

Robert Browning.



Class PR4202

Book .G42

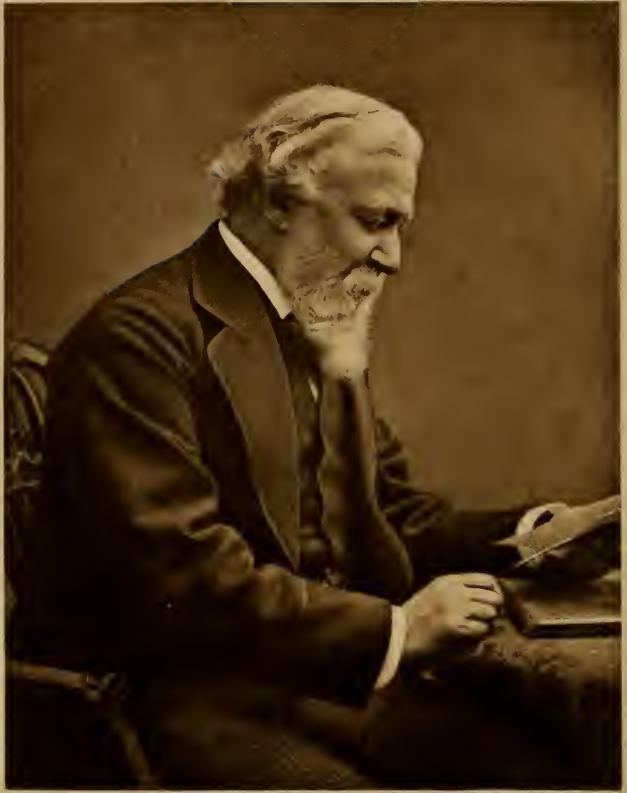
Copyright N^o 1905

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.

SELECT POEMS
OF
ROBERT BROWNING

By A. J. GEORGE

WORDSWORTH'S COMPLETE POETICAL WORKS	With Introduction and Notes
WORDSWORTH'S PRELUDE	“ “ “
SELECTIONS FROM WORDSWORTH	“ “ “
WORDSWORTH'S PREFACES AND ESSAYS ON POETRY	“ “ “
SELECT POEMS OF BURNS	“ “ “
SELECT POEMS OF BROWNING	“ “ “
BURKE'S AMERICAN ORATIONS	“ “ “
BURKE'S SPEECH ON CONCILIATION	“ “ “
WEBSTER'S SELECT SPEECHES	“ “ “
WEBSTER'S BUNKER HILL ORATION AND WASHINGTON'S FAREWELL ADDRESS	“ “ “
COLERIDGE'S ANCIENT MARINER	“ “ “
SELECT POEMS OF COLERIDGE	“ “ “
COLERIDGE'S ESSAYS ON POETRY. From the Biographia Literaria	“ “ “
TENNYSON'S PRINCESS	“ “ “
CARLYLE'S ESSAY ON BURNS	“ “ “
SYLLABUS OF ENGLISH HISTORY AND LITERATURE	“ “ “
FROM CHAUCER TO ARNOLD	“ “ “
SHORTER POEMS OF MILTON. (Complete)	“ “ “
MILTON'S COMUS, LYCIDAS, ETC. (Pocket Classics)	“ “ “
BYRON'S CHILDE HAROLD	“ “ “
EMERSON'S CONDUCT OF LIFE	With Introduction
EMERSON'S ENGLISH TRAITS	“ “
HAWTHORNE'S BLITHEDALE ROMANCE	“ “



SELECT POEMS
OF
ROBERT BROWNING

*Arranged in Chronological Order, with Biographical
and Literary Notes*

BY

A. J. GEORGE, A. M., LITT. D.

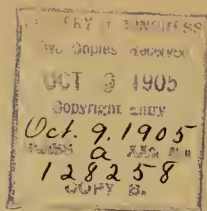
EDITOR OF "POETICAL WORKS OF WORDSWORTH," "SHORTER
POEMS OF MILTON," "SELECT POEMS OF BURNS,"
"FROM CHAUCER TO ARNOLD," ETC.

"Since Chaucer was alive and hale,
No man hath walk'd along our roads with steps
So active, so inquiring eye, or tongue
So varied in discourse."



BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

1905



Copyright, 1905,
BY A. J. GEORGE.

All Rights Reserved

Published October, 1905



64
Recd. A.M. 8 Feb. 1877.

To the Memory

OF

FRANCIS B. HORN BROOKE, D.D.

SOMETIME PRESIDENT OF THE BOSTON BROWNING SOCIETY,

A RIPE SCHOLAR AND RARE FRIEND,

THIS VOLUME

IN WHICH HE MANIFESTED A KINDLY INTEREST

IS GRATEFULLY DEDICATED

P R E F A C E

IT is now generally admitted by competent students of Browning that — as a portion of his verse is so far below what is characteristic of him as a poet and artist — such a selection from his representative work in each period of the evolution of his mind and art as will present his peculiar excellencies should be made accessible both to the student and general reader. In the present volume of selections — from “Pauline” to “Asolando” — an attempt has been made to reveal the principles which formed the mind and fashioned the art of this great teacher in his happiest moments and highest ideals. The poems are arranged in chronological order ; and the notes are biographical and literary, relating each poem to the events in the author’s life out of which it grew, and to the characteristic forms of art in his own career and that of his great contemporaries, Wordsworth and Tennyson. This method of study has been tested for a long time by the editor in school and college classes, and with general readers, and has been found to be stimulating and rewarding. Professor Edward Dowden closes his interesting and suggestive study of the life and work of Browning with this sentence : “Time will make its discreet selection from his writings. And the portion which seems most likely to survive is that which presents in true forms of art the permanent passions of humanity and characters of enduring interest.”

On one occasion Browning uttered this prohibition against those who would pry into his private life because he happened to be a man of genius :

“ A peep through my window, if you prefer ;
But, please you, no foot over threshold of mine.”

During his life all self-respecting people honored this wish of his, and since his death have desired to know only such facts as influenced the development of his mind and art. In the absence of such aids we have had much glowing rhetoric and shrill panegyric,— in themselves somewhat repelling to the student and general reader who desired to come into close personal relations with the personality of the poet. His nearest relatives and friends have now removed the prohibition, and have invited those who are interested in literary history to cross the threshold and sit by his fireside, and even listen to the sacred story of how he loved one only and how that love enriched and ennobled his life. In the “*Life and Letters of Robert Browning*,” by Mrs. Sutherland Orr, “*The Letters of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett*,” “*Mrs. Browning’s Letters*,” “*Personalia*,” by Edmund Gosse, Mrs. Arthur Bronson’s “*Browning in Venice*” and “*Browning in Asolo*,” “*Story and his Friends*,” by Henry James, there have been given to us those elements of perspective necessary to a right view of works of art such as he created. With Mrs. Orr’s “*Handbook to Robert Browning’s Works*,” Dr. Berdoe’s “*The Browning Encyclopedia*,” Mr. Stopford Brooke’s “*The Poetry of Robert Browning*,” and Professor Dowden’s “*Robert Browning*,” there is little reason why one should be disturbed by the spectre of Browning’s obscurity.

As Browning seldom recast his lines there is little reason for introducing textual notes, and as extended

glossarial and explanatory notes would be out of place in a volume of this kind,— the general reader does not care for them, and the special student should prepare his own, — I have limited myself to such notes as are biographical and critical.

As the biographical notes present the main features of Browning's life, and the literary notes the leading characteristics of his art, I have devoted the Introduction to a consideration of the genesis, progress, and nature of that disposition which we call optimism in the teaching of Browning, and his great contemporary, Wordsworth.

It is impossible to ascertain the date of composition of many of Browning's poems, and therefore I have arranged them in the order of their first publication by the poet, and have placed the date of publication at the head of each poem. In every case the latest text has been given. The only poems not given entire are "Pauline," "Paracelsus," and "Pippa Passes."

I am indebted to my friend Professor Edward Dowden of Trinity College, Dublin, for helpful suggestions in regard to the list of poems here included.

I thank The Macmillan Company and the Boston Browning Society for permission to use parts of my paper now printed in the "Boston Browning Society Papers" in the Introduction to this volume.

A. J. G.

BROOKLINE, MASS.

Sept., 1905.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	v
INTRODUCTION	ix

FIRST PERIOD — 1841.

1833.

FROM "PAULINE: A FRAGMENT OF A CONFESSION"

A Reflection	1
Early Ideals	1
A Revelation	3
Imaginative Delight	4
A Crisis	4
Recovery	5

1835.

FROM "PARACELSUS"

Paracelsus Aspires	7
Aprile's Song	9
Aprile's Revelation	10
Song: "Heap cassia, sandal-buds, and stripes"	12
Song: "Thus the Mayne glideth"	12
Paracelsus Attains	13

SECOND PERIOD — 1841-1868.

1841.

FROM "PIPPA PASSES: A DRAMA"

New Year's Hymn	20
Song: "The year's at the spring"	20
Song: "Give her but a least excuse to love me!"	20
Song: "A king lived long ago"	21
Song: "Over-head the tree-tops meet"	22
The Day's Close at Asolo	23

1842.

DRAMATIC LYRICS	PAGE
Cavalier Tunes:	
I. Marching Along	25
II. Give a Rouse	26
III. Boot and Saddle	26
My Last Duchess	27
Incident of the French Camp	28
Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister	30
Waring	32
Cristina	39
The Pied Piper of Hamelin: A Child's Story	41

1845.

DRAMATIC ROMANCES AND LYRICS	
“How they brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix”	49
Pictor Ignotus	51
The Lost Leader	53
Home Thoughts, from Abroad	54
Home Thoughts, from the Sea	55
The Bishop orders his Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church	55
The Flower's Name	58
The Flight of the Duchess	61
Fame	84
The Boy and the Angel	84
The Glove	87

1855.

MEN AND WOMEN	
Love Among the Ruins	92
A Lovers' Quarrel	94
Evelyn Hope	99
Up at a Villa — Down in the City	100
Fra Lippo Lippi	105
— A Toccata of Galuppi's	115
By the Fireside	118
Any Wife to Any Husband	125
An Epistle containing the Strange Medical Experience of Karshish, the Arab Physician	130
My Star	138
Instans Tyrannus	138
“Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came”	141
Respectability	147
The Statue and the Bust	148

	PAGE
How it strikes a Contemporary	156
The Last Ride Together	159
The Patriot	162
Memorabilia	163
Andrea del Sarto (called "The Faultless Painter")	164
Old Pictures in Florence	171
Saul	179
"De Gustibus"	195
Holy-Cross Day	196
Cleon	201
Two in the Campagna	210
A Grammarian's Funeral	212
"Transcendentalism: A Poem in Twelve Books"	216
Misconceptions	217
One Word More. To E. B. B.	218

1864.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

James Lee's Wife	224
Dis Aliter Visum; or Le Byron de Nos Jours . . .	235
— Abt Vogler	240
Rabbi Ben Ezra	244
A Death in the Desert	251
Confessions	268
Prospice	269
A Face	270
Apparent Failure	271
Epilogue to Dramatis Personæ	273

THIRD PERIOD — 1868-1889.

