Give again
 The chance,—same marriage and no
 other wife,
 Be sure I 'll edify you! That's be-
 cause
 I 'm practised, grown fit guide for
 Guido's self.
 You proffered guidance,—I know, none
 so well,—
 You laid down law and rolled decorum
 out,
 From pulpit-corner on the gospel-side,—
 Wanted to make your great experience
 mine,
 Save me the personal search and pains
 so: thanks!
 Take your word on life's use? When
 I take his—
 The muzzled ox that treadeth out the
 corn,
 Gone blind in padding round and round
 one path,—
 As to the taste of green grass in the
 field!
 What do you know o' the world that's
 trodden flat
 And salted sterile with your daily dung,
 Leavened into a lump of loathsomeness?
 Take your opinion of the modes of life,
 The aims of life, life's triumph or de-
 feat,
 How to feel, how to scheme and how to
 do
 Or else leave undone? You preached
 long and loud
 On high-days, "Take our doctrine up-
 on trust!
 "Into the mill-house with you! Grind
 our corn,
 "Relish our chaff, and let the green
 grass grow!"
 I tried chaff, found I fannished on such
 fare,
 So made this mad rush at the mill-
 house-door,
 Buried my head up to the ears in dew,
 Browsed on the best, for which you
 brain me, Sirs!
 Be it so! I conceived of life that way,
 And still declare—life, without abso-
 lute use
 Of the actual sweet therein, is death,
 not life.
 Give me,—pay down,—not promise,
 which is air,—
 Something that 's out of life and better
 still,
 Make sure reward, make certain pun-
 ishment,
 Entice me, scare me,—I 'll forgo this
 life;
 Otherwise, no!—the less that words,
 mere wind,
 Would cheat me of some minutes while
 they plague.
 The fulness of revenge here,—blame
 yourselves
 For this eruption of the pent-up soul
 You prisoned first and played with
 afterward!
 "Deny myself" meant simply pleas-
 ure you,
 The sacred and superior save the mark!
 You,—whose stupidity and insolence
 I must defer to, soothe at every turn,—
 Whose swine-like snuffling greed and
 grunting lust
 I had to wink at or help gratify,—
 While the same passions,—dared they
 perk in me,
 Me, the immeasurably marked, by God,
 Master of the whole world of such as
 you,—
 I, boast such passions? 'T was "Sup-
 press them straight!
 "Or stay, we 'll pick and choose before
 destroy:
 "Here 's wrath in you,—a serviceable
 sword,—
 "Beat it into a ploughshare! What's
 this long [ing-hook,
 "Lance-like ambition? Forge a prun-
 May be of service when our vines
 grow tall!
 "But—sword used swordwise, spear
 thrust out as spear?
 "Anathema! Suppression is the
 word!"
 My nature, when the outrage was too
 gross,
 Widened itself an outlet over-wide
 By way of answer?—sought its own
 relief

With more of fire and brimstone than
you wished?
All your own doing: preachers, blame
yourselves!

'Tis I preach while the hourglass runs
and runs!
God keep me patient! All I say just
means—
My wife proved, whether by her fault or
mine,—
That 's immaterial—a true stumbling-
block
I' the way of me her husband: I but
plied
The hatchet yourselves use to clear a
path,
Was politic, played the game you war-
rant wins,
Plucked at law's robe a-rustle through
the courts, [shoe
Bowed down to kiss divinity's buckled
Cushioned i' the church: efforts all
wide the aim!
Procedures to no purpose! Then
flashed truth!
The letter kills, the spirit keeps alive
In law and gospel: there be nods and
winks
Instruct a wise man to assist himself
In certain matters nor seek aid at all.
"Ask money of me,"—quoth the
elownish saw,—
"And take my purse! But,—speak-
ing with respect,—
"Need you a solace for the troubled
nose?
"Let everybody wipe his own himself!"
Sirs, tell me free and fair! Had things
gone well
At the wayside inn: had I surprised
asleep
The runaways, as was so probable,
And pinned them each to other part-
ridge-wise,
Through back and breast to breast and
back, then bade
Bystanders witness if the spit, my
sword,
Were loaded with unlawful game for
once—
Would you have interposed to damp
the glow
Applauding me on every husband's
check?
Would you have checked the cry "A
judgment, see!

"A warning, note! Be hence
chaste, ye wives,
"Nor stray beyond your proper
cinct, priests!"
If you had, then your house ag-
itself
Divides, nor stands your kingdom
more.
Oh, why, why was it not ordained
so?
Why fell not things out so nor o-
wise?
Ask that particular devil whose ta-
is
To trip the all-but-at perfection,—
The line o' the painter just where p-
leaves off
And life begins,—puts ice into the
O' the poet while he cries "Next sta-
—fire!"
Inscribes all human effort with
word,
Artistry's haunting curse, the Inc-
plete!
Being incomplete, the act escaped s-
Easy to blame now! Every fool o-
swear
To hole in net that held and slipped
fish.
But, treat my act with fair unjaundic-
eye,
What was there wanting to a maste-
piece
Except the luck that lies beyond a ma-
My way with the woman, now prov-
grossly wrong,
Just missed of being gravely grand
right
And making critics laugh o' the oth-
side.
Do, for the poor obstructed artist's sake
Go with him over that spoiled wor-
once more!
Take only its first flower, the ended ac-
Now in the dusty pod, dry and defunct
I march to the Villa, and my men with
me,
That evening, and we reach the door
and stand.
I say . . . no, it shoots through m-
lightning-like
While I pause, breathe, my hand upon
the latch,
"Let me forebode! Thus far, too
much success:
"I want the natural failure—find it
where?

" Which thread will have to break and
 leave a loop
 " I' the meshy combination, my brain's
 loom
 " Wove this long while and now next
 minute tests ?
 " Of three that are to catch, two should
 go free,
 " One must : all three surprised,—im-
 possible !
 " Beside, I seek three and may chance
 on six,—
 " This neighbour, t' other gossip,—the
 babe's birth
 " Brings such to fireside and folks give
 them wine,—
 " 'T is late : but when I break in pres-
 ently
 " One will be found outlingering the
 rest
 " For promise of a posset,—one whose
 shout
 " Would raise the dead down in the cata-
 combs,
 " Much more the city-watch that goes
 its round.
 " When did I ever turn adroitly up
 " To sun some brick embedded in the
 soil,
 " And with one blow crush all three
 scorpions there ?
 " Or Pietro or Violante shambles off—
 " It cannot be but I surprise my wife—
 " If only she is stopped and stamped
 on, good !
 " That shall suffice : more is improb-
 able.
 " Now I may knock ! " And this once
 for my sake
 The impossible was effected : I called
 king,
 Queen and knave in a sequence, and
 cards came,
 All three, three only ! So, I had my
 way,
 Did my deed : so, unbrokenly lay bare
 Each tænia that had sucked me dry of
 juice,
 At last outside me, not an inch of ring
 Left now to writhe about and root it-
 self
 I' the heart all powerless for revenge !
 Henceforth
 I might thrive : these were drawn and
 dead and damned.
 Oh Cardinal, the deep long sigh you
 heave

When the load 's off you, ringing as it
 runs
 All the way down the serpent-stair to
 hell !
 No doubt the fine delirium flustered me,
 Turned my brain with the influx of suc-
 cess
 As if the sole need now were to wave
 wand
 And find doors fly wide,—wish and
 have my will,—
 The rest o' the scheme would care for
 itself : escape ?
 Easy enough were that, and poor be-
 side !
 It all but proved so,—ought to quite
 have proved,
 Since, half the chances had sufficed, set
 free
 Anyone, with his senses at command,
 From thrice the danger of my flight.
 But, drunk,
 Redundantly triumphant,—some re-
 verse
 Was sure to follow ! There 's no other
 way
 Accounts for such prompt perfect fail-
 ure then
 And there on the instant. Any day o'
 the week,
 A ducat slid discreetly into palm
 O' the mute post-master, while you
 whisper him—
 How you the Count and certain four
 your knaves,
 Have just been mauling who was mala-
 pert,
 Suspect the kindred may prove trouble-
 some,
 Therefore, want horses in a hurry,—
 that
 And nothing more secures you any day
 The pick o' the stable ! Yet I try the
 trick.
 Double the bribe, call myself Duke
 for Count,
 And say the dead man only was a Jew,
 And for my pains find I am dealing just
 With the one scrupulous fellow in all
 Rome—
 Just this immaculate official stares,
 Sees I want hat on head and sword in
 sheath,
 Am splashed with other sort of wet
 than wine,
 Shrugs shoulder, puts my hand by, gold
 and all,

Stands on the strictness of the rule o'
 the road!
 "Where's the Permission?" Where's
 the wretched rag
 With the due seal and sign of Rome's
 Police,
 To be had for asking, half-an-hour ago?
 "Gone? Get another, or no horses
 hence!"
 He dares not stop me, we five glare too
 grim,
 But hinders,—hacks and hamstrings
 sure enough,
 Gives me some twenty miles of miry
 road
 More to march in the middle of that
 night
 Whereof the rough beginning taxed the
 strength
 O' the youngsters, much more mine,
 such as you see,
 Who had to think as well as act: dead-
 beat,
 We gave in ere we reached the boundary
 And safe spot out of this irrational
 Rome,—
 Where, on dismounting from our steeds
 next day,
 We had snapped our fingers at you,
 safe and sound,
 Tuscans once more in blessed Tuscany,
 Where the laws make allowance, un-
 derstand
 Civilised life and do its champions
 right!
 Witness the sentence of the Rota there,
 Arezzo uttered, the Granduke con-
 firmed,
 One week before I acted on its hint,—
 Giving friend Guillichini, for his love,
 The galleys, and my wife your saint,
 Rome's saint,—
 Rome manufactures saints enough to
 know,—
 Seclusion at the Stinche for her life.
 All this, that all but was, might all
 have been,
 Yet was not! baulked by just a scru-
 pulous knave
 Whose palm was horn through hand-
 ling horses' hoofs
 And could not close upon my proffered
 gold!
 What say you to the spite of fortune?
 Well,
 The worst's in store: thus hindered,
 haled this way

To Rome again by hangdogs, v
 find I
 Here, still to fight with, but my
 frail wife?
 —Riddled with wounds by one no
 to waste
 The blows he dealt,—knowing
 tomy,—
 (I think I told you) one to pick
 choose
 The vital parts! 'T was learning
 in vain!
 She too must shimmer through
 gloom o' the grave,
 Come and confront me—not at ju-
 ment-seat—
 Where I could twist her soul, as
 her flesh,
 And turn her truth into a lie,—
 there,
 O' the death-bed, with God's hand
 tween us both,
 Striking me dumb, and helping her
 speak,
 Tell her own story her own way, a
 My plausibility to nothingness!
 Four whole days did Pompilia ke
 alive,
 With the best surgery of Rome aga
 At the miracle,—this cut, the oth
 slash,
 And yet the life refusing to dislodge,
 Four whole extravagant impossib
 days,
 Till she had time to finish and persuad
 Every man, every woman, every chil
 In Rome of what she would: the sel
 same she
 Who, but a year ago, had wrung he
 hands,
 Reddened her eyes and beat her breasts
 rehearsed
 The whole game at Arezzo, nor availed
 Thereby to move one heart or raise one
 hand!
 When destiny intends you cards like
 these,
 What good of skill and preconcerted
 play?
 Had she been found dead, as I left her
 dead,
 I should have told a tale brooked no
 reply:
 You scarcely will suppose me found at
 fault
 With that advantage! "What brings
 me to Rome?"

"Necessity to claim and take my wife :
 "Better, to claim and take my new-born babe,—
 "Strong in paternity a fortnight old,
 "When 't is at strongest : warily I work,
 "Knowing the machinations of my foe ;
 "I have companionship and use the night :
 "I seek my wife and child,—I find—no child
 "But wife, in the embraces of that priest
 "Who caused her to elope from me. These two,
 "Backed by the pandar-pair who watch the while,
 "Spring on me like so many tiger-cats,
 "Glad of the chance to end the intruder. I—
 "What should I do but stand on my defence,
 "Strike right, strike left, strike thick and threefold, slay,
 "Not all—because the coward priest escapes.
 "Last, I escape, in fear of evil tongues,
 "And having had my taste of Roman law."
 What's disputable, refutable here ?—
 Save by just this one ghost-thing half on earth,
 Half out of it,—as if she held God's hand
 While she leant back and looked her last at me,
 Forgiving me (here monks begin to weep)
 Oh, from her very soul, commending mine [finite,—
 To heavenly mercies which are in—
 While fixing fast my head beneath your knife !
 'T is fate not fortune ! All is of a piece !
 What was it you informed me of my youths ?
 My rustic four o' the family, soft swains,
 What sweet surprise had they in store for me,
 Those of my very household,—what did Law
 Twist with her rack-and-cord-con-
 trivance late
 From out their bones and marrow ?
 What but this—
 Had no one of these several stumbling-
 blocks

Stopped me, they yet were cherishing a scheme,
 All of their honest country homespun wit,
 To quietly next day at crow of cock,
 Cut my own throat too, for their own behoof,
 Seeing I had forgot to clear accounts
 O' the instant, nowise slackened speed for that,—
 And somehow never might find memory,
 Once safe back in Arezzo, where things change,
 And a court-lord needs mind no country lout.
 Well, being the arch-offender, I die last,—
 May, ere my head falls, have my eyesight free,
 Nor miss them dangling high on either hand,
 Like scarecrows in a hemp-field, for their pains !
 And then my Trial,—'t is my Trial that bites
 Like a corrosive, so the cards are packed,
 Dice loaded, and my life-stake tricked away !
 Look at my lawyers, lacked they grace of law,
 Latin or logic ? Were not they fools to the height,
 Fools to the depth, fools to the level between,
 O' the foolishness set to decide the case ?
 They feign, they flatter ; nowise does it skill,
 Everything goes against me : deal each judge
 His dole of flattery and feigning,—why,
 He turns and tries and snuffs and savours it,
 As an old fly the sugar-grain, your gift ;
 Then eyes your thumb and finger, brushes clean
 The absurd old head of him, and whisks away,
 Leaving your thumb and finger dirty.
 Faugh !
 And finally, after this long-drawn range
 Of affront, failure, failure and affront,—
 This path, twixt crosses leading to a skull,

Paced by me barefoot, bloodied by my
 palms
 From the entry to the end,—there 's
 light at length,
 A cranny of escape,—appeal may be
 To the old man, to the father, to the
 Pope,
 For a little life—from one whose life is
 spent,
 A little pity—from pity's source and
 seat,
 A little indulgence to rank, privilege,
 From one who is the thing personified,
 Rank, privilege, indulgence, grown be-
 yond
 Earth's bearing, even, ask Jansenius
 else !
 Still the same answer, still no other tune
 From the cicala perched at the tree-top
 Than crickets noisy round the root,—
 't is " Die ! "
 Bids Law—" Be damned ! " adds Gos-
 pel,—nay,
 No word so frank,—'t is rather, " Save
 yourself ! "
 The Pope subjoins—" Confess and be
 absolved !
 " So shall my credit countervail your
 shame,
 " And the world see I have not lost the
 knack
 " Of trying all the spirits,—yours, my
 son,
 " Wants but a fiery washing to emerge
 " In clarity ! Come, cleanse you, ease
 the ache
 " Of these old bones, refresh our bowels,
 boy ! "
 Do I mistake your mission from the
 Pope ?
 Then, bear his Holiness the mind of me !
 I do get strength from being thrust to
 wall,
 Successively wrenched from pillar and
 from post
 By this tenacious hate of fortune, hate
 Of all things in, under, and above earth.
 Warfare, begun this mean unmanly
 mode,
 Does best to end so,—gives earth spec-
 tacle
 Of a brave fighter who succumbs to
 odds
 That turn defeat to victory. Stab, I
 fold
 My mantle round me ! Rome ap-
 proves my act :

Applauds the blow which costs m
 but keeps
 My honour spotless : Rome w
 praise no more
 Had I fallen, say, some fifteen years
 Helping Vienna when our Aretines
 Flocked to Duke Charles and fo
 Turk Mustafa ;
 Nor would you two be trembling
 my corpse
 With all this exquisite solicitude.
 Why is it that I make such suit to li
 The popular sympathy that 's ro
 ine now
 Would break like bubble that c
 domes a fly—
 Pretty enough while he lies quiet th
 But let him want the air and ply
 wing,
 Why, it breaks and bespatters I
 what else ?
 Cardinal, if the Pope had pardoned
 And I walked out of prison throug
 crowd,
 It would not be your arm I should c
 press !
 Then, if I got safe to my place again
 How sad and sapless were the year
 come !
 I go my old ways and find things gro
 grey ;
 You priests leer at me, old friends l
 askance ;
 The mob 's in love, I 'll wager, to a m
 With my poor young good beaute
 murdered wife :
 For hearts require instruction how
 beat,
 And eyes, on warrant of the story, w
 Wanton at portraiture in white a
 black
 Of dead Pompilia gracing ballad-she
 Which, had she died unmurdered a
 unsung,
 Would never turn though she pac
 street as bare
 As the mad penitent ladies do in Fran
 My brothers quietly would edge me o
 Of use and management of thin
 called mine ;
 Do I command ? " You stretch
 command before ! "
 Show anger ? " Anger little help
 you once ! "
 Advise ? " How managed you affai
 of old ? "
 My very mother, all the while they gir

Turns eye up, gives confirmatory
groan,—
For unsucess, explain it how you will,
Disqualifies you, makes you doubt
yourself,
—Much more, is found decisive by
your friends.
Beside, am I not fifty years of age?
What new leap would a life take,
checked like mine
I' the spring at outset? Where's my
second chance?
Ay, but the babe . . . I had forgot my
son,
My heir! Now for a burst of grati-
tude!
There's some appropriate service to in-
tone,
Some *gaudeamus* and thanksgiving-
psalm!
Old, I renew my youth in him, and poor
Possess a treasure,—is not that the
phrase?
Only I must wait patient twenty years—
Nourishing all the while, as father
ought,
The excrecence with my daily blood of
life.
Does it respond to hope, such sacrifice,—
Grows the wen plump while I myself
grow lean?
Why, here 's my son and heir in evi-
dence,
Who stronger, wiser, handsomer than I
By fifty years, relieves me of each
load,—
Tames my hot horse, carries my heavy
gun,
Courts my coy mistress,—has his apt
advice
On house-economy, expenditure,
And what not? All which good gifts
and great growth
Because of my decline, he brings to bear
On Guido, but half apprehensive how
He cumbers earth, crosses the brisk
young Count,
Who civilly would thrust him from the
scene.
Contrariwise, does the blood-offering
fail?
There 's an ineptitude, one blank the
more
Added to earth in semblance of my
child?
Then, this has been a costly piece of
work,

My life exchanged for his!—why he,
not I,
Enjoy the world, if no more grace ac-
crue?
Dwarf me, what giant have you made
of him?
I do not dread the disobedient son—
I know how to suppress rebellion there,
Being not quite the fool my father was.
But grant the medium measure of a
man,
The usual compromise 'twixt fool and
sage,
—You know—the tolerably-obstinate,
The not-so-much-perverse but you may
train,
The true son-servant that, when parent
bids
"Go work, son, in my vineyard!"
makes reply
"I go, Sir!"—Why, what profit in
your son
Beyond the drudges you might subsi-
dise,
Have the same work from at a paul the
head?
Look at those four young precious
olive-plants
Reared at Vittiano,—not on flesh and
blood,
These twenty years, but black bread
and sour wine!
I bade them put forth tender branch,
and hook
And hurt three enemies I had in Rome:
They did my best as unreluctantly,
At promise of a dollar, as a son
Adjured by mumping memories of the
past!
No, nothing repays youth expended
so—
Youth, I say, who am young still,—
give but leave
To live my life out, to the last I'd live
And die conceding age no right of youth!
It is the will runs the renewing nerve
Through flaccid flesh, would faint be-
fore the time.
Therefore no sort of use for son have I—
Sick, not of life's feast but of steps to
climb
To the house where life prepares her
feast,—of means
To the end: for make the end attain-
able
Without the means,—my relish were
like yours.