1872.

PROLOGUE TO FIFINE AT THE FAIR. (Amphibian). .	276
--	-----

1876.

FROM "PACCHIAROTTO WITH OTHER POEMS"

Natural Magic	278
Magical Nature	279
Hervé Riel	279
Epilogue to Pacchiarotto	284

1878.

La Saisiaz	290
Epilogue to the Two Poets of Croisic	322

1879.

DRAMATIC IDYLS	PAGE
Pheidippides	325

1880.

DRAMATIC IDYLS—SECOND SERIES

Muléykch	331
Epilogue to Dramatic Idyls—Second Series	335

1883.

JOCOSERIA

Wanting Is—What?	336
Never the Time and the Place	336

1884.

EPILOGUE TO FERISHTAH'S FANCIES	337
---	-----

1889.

ASOLANDO: FANCIES AND FACTS

Prologue to Asolando	338
Poetics	340
Summum Bonum	340
A Pearl, a Girl	341
Speculative	341
Epilogue to Asolando	342

NOTES	345
-----------------	-----

REFERENCES	409
----------------------	-----

INDEX TO POEMS	411
--------------------------	-----

INDEX TO FIRST LINES	415
--------------------------------	-----

INTRODUCTION¹

ENGLISH literature of the nineteenth century derives its distinction from, if not its superiority over, that of any preceding century, from the fact that it has kept close to life — its passion, its pathos, its power.

The movement it has told of life,
Its pain and pleasure, rest and strife.

It has revealed

The thread which binds it all in one,
And not its separate parts alone.

We hear much in these days of the Spirit of the Age, and perhaps too little of the Spirit of the Ages. The spirit of any age, however enlightened it may be, is an unsafe guide if it does not embody the best of what the ages have found to be true. We are constantly elevating costume above character, the transient above the abiding, phenomena above noumena, cleverness above style, method above spirit. Our attention in the classroom and the study is too often directed away from the great sources of power to the forms under which that power has revealed itself.

The moral progress of the world is most impressive and instructive when viewed in the great moments of the inner life, — those moments awful when power streamed forth; and the soul received the light reflected, as a light bestowed. These are the periods when earnest souls get glimpses of the eter-

¹ Parts of this Introduction appeared in the editor's address on The Optimism of Wordsworth and Browning, before the Boston Browning Society, March 4, 1895, now printed in *Boston Browning Society Papers*.

nal truths ; it is then that a height is reached in life from which are glimpses of a height that is higher. This is merely affirming that, consciously or unconsciously, the race has lived and moved and had its being in one or the other of two great conceptions of human life : the ideal or the material ; or, in terms of philosophy, Idealism or Materialism. The various forms of Art are but the revelations of man's ascent of the heights and his vision there. The Vedic Hymns, the Hebrew Psalms, Greek Art in all its forms, are but the meeting-place of the finite and the infinite. Where there is no vision the people perish, is the revelation of history.

As the man of rich and varied interests has been the man of the largest influence, — the most interesting character, — because of his sympathy with the life of our common humanity and his belief that it is at heart sound, so the literature which has reflected this godlike enthusiasm has been the literature of the greatest uplift in an age of marvellous material interests, — an age which, in its worship of the *actual*, was in danger of losing the *real*. The inspired singers and prophets of the century have sounded this note :

In faultless rhythm the ocean rolls,
A rapturous silence thrills the skies ;
And on this earth are lovely souls
That softly look with aidful eyes.

Though dark, O God, thy course and track,
We think Thou must at least have meant
That nought which lives should wholly lack
The things that are more excellent.

Mr. Richard Holt Hutton has given us a study of four leaders, guides to thought in matters of faith, — Newman, Arnold, Carlyle, and George Eliot, — who influenced the age through the art of prose. They represent certain phases of movement toward the new world where humanity is regarded as a spiritual totality, living, moving, and having its being in the life of the Eternal. It is in the poetry of Wordsworth,

Tennyson, and Browning that we find most clearly reflected this great awakening. Much may be gained by a comparative study of the works of these great poets, especially of Wordsworth and Browning, by showing how one of the earliest of this gladsome choir, — the poet of serene and blessed moods, — whence came visions of —

Something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns, —

clasps hands across the century with that later fellow-laborer — the poet of tasks — who, as he marched breast forward, cried,

Strive and thrive ! Speed, — fight on, fare ever
There as here !

It is indeed worth our while to study the mind and art of such teachers at a time when certain other aspirants for leadership come to us and say : “ You can dismiss as a fond dream the doctrine of a Divine Father. You are of age, and do not need a Father.” Or again : “ We are realists, looking facts in the face, and see no evidence in the world that throughout the ages one unceasing purpose of wisdom and goodness runs.”

There is a story, told with a great deal of satisfaction by the dalesmen of the little valley of Seathwaite in the English Lakes, of an old rector who in time of drought had been ordered by the bishop to offer prayers for rain. On the day appointed for that service he went out and made the usual observations as to sky and wind, and then went to his chapel and announced to his congregation that it was of no use for them to pray for rain so long as the wind was blowing over Hard-Nott. He did not think it wise to fly in the face of Providence as revealed in the laws of nature.

We are not always so wise as was this Cumberland dalesman, for we often invoke blessings from

the great creators of literature in defiance of the fact that the wind is blowing over Hard-Nott. We do not take the trouble to study the conditions of heredity and environment governing the nature of these men — we forget that the wind is blowing over Hard-Nott.

There was a time when it was thought possible to fully understand a great author, or a great era in history, by confining one's attention to that author or that era; but methods of interpretation in literature and history have been revolutionized by the application of the great principle of Evolution. The greatest obstacle to progress in the new methods has been the disposition of a coterie or a clique to close its eyes to everything but the one object of veneration, be that object a person, a book, or a given period in the world's history.

We have had during the last quarter of our century some striking illustrations of the new spirit, the most noteworthy being in the sphere of what is known as Higher Criticism. The Lowell Institute lectures of 1893, by a prominent college president and orthodox clergyman, furnished a beautiful example of the new spirit and the new method. The lecturer sought for the religious content in institutions and in literature which twenty-five years ago would have been considered as totally irreligious.

When the Wordsworth Society was instituted, Mr. Matthew Arnold took great pains to warn its members against the spirit of a clique. He said: "If we are to get Wordsworth recognised by the public, we must recommend him, not in the spirit of a clique but in the spirit of disinterested lovers of poetry. We must avoid the historical estimate, and the personal estimate, and we must seek the *real estimate*." Mr. Stopford Brooke, not long after Browning's death, warned us against those "who deceive themselves into a belief that they enjoy poetry because they enjoy Browning, while they never open Milton and have only heard of Chaucer and Spenser." A third

great teacher and interpreter of literature, Professor Dowden, has sounded the same note of warning, and has pointed out the only method by which we can arrive at a real estimate. "Our prime object," says he, "should be to get into living relation with a man, with the good forces of nature and humanity that play in and through him. Approach a great writer in the spirit of cheerful and trustful fraternity; this is better than hero-worship. A great master is better pleased to find a brother than a worshipper or a serf." In keeping close to the great writers from Homer to Browning, we keep close to life, and if we thus become members of the one Catholic Apostolic Church of literature, it will matter little who may be the bishop of our particular diocese.

A teacher of literature should present no literary creed to which he demands assent, nor hold a brief as for a client. He should try to reveal an attitude of mind which has been produced by reading and reflection, — an attitude which may be modified by further reading and reflection. His position should be neither that of a defendant nor that of a judge, but that of a guide. Now, the requisites for a good guide are: familiarity with the ground, and a willingness to keep himself in the background and allow us to do our own seeing.

The greatest question to be asked in regard to a poetic teacher is: What was his attitude toward those problems, those limitless desires in which every human being shares? Did he inspire hope in the unseen order of things? The disposition which we call optimism, as it reveals itself in literature and life, is difficult of exact definition, and yet we must image the whole, then execute the parts. We need such a conception as will admit of the poetic and the philosophic essentials, — that will not be so poetic as to be vague nor so philosophic as to be abstruse, — and we find such in the affirmation of the essential spiritual nature of the universe. This enthrones man

upon the heights, for it regards him in his threefold nature —

What Does, what Knows, what Is; three souls, one man —
as the goal of Creative Energy and the special object of God's love.

Pessimism is the denial of any such spiritual element in the universe and the consequent dethronement of man. "Once dethrone Humanity, regard it as a mere local incident in an endless and aimless series of cosmical changes, and you arrive at a doctrine, which, under whatever specious name it may be veiled, is at bottom neither more nor less than Atheism."¹

There is a class of writers claiming to be teachers who, while accepting what they call the demonstrations of the understanding as to man's origin and destiny, yet attempt to save him from the inevitable abyss, — from being drown'd in the deeps of a meaningless past.

Of Heaven or Hell I have no power to sing,
I cannot ease the burden of your fears,
Or make quick-coming death a little thing,
Nor for my words shall ye forget your tears!

Love deep as the sea as a rose must wither,
As the rose-red seaweed that mocks the rose.
Shall the dead take thought for the dead to love them?
What love was ever as deep as the grave?
They are loveless now as the grass above them,
Or the wave.

We may delight in these pretty theories while life moves serenely, but when the storm and stress come we then find we have need of such revelations as the world has tested. It is when we turn from such idle singers of an empty day to the great poets, that we are thrilled with the wild joys of living.

With the optimism of Wordsworth and Browning we are all more or less familiar, but are we equally familiar with the causes and the nature of this per-

¹ John Fiske, *Destiny of Man*.

sonal note in each, by which one became the bearer of "plenteous health, exceeding store of joy, and an impassioned quietude," and the other became the "Subtlest Assertor of the Soul in Song"?

In any attempt to assign causes for the optimism of a great teacher the influences of hereditary predisposition and of environment must be given a place, but a place subordinate to that third somewhat, — which we can neither analyze nor define, but which we know as the essential self, — the individuality.

In the case of Wordsworth, heredity and early environment were no doubt of deep significance, and we fear that too often they have been used as a sufficient cause of his optimism. We wish to show that they were efficient, but not sufficient; that in Wordsworth's work we have not only the profoundest thought, but well-ordered thought, in union with poetic sensibility unique and unmatched; that in the union of natural magic and moral profundity the great body of his work is making for "rest and peace, and shade for spirits fevered with the sun" in a time when "there is no shelter to grow ripe, no leisure to grow wise." Emerson gave a just estimate of the value of heredity and environment in the problem which Wordsworth was to work out, when he said: "It is very easy to see that to act so powerfully in this practical age — as this solitariest and wisest of poets did — he needed, with all his Oriental abstraction, the indomitable vigor rooted in animal constitution for which his countrymen are marked."

His school days were spent in the rural valley of Hawkshead, at the Edward VI. School. There he lived the simple life of the dalesmen until he was prepared for the work of the university. He was a lover of the woods, the hills and the lakes, and these localities are rich in associations with his boyish sports, of harrying the raven's nest, of setting springes for woodcock that run along the smooth green turf, and of boating on Esthwaite and Windermere. The first period, or seed-time of his soul may be called the

period of *unconscious* relation to Nature, and it is of importance to bear in mind the fact that in it he was living the free, simple, spontaneous life of a boy among boys, with nothing to distinguish him from his mates. He was thus saved from becoming either a prig or a prodigy.

Yes, I remember when the changeful earth
And twice five summers on my mind had stamped
The faces of the moving year, even then
I held unconscious intercourse with beauty
Old as creation, drinking in a pure
Organic pleasure from the silver wreaths
Of curling mist, or from the level plain
Of waters coloured by impending clouds.

But in due time came the period of *conscious* love of Nature, which is a step of profound significance; here is the beginning of the philosophic mind:

Those incidental charms which first attached
My heart to rural objects, day by day
Grew weaker, and I hasten on to tell
How Nature, intervenient till this time
And secondary, now at length was sought
For her own sake.

It was in this period that the basis of his optimism was laid; then it was that the essential spiritual nature of the universe was revealed to him. It is this note that characterizes all of his poems on Nature. It is his master vision — God in nature. He now sees into the *life* of things:

I was only then
Contented, when with bliss ineffable
I felt the sentiment of Being spread
O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still;
O'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought
And human knowledge, to the human eye
Invisible, yet liveth to the heart;
O'er all that leaps and runs, and shouts and sings,
Or beats the gladsome air; o'er all that glides
Beneath the wave, yea, in the wave itself,
And mighty depth of waters.

This was a note absolutely new in English poetry. It is the note which is sounded in every poem written

before he rises into the sphere of the humanities and becomes the poet of man. I could illustrate it from thousands of his verses. It rises to its highest point of exultation in the *Tintern Abbey*:

And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

The significance of this revelation as poetry has had its due recognition, but in the closing years of the century we are getting its significance as philosophy.

Those who have followed the movements of modern thought have not failed to notice that the theist no longer gives much time to defending the outposts, when the central citadel is attacked; this central citadel is the spiritual content of nature itself. Mr. John Fiske gave especial prominence to this conception in the preface to his *Idea of God*. He said: "It is enough to remind the reader that Deity is unknowable, just in so far as it is not manifested to consciousness through the phenomenal world, — knowable, just in so far as it is thus manifested; unknowable (in its entirety) in so far as it is infinite and absolute, — knowable in a symbolic way as the Power which is disclosed in every throb of the mighty rhythmic life of the Universe." Again, in Chapter I.: "As in the roaring loom of Time the endless web of events is woven, each strand shall make more and more clearly visible the living garment of God." Both Wordsworth and Fiske have had the vague and uninformative epithet of "Pantheist" hurled at them by those who feared the results of sustained and accurate thinking. "Christianity assumes an unseen world, and then urges that the life of Christ is the fittest way in which such a world could come

into contact with the world we know. The essential spirituality of the universe, in short, is the basis of religion, and it is precisely this basis which is now assailed. . . . It is on the ground of the cosmic law of interpenetrating worlds that I would claim for Wordsworth a commanding place among the teachers of this century.”¹ Can there be any doubt as to the cause of Wordsworth’s optimism or as to the significance of it in modern thought? Is it any wonder that he could sing of man, of nature, and of human life with hardly a note of despondency, and never one of despair?

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
 Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought,
 That givest to forms and images a breath
 And everlasting motion, not in vain
 By day or star-light thus from my first dawn
 Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
 The passions that build up our human soul;
 Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,
 But with high objects, with enduring things —
 With life and nature — purifying thus
 The elements of feeling and of thought,
 And sanctifying, by such discipline,
 Both pain and fear, until we recognise
 A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.

The final step in his ascent is that by which he rises from the love of Nature to the love of man. It was a critical moment for him, migration strange for a stripling of the hills, when he was transferred from the calm delights and simple manners of Hawkshead to that world within a world — a great university. Cambridge could present nothing in kind to take the place of those sights and sounds sublime with which he had been conversant, but she offered him those treasures which had been created for her by the hand of man.

Oft when the dazzling show no longer new
 Had ceased to dazzle, oftentimes did I quit
 My comrades, leave the crowd, buildings and groves,

¹ F. W. Myers, *Science and a Future Life*.

And as I paced alone the level fields
 Far from those lovely sights and sounds sublime
 With which I had been conversant, the mind
 Drooped not; but there into herself returning,
 With prompt rebound, seemed fresh as heretofore.

Here we have a still higher note of optimism. His mind drooped not, because he had as an everlasting possession the harvest of that first period of unconscious intercourse with Nature. The riches which came to him in that period of health and happiness were the riches of —

Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health —
 Truth, breathed by cheerfulness.

We are inclined to think that this is the most immediately helpful of all the poet's revelations. It is the fundamental note in the *Character of the Happy Warrior*.

Who is the happy Warrior? Who is he
 That every man in arms should wish to be?
 — It is the generous Spirit, who, when brought
 Among the tasks of real life, hath wrought
 Upon the plan that pleased his boyish thought:
 Whose high endeavours are an inward light
 That makes the path before him always bright.

It is this power to transmute sorrow, disappointment, and defeat into means of strength that makes his poetry such a tonic to the weary and heavy-laden. When we rise to the heights, and can say in the face of disappointment,

We will grieve not, rather find
 Strength in what remains behind,

we have gained the secret of Wordsworth's optimism, and then —

Farewell, farewell the heart that lives alone,
 Housed in a dream, at distance from the Kind!
 Such happiness, wherever it be known,
 Is to be pitied; for 't is surely blind.

But welcome fortitude, and patient cheer,
 And frequent sights of what is to be borne !
 Such sights, or worse, as are before me here. —
 Not without hope we suffer and we mourn.

“Wordsworth’s optimism has no fear of sorrow or of evil. He can stand in the shadow of death and pain, ruin and failure, with sympathy that is almost painful in its quiet intensity; the faith in the omnipotence ‘of love and man’s unconquerable mind’ is never destroyed or weakened in him. The contemplation of evil and pain always ends with him, by an inevitable recoil, in an inspired expression of his faith in the good which transmutes and transfigures it, as the clouds are changed into manifestations of the sunlight they strive to hide.”¹

In passing from the optimism of Wordsworth to that of Browning we cannot do better than maintain the disposition shown by the older to the younger poet that evening at the rooms of Talfourd, when, in the presence of Macready, Landor, Miss Mitford, and others, the host proposed “The Poets of England,” and with a kindly grace having alluded to the company of great men honoring him with their presence, presented “Mr. Robert Browning, the author of *Paracelsus*.” Miss Mitford, in speaking of the pride which Browning must have felt at that moment, says: “He was prouder still when Wordsworth leaned across the table and with stately affability said, ‘I am proud to drink your health, Mr. Browning.’” All Wordsworthians, all disinterested lovers of poetry, are proud to drink the health of Robert Browning.

We have seen that Wordsworth’s optimism did not result from any victory of the intellect over the perplexities of a scientific age. The era of modern science had not begun when this poet did his great work, but yet he foresaw what was sure to come with such an age. He foresaw that men would “pore,”

¹ E. Caird, *Literature and Philosophy*.

and was disturbed with the thought that they might "dwindle as they pored," and yet he had no fears that the most extensive researches of science would cut the nerve of poetry. He saw the dangers of the new age, and yet he could say :

I exult,
Casting reserve away, exult to see
An intellectual mastery exercised
O'er the blind elements.

"The knowledge, both of the Poet and the Man of science," he says, "is pleasure; but the knowledge of the one cleaves to us as a necessary part of our existence, our natural and inalienable inheritance; the other is a personal and individual acquisition. The Man of science cherishes and loves truth in solitude; the poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion. Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science. . . . If the time should ever come when what is now called Science shall be ready to put on, as it were, the form of flesh and blood, the Poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration, and will welcome the Being thus produced as a dear and genuine inmate of the household of man."¹

The student of Tennyson and Browning is witnessing the fulfilment of this prophecy of the last year of the eighteenth century. Tennyson, in accepting Evolution, which was thought by some to be a step toward atheism, says :

If my body come from brutes tho' somewhat finer than their
own,
I am heir, and this my kingdom. Shall the royal voice be
mute?
No, but if the rebel subject seek to drag me from the throne,
Hold the sceptre, Human Soul, and rule thy Province of the
brute.

¹ *Prefaces and Essays on Poetry*, A. J. George, ed.

I have climbed to the snows of Age and I gaze at a field in
 the Past,
 Where I sank with the body, at times, in the sloughs of a
 low desire,
 But I hear no yelp of the beast, and the Man is quiet at last
 As he stands on the heights of his life with a glimpse of a
 height that is higher.

Browning's early life was spent near the busy haunts of men, and it was natural therefore that the subjects of his work should be man rather than nature. Wordsworth came to the love of man through the love of nature; with Browning the order is reversed, man is everywhere primary in his thought.