THE RING AND THE BOOK

A man may have an appetite enough
For a whole dish of robins ready cooked
And yet lack courage to face sleet, pad
snow,
And snare sufficiency for supper.

Thus
The time's arrived when, ancient Ro-
man-like,
I am bound to fall on my own sword,—
why not
Say—Tuscan-like, more ancient, better
still?

Will you hear truth can do no harm nor
good?

I think I never was at any time

A Christian, as you nickname all the
world,

Me among others: truce to nonsense
now!

Name me, a primitive religionist—

As should the aboriginary be

I boast myself, Etruscan, Aretine,

One sprung,—your frigid Virgil's fieri-
est word,—

From fauns and nymphs, trunks and
the heart of oak,

With,—for a visible divinity,—

The portent of a Jove Ægioclus

Descried 'mid clouds, lightning and
thunder, couched

On topmost crag of your Capitoline—

'Tis in the Seventh Æneid,—what, the
Eighth?

Right,—thanks, Abate,—though the
Christian's dumb,

The Latinist's vivacious in you yet!

I know my grandsire had our tapestry

Marked with the motto, 'neath a cer-
tain shield

His grandson presently will give some
gules

To vary azure. First we fight for
faiths,

But get to shake hands at the last of all:

Mine's your faith too,—in Jove Ægi-
oclus!

Nor do Greek gods, that serve as sup-
plement,

Jar with the simpler scheme, if under-
stood.

We want such intermediary race

To make communication possible;

The real thing were too lofty, we too
low,

Midway hang these: we feel their use
so plain

In linking height to depth, that
hat

And put no question nor pry na-
into the nature hid behind the

We grudge no rite the fancy in
mand;

But never, more than needs, i-
refine,

Improve upon requirement, idly
Beyond the letter, teaching gods

trade,
Which is to teach us: we'll obey

taught.
Why should we do our duty pas-

When the sky darkens, Jove is w-
—say prayer!

When the sun shines and Jove is
—sing psalm!

But wherefore pass prescription
devise

Blood-offering for sweat service,
the rod

A pungency through pickle of our o-
Learned Abate,—no one teaches y-

What Venus means and who's Ap-
here!

I spare you, Cardinal,—but, the
you wince,

You know me, I know you, and I
know that!

So, if Apollo bids us fast, we fast:
But where does Venus order we

sense

When Master Pietro rhymes a pl-
antr'y?

Give alms prescribed on Friday,—
hold hand

Because your foe lies prostrate
where's the word

Explicit in the book debars reven-
The rationale of your scheme is just

"Pay toll here, there pursue y-
pleasure free!"

So do you turn to use the medi-
powers,

Mars and Minerva, Bacchus and
rest,

And so are saved propitiating—wha-
What all good, all wise and all pot-

Jove
Vexed by the very sins in man, him-

Made life's necessity when man
made?

Irrational bunglers! So, the livi-
truth

Revealed to strike Pan dead, d-
low at last,

Prays leave to hold its own and live
 good days
 Provided it go masque grotesquely,
 called
 Christian not Pagan? Oh, you purged
 the sky
 Of all gods save the One, the great and
 good,
 Clapped hands and triumphed! But
 the change came fast:
 The inexorable need in man for life—
 Life,—you may mulct an I minish to a
 grain
 Out of the lump, so the grain left but
 live,—
 Laughed at your substituting death for
 life,
 And bade you do your worst,—which
 worst was done
 —Pass that age styled the primitive
 and pure
 When Saint this, Saint that, dutifully
 starved,
 Froze, fought with beasts, was beaten
 and abused
 And finally ridded of his flesh by fire,
 Keeping the while unspotted from the
 world!—
 Good: but next age, how goes the
 game, who gives
 His life and emulates Saint that and
 this?
 They mutiny, mutter who knows what
 excuse?
 In fine make up their minds to leave the
 new,
 Stick to the old,—enjoy old liberty,
 No prejudice, all the same, if so it please,
 To the new profession: sin o' the sly,
 henceforth!
 Let the law stand: the letter kills, what
 then?
 The spirit saves as unmistakeably.
 Omniscience sees, Omnipotence could
 stop,
 All-mercifulness pardons,—it must be,
 Frown law its fiercest, there's a wink
 somewhere.
 Such was the logic in this head of mine:
 I, like the rest, wrote "poison" on my
 bread;
 But broke and ate:—said "those that
 use the sword
 "Shall perish by the same;" then
 stabbed my foe.
 I stand on solid earth, not empty air:

Dislodge me, let your Pope's crook hale
 me hence!
 Not he, nor you! And I so pity both,
 'I'll make the speech you want the wit
 to make:
 "Count Guido, who reveal our mys-
 tery,
 "You trace all issues to the love of life:
 "We have a life to love and guard, like
 you.
 "Why did you put us upon self-de-
 fence?
 "You well knew what prompt pass-
 word would appease
 "The sentry's ire when folk infringe
 his bounds,
 "And yet kept mouth shut: do you
 wonder then
 "If, in mere decency, he shot you dead?
 "He can't have people play such
 pranks as you
 "Beneath his nose at noonday, who
 disdain
 "To give him an excuse before the
 world, [camp!]
 "By crying 'I break rule to save our
 "Under the old rule, such offence were
 death;
 "And so had you heard Pontifex pro-
 nounce
 "Since you slay foe and violate the
 form,
 "That turns to murder, which were
 sacrifice
 "Had you, while, say, law-suiting him
 to death,
 "But raised an altar to the Unknown
 God,
 "Or else the Genius of the Vatican.'
 "Why then this pother?—all because
 the Pope
 "Doing his duty, cries 'A foreigner,
 "You scandalize the natives: here at
 Rome
 "Romano vivitur more: wise men here,
 "Put the Church forward and efface
 themselves.
 "The fit defence had been,—you
 stamped on wheat,
 "Intending all the time to trample
 tares,—
 "Were fain extirpate, then, the here-
 tic,
 "And now find, in your haste you
 slew a fool:
 "Nor Pietro, nor Violante, nor your
 wife

That takes your taste, you other kind
 of men!
 How you had loved her! Guido
 wanted skill
 To value such a woman at her worth!
 Properly the instructed criticise
 "What 's here, you simpleton have
 tossed to take
 "Its chance i' the gutter? This a
 daub, indeed?
 "Why, 't is a Rafael that you kicked
 to rags!"
 Perhaps so: some prefer the pure de-
 sign:
 Give me my gorge of colour, glut of gold
 In a glory round the Virgin made for
 me!
 Titian 's the man, not Monk Angelico
 Who traces you some timid chalky
 ghost
 That turns the church into a charnel:
 ay, [wife!
 Just such a pencil might depict my
 She,—since she, also, would not change
 herself,—
 Why could not she come in some heart-
 shaped cloud,
 Rainbow'd about with riches, royalty
 Rimming her round, as round the tint-
 less lawn
 Guardingly runs the selvage cloth of
 gold?
 I would have left the faint fine gauze
 untouched,
 Needle-work'd over with its lily and
 rose,
 Let her bleach unmolested in the midst.
 Chill that selected solitary spot
 Of quietude she pleased to think was
 life:
 Purity, pallor grace the lawn no doubt
 When there 's the costly bordure to un-
 thread
 And make again an ingot: but what's
 grace
 When you want meat and drink and
 clothes and fire?
 A tale comes to my mind that 's appo-
 site—
 Possibly true, probably false, a truth
 Such as all truths we live by, Cardinal!
 'T is said, a certain ancestor of mine
 Follow'd—whoever was the potentate,
 To Paynimrie, and in some battle,
 broke
 Through more than due allowance of
 the foe
 And, risking much his own life, saved
 the lord's.
 Battered and bruised, the Emperor
 scrambles up,
 Rubs his eyes and looks round and sees
 my sire,
 Picks a furze-sprig from out his hau-
 berk-joint,
 (Token how near the ground went
 majesty)
 And says "Take this, and, if thou get
 safe home,
 "Plant the same in thy garden-ground
 to grow:
 "Run thence an hour in a straight line,
 and stop:
 "Describe a circle round (for central
 point)
 "The furze aforesaid, reaching every
 way
 "The length of that hour's run: I give
 it thee,—
 "The central point, to build a castle
 there,
 "The circumjacent space, for fit de-
 mesne,
 "The whole to be thy children's heri-
 tage,—
 "Whom, for my sake, bid thou wear
 furze on cap!"
 Those are my arms: we turned the
 furze a tree
 To show more, and the greyhound tied
 thereto,
 Straining to start, means swift and
 greedy both;
 He stands upon a triple mount of gold—
 By Jove, then, he's escaping from true
 gold
 And trying to arrive at empty air!
 Aha! the fancy never crossed my
 mind!
 My father used to tell me, and subjoin
 "As for the castle, that took wings and
 flew:
 "The broad lands,—why, to traverse
 them to-day
 "Would task my gouty feet, though in
 my prime
 "I doubt not I could stand and spit so
 far:
 "But for the furze, boy, fear no lack
 of that,
 "So long as fortune leaves one field to
 grub!
 "Wherefore hurra for furze and loy-
 alty!"