The life and work of Browning, as with Wordsworth, falls naturally into three periods. The first period, until 1841, is that of preparation, in *Pauline*, *Paracelsus*, and *Sordello*, during which time he was gradually coming to a consciousness of his powers. *Pauline* and *Paracelsus* are as distinctly revelations of his inner life as is the *Prelude* of Wordsworth's. In the second period, 1841-1868, from the publication of the first number of *Bells and Pomegranates* to the completion of *The Ring and the Book*, he attained a full consciousness of his mission as a poet, and a full command of thought and expression upon a greater variety of subjects than had been seen in any poet since Shakespeare; and we have studies of typical souls in almost every condition in life and of almost every form of experience, revealed in verse forms of widest range and of unique originality. This work is rich in imagination, vital in passion, and moving in melody; of highest perfection and universal appeal to the tenderest in human feeling and noblest in human thought—verily, bells for delight and pomegranates for sustenance of man. In the third period, 1868-1889, to which he passed through *The Ring and the Book*, we have less of the emotional imagination of the poet, and more of the subtle thinking about origins of thought and feeling. The romantic element of his nature, the revolutionary spirit, and the transcendental ideals were for a time

subservient to that passion for scientific research. As Professor Dowden says, "he was condemned to write with his left hand;" and yet the Browningite of the narrow, exclusive, and sectarian school has often demanded loyalty to this work as a test of discipleship. Such blundering praise as this has done Browning more harm than all the blundering blame for obscurity and other faults. Master poems are infrequent, and yet at times the intellectual and imaginative elements are so fused by the vital soul of passion that the result is a "recapture of the first fine careless rapture."

Now let us review these changes more in detail to ascertain how it was that he retained to the last his vision and faculty divine, — his noble optimism.

Browning, with his first plunge into the depths, said in *Paracelsus*, — that poem of his youth where may be found those fundamental truths which filled his life with a radiant hope in an endless future :

Truth is within ourselves : it takes no rise
From outward things, whate'er you may believe :
There is an inmost centre in us all,
Where truth abides in fulness ; and around,
Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in,
This perfect, clear perception — which is truth ;
A baffling and perverting carnal mesh
Blunts it and makes it error : and " *to know* "
Rather consists in opening out a way
Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,
Than in affording entry for a light
Supposed to be without.

In *Paracelsus* we have united the two great principles which lie at the basis of all Browning's work : one which has for its end knowledge ; the other which has for its end conduct. The first is Browning's philosophy ; the second, Browning's art. These correspond very well to the two great classes of literature as given by Matthew Arnold : scientific, ministering to our instinct for knowledge ; poetic, ministering to our instinct for conduct and beauty. Along these lines all life must move, and the poet who attempts

to lead here needs all the courage of the most resolute :

Must keep ever at his side
The tonic of a wholesome pride.

For, ah ! so much he has to do :
Be painter and musician too !
The aspect of the moment show,
The feeling of the moment know !
But, ah, then comes his sorest spell
Of toil, — he must life's *movement* tell !

Browning, more than any poet of modern times, has that intellectual fearlessness which is thoroughly Greek ; he looks unflinchingly upon all that meets him, and he apparently cares not for consequences. This impetuosity of mental action resulted in that duality which he seemed so careless about unifying, — philosophy and ethics. It is admitted by all that when Browning appeals to the head for the solution of the problem of evil, he works, not as an artist and poet, dealing with life as a whole, but as a philosopher interested in certain problems suggested by the mind itself. His solution of the problem of evil can be stated in a few words. Starting with the great principle of evolution, that man is ever becoming, "made to grow, not stop,"

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,

he is bound to follow life through all its stages of pain and pleasure, victory and defeat, faith and doubt, and face the stern realities. How is he able to do this and not become a pessimist? He sees clearly all the struggle and misery ; he selects a Guido on the one hand, and a Saul on the other ; here a student "dead from the waist down," there a faithful teacher left to die in the desert, in order that he may be certain that he has seen life as it actually is. Nothing can save him from despair but the idea that

man is working out a moral ideal, in which God is omnipresent, and that the manifestation of God's presence in man is love :

Be warned by me,
Never you cheat yourself one instant ! Love,
Give love, ask only love, and leave the rest !

Now this love is made perfect through suffering, man is a god though in the germ. This is perception, not demonstration, and Browning has sought refuge in poetry, not philosophy ; but he will do better next time. Let us see what he does when asked to demonstrate the truth of this faith in the unity of God and man :

Take the joys and bear the sorrows — neither with extreme concern !
Living here means nescience simply, 't is next life that helps to learn.

Knowledge means
Ever-renewed assurance by defeat,
That victory is somehow still to reach.

To each mortal peradventure earth becomes a new machine,
Pain and pleasure no more tally in our sense than red and green.

Each man has his own criterion — to question is absurd. Can it be that Browning is teaching a fatal agnosticism ?

Wholly distrust thy knowledge, then, and trust
As wholly love allied to ignorance !
There lies thy truth and safety.

“ In degrading human knowledge,” says Professor Henry Jones, “ the poet is disloyal to the fundamental principle of the Christian faith which he professed — that God can and does manifest himself in man.” What shall we say to attaining even a moral life by such a sacrifice ? Shall we cast doubt upon the head in order to secure the heart ? This seems, at least, to be an entire abandonment of the principle from which modern philosophy had its origin, *Cogito ergo sum*. We must confess, therefore, that Browning the

philosopher fails us whenever he allows his subtle, analytic intellect to gain supremacy over his imagination and passion. We find no optimism here ; we must turn to Browning the poet.

We need not be disturbed in the least at the results reached in our study of Browning the philosopher. We all know that the most thorough and sympathetic criticism of Browning has insisted upon Browning the poet as the Browning who is to live. Modern philosophy takes no notice of Browning except to show that his philosophy — if philosophy it can be called — leads to agnosticism, and yet there are those who claim that Browning's final utterances are to be found in the argumentative poems, because they were, for the most part, his latest utterances. Mr. Stopford Brooke says : " I hold fast to one thing — that the best work of our poet, that by which he will always live, is not in his intellectual analysis, or in his preaching, or in his difficult thinkings, but in the simple, sensuous, and impassioned things he wrote out of the overflowing of his heart."

Mr. William Sharp says : " It is as the poet he will live ; not merely as the ' novel thinker ' in verse ; logically, his attitude as thinker is unimpressive." " A philosophy of life," says Professor Jones, " which is based on agnosticism is an explicit self-contradiction, which can help no one. We must appeal from Browning the philosopher to Browning the poet." " It was not much of a philosophy," says Mr. Saintsbury, " this which the poet half echoed from and half taught to the second half of the nineteenth century. But the poet is always saved by his poetry, and this is the case with Browning." Professor Dowden says : " His thought, so far as it is polemical, will probably cease to interest future readers." These men are not hostile to Browning ; they are his most sympathetic interpreters : but they appeal from the Aristotelianism of Browning to his Platonism, and here too much cannot be said ; here his optimism is no trailing cloud, but a bright consummate star, shining

clear and steady in the heavens from which so many have paled their ineffectual fire. Sound criticism reveals the failures as well as the successes in a poet's work ; but it never mistakes failures for successes. It has done its very necessary work for Wordsworth and Tennyson, and it is doing it for Browning. Our appreciation of their art is all the more vital and wholesome because we know the causes and the nature of their sometime failures.

The age in which Browning lived was an age of introspection, and it is not surprising that at times he should think it necessary to assume the function of philosopher and attempt to solve the problem of evil. The only poem in this volume of *Selections* where he makes the essay of solving questions by the intellect which lie in quite other spheres is in *La Saisiaz* ; and here we find the fundamental error which disfigures so many of his argumentative poems, — casting doubt upon the intellect in order to save the truths of the heart ; but he is more cautious here than elsewhere, for he speaks only for himself. The result of such a process is intellectual pessimism, absolute skepticism. If it be true that

Living here means nescience simply,

then why attempt to construct any theory of good and evil, or of immortality? How can man be a moral agent upon such a doctrine of nescience or agnosticism? It would put an end both to philosophy and poetry. Browning the philosopher in *La Saisiaz* fails us ; but fortunately the work is saved for poetry by the revelations of the heart, rising in revolution against the conclusions of the intellect and insisting upon the claims of love, which is the activity of his spirit as intelligence. Browning nowhere doubts when the heart rises up and utters, "I have felt." Out of this comes his great theory that the moral quality of the act is determined quite regardless of the power to execute ; for

'T is not what man Does that exalts him,
But what man Would do.

Upon this conception of the moral consciousness of man he is able to rise from the pessimism into which the intellect alone had led him, and with his pulses beating anew he is restored to a noble optimism.

In love success is sure,
Attainment no delusion, whate'er the prize may be.

Browning the poet quietly ignores the logical consequences of the theories held by Browning the philosopher, and gives us, not what is contrary to philosophy in general, but what is contrary only to his own poor argument; he gives us the very thing which poetry is bound to give, — “such a living faith in God’s relation to man as leaves no place for that helpless resentment against the appointed order so apt to rise within us at the sight of undeserved pain. This faith is manifested in the highest form in Christian Theism.”¹ Browning’s optimism as poet and man is the result of Browning’s Christian Theism.

We have alluded to the fact that Browning as a poet dared to do what Wordsworth predicted the poet of the age of science could do. He has dared to follow side by side with the scientist, and use the material of the scientist for the ends of poetry. This work is distinctly different from that which Browning the philosopher does. This is nowhere more clearly revealed to us than in *Browning as a Philosophical and Religious Teacher*, by Professor Jones. The author nowhere claims for Browning a place among the great philosophers; but he rightly claims for him a place among the prophets. Browning as a prophet moves in a sphere forever undisturbed by the revelations of the scientist, simply because it is the sphere of poetry, the sphere of man’s loves, man’s hopes, man’s aspirations. As Wordsworth did more for mankind by his *Ode to Duty* and his *Ode on Intimations of Immortality* than by his *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, as Tennyson sounded a higher note in

¹ A. J. Balfour, *Foundations of Belief*.

his *In Memoriam* than in his *Two Voices* and the *Supposed Confessions of a Second-rate Sensitive Mind*, so Browning contributed more to the spiritual movement of the age by his *Saul*, *Apparent Failure*, *Prospice*, *Abt Vogler*, etc., than by all his argumentative verse. These are indeed veritable fountain-heads of spiritual power. "High art," says Mr. F. W. Myers, "is based upon unprovable intuitions, and of all the arts it is poetry whose intuitions take the brightest glow, and best illumine the mystery without us from the mystery within." This was the secret of Browning's work as an optimist, — he illumines the mystery without by the mystery within :

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.

This is the note sounding everywhere in Browning's highest poetry, the note which it is the purpose of this volume of Selections to reveal. It is an appeal to the God-consciousness in every man — "what a man may waste, desecrate, never quite lose."

But all, the world's coarse thumb
 And finger failed to plumb,
 All I could never be,
 All, men ignored in me,
 This, I was worth to God.

It is no easy-going moral creed that we find in —

Progress is the law of life, man is not Man as yet.

A principle of restlessness,
 Which would be all, have, see, know, taste, feel, all.

Oh, if we draw a circle premature, Heedless of far gain,
 Greedy for quick returns of profit, Sure
 Bad is our bargain!

We see, therefore, that the optimism of Browning is the optimism of Christianity in its simplicity and directness :

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.

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.

Browning's joyous, fearless activity in studying life ; the noble aspirations of his intellect and the mighty passions of his heart ; his steady certainty that God and man are one in kind, and are working together in the universe ; his feeling that even human experience has its place in fashioning man for his place in the divine order, and that it is by certain types of experience, called by many failures, that man marks his ascent on the road to success, — make him one of the world's great teachers.

Thus at the close of his life, having been wearied out with contrarities in his intellectual quest, he returns to his first great ideal in *Paracelsus* : "God ! Thou art Love ! I build my faith on that !" and reënforces it with all the wealth of his rich experience of years by asserting that man, too, has the nature of God, has the principle of divinity, which is the culmination of the creative process called evolution. This is Browning's supreme revelation. It is this which gives the element of unity to his great poetry, and this element is none other than his own noble and unique personality revealing the sanity of true genius.

So the message of Browning thus makes common cause with that of Wordsworth and Tennyson, although these poets did not attain by casting doubt upon the understanding ; they merely recognized that there was a lower and a higher. Wordsworth's highest note is —

We live by Admiration, Hope, and Love ;
And even as these are well and wisely fix'd,
In dignity of being we ascend.

While that of Tennyson is —

To feel, altho' no tongue can prove,
That every cloud that spreads above
And veileth love, itself is love.

And Browning sings —

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.

We can see no better ground for optimism than that of these poets who have given us veritable aids to faith. These surpassing spirits, in their serene faith in God and immortality, in their yearning for expansion of the subtle thing called Spirit, and their belief in an endless future,

Never turn their backs, but march breast forward,
Never doubt clouds will break,
Never dream, though right be worsted, wrong will triumph ;
Hold we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake.

APPRECIATIONS

BROWNING never thinks but at full speed; and the rate of his thought is to that of another man's as the speed of a railway to that of a wagon, or the speed of a telegraph to that of a railway. It is hopeless to enjoy the charm or to apprehend the gist of his writings except with a mind thoroughly alert, an attention awake on all points, a spirit open and ready to be kindled by the contact of the writers.

A. C. SWINBURNE.

Browning has the sort of insight whose peculiar characteristic it is to recognize everywhere, not only forms and facts, but their mutual connections and methods of action. This philosophical power which he possesses of seizing subtle and exact relations is met with in more than one thinker, it is true; but he is one of the first, if not the first, in whom it has reached such development without becoming the dominant faculty which subordinates all the others.

J. MILSAND.

It is because I regard Browning as not merely a poet but a prophet, that I think I am entitled to seek in him, as in Isaiah or Æschylus, a solution, or a help to the solution, of the problems that press upon us when we reflect upon man, his place in the world, and his destiny. He has given us indirectly, and as a poet gives, a philosophy of life; he has interpreted the world anew in the light of a dominant idea: and it will be no little gain if we can make clear to ourselves those constitutive principles on which his view of the world rests.

HENRY JONES.

Browning perhaps painted himself, consciously or unconsciously, in the poet of his *How it strikes a Contemporary*, — the man who has no airs, no picturesque

costume, nothing of the melodramatic, but who notes everything about him, remembers everything, and can, if needed, tell the tale. This is precisely what Walter Savage Landor had foreshadowed, fifty years before, in comparing him to Chaucer.

T. W. HIGGINSON.

When Browning's enormous influence upon the spiritual and mental life of our day — an influence ever shaping itself to wise and beautiful issues — shall have lost much of its immediate import, there will still surely be discerned in his work a formative energy whose resultant is pure poetic gain. It is as the poet he will live: not merely as the "novel thinker in verse." Logically, his attitude as thinker is unimpressive.

WILLIAM SHARP.

The obscure author of the undoubtedly obscure *Sordello*, who came from nobody knew where, and wrote a poem about nobody knew what; who was vouched for by none of the great schools and universities, of which Englishmen are wont to make much; who quoted no critic and sought no man's society; slowly, very slowly, won his audience, made his way, earned his fame without puffs preliminary in the newspapers, or any other of the now well-worn expedients of attracting attention to that lamentable object one's self.

AUGUSTINE BIRRELL.

The attentive reader of Browning's poetry must soon discover how remarkably homogeneous it is in spirit. There are many authors, and great authors too, the reading of whose collected works gives the impression of their having "tried their hand" at many things. No such impression is derivable from the voluminous poetry of Browning. Wide as is its range, one great and homogeneous spirit pervades and animates it all, from the earliest to the latest. No other living poet gives so decided an assurance of having a *burden* to deliver.

HIRAM CORSON.

The determination never to sacrifice sense to sound is the secret of whatever repels us in Mr. Browning's verse, and also of whatever attracts. Wherever in it

sense keeps company with sound, we have a music far deeper than can arise from mere sound, or even from a flow of real lyric emotion, which has its only counterpart *in* sound. It is in the idea, and of it. It is the brain picture beating itself into words.

MRS. SUTHERLAND ORR.

Scarcely any special bias can be found running through Browning's work; on the contrary an incessant change of subject and manner, combined with a strong but not overweening individuality, raced, like blood through the body, through every vein of his labour. Creative and therefore joyful, receptive and therefore thoughtful, at one with humanity and therefore loving; aspiring to God and believing in God, and therefore steeped to the tips in radiant Hope; at one with the past, passionate with the present, and possessing by faith an endless and glorious future — this was a life lived on the top of the wave, and moving with its motion from youth to manhood, from manhood to old age.

STOPFORD A. BROOKE.

Browning's chief influence, other than what is purely artistic, upon a reader is towards establishing a connection between the known order of things in which we live and move and that larger order of which it is a part. He plays upon the will, summoning it from lethargy to activity. He spiritualizes the passions by showing that they tend through what is human towards what is divine. He assigns to the intellect a sufficient field for exercise, but attaches more value to its efforts than its attainments. His faith in an unseen order of things creates a hope which persists through the apparent failures of earth. In a true sense he may be named the successor of Wordsworth, not indeed as an artist but as a teacher.

EDWARD DOWDEN.

Select Poems of Browning

PAULINE

(1833)

A REFLECTION

Thou wilt remember one warm morn when winter
Crept aged from the earth, and spring's first breath
Blew soft from the moist hills ; the black-thorn boughs,
So dark in the bare wood, when glistening
In the sunshine were white with coming buds,
Like the bright side of a sorrow, and the banks
Had violets opening from sleep like eyes.
I walked with thee who knew'st not a deep shame
Lurked beneath smiles and careless words which sought
To hide it till they wandered and were mute, 10
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.

EARLY IDEALS

As life wanes, all its care and strife and toil
Seem strangely valueless, while the old trees
Which grew by our youth's home, the waving mass
Of climbing plants heavy with bloom and dew,
The morning swallows with their songs like words,
All these seem clear and only worth our thoughts :
So, aught connected with my early life,
My rude songs or my wild imaginings,
How I look on them — most distinct amid
The fever and the stir of after years ! 10

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 honor, 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? 20

Sun-treader, life and light be thine forever !
 Thou art gone from us ; years go by and spring
 Gladdens and the young earth is beautiful,
 Yet thy songs come not, other bards arise,
 But none like thee : they stand, thy majesties,
 Like mighty works which tell some spirit there
 Hath sat regardless of neglect and scorn,
 Till, its long task completed, it hath risen
 And left us, never to return, and all
 Rush in to peer and praise when all in vain. 30
 The air seems bright with thy past presence yet,
 But thou art still for me as thou hast been
 When I have stood with thee as on a throne
 With all thy dim creations gathered round
 Like mountains, and I felt of mould like them,
 And with them creatures of my own were mixed,
 Like things half-lived, catching and giving life.
 But thou art still for me who have adored
 Though single, panting but to hear thy name
 Which I believed a spell to me alone, 40
 Scarce deeming thou wast as a star to men !
 As one should worship long a sacred spring
 Scarce worth a moth's flitting, which long grasses cross,
 And one small tree embowers droopingly —
 Joying to see some wandering insect won
 To live in its few rushes, or some locust
 To pasture on its boughs, or some wild bird
 Stoop for its freshness from the trackless air :
 And then should find it but the fountain-head,
 Long lost, of some great river washing towns 50
 And towers, and seeing old woods which will live

But by its banks untrod of human foot,
 Which, when the great sun sinks, lie quivering
 In light as some thing lieth half of life
 Before God's foot, waiting a wondrous change ;
 Then girt with rocks which seek to turn or stay
 Its course in vain, for it does ever spread
 Like a sea's arm as it goes rolling on,
 Being the pulse of some great country — so
 Wast thou to me, and art thou to the world ! 60
 And I, perchance, half feel a strange regret
 That I am not what I have been to thee :
 Like a girl one has silently loved long
 In her first loneliness in some retreat,
 When, late emerged, all gaze and glow to view
 Her fresh eyes and soft hair and lips which bloom
 Like a mountain berry : doubtless it is sweet
 To see her thus adored, but there have been
 Moments when all the world was in our praise,
 Sweeter than any pride of after hours. 70
 Yet, sun-treader, all hail ! From my heart's heart
 I bid thee hail ! E'en in my wildest dreams,
 I proudly feel I would have thrown to dust
 The wreaths of fame which seemed o'erhanging me,
 To see thee for a moment as thou art.

A REVELATION

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 10
 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 — of powers the only one
 Which marks me — an imagination which
 Has been a very angel, coming not
 In fitful visions, but beside me ever
 And never failing me.

20

IMAGINATIVE DELIGHT

They came to me in my first dawn of life
 Which passed alone with wisest ancient books
 All halo-girt with fancies of my own ;
 And I myself went with the tale — a god
 Wandering after beauty, or a giant
 Standing vast in the sunset — an old hunter
 Talking with gods, or a high-crested chief
 Sailing with troops of friends to Tenedos.
 I tell you, naught has ever been so clear
 As the place, the time, the fashion of those lives : 10
 I had not seen a work of lofty art,
 Nor woman's beauty nor sweet nature's face,
 Yet, I say, never morn broke clear as those
 On the dim clustered isles in the blue sea,
 The deep groves and white temples and wet caves :
 And nothing ever will surprise me now —
 Who stood beside the naked Swift-footed,
 Who bound my forehead with Proserpine's hair.