What may I mean, where may the lesson lurk?
 "Do not bestow on man by way of gift
 "Furze without some substantial framework,—grace
 "Of purity, a furze-sprig of a wife,
 "To me, 't' the thick of battle for my bread,
 "Without some better dowry,—house and land!"
 No other gift than sordid muck? Yes, Sir!
 Many more and much better. Give them me!
 O those Olimpias bold, those Biancas brave,
 That brought a husband will worth Ormuz' wealth!
 Cried "Thou being mine, why, what but thine am I?"
 "Be thou to me law, right, wrong, heaven and hell!
 "Let us blend souls, be thou in me to bid
 "Two bodies work one pleasure! What are these
 "Called king, priest, father, mother, stranger, friend?
 "They fret thee or they frustrate? Give the word—
 "Be certain they shall frustrate nothing more!
 "And who is this young florid foolishness
 "That holds thy fortune in his pigmy [clutch
 "—Being a prince and potency, forsooth!—
 "And hesitates to let the trifle go?
 "Let me but seal up eye, sing ear to sleep
 "Sounder than Samson,—pounce thou on the prize
 "Shall slip from off my breast, and down couch-side
 "And on to floor, and far as my lord's feet—
 "Where he stands in the shadow with the sword
 "Waiting to see what Delilah dares do!
 "Is the youth fair? What is a man to me
 "Who am thy call-bird? Twist his neck—my dupe's,—
 "Then take the breast shall turn a breast indeed!"
 Such women are there; and they marry whom?

Why, when a man has gone and hanged himself
 Because of what he calls a wicked wife,—
 See, if the turpitude, he makes his moan,
 Be not mere excellence the fool ignore
 His monster is perfection, Circe, sent straight from the sun, with rod the idiot blames
 As not an honest distaff to spin wool
 O thou Lucrezia, is it long to wait
 Yonder where all the gloom is in a glow
 With thy suspected presence?—virgin yet,
 Virtuous again in face of what's to teach—
 Sin unimagined, unimaginable,—
 I come to claim my bride,—thy Borgias's self
 Not half the burning bridegroom shall be!
 Cardinal, take away your crucifix!
 Abate, leave my lips alone, they bite
 'T is vain you try to change, what should not change,
 And cannot. I have bared, you bath my heart—
 It grows the stonier for your saving dew!
 You steep the substance, you would lubricate,
 In waters that but touch to petrify!
 You too are petrifications of a kind:
 Move not a muscle that shows mercy
 rave
 Another twelve hours, every word were waste!
 I thought you would not slay impenitence,—
 Teased first contrition from the man you slew,—
 I thought you had a conscience. Cardinal,
 You know I am wronged!—wronged, say, and wronged maintain.
 Was this strict inquisition made for blood
 When first you showed us scarlet on your back,
 Called to the College? That straightforward way
 To that legitimate end,—I think it passed
 Over a scantling of heads brained, hearts broke,

Lives trodden into dust,—how other-
wise ?
Such is the way o' the world, and so
you walk :
Does memory haunt your pillow ? Not
a whit.
God wills you never pace your garden-
path
One appetising hour ere dinner-time
But your intrusion there treads out of
life
An universe of happy innocent things :
Feel you remorse about that damsel-fly
Which buzzed so near your mouth and
flapped your face,
You blotted it from being at a blow ?
It was a fly, you were a man, and more,
Lord of created things, so took your
course.
Manliness, mind,—these are things fit
to save,
Fit to brush fly from : why, because I
take
My course, must needs the Pope kill
me ?—kill you !
Because this instrument he throws
away [yours
Is strong to serve a master : it were
To have and hold and get such good
from out !
The Pope who dooms me, needs must
die next year ;
I 'll tell you how the chances are sup-
posed
For his successor : first the Chamber-
lain,
Old San Cesario,—Colloredo, next,—
Then, one, two, three, four, I refuse to
name,
After these, comes Altieri ; then come
you—
Seventh on the list you are, unless . .
ha, ha,
How can a dead hand give a friend a
lift ?
Are you the person to despise the help
O' the head shall drop in pannier pres-
ently ?
So a child seesaws on or kicks away
The fulcrum-stone that 's all the sage
requires
To fit his lever to and move the world.
Cardinal, I adjure you in God's name,
Save my life, fall at the Pope's feet, set
forth
Things your own fashion, not in words
like these

Made for a sense like yours who appre-
hend !
Translate into the court-conventional
" Count Guido must not die, is inno-
cent !
" Fair, be assured ! But what an he
were foul,
" Blood-drenched and murder-crusted
head to foot ?
" Spare one whose death insults the
Emperor,
" And outrages the Louis you so love !
" He has friends who will avenge him ;
enemies
" Who hate the church now with im-
punity
" Missing the old coercive : would you
send
" A soul straight to perdition, dying
frank
" An atheist ? " Go and say this, for
God's sake !
—Why, you don't think I hope you 'll
say one word ?
Neither shall I persuade you from your
stand
Nor you persuade me from my station :
take
Your crucifix away, I tell you twice !
Come, I am tired of silence ! Pause
enough !
You have prayed : I have gone inside
my soul
And shut its door behind me : 't is your
torch
Makes the place dark,—the darkness let
alone
Grows tolerable twilight,—one may
grope
And get to guess at length and breadth
and depth.
What is this fact I feel persuaded of—
This something like a foothold in the
sea,
Although Saint Peter's bark scuds,
billow-borne,
Leaves me to founder where it flung
me first ?
Spite of your splashing, I am high and
dry !
God takes his own part in each thing he
made ;
Made for a reason, he conserves his
work,
Gives each its proper instinct of de-
fence.

My lamblike wife could neither bark
nor bite,
She bleated, bleated, till for pity pure,
The village roused it, ran with pole and
prong
To the rescue, and behold the wolf 's at
bay!
Shall he try bleating?—or take turn or
two,
Since the wolf owns to kinship with the
fox,
And failing to escape the foe by these,
Give up attempt, die fighting quietly?
The last bad blow that strikes fire in at
eye
And on to brain, and so out, life and all,
How can it but be cheated of a pang
While, fighting quietly, the jaws enjoy
Their re-embrace in mid backbone
they break,
After their weary work thro' the toes'
flesh?
That 's the wolf-nature. Don't mis-
take my trope!
The Cardinal is qualmish! Eminence,
My fight is figurative, blows i' the air,
Brain-war with powers and principal-
ties,
Spirit-bravado, no real fisticuffs!
I shall not presently, when the knock
comes,
Cling to this bench nor flee the hang-
man's face,
No, trust me! I conceive worse lots
than mine.
Whether it be the old contagious fit
And plague o' the prison have sur-
prised me too,
The appropriate drunkenness of the
death-hour
Creep on my sense, the work o' the wine
and myrrh,—
I know not,—I begin to taste my
strength,
Careless, gay even: what's the worth of
life?
The Pope is dead, my murderous old
man,
For Tozzi told me so: and you, for-
sooth—
Why, you don't think, Abate, do your
best,
You'll live a year more with that hack-
ing cough
And blotch of crimson where the cheek's
a pit?
Tozzi has got you also down in book.

Cardinal, only seventh of seventy m
Is not one called Albano in the lot
Go eat your heart, you 'll never b
Pope!
Inform me, is it true you left your
A Pucci, for promotion in the church
She 's more than in the church,—in
churchyard!
Plautilla Pucci, your affianced bride
Has dust now in the eyes that held
love,—
And Martinez, suppose they make y
Pope,
Stops that with *veto*,—so, enjoy yo
self!
I see you all reel to the rock, y
waves—
Some forthright, some describe a su
ous track.
Some crested, brilliantly with hea
above,
Some in a strangled swirl sunk w
knows how,
But all bound whither the main-curre
sets,
Rockward, an end in foam for all
you!
What if I am o'ertaken, pushed to t
front
By all you crowding smoother souls t
And reach, a minute sooner than w
meant,
The boundary, whereon I break
mist?
Go to! the smoothest safest of you a
Most perfect and compact wave in n
train,
Spite of the blue tranquillity above,
Spite of the breadth before of lapsin
peace
Where broods the halcyon and the fis
leaps free,
Will presently begin to feel the prick
At lazy heart, the push at torpid brain
Will rock vertiginously in turn, an
reel,
And, emulative, rush to death like me
Later or sooner by a minute then,
So much for the untimeliness of death,—
And, as regards the manner that o
fends,
The rude and rough, I count the sam
for gain—
Be the act harsh and quick! Un
doubtedly
The soul 's condensed and, twice itsel
expands

To burst thro' life, in alternation due,
 Into the other state whate'er it prove.
 You never know what life means till
 you die :

Even throughout life, 't is death that
 makes life live,

Gives it whatever the significance.

For see, on your own ground and argu-
 ment,

Suppose life had no death to fear, how
 find

A possibility of nobleness

In man, prevented daring any more ?

What 's love, what 's faith without a
 worst to dread ?

Lack-lustre jewelry ; but faith and love
 With death behind them bidding do or
 die—

Put such a foil at back, the sparkle 's
 born !

From out myself how the strange co-
 lours come !

Is there a new rule in another world ?

Be sure I shall resign myself : as here

I recognised no law I could not see,

There, what I see, I shall acknowledge
 too :

On earth I never took the Pope for God,
 In heaven I shall scarce take God for
 the Pope.

Unmanned, remade : I hold it prob-
 able—

With something changeless at the heart
 of me

To know me by, some nucleus that 's
 myself :

Accretions did it wrong ? Away with
 them—

You soon shall see the use of fire !

Till when,
 All that was, is ; and must for ever be.
 Nor is it in me to unhate my hates,—
 I use up my last strength to strike once
 more

Old Pietro in the wine-house-gossip-
 face,

To trample underfoot the whine and
 wile

Of that Violante,—and I grow one gorge
 To loathingly reject Pompilia's pale

Poison my hasty hunger took for food.
 A strong tree wants no wreaths about
 its trunk,

No cloying cups, no sickly sweet of
 scent,

But sustenance at root, a bucketful.

How else lived that Athenian who died
 so,

Drinking hot bull's-blood, fit for men
 like me ?

I lived and died a man, and take man's
 chance,

Honest and bold : right will be done to
 such.

Who are these you have let descend my
 stair ?

Ha, their accursed psalm ! Lights at
 the sill !