A CRISIS

Oh, let me look back ere I leave forever
 The time which was an hour one fondly waits
 For a fair girl that comes a withered hag !
 And I was lonely, far from woods and fields,
 And amid dullest sights, who should be loose
 As a stag ; yet I was full of bliss, who lived
 With Plato and who had the key to life ;
 And I had dimly shaped my first attempt,
 And many a thought did I build up on thought,
 As the wild bee hangs cell to cell ; in vain, 10
 For I must still advance, no rest for mind.

'T was in my plan to look on real life,
 The life all new to me ; my theories
 Were firm, so them I left, to look and learn
 Mankind, its cares, hopes, fears, its woes and joys ;
 And, as I pondered on their ways, I sought
 How best life's end might be attained — an end
 Comprising every joy. I deeply mused.

And suddenly without heart-wreck I awoke
 As from a dream : I said, "'T was beautiful, 20
 Yet but a dream, and so adieu to it !"

RECOVERY

But whate'er come of it, and though it fade,
 And though ere the cold morning all be gone,
 As it may be ; — though music wait to wile,
 And strange eyes and bright wine lure, laugh like sin
 Which steals back softly on a soul half saved,
 And I the first deny, decry, despise,
 With this avowal, these intents so fair, —
 Still be it all my own, this moment's pride !
 No less I make an end in perfect joy.
 E'en in my brightest time, a lurking fear 10
 Possessed me : I well knew my weak resolves,
 I felt the witchery that makes mind sleep
 Over its treasure, as one half afraid
 To make his riches definite : but now
 These feelings shall not utterly be lost,
 I shall not know again that nameless care
 Lest, leaving all undone in youth, some new
 And undreamed end reveal itself too late :
 For this song shall remain to tell forever
 That when I lost all hope of such a change, 20
 Suddenly beauty rose on me again.
 No less I make an end in perfect joy,
 For I, who thus again was visited,
 Shall doubt not many another bliss awaits,
 And, though this weak soul sink and darkness whelm,
 Some little word shall light it, raise aloft,
 To where I clearer see and better love,
 As I again go o'er the tracts of thought

Like one who has a right, and I shall live
With poets, calmer, purer still each time, 30
And beauteous shapes will come for me to seize,
And unknown secrets will be trusted me
Which were denied the waverer once ; but now
I shall be priest and prophet as of old.

Sun-treader, I believe in God and truth
And love ; and as one just escaped from death
Would bind himself in bands of friends to feel
He lives indeed, so, I would lean on thee !
Thou must be ever with me, most in gloom
If such must come, but chiefly when I die, 40
For I seem, dying, as one going in the dark
To fight a giant : but live thou forever,
And be to all what thou hast been to me !
All in whom this wakes pleasant thoughts of me
Know my last state is happy, free from doubt
Or touch of fear. Love me and wish me well.



ROBERT BROWNING.

1835.

PARACELSUS

(1835)

PARACELSUS ASPIRES

See, the great moon ! and ere the mottled owls
Were wide awake, I was to go. It seems
You acquiesce at last in all save this —
If I am like to compass what I seek
By the untried career I choose ; and then,
If that career, making but small account
Of much of life's delight, will yet retain
Sufficient to sustain my soul : for thus
I understand these fond fears just expressed.
And first ; the lore you praise and I neglect, 10
The labors and the precepts of old time,
I have not lightly disesteemed. But, friends,
Truth is within ourselves ; it takes no rise
From outward things, whate'er you may believe.
There is an inmost centre in us all,
Where truth abides in fulness ; and around,
Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in,
This perfect, clear perception — which is truth.
A baffling and perverting carnal mesh
Binds it, and makes all error : and, to KNOW, 20
Rather consists in opening out a way
Whence the imprisoned splendor 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 favor : chance — for hitherto, your sage
Even as he knows not how those beams are born, 30
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 labor 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. 40
 Hence, may not truth be lodged alike in all,
 The lowest as the highest? some slight film
 The interposing bar which binds a soul
 And makes the idiot, just as makes the sage
 Some film removed, the happy outlet whence
 Truth issues proudly? See this soul of ours !
 How it strives weakly in the child, is loosed
 In manhood, clogged by sickness, back compelled
 By age and waste, set free at last by death :
 Why is it, flesh enthralled it or enthrones? 50
 What is this flesh we have to penetrate?
 Oh, not alone when life flows still, do truth
 And power emerge, but also when strange chance
 Ruffles its current ; in unused conjuncture,
 When sickness breaks the body — hunger, watching,
 Excess or languor — oftenest death's approach,
 Peril, deep joy or woe. One man shall crawl
 Through life surrounded with all stirring things,
 Unmoved ; and he goes mad : and from the wreck
 Of what he was, by his wild talk alone, 60
 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 — 70
 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.

APRILE'S SONG

(*Paracelsus hears 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 10
 Great gifts to, but who, proud, refused
 To do his work, or lightly used
 Those gifts, or failed through weak endeavor,
 So, mourn, cast off by him forever, —
 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 20
 Reproach to thee,
 Knowing what thou sink'st beneath.
 So sank we in those old years,
 We who bid thee, come ! thou last
 Who, living yet, hast life o'erpast.
 And altogether we, thy peers,
 Will pardon crave for thee, the last
 Whose trial is done, whose lot is cast
 With those who watch but work no more,
 Who gaze on life but live no more. 30
 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, 40
 And join us, leaving as he found
 The world, he was to loosen, bound?
 Anguish! ever and forever;
 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: 50
 Once more, therefore, come, O come!
 How should we clothe, how arm the spirit
 Shall next thy post of life inherit—
 How guard him from thy speedy ruin?
 Tell us of thy sad undoing
 Here, where we sit, ever pursuing
 Our weary task, ever renewing
 Sharp sorrow, far from God who gave
 Our powers, and man they could not save!"

APRILE'S REVELATION

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 10
 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 — 20
You should be moved no less beside some strong
Rare spirit, fettered to a stubborn body,
Endeavoring to subdue it and inform it
With its own splendor! 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 ! ” 30
And, at the word, I would contrive and paint
Woods, valleys, rocks and plains, dells, sands and
wastes,
Lakes which, when morn breaks on their quivering
bed,
Blaze like a wyvern flying round the sun,
And ocean isles so small, the dog-fish tracking
A dead whale, who should find them, would swim
thrice
Around them, and fare onward — all to hold
The offspring of my brain. Nor these alone :
Bronze labyrinth, palace, pyramid and crypt,
Baths, galleries, courts, temples and terraces, 40
Marts, theatres, and wharfs — all filled with men,
Men everywhere ! And this performed in turn,
When those who looked on, pined to hear the hopes
And fears and hates and loves which moved the
crowd,
I would throw down the pencil as the chisel,
And I would speak ; no thought which ever stirred
A human breast should be untold ; all passions,
All soft emotions, from the turbulent stir
Within a heart fed with desires like mine,
To the last comfort shutting the tired lids 50
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. 60
 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 !"

SONG

Heap cassia, sandal-buds, and stripes
 Of labdanum, and aloe-balls,
 Smear'd 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 faint,
 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 10
 Which breaks to dust when once unrolled ;
 Or shredded perfume, like a cloud
 From closet long to quiet vowed,
 With moth'd and dropping arras hung,
 Mouldering her lute and books among,
 As when a queen, long dead, was young.

SONG

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 it shaven ledge
 Aught but weeds and waving grasses
 To view the river as it passes, 10
 Save here and there a scanty patch
 Of primroses too faint to catch
 A weary bee.

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 ; 20
 Where the quick sandpipers flit
 In and out the marl and grit
 That seems to breed them, brown as they :
 Naught 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.

PARACELBUS ATTAINS

Par. Yes, it was in me ; I was born for it —
 I, Paracelsus : it was mine by right.
 Doubtless a searching and impetuous soul
 Might learn from its own motions that some task
 Like this awaited it about the world ;
 Might seek somewhere in this blank life of ours
 For fit delights to stay its longings vast ;
 And, grappling Nature, so prevail on her
 'To fill the creature full she dared thus frame
 Hungry for joy ; and, bravely tyrannous, 10
 Grow in demand, still craving more and more,
 And make each joy conceded prove a pledge
 Of other joy to follow — bating naught
 Of its desires, still seizing fresh pretence

To turn the knowledge and the rapture wrung
 As an extreme, last boon, from destiny,
 Into occasion for new covetings,
 New strifes, new triumphs : doubtless a strong soul,
 Alone, unaided might attain to this, 20
 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 30
 As bade me plant a surer foot upon
 The sun-road, kept my eye unruined 'mid
 The fierce and flashing splendor, 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, 40
 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, 50
 A happiness in store afar, a sphere
 Of distant glory in full view ; thus climbs
 Pleasure its heights forever and forever.
 The centre-fire heaves underneath the earth,
 And the earth changes like a human face ;
 The molten ore bursts up among the rocks,

Winds into the stone's heart, outbranches bright
 In hidden mines, spots barren river-beds,
 Crumbles into fine sand where sunbeams bask —
 God joys therein. The wroth sea's waves are edged 60
 With foam, white as the bitten lip of hate,
 When, in the solitary waste, strange groups
 Of young volcanos come up, cyclops-like,
 Staring together with their eyes on flame —
 God tastes a pleasure in their uncouth pride.
 Then all is still ; earth is a wintry clod :
 But spring-wind, like a dancing psaltress, passes
 Over its breast to waken it, rare verdure
 Buds tenderly upon rough banks, between
 The withered tree-roots and the cracks of frost, 70
 Like a smile striving with a wrinkled face ;
 The grass grows bright, the boughs are swoln with
 blooms
 Like chrysalids impatient for the air,
 The shining dorrs are busy, beetles run
 Along the furrows, ants make their ado ;
 Above, birds fly in merry flocks, the lark
 Soars up and up, shivering for very joy ;
 Afar the ocean sleeps ; white fishing-gulls
 Flit where the strand is purple with its tribe
 Of nested limpets ; savage creatures seek 80
 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, 90
 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 100
 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-checked 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, 110
 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 forever 120
 His presence on all lifeless things : the winds
 Are henceforth voices, wailing or a shout,
 A querulous mutter or a quick gay laugh,
 Never a senseless gust now man is born.
 The herded pines commune and have deep thoughts,
 A secret they assemble to discuss
 When the sun drops behind their trunks, which glare
 Like grates of hell : the peerless cup afloat
 Of the lake-lily is an urn, some nymph
 Swims bearing high above her head : no bird 130
 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, 140
 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, 150
 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, 160
 The breath drawn sharp, the strong right-hand clenched
 stronger,
 As it would pluck a lion by the jaw ;
 The glorious creature laughed out even in sleep !
 But when full roused, each giant-limb awake,
 Each sinew strung, the great heart pulsing fast,
 He shall start up and stand on his own earth,
 'Then shall his long triumphant march begin . . .
 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 170
 Had spotted my career from its uprise ;
 I saw Aprile — my Aprile there !
 And as the poor melodious wretch disburdened
 His heart, and moaned his weakness in my ear,
 I learned my own deep error ; love's undoing
 Taught me the worth of love in man's estate,
 And what proportion love should hold with power
 In his right constitution ; love preceding