Is it " Open " they dare bid you ?
 Treachery !

Sirs, have I spoken one word all this
 while

Out of the world of words I had to say ?
 Not one word ! All was folly—I

laughed and mocked !

Sirs, my first true word, all truth and
 no lie,

Is—save me notwithstanding ! Life is
 all !

I was just stark mad,—let the madmar-
 live

Pressed by as many chains as you
 please pile !

Don't open ! Hold me from them ! I
 am yours,

I am the Granduke's—no, I am the
 Pope's !

Abate,—Cardinal,—Christ,—Maria,—
 God, . . .

Pompilia, will you let them murder me ?

XII

THE BOOK AND THE RING

HERE were the end, had anything an
 end :

Thus, lit and launched, up and up
 roared and soared

A rocket, till the key o' the vault was
 reached,

And wide heaven held, a breathless
 minute-space,

In brilliant usurpature : thus caught
 spark,

Rushed to the height, and hung at full
 of fame

Over men's upturned faces, ghastly
 thence,

Our giaring Guido : now decline must
 be.

In its explosion, you have seen his act,
 By my power—maybe, judged it by
 your own,—

Or composite as good orbs prove, or
crammed
With worse ingredients than the Worm-
wood Star.

The act, over and ended, falls and fades :
What was once seen, grows what is now
described,

Then talked of, told about, a tinge the
less

In every fresh transmission ; till it
melts,

Trickles in silent orange or wan grey
Across our memory, dies and leaves all
dark,

An I presently we find the stars again.
Follow the main streaks, meditate the
mode

Of brightness, how it hastes to blend
with black !

After that February Twenty-Two,
Since our salvation, Sixteen-Ninety-
Eight,

Of all reports that were, or may have
been,

Concerning those the day killed or let
live,

Four I count only. Take the first that
comes.

A letter from a stranger, man of rank,
Venetian visitor at Rome,—who knows,
On what pretence of busy idleness ?
Thus he begins on evening of that day.

" Here are we at our end of Carnival ;
" Prodigious gaiety and monstrous
mirth,

" And constant shift of entertaining
show :

" With influx, from each quarter of the
globe,

" Of strangers nowise wishful to be last
" I' the struggle for a good place pres-
ently

" When that befalls, fate cannot long
defer.

" The old Pope totters on the verge o'
the grave :

" You see, Malpichi understood far
more

" Than Tozzi how to treat the ailments :
age,

" No question, renders these inveter-
ate.

" Cardinal Spada, actual Minister,
" Is possible Pope ; I wager on his head,

" Since those four entertainments of
niece

" Which set all Rome a-stare : P
probably—

" Though Colloredo has his backers
" And San Cesario makes one doub
times :

" Altieri will be Chamberlain at m

" A week ago the sun was warm
May,

" And the old man took daily exer
" Along the river-side ; he loves to

" That Custom-house he built upon
bank,

" For, Naples-born, his tastes are ma
time :

" But yesterday he had to keep in-do
" Because of the outrageous rain th
fell.

" On such days the good soul has fail
ing-fits,

" Or lies in stupor, scarcely makes l
lieve

" Of minding business, fumbles at l
beads.

" They say, the trust that keeps l
heart alive

" Is that, by lasting till December nex
" He may hold Jubilee a second tim

" And, twice in one reign, ope the Ho
Doors.

" By the way, somebody responsible
" Assures me that the King of Fran
has writ

" Fresh orders : Fenelon will be co
demned :

" The Cardinal makes a wry fa
enough,

" Having a love for the delinquent
still,

" He 's the ambassador, must press th
point.

" Have you a wager too dependen
here ?

" Now, from such matters to diver
awhile,

" Hear of to-day's event which crown
the week,

" Casts all the other wagers into shade
" Tell Dandolo I owe him fifty drop

" Of heart's blood in the shape of gol
zecchines !

" The Pope has done his worst :
have to pay

ainments of his
a-stare : Pope
his backers too,
s one doubt at
erlain at most.
was warm like
daily exercise
he loves to see
built upon the
astes are mari-
keep in-doors
ous rain that
soul has faint-
ely makes be-
umbles at his
that keeps his
cember next,
second time,
ope the Holy
responsible
ing of France
will be con-
a wry face
delinquent :
ust press the
o dependent
rs to divert
which crowns
s into shade.
a fifty drops
hape of gold
s worst : I

" For the execution of the Count, by Jove !
" Two days since, I reported him as safe,
" Re-echoing the conviction of all Rome :
" Who could suspect the one deaf ear—the Pope's ?
" But prejudices grow insuperable,
" And that old enmity to Austria, that
" Passion for France and France's pageant-king
" (Of which, why pause to multiply the proofs
" Now scandalously rife in Europe's mouth ?)
" These fairly got the better in the man
" Of justice, prudence, and *esprit de corps*,
" And he persisted in the butchery.
" Also, 't is said that in his latest walk
" To that Dogana-by-the-Bank, he built,
" The crowd,—he suffers question, unrebuked,—
" Asked, ' Whether murder was a privilege
" ' Only reserved for nobles like the Count ? '
" And he was ever mindful of the mob.
" Martinez, the Cæsarian Minister,
" —Who used his best endeavours to spare blood,
" And strongly pleaded for the life ' of one,'
" Urged he, ' I may have dined at table with ! —
" He will not soon forget the Pope's rebuff,
" —Feels the slight sensibly, I promise you !
" And but for the dissuasion of two eyes
" That make with him foul weather or fine day,
" He had abstained, nor graced the spectacle :
" As it was, barely would he condescend
" Look forth from the *palchetto* where he sat
" Under the Pincian : we shall hear of this !
" The substituting, too, the People's Square
" For the out-o'-the-way old quarter by the Bridge,

" Was meant as a conciliatory sop
" To the mob ; it gave one holiday the more.
" But the French Embassy might unfurl flag,—
" Still the good luck of France to fling a foe !
" Cardinal Bouillon triumphs properly !
" *Palchetti* were erected in the Place,
" And houses, at the edge of the Three Streets,
" Let their front windows at six dollars each :
" Anguisiola, that patron of the arts,
" Hired one ; our Envoy Contarini too.
" Now for the thing ; no sooner the decree
" Gone forth,—'t is four-and-twenty hours ago,—
" Than Acciaïoli and Panciatichi,
" Old friends, indeed compatriots of the man,
" Being pitched on as the couple properest
" To intimate the sentence yesternight,
" Were closeted ere cock-crow with the Count.
" They both report their efforts to dispose
" The unhappy nobleman for ending well,
" Despite the natural sense of injury,
" Were crowned at last with a complete success :
" And when the Company of Death arrived
" At twenty-hours,—the way they reckon here,—
" We say, at sunset, after dinner-time,—
" The Count was led down, hoisted up on car,
" Last of the five, as heinousest, you know :
" Yet they allowed one whole car to each man.
" His intrepidity, nay, nonchalance,
" As up he stood and down he sat himself,
" Struck admiration into those who saw.
" Then the procession started, took the way
" From the New Prisons by the Pilgrim's Street,
" The street of the Governo, Pasquin's Street,

- " (Where was stuck up, 'mid other epigrams,
 " A quatrain . . . but of all that, presently !)
 " The Place Navona, the Pantheon's Place,
 " Place of the Column, last the Corso's length,
 " And so debouched thence at Man-naia's foot
 " I' the Place o' the People. As is evident,
 " (Despite the malice,—plainly meant, I fear,
 " By this abrupt change of locality,—
 " The Square 's no such bad place to head and hang)
 " We had the titillation as we sat
 " Assembled, (quality in conclave, ha ?)
 " Of, minute after minute, some report
 " How the slow show was winding on its way.
 " Now did a car run over, kill a man,
 " Just opposite a pork-shop numbered Twelve :
 " And bitter were the outcries of the mob
 " Against the Pope : for, but that he forbids
 " The Lottery, why, twelve were Tern Quatern !
 " Now did a beggar by Saint Agnes, lame
 " From his youth up, recover use of leg,
 " Through prayer of Guido as he glanced that way :
 " So that the crowd near crammed his hat with coin.
 " Thus was kept up excitement to the last,
 " —Not an abrupt out-bolting, as of yore,
 " From Castle, over Bridge and on to block,
 " And so all ended ere you well could wink !
 " Guido was last to mount the scaffold-steps
 " Here also, as atrociouslest in crime.
 " We hardly noticed how the peasants died,
 " They dangled somehow soon to right and left,
 " And we remained all ears and eyes, could give
 " Ourselves to Guido undividedly,
 " As he harangued the multitude neath.
 " He begged forgiveness on the part God,
 " And fair construction of his act from men,
 " Whose suffrage he entreated for his soul,
 " Suggesting that we should forthwith repeat
 " A *Pater* and an *Ave*, with the hymn
 " *Salve Regina Cæli*, for his sake.
 " Which said, he turned to the confessor, crossed
 " And reconciled himself, with decency
 " Oft glancing at Saint Mary's opposite site
 " Where they possess, and showed shrine to-day,
 " The Blessed *Umbilicus* of our Lord
 " (A relic 't is believed no other church
 " In Rome can boast of)—then rose up as brisk
 " Knelt down again, bent head, adapted neck,
 " And, with the name of Jesus on his lips,
 " Received the fatal blow.
 " The headsman showed
 " The head to the populace. Must avouch
 " We strangers own to disappointment here ?
 " Report pronounced him fully six feet high,
 " Youngish, considering his fifty years
 " And, if not handsome, dignified at least.
 " Indeed, it was no face to please wife !
 " His friends say, this was caused by the costume :
 " He wore the dress he did the murder in,
 " That is, a *just-a-corps* of russet serge
 " Black camisole, coarse cloak of baracan
 " (So they style here the garb of goat's hair cloth)
 " White hat and cotton cap beneath, poor Count,
 " Preservative against the evening dews
 " During the journey from Arezzo. Well,
 " So died the man, and so his end was peace ;

" Whence many a moral were to meditate.

" Spada,—you may bet Dandolo,—is Pope!

" Now for the quatrain!"

No, friend, this will do!

You 've sputtered into sparks. What streak comes next?

A letter: Don Giacinto Arcangeli, Doctor and Proctor, him I made you mark

Buckle to business in his study late, The virtuous sire, the valiant for the truth,

Acquaints his correspondent,—Florentine,

By name Cencini, advocate as well, *Socius* and brother-in-the-devil to match,—

A friend of Franceschini, anyhow, And knit up with the bowels of the case,—

Acquaints him, (in this paper that I touch)

How their joint effort to obtain re-prieve

For Guido had so nearly nicked the nine

And ninety and one over,—he would say,

At Tarocs,—or succeeded,—in our phrase.

To this Cencini's care I owe the Book, The yellow thing I take and toss once more

—How will it be, my four-years'-intimate,

When thou and I part company anon?—

"T was he, the " whole position of the case,"

Pleading and summary, were put before;

Discreetly in my Book he bound them all,

Adding some three epistles to the point. Here is the first of these, part fresh as penned,

The sand, that dried the ink, not rubbed away,

Though penned the day whereof it tells the deed:

Part—extant just as plainly, you know where,

Whence came the other stuff, went, you know how,

To make the ring that's all but round and done.

" Late they arrived, too late, egregious Sir,

" Those same justificative points you urge

" Might benefit His Blessed Memory

" Count Guido Franceschini now with God:

" Since the Court,—to state things succinctly,—styled

" The Congregation of the Governor,

" Having resolved on Tuesday last our cause

" I' the guilty sense, with death for punishment,

" Spite of all pleas by me deducible

" In favour of said Blessed Memory,—

" I, with expenditure of pains enough,

" Obtained a respite, leave to claim and prove

" Exemption from the law's award,—alleged

" The power and privilege o' the Clericate:

" To which effect a courier was despatched.

" But ere an answer from Arezzo came,

" The Holiness of our Lord the Pope (prepare!)

" Judging it inexpedient to postpone

" The execution of such sentence passed,

" Saw fit, by his particular chirograph,

" To derogate, dispense with privilege,

" And wink at any hurt accruing thence

" To Mother Church through damage of her son;

" Also, to overpass and set aside

" That other plea on score of tender age,

" Put forth by me to do Pasquini good,

" One of the four in trouble with our friend.

" So that all five, to-day, have suffered death

" With no distinction save in dying,—he,

" Decollated by way of privilege,

" The rest hanged decently and in order. Thus

" Came the Count to his end of gallant man,

" Defunct in faith and exemplarity:

" Nor shall the shield of his great House lose shine,

" Nor its blue banner blush to red thereby.

" This too, should yield sustainment to
our hearts—

" He had commiseration and respect

" In his decease from universal Rome,

" *Quantum est hominum venustiorum,*

" The nice and cultivated everywhere :

" Though, in respect of me his advocate,

" Needs must I groan o'er my debility,

" Attribute the untoward event o' the
strife

" To nothing but my own crass ignor-
ance

" Which failed to set the valid reasons
forth,

" Find fit excuse : such is the fate of
war !

" May God compensate us the direful
blow

" By future blessings on his family

" Whereof I lowly beg the next com-
mands ;

" —Whereeto, as humbly, I confirm my-
self . . ."

And so forth,—follow name and place
and date :

On the next leaf—

" *Hactenus senioribus !*

" There, old fox, show the clients t'
other side

" And keep this corner sacred, I be-
seech !

" You and your pleas and proofs were
what folks call

" Pisan assistance, aid that comes too
late,

" Saves a man dead as nail in post of
door.

" Had I but time and space for narra-
tive !

" What was the good of twenty Cleri-
cates

" When Somebody's thick headpiece
once was bent

" On seeing Guido's drop into the bag ?

" How these old men like giving youth
a push !

" So much the better : next push goes
to him,

" And a new Pope begins the century.

" Much good I get by my superb de-
fence !

" But argument is solid and subsists,

" While obstinacy and ineptitude

" Accompany the owner to his tomb ;

" What do I care how soon ? Beside,
folks see !

" Rome will have relished heartily the
show,

" Yet understood the motives, never
fear,

" Which caused the indecent change o'
the People's Place

" To the People's Playground,—stigi-
matize the spite

" Which in a trice precipitated things

" As oft the moribund will give a kick

" To show they are not absolutely dead

" So feebleness i' the socket shoots its
last,

" A spirit of violence for energy !

" But thou, Cencini, brother of my
breast,

" O fox, whose home is 'mid the tender
grape,

" Whose couch in Tuscany by Themis
throne,

" Subject to no such . . . but I shut
my mouth

" Or only open it again to say,

" This pother and confusion fairly laid,

" My hands are empty and my satchel
lank.

" Now then for both the Matrimonial
Cause

" And the case of Gomez ! Serve them
hot and hot !

" *Reliqua differamus in crastinum !*

" The impatient estafette cracks whip
outside :

" Still, though the earth should swallow
him who swears

" And me who make the mischief, in
must slip

" —My boy, your godson, fat-chaps
Hyacinth,

" Enjoyed the sight while Papa plodded
here.

" I promised him, the rogue, a month
ago,

" The day his birthday was, of all the
days,

" That if I failed to save Count Guido's
head,

" Cinuccio should at least go see it
chopped

" From trunk—' So, Latinize your
thanks !' quoth I :

" ' That I prefer, *hoc malim,*' raps me
out

" The rogue : you notice the subjun-
ctive ? Ah !

heartily the
 natives, never
 change o'
 ound,—stig-
 ated things !
 give a kick
 olutely dead,
 et shoots its
 nergy !
 ther of my
 d the tender
 by Themis'
 but I shut
 say,
 a fairly laid,
 my satchel
 Matrimonial
 Serve them
 stinum !
 cracks whip
 ould swallow
 mischief, in
 fat-chaps
 pa plodded
 e, a month
 , of all the
 ant Guido's
 go see it
 nize your
 , raps me
 e subjunc-

" Accordingly he sat there, bold in box'
 " Proud as the Pope behind the pea-
 cock-fans ;
 " Whereon a certain lady-patroness
 " For whom I manage things (my boy
 in front,
 " Her Marquis sat the third in evidence ;
 " Boys have no eyes nor ears save for
 the show)
 " " This time, Cintino," was her sportive
 word,
 " When whiz and thump went axe and
 mowed lay man,
 " And folks could fall to the suspended
 chat,
 " " This time, you see, Bottini rules the
 roast,
 " " Nor can Papa with all his eloquence
 " " Be reckoned on to help as hereto-
 fore ! " [ishly—
 " Whereat Cinone pouts ; then, spark-
 " " Papa knew better than aggrrieve his
 Pope,
 " " And baulk him of his grudge against
 our Count,
 " " Else he 'd have argued-off Bottini's
 . . . what ?
 " " His nose,"—the rogue ! well parried
 of the boy !
 " He 's long since out of Cæsar (eight
 years old)
 " And as for tripping in Eutropius . .
 well,
 " Reason the more that we strain every
 nerve
 " To do him justice, mould a model-
 mouth,
 " A Bartolus-cum-Baldo for next age :
 " For that I purse the pieces, work the
 brain,
 " And want both Gomez and the mar-
 riage-case,
 " Success with which shall plaster
 aught of pate
 " That 's broken in me by Bottini's
 flail,
 " And bruise his own, belike, that wags
 and brags.
 " *Adverti supplico humiliter*
 " *Quod*, don't the fungus see, the fop
 divine
 " That one hand drives two horses, left
 and right ?
 " With this rein did I rescue from the
 ditch
 " The fortune of our Franceschini,
 keep

" Unsplashed the credit of a noble
 House,
 " And set the fashionable cause of Rome
 " A-prancing till oystanders shouted
 'ware !'
 " The other rein's judicious manage-
 ment
 " Suffered old Somebody to keep the
 pace,
 " Hobblyingly play the roadster : who
 but he
 " Had his opinion, was not led by the
 nose
 " In leash of quibbles strung to look like
 law !
 " You 'll soon see,—when I go to pay
 devoir
 " And compliment him on confuting
 me,—
 " If, by a back-swing of the pendulum,
 " Grace be not, thick and threefold,
 consequent !
 " " I must decide as I see proper, Don !
 " " The Pope, I have my inward lights
 for guide.
 " " Had learning been the matter in dis-
 pute,
 " " Could eloquence avail to gainsay
 fact,
 " " Yours were the victory, be com-
 forted !'
 " Cinuzzo will be the gainer by it all.
 " Quick then with Gomez, hot and hot
 next case ! "

Follows, a letter, takes the other side.
 Tail blue-eyed Fisc whose head is
 capped with cloud,
 Doctor Bottini,—to no matter who,
 Writes on the Monday two days after-
 ward.
 Now shall the honest championship of
 right,
 Crowned with success, enjoy at last,
 unblamed,
 Moderate triumph ! Now shall elo-
 quence
 Poured forth in fancied floods for vir-
 tue's sake,
 (The print is sorrowfully dyked and
 dammed,
 But shows where fain the unbridled
 force would flow,
 Finding a channel)—now shall this
 refresh
 The thirsty donor with a drop or two !
 Here has been truth at issue with a lie :

Let who gained truth the day have
handsome pride
In his own prowess ! Eh ? What ails
the man ?