Power, and with much power, always much more
 love ;
 Love still too straightened in his present means, 180
 And earnest for new power to set love free.
 I learned this, and supposed the whole was learned :
 And thus, when men received with stupid wonder
 My first revealings, would have worshipped me,
 And I despised and loathed their proffered praise —
 When, with awakened eyes, they took revenge
 For past credulity in casting shame
 On my real knowledge, and I hated them —
 It was not strange I saw no good in man,
 To overbalance all the wear and waste 190
 Of faculties, displayed in vain, but born
 To prosper in some better sphere : and why ?
 In my own heart love had not been made wise
 To trace love's faint beginnings in mankind,
 To know even hate is but a mask of love's,
 To see a good in evil, and a hope
 In ill success ; to sympathize, be proud
 Of their half-reasons, faint aspirings, dim
 Struggles for truth, their poorest fallacies,
 Their prejudice and fears and cares and doubts ; 200
 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 210
 To drink the life-springs, beamless thence itself —
 And the dark orb which borders the abyss,
 Ingulfed in icy night, — might have its course,
 A temperate and equidistant world.
 Meanwhile, I have done well, though not all well.
 As yet men cannot do without contempt ;
 'T is for their good, and therefore fit awhile
 That they reject the weak, and scorn the false,
 Rather than praise the strong and true, in me :

But after, they will know me. If I stoop 220
Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
It is but for a time ; I press God's lamp
Close to my breast ; its splendor, soon or late,
Will pierce the gloom : I shall emerge one day.
You understand me ? I have said enough !

Festus. Now die, dear Aureole !

Paracelsus. Festus, let my hand —
This hand, lie in your own, my own true friend !
Aprile ! Hand in hand with you, Aprile !

Festus. And this was Paracelsus !

PIPPA PASSES

(1841)

NEW YEAR'S HYMN

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 !

SONG

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

SONG

Give her but a least excuse to love me !
 When — where —
 How — can this arm establish her above me,
 If fortune fixed her as my lady there,
 There already, to eternally reprove me ?

("Hist!" — said Kate the Queen;
 But "Oh!" cried the maiden, binding her tresses,
 "'T is only a page that carols unseen,
 Crumbling your hounds their messes!")

Is she wronged? — To the rescue of her honor, 10
 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 unseen,

Fitting your hawks their jesses!")

SONG

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, 10
 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.

Among the rocks his city was:
 Before his palace, in the sun,
 He sat to see his people pass,
 And judge them every one
 From its threshold of smooth stone.
 They haled him many a valley-thief 20
 Caught in the sheep-pens, robber-chief
 Swarthy and shameless, beggar-cheat,
 Spy-prowler, or rough pirate found

On the sea-sand left aground ;
 And sometimes clung about his feet,
 With bleeding lip and burning cheek,
 A woman, bitterest wrong to speak
 Of one with sullen thickset brows :
 And sometimes from the prison-house
 The angry priests a pale wretch brought, 30
 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.

His councillors, on left and right, 40
 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 forky tone 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 50
 To the maiden who singeth, dancing bare
 In the altar-smoke by the pine-torch lights,
 At his wondrous forest rites, —
 Seeing this, he did not dare
 Approach that threshold in the sun,
 Assault the old king smiling there.
 Such grace had kings when the world begun !

SONG

Over-head the tree-tops meet,
 Flowers and grass spring 'neath one's feet ;
 There was naught above me, naught 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.

THE DAY'S CLOSE AT ASOLO

Oh, what a drear, dark close to my poor day !
 How could that red sun drop in that black cloud ?
 Ah, Pippa, morning's rule is moved away,
 Dispensed with, never more to be allowed !
 Day's turn is over, now arrives the night's.
 Oh lark, be day's apostle
 To mavis, merle and throstle,
 Bid them their betters jostle
 From day and its delights !
 But at night, brother howlet, over the woods, 10
 Toll the world to thy chantry ;
 Sing to the bats' sleek sisterhoods
 Full complines with gallantry :
 Then, owls and bats,
 Cows 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 : 20
 — Approach, I mean, so as to touch them, so
 As to . . . in some way . . . move them — if you
 please,
 Do good or evil to them some slight way.
 For instance, if I wind
 Silk to-morrow, my silk may bind

[*Sitting on the bedside.*

And border Ottima's cloak's hem.
 Ah me, and my important part with them,
 This morning's hymn half promised when I rose !
 True in some sense or other, I suppose.

[*As she lies down.*

God bless me ! I can pray no more to-night. 30
 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.*

CAVALIER TUNES

(1842)

I. MARCHING ALONG

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

God for King Charles ! Pym and such carles
To the Devil that prompts 'em their treasonous paroles !
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!

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,

CHO. — Marching along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song?

Then, God for King Charles ! Pym and his snarls
To the Devil that pricks on such pestilent carles !
Hold by the right, you double your might ;
So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the fight,

CHO. — March we along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song !

II. GIVE A ROUSE

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

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?

CHO. — 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 !

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?

CHO. — 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

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

CHO. — Boot, saddle, to horse, and away !

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 —

CHO. — Boot, saddle, to horse, and away ! "

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,
 Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Roundheads' array :
 Who laughs, " Good fellows ere this, by my fay,

CHO. — Boot, saddle, to horse, and away ! "

Who? My wife Gertrude ; that, honest and gay,
Laughs when you talk of surrendering, "Nay!
I've better counsellors ; what counsel they?"

CHO. — Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!"

MY LAST DUCHESS

(1842)

FERRARA

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now : Frà Pandolf's hands
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 countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I) 10
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 : perhaps
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 20
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart — how shall I say? — too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed : she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 't was all one ! My favor at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace — all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech, 30

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 40

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 50

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!

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP

(1842)

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon :

A mile or so away,

On a little mound, Napoleon

Stood on our storming-day ;

With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,

Legs wide, arms locked behind,

As if to balance the prone brow

Oppressive with its mind.

Just as perhaps he mused, " My plans
That soar, to earth may fall, 10
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.

Then off there flung in smiling joy,
And held himself erect
By just his horse's mane, a boy :
You hardly could suspect — 20
(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.

" 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, 30
Perched him ! " The chief's eye flashed ; his plans
Soar'd up again like fire.

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. 40

SOLILOQUY OF THE SPANISH
CLOISTER

(1842)

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

At the meal we sit together :
Salve tibi! I must hear 10
 Wise talk of the kind of weather,
 Sort of season, time of year :
Not a plenteous cork-crop: scarcely
Dare we hope oak-galls, I doubt :
What's the Latin name for "parsley,"
 What's the Greek name for Swine's Snout?

Whew! We 'll have our platter burnished,
 Laid with care on our own shelf !
 With a fire-new spoon we 're furnished,
 And a goblet for ourself, 20
 Rinsed like something sacrificial
 Ere 't is fit to touch our chaps —
 Marked with L for our initial !
 (He-he ! There his lily snaps !)

Saint, forsooth ! While brown Dolores
 Squats outside the Convent bank
 With Sanchicha, telling stories,
 Steeping tresses in the tank,
 Blue-black, lustrous, thick like horsehairs,
 — Can't I see his dead eye glow 30
 Bright as 't were a Barbary corsair's?
 (That is, if he 'd let it show !)

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

40

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 !

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

50

Or, my scrofulous French novel
On gray 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 ?

60

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

70

WARING

(1842)

I

What's become of Waring
 Since he gave us all the slip,
 Chose land-travel or seafaring,
 Boots and chest or staff and scrip,
 Rather than pace up and down
 Any longer London town?

Who 'd have guessed it from his lip
 Or his brow's accustomed bearing,
 On the night he thus took ship
 Or started landward? — little caring 10
 For us, it seems, who supped together
 (Friends of his, too, I remember)
 And walked home through 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? 20
 Never looked he half so gay!

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 30
 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 who e'er believed
 In more to come ! " But who goes gleaning
 Hedgeside chance-blades, while, full-sheaved,
 Stand cornfields by him? Pride, o'erweening
 Pride alone, puts forth such claims 40
 O'er the day's distinguished names.

Meantime, how much I loved him,
 I find out now I've lost him.
 I who cared not if I moved him,
 Who could so carelessly accost him,
 Henceforth never shall get free
 Of his ghostly company.
 His eyes that just a little wink
 As deep I go into the merit 50
 Of this and that distinguished spirit —
 His cheeks' raised color, soon to sink,
 As long I dwell on some stupendous
 And tremendous (Heaven defend us !)
 Monstr'-inform'-ingens-horrend-ous
 Demoniaco-seraphic
 Penman's latest piece of graphic.
 Nay, my very wrist grows warm
 With his dragging weight of arm.
 E'en so, swimmingly appears,
 Through one's after-supper musings, 60
 Some lost lady of old years
 With her beauteous vain endeavor
 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 ! 70
 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 through 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.

Oh, could I have him back once more, 80
 This Waring, but one half-day more !
 Back, with the quiet face of yore,
 So hungry for acknowledgment
 Like mine ! I 'd fool him to his bent.
 Feed, should not he, to heart's content ?
 I 'd say, "to only have conceived,
 Planned your great works, apart from progress,
 Surpasses little works achieved !"
 I 'd lie so, I should be believed,
 I 'd make such havoc of the claims 90
 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 humors license, barely
 Requiring that it lives.