" Well, it is over, ends as I foresaw :
" Easily proved, Pompilia's innocence !
" Catch them entrusting Guido's guilt
to me !
" I had, as usual, the plain truth to
plead.
" I always knew the clearness of the
stream
" Would show the fish so thoroughly,
child might prong
" The clumsy monster : with no mud
to splash,
" Small credit to lynx-eye and light-
ning-spear !
" This Guido,—(much sport he con-
trived to make,
" Who at first twist, preamble of the
cord,
" Turned white, told all, like the pol-
troon he was !)—
" Finished, as you expect, a penitent,
" Fully confessed his crime, and made
amends,
" And, edifying Rome last Saturday,
" Died like a saint, poor devil ! That's
the man
" The gods still give to my antagonist :
" Imagine how Arcangeli claps wing,
" And crows ! ' Such formidable facts
to face,
" ' So naked to attack, my client here,
" ' And yet I kept a month the Fisc at
bay,
" ' And in the end had foiled him of the
prize
" ' By this arch-stroke, this plea of
privilege,
" ' But that the Pope must gratify his
whim,
" ' Put in his word, poor old man,—let
it pass !'
" —Such is the cue to which all Rome
responds.
" What with the plain truth given me
to uphold,
" And, should I let truth slip, the Pope
at hand
" To pick up, steady her on legs again.
" My office turns a pleasantry indeed !
" Not that the burly boaster did one jot
" O' the little was to do—young Spre-
ti's work !

" But for him,—mannikin and dandi-
prat,
" Mere candle-end and inch of clever-
ness
" Stuck on Arcangeli's save-all,—but
for him
" The spruce young Spreti, what is bad
were worse !
" I looked that Rome should have the
natural gird
" At advocate with case that proves it-
self ;
" I knew Arcangeli would grin and
brag :
" But what say you to one impertinence
" Might move a man ? That monk,
you are to know,
" That barefoot Augustinian whose
report
" O' the dying woman's words did det-
riment
" To my best points it took the fresh-
ness from,
" —That meddler preached to purpose
yesterday
" At San Lorenzo as a winding-up
" O' the shows, have proved a treasure
to the church.
" Out comes his sermon smoking from
the press :
" Its text—' Let God be true, and
every man
" ' A liar '—and its application, this,
" The longest-winded of the paragraphs,
" I straight unstitch, tear out and treat
you with :
" 'T is piping hot and posts through
Rome to-day.
" Remember it, as I engage to do !
" But if you rather be disposed to see
" In the result of the long trial here,—
" This dealing doom to guilt and doling
praise
" To innocence,—any proof that truth
" May look for vindication from the
world,
" Much will you have misread the signs,
I say.
" God, who seems acquiescent in the
main
" With those who add ' So will He ever
sleep '—
" Flutters their foolishness from time
to time,

- " Puts forth His righthand recognisably ;
 " Even as, to fools who deem He needs must right
 " Wrong on the instant, as if earth were heaven,
 " He wakes remonstrance—' Passive, Lord, how long ?
 " Because Pompilia's purity prevails,
 " Conclude you, all truth triumphs in the end ?
 " So might those old inhabitants of the ark,
 " Witnessing haply their dove's safe return,
 " Pronounce there was no danger all the while
 " O' the deluge, to the creature's counterparts,
 " Aught that beat wing i' the world, was white or soft,—
 " And that the lark, the thrush, the culver too,
 " Might equally have traversed air, found earth,
 " And brought back olive-branch in unharmed bill.
 " Methinks I hear the Patriarch's warning voice—
 " ' Though this one breast, by miracle, return,
 " ' No wave rolls by, in all the waste, but bears
 " ' Within it some dead dove-like thing as dear,
 " ' Beauty made blank and harmlessness destroyed !'
 " How many chaste and noble sister-fames
 " Wanted the extricating hand, and lie
 " Strangled, for one Pompilia proud above
 " The welter, plucked from the world's calumny,
 " Stupidity, simplicity,—who cares ?
 " Romans ! An elder race possessed your land
 " Long ago, and a false faith lingered still,
 " As shades do, though the morning star be out.
 " Doubtless, some pagan of the twilight-day
 " Has often pointed to a cavern-mouth,
 " Obnoxious to beholders, hard by Rome,
 " And said,—nor he a bad man, no, nor fool,—
 " Only a man, so, blind like all his mates,—
 " ' Here skulk in safety, lurk, defying law,
 " ' The devotees to execrable creed,
 " ' Adoring—with what culture . . . Jove, avert
 " ' Thy vengeance from us worshippers of thee ! . . .
 " ' What rites obscene—their idol-god, an Ass !'
 " So went the word forth, so acceptance found,
 " So century re-echoed century,
 " Cursed the accursed,—and so, from sire to son,
 " You Romans cried ' The offscourings of our race
 " ' Corrupt within the depths there : fitly, fiends
 " ' Perform a temple-service o'er the dead :
 " ' Child, gather garment round thee, pass nor pry !'
 " So groaned your generations : till the time
 " Grew ripe, and lightning hath revealed, belike,—
 " ' Thro' crevice peeped into by curious fear,—
 " Some object even fear could recognise
 " I the place of spectres ; on the illumined wall,
 " To wit, some nook, tradition talks about,
 " Narrow and short, a corpse's length, no more :
 " And by it, in the due receptacle,
 " The little rude brown lamp of earthenware,
 " The cruse, was meant for flowers, but held the blood,
 " The rough-scratched palm-branch and the legend left
 " *Pro Christo*. Then the mystery lay clear :
 " The abhorred one was a martyr all the time,
 " A saint whereof earth was not worthy. What ?
 " Do you continue in the old belief ?
 " Where blackness bides unbroke, must devils be ?
 " Is it so certain, not another cell

" O' the myriad that make up the cata-
 comb,
 " Contains some saint a second flash
 would show ?
 " Will you ascend into the light of day
 " And, having recognised a martyr's
 shrine,
 " Go join the votaries that gape around
 " Each vulgar god that awes the mar-
 ket-place ?
 " Be these the objects of your praising ?
 See !
 " In the outstretched right hand of
 Apollo, there,
 " Is screened a scorpion : housed amid
 the folds
 " Of Juno's mantle, lo, a cockatrice !
 " Each statue of a god were fitlier styled
 " Demon and devil. Glorify no brass
 " That shines like burnished gold in
 noonday glare,
 " For fools ! Be otherwise instructed,
 you !
 " And preferably ponder, ere ye pass,
 " Each incident of this strange human
 play
 " Privily acted on a theatre,
 " Was deemed secure from every gaze
 but God's,—
 " Till, of a sudden, earthquake lays
 wall low
 " And lets the world see the wild work
 inside,
 " And how, in petrification of surprise,
 " The actors stand,—raised arm and
 planted foot,—
 " Mouth as it made, eye as it evidenced,
 " Despairing shriek, triumphant hate,
 —transfixed.
 " Both he who takes and she who yields
 the life.
 " As ye become spectators of this
 scene—
 " Watch obscuration of a fame pearl-
 pure
 " In vapoury films, enwoven circum-
 stance,
 " —A soul made weak by its pathetic
 want
 " Of just the first apprenticeship to sin,
 " Would thenceforth make the sinning
 soul secure
 " From all foes save itself, that 's tru-
 liest foe,—
 " For egg turned snake needs fear no
 serpentry,—

" As ye behold this web of circumstance
 " Deepen the more for every thrill and
 throe,
 " Convulsive effort to disperse the films
 " And disenmesh the fame o' the mar-
 tyr,—mark
 " How all those means, the unfriended
 one pursues,
 " To keep the treasure trusted to her
 breast,
 " Each struggle in the flight from
 death to life,
 " How all, by procurement of the powers
 " Of darkness, are transformed,—no
 single ray,
 " Shot forth to show and save the in-
 most star,
 " But, passed as through hell's prism,
 proceeding black
 " To the world that hates white : as ye
 watch, I say,
 " Till dusk and such defacement grow
 eclipse
 " By,—rueful perversity of man !—
 " The inequacy and inaptitude
 " Of that self-same machine, that very
 law
 " Man vaunts, devised to dissipate the
 gloom,
 " Rescue the drowning orb from ca-
 lumny, [just,
 " —Hear law, appointed to defend the
 " Submit, for best defence, that wick-
 edness
 " Was bred of flesh and innate with
 the bone
 " Borne by Pompilia's spirit for a
 space,
 " And no mere chance fault, passion-
 ate and brief :
 " Finally, when ye find,—after this
 touch
 " Of man's protection which intends to
 mar
 " The last pin-point of light and damn
 the disc,—
 " One wave of the hand of God amid
 the worlds
 " Bid vapour vanish, darkness flee away,
 " And leave the vexed star culminate
 in peace
 " Approachable no more by earthly
 mist—
 " What I call God's hand,—you, per-
 haps,—this chance
 " Of the true instinct of an old good
 man

- " Who happens to hate darkness and love light,—
 " In whom too was the eye that saw, not dim,
 " The natural force to do the thing he saw,
 " Nowise abated,—both by miracle,—
 " All this well pondered,—I demand assent
 " To the enunciation of my text
 " In face of one proof more that ' God is true
 " ' And every man a liar '—that who trusts
 " To human testimony for a fact
 " Gets this sole fact—himself is proved a fool;
 " Man's speech being false, if but by consequence
 " That only strength is true; while man is weak,
 " And, since truth seems reserved for heaven not earth,
 " Should learn to love what he may speak one day.
 " For me, the weary and the worn, who prompt
 " To mirth or pity, as I move the mood,—
 " A friar who glide unnoticed to the grave,
 " Bare feet, coarse robe and rope-girt waist of mine,—
 " I have long since renounced your world, ye know:
 " Yet weigh the worth of worldly prize forgone,
 " Disinterestedly judge this and that
 " Good ye account good: but God tries the heart.
 " Still, if you question me of my content
 " At having put each human pleasure by.
 " I answer, at the urgency of truth,
 " As this world seems, I dare not say I know
 " —Apart from Christ's assurance which decides—
 " Whether I have not failed to taste some joy.
 " For many a dream would fain perturb my choice—
 " How love, in those the varied shapes, might show
 " As glory, or as rapture, or as grace :
 " How conversancy with the books that teach,
 " The arts that help,—how, to grow great, in fine,
 " Rather than simply good, and bring thereby
 " Goodness to breathe and live, nor, born i' the brain,
 " Die there,—how these and many another gift
 " May well be precious though abjured by me.
 " But, for one prize, best meed of mightiest man,
 " Arch-object of ambition,—earthly praise,
 " Repute o' the world, the flourish of loud trump,
 " The softer social fluting,—Oh, for these,
 " —No, my friends! Fame,—that bubble which, world-wide
 " Each blows and bids his neighbour lend a breath,
 " That so he haply may behold thereon
 " One more enlarged distorted false fool's-face,
 " Until some glassy nothing grown as big
 " Send by a touch the imperishable to suds,—
 " No, in renouncing fame, the loss was light,
 " Choosing obscurity, the chance was well ! "
 Didst ever touch such ampoilosity
 As the man's own bubble, let alone its spite ?
 What 's his speech for, but just the fame he flouts—
 How he dares reprehend both high and low ?
 Else had he turned the sentence " God is true
 " And every man a liar—save the Pope
 " Happily reigning—my respects to him ! "
 —So, rounded off the period. Molinism
 Simple and pure ! To what pitch get we next ?
 I find that, for first pleasant consequence,
 Gomez, who had intended to appeal
 From the absurd decision of the Court,
 Declines, though plain enough his privilege,

To call on help from lawyers any more—
Resolves the liars may possess the
world,
Till God have had sufficiency of both :
So may I whistle for my job and fee !