Ichabod, Ichabod,
 The glory is departed ! 100
 Travels Waring East away ?
 Who, of knowledge, by hearsay,
 Reports a man up started
 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 110

Over the Krenlin'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 120
 Cold northern natures born 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 fame at Taurica,
 Where now, a captive priestess, she alway
 Mingles her tender grave Hellenic speech
 With theirs, tuned to the hailstone-beaten beach,
 As pours some pigeon, from the myrrhy lands 130
 Rapt by the whirlblast to fierce Scythian strands
 Where breed the swallows, her melodious cry
 Amid their barbarous twitter!
 In Russia? Never! Spain were fitter!
 Ay, most likely '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 there 's slid
 Its stiff gold blazing pall 140
 From some black coffin-lid.
 Or, best of all,
 I love to think
 The leaving us was just a feint;
 Back here to London did he slink,
 And now works on without a wink
 Of sleep, and we are on the brink
 Of something great in fresco-paint:
 Some garret's ceiling, walls and floor,
 Up and down and o'er and o'er, 150
 He splashes, as none splashed before
 Since great Caldara Polidore;

Or Music means this land of ours
 Some favor 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, 160
 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, 170
 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 180
 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.
 O Waring, what 's to really be ?
 A clear stage and a crowd to see !
 Some Garrick, say, out shall not he 190
 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? 200
 Our men scarce seem in earnest now.
 Distinguished names! — but 't is, somehow,
 As if they played at being names
 Still more distinguished, like the games
 Of children. Turn our sport to earnest
 With a visage of the sternest!
 Bring the real times back, confessed
 Still better than our very best!

II

- “ When I last saw Waring . . . ”
 (How all turned to him who spoke!
 You saw Waring? Truth or joke?
 In land-travel or sea-faring?) 210
- “ We were sailing by Triest,
 Where a day or two we harbored:
 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, 220
 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 furl'd,
 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? 230
 A pilot for you to Triest?

Without one, look you ne'er so big,
 They'll never let you up the bay!
 We natives should know best.'
 I turned, and 'just those fellows' way,'
 Our captain said. 'The 'long-shore thieves
 Are laughing at us in their sleeves.'

"In truth, the boy leaned laughing back ;
 And one, half-hidden by his side
 Under the furled sail, soon I spied, 240
 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, 250
 And so went off, as with a bound,
 Into the rosy and golden half
 O' the sky, to overtake the sun
 And reach the shore, like the sea-calf
 Its singing cave ; yet I caught one
 Glance ere away the boat quite passed,
 And neither time nor toil could mar
 Those features : so I saw the last
 Of Waring !" — You? Oh, never star
 Was lost here but it rose afar ! 260
 Look East, where whole new thousands are !
 In Vishnu-land what Avatar ?

CRISTINA

(1842)

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.

What? To fix me thus meant nothing?
But I can't tell (there 's my weakness) 10
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."

Oh, we 're sunk enough here, God knows !
But not quite so sunk that moments,
Sure though seldom, are denied us
When the spirit's true endowments 20
Stand out plainly from its false ones,
And apprise it if pursuing
Or the right way or the wrong way,
To its triumph or undoing.

There are flashes struck from midnights,
There are fire-flames noondays kindle,
Whereby piled-up honors perish,
Whereby swollen ambitions dwindle,
While just this or that poor impulse,
Which for once had play unstified, 30
Seems the sole work of a lifetime,
That away the rest have trifled.

Doubt you if, in some such moment,
 As she fixed me, she felt clearly
 Ages past the soul existed,
 Here an age '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?

40

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?

Oh, observe! Of course, next moment,
 The world's honors, in derision,
 Trampled out the light forever:
 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!

50

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.

60

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

A CHILD'S STORY

(1842)

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.

Rats !

10

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.

20

At last the people in a body

To the Town Hall came flocking :
" 'T is clear," cried they, " our Mayor 's a noddy ;
And as for our Corporation — shocking
To think we buy gowns lined with ermine
For dolts that can't or won't determine
What 's best to rid us of our vermin !
You hope, because you 're old and obese,
To find in the furry civic robe ease ?
Rouse up, sirs ! Give your brains a racking
To find the remedy we 're lacking,
Or, sure as fate, we 'll send you packing !"

30

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

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.

40

Oh for a trap, a trap, a trap ! ”

Just as he said this, what should hap

At the chamber-door but a gentle tap ?

“ Bless us,” cried the Mayor, “ what’s that ? ”

(With the Corporation as he sat,

Looking little, though wondrous fat ;

Nor brighter was his eye, nor moister,

Than a too-long-opened oyster,

Save when at noon his paunch grew mutinous

50

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 ! ”

“ Come in ! ” — the Mayor cried, looking bigger :

And in did come the strangest figure !

His queer long coat from heel to head

Was half of yellow and half of red,

And he himself was tall and thin,

With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin,

60

And light loose hair, yet swarthy skin,

No tuft on cheek nor beard on chin,

But lips where smiles went out and in ;

There was no guessing his kith and kin :

And nobody could enough admire

The tall man and his quaint attire.

Quoth one : “ It’s as my great-grandsire,

Starting up at the Trump of Doom’s tone,

Had walked this way from his painted tombstone ! ”

He advanced to the council-table :

70

And, “ Please your honors,” 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 80
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 ; 90
I eased in Asia the Nizam
Of a monstrous brood of vampire-bats :
And as for what your brain bewilders,
If I can rid your town of rats
Will you give me a thousand guilders ?”
“One? fifty thousand !” — was the exclamation
Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation.

Into the street the Piper stept,
Smiling first a little smile,
As if he knew what magic slept 100
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. 110
Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,
Brown rats, black rats, gray 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, 120
 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 : 130
 And a moving away of pickle-tub-boards,
 And a leaving ajar of conserve-cupboards,
 And a drawing the corks of train-oil-flasks,
 And a breaking the hoops of butter-casks ;
 And it seemed as if a voice
 (Sweeter far than by harp or by psaltery
 Is breathed) called out, ‘ Oh rats, rejoice !
 The world is grown to one vast drysaltery !
 So munch on, crunch on, take your nuncheon,
 Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon ! ’ 140
 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.”

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, 150
 And leave in our town not even a trace
 Of the rats ! ” — when suddenly, up the face
 Of the Piper perked in the market-place,
 With a, “ First, if you please, my thousand guilders ! ”

A thousand guilders ! The Mayor looked blue ;
So did the Corporation, too.
For council dinners made rare havoc
With Claret, Moselle, Vin-de-Grave, Hock ;
And half the money would replenish
Their cellar's biggest butt with Rhenish. 160
To pay this sum to a wandering fellow
With a gypsy coat of red and yellow !
" Beside," quoth the Mayor with a knowing wink,
" Our business was done at the river's brink ;
We saw with our eyes the vermin sink,
And what's dead can't come to life, I think ;
So, friend, we're not the folks to shrink
From the duty of giving you something for drink,
And a matter of money to put in your poke ;
But as for the guilders, what we spoke 170
Of them, as you very well know, was in joke.
Beside, our losses have made us thrifty :
A thousand guilders ! Come, take fifty ! "

The Piper's face fell, and he cried,
" No trifling ! I can't wait, beside !
I've promised to visit by dinner time
Bagdat, and accept the prime
Of the Head-Cook's pottage, all he's rich in,
For having left, in the Caliph's kitchen,
Of a nest of scorpions no survivor : 180
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."

" 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 ! " 190

Once more he stept into the street,
And to his lips again
Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane ;

And ere he blew three notes (such sweet
Soft notes as yet musician's cunning

Never gave the enraptured air)

There was a rustling that seemed like a bustling
Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hustling ;
Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes clattering,
Little hands clapping and little tongues chattering, 200
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.

The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood
As if they were changed into blocks of wood,
Unable to move a step, or cry 210

To the children merrily skipping by,
— Could only follow with the eye
That joyous crowd at the Piper's back.

But how the Mayor was on the rack,
And the wretched Council's bosoms beat,
As the Piper turned from the High Street
To where the Weser rolled its waters
Right in the way of their sons and daughters !
However, he turned from South to West,
And to Koppelberg Hill his steps addressed, 220
And after him the children pressed ;
Great was the joy in every breast.

“ He never can cross that mighty top !

He 's forced to let the piping drop,
And we shall see our children stop ! ”

When, lo ! as they reached the mountain-side,
A wondrous portal opened wide,
As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed ;
And the Piper advanced and the children followed,
And when all were in to the very last, 230
The door in the mountain-side shut fast.

Did I say all? No ! One was lame,
And could not dance the whole of the way ;
And in after years, if you would blame

His sadness, he was used to say, —
“It’s dull in our town since my playmates left!
I can’t forget that I’m bereft
Of all the pleasant sights they see,
Which the Piper also promised me.
For he led us, he said, to a joyous land, 240
Joining the town and just at hand,
Where waters gushed and fruit-trees grew
And flowers put forth a fairer hue,
And everything was strange and new;
The sparrows were brighter than peacocks here,
And their dogs outran our fallow deer,
And honey-bees had lost their stings,
And horses were born with eagles’ wings:
And just as I became assured
My lame foot would be speedily cured, 250
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!”

Alas, alas, for Hamelin!

There came into many a burgher’s pate
A text which says that heaven’s gate
Opes to the rich at as easy rate
As the needle’s eye takes a camel in! 260
The Mayor sent East, West, North and South,
To offer the Piper, by word of mouth,
Wherever it was men’s lot to find him,
Silver and gold to his heart’s content,
If he’d only return the way he went,
And bring the children behind him.
But when they saw ’t was a lost endeavor,
And Piper and dancers were gone forever,
They made a decree that lawyers never
Should think their records dated duly 270
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 labor. 280
 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 290
 Of alien people, who ascribe

The outlandish ways and dress
 On which their neighbors 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.

So, Willy, let me and you be wipers 300
 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 !

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

(1845)

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

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, 10
Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

'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 Düffeld, 't was 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 !"

At Aershot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,
And against him the cattle stood black every one, 20
To stare through the mist at us galloping past,
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,
With resolute shoulders, each butting away
The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray :

50 "*How They Brought the Good News*"

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent
back

For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track ;
And one eye's black intelligence, — ever that glance

O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance !
And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and
anon

His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on. 30

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned ; and cried Joris, "Stay
spur !

Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's not in her,
We'll remember at Aix" — for one heard the quick
wheeze

Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering
knees,

And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

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 !" 40

"How they'll greet us !" — and all in a moment his
roan

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

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster let fall,
Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all, 50
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,
Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse without
peer ;

Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad
or good,
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

And all I remember is — friends flocking round
As I sat with his head 'twixt my knees on the ground ;
And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,
As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,
Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)
Was no more than his due who brought good news
from Ghent. 60

PICTOR IGNOTUS

FLORENCE, 15—

(1845)

I could have painted pictures like that youth's
Ye praise so. How my soul springs up ! No bar
Stayed me — ah, thought which saddens while it
soothes !
— Never did fate forbid me, star by star,
To outburst on your night with all my gift
Of fires from God : nor would my flesh have shrunk
From seconding