But, for this virulent and rabid monk,—
If law be an inadequate machine,
And advocacy, so much impotence,
We shall soon see, my blatant brother !
That 's

Exactly what I hope to show your sort !
For, by a veritable piece of luck,
True providence, you monks round
period with,
All may be gloriously retrieved. Per-
pend !

That Monastery of the Convertites
Whereto the Court consigned Pompilia
first,

—Observe, if convertite, why, sinner
then,

Or where the pertinency of award ?—
And whither she was late returned to
die,

—Still in their jurisdiction, mark
again !—

That thrifty Sisterhood, for perquisite,
Claims every paul whereof may die pos-
sessed

Each sinner in the circuit of its walls.
Now, this Pompilia, seeing that by
death

O' the couple, all their wealth devolved
on her,

Straight utilised the respite ere decease
By regular conveyance of the goods
She thought her own, to will and to
devise,—

Gave all to friends, Tighetti and the
like,

In trust for him she held her son and
heir,

Gaetano,—trust to end with infancy :
So willing and devising, since assured
The justice of the Court would pres-
ently

Confirm her in her rights and excul-
pate,

Re-integrate and rehabilitate—
Station as, through my pleading, now
she stands.

But here 's the capital mistake : the
Court

Found Guido guilty,—but pronounced
no word

About the innocency of his wife :
I grounded charge on broader base,
hope !

No matter whether wife be true
false,

The husband must not push aside the
law,

And punish of a sudden : that 's the
point !

Gather from out my speech the con-
trary !

It follows that Pompilia, unrelieved
By formal sentence from imputed fault
Remains unfit to have and to dispose
Of property, which law provides shall
lapse :

Wherefore the Monastery claims its due
And whose, pray, whose the office, but
the Fisc's ?

Who but I institute procedure next
Against the person of dishonest life,
Pompilia, whom last week I sainted so
I, it is, teach the monk what Scriptural
means,

And that the tongue should prove a two-
edged sword,

No axe sharp one side, blunt the other
way.

Like what amused the town at Guido's
cost !

Astræa redux ! I've a second chance
Before the self-same Court o' the Gov-
ernor

Who soon shall see volte-face and chop,
change sides !

Accordingly, I charge you on your life,
Send me with all despatch the judg-
ment late

O' the Florence Rota Court, confirma-
tive

O' the prior judgment at Arczzo,
clenched

Again by the Granducal signature
Wherein Pompilia is convicted, doomed,
And only destined to escape through
flight

The proper punishment. Send me the
piece,—

I'll work it ! And this foul-mouthed
friar shall find

His Noah's-dove that brought the olive
back,

Is turned into the other sooty scout,
The raven, Noah first of all put forth
the ark,

And never came back, but ane car-
cases !

No adequate machinery in law ?
No power of life and death i' the learned
tongue ?

Methinks I am already at my speech,
Startle the world with "Thou, Pom-
pilia, thus ?

"How is the fine gold of the Temple
dim !"

And so forth. But the courier bids me
close,

And elip away one joke that runs
through Rome,

Side by side with the sermon which I
send—

How like the heartlessness of the old
hunks

Arcangeli ! His Count is hardly cold,
His client whom his blunders saerificed,
When somebody must needs describe
the scene—

How the procession ended at the church
That boasts the famous relie : quoth
our brute,

"Why, that's just Martial's phrase for
'make an end'—

"*Ad umbilicum sic perventum est !*"

The callous dog,—let who will eut off
head,

He cuts a joke, and cares no more than
so !

I think my speech shall modify his
mirth :

"How is the fine gold dim !"—but
send the piece !

Alack, Bottini, what is my next word
But death to all that hope ? The In-
strument

Is plain before me, print that ends my
Book

With the definitive verdict of the Court.
Dated September, six months after-
ward,

(Such trouble and so long, the old Pope
gave !)

"In restitution of the perfect fame

"Of dead Poinpilia, *quondam* Guido's
wife,

"And warrant to her representative

"Domenico Tighetti, barred hereby,

"While doing duty in his guardianship,

"From all molesting, all disquietude,

"Each perturbation and vexation
brought

"Or threatened to be brought against
the heir

"By the Most Venerable Convent called

"Saint Mary Magdalen o' the Convert-
ites

"I' the Corso."

Justice done a second time !

Well judged, Marc Antony, *Locum-
tenens*

O' the Governor, a Venturini too !

For which I save thy name,—last of the
list !

Next year but one, completing his nine
years

Of rule in Rome, died Innocent my
Pope

—By some accounts, on his accession-
day.

If he thought doubt would do the next
age good,

'T is pity he died unapprised what
birth by—

His reign may boast of, be remembered
Terrible Pope, too, of a kind,—Voltaire.

And so an end of all i' the story. Strain
Never so much my eyes, I miss the
mark

There lived or died that Gaetano, child
Of Guido and Pompilia : only find,

Immediately upon his father's death,
A record in the annals of the town

That Porzia, sister of our Guido, moved
The Priors of Arezzo and their head

Its Gonfalonier to give loyally
A public attestation to the right

O' the Franceschini to men's reverence—
Apparently because of the incident

O' the murder,—there's no mention
made of crime,

But what else caused such urgency to
cure

The mob, just then, of chronic greed-
iness

For scandal, love of lying vanity,
And appetite to swallow crude reports

That bring annoyance to their betters ?
—Bane

Which, here, was promptly met by
antidote.

I like and shall translate the eloquence
Of nearly the worst Latin ever writ :

"Since antique time whereof the mem-
ory

"Holds the beginning, to this present
hour,

"Our Franceschini ever shone, and
shine,

"Still i' the primary rank, supreme
amid

"The lustrés of Arezzo, proud to own
 "In this great family—her flag-bearer,
 "Guide of her steps and guardian
 against foe,—
 "As in the first beginning, so to-day!"
 There, would you disbelieve stern His-
 tory,
 Trust rather to the babble of a bard?
 I thought, Arezzo, thou hadst fitter
 souls,
 Petrarch,—nay, Buonarroti at a pinch,
 To do thee credit as *vexillifer*!
 Was it mere mirth the Patavinian
 meant,
 Making thee out, in his veracious page,
 Founded by Janus of the Double Face?

Well, proving of such perfect parentage,
 Our Gaetano, born of love and hate,
 Did the babe live or die?—one fain
 would find!
 What were his fancies if he grew a man?
 Was he proud,—a true scion of the
 stock,—
 Of bearing blazon, shall make bright
 my Book—
 Shield, Azure, on a Triple Mountain, Or,
 A Palm-tree, Proper, whereunto is
 tied
 A Greyhound, Rampant, striving in
 the slips?
 Or did he love his mother, the base-
 born,
 And fight i' the ranks, unnoticed by
 the world?

Such then, the final state o' the story.
 So
 Did the Star Wormwood in a blazing
 fall
 Frighten awhile the waters and lie lost:
 So did this old woe fade from memory,
 Till after, in the fulness of the days,
 I needs must find an ember yet un-
 quenched,
 And, breathing, blow the spark to
 flame. It lives,
 If precious be the soul of man to man.
 So, British Public, who may like me yet,
 (Marry and amen!) learn one lesson
 hence
 Of many which whatever lives should
 teach:
 This lesson, that our human speech is
 naught,
 Our human testimony false, our fame
 And human estimation words and wind.

Why take the artistic way to prove
 much?
 Because, it is the glory and good of
 That Art remains the one way poss-
 Of speaking truth, to mouths
 mine, at least.
 How look a brother in the face and
 "Thy right is wrong, eyes hast thou
 yet art blind,
 "Thine ears are stuffed and stop
 despite their length,
 "And, on, the foolishness thou com-
 est faith!"
 Say this as silverly as tongue can tro-
 The anger of the man may be endur-
 The shrug, the disappointed eye
 him
 Are not so bad to bear—but here's
 That all this trouble comes of tell-
 truth,
 Which truth, by when it reaches
 looks false,
 Seems to be just the thing it would
 plant,
 Nor recognisable by whom it left—
 While falsehood would have done
 work of truth.
 But Art,—wherein man nowise spe-
 to men,
 Only to mankind,—Art may tell
 Obliquely, do the thing shall breed
 thought,
 Nor wrong the thought, missing the
 diate word.
 So may you paint your picture, to
 show truth,
 Beyond mere imagery on the wall
 So, note by note, bring music from y-
 mind,
 Deeper than ever the Andante dives
 So write a book shall mean, beyond
 facts,
 Suffice the eye and save the soul
 side.
 And save the soul! If this intent
 mine,—
 If the rough ore be rounded to a
 Render all duty which good ring sh-
 do,
 And, failing grace, succeed in guard-
 ship,—
 Might mine but lie outside thine, L-
 Love,
 Thy rare gold ring of verse (the
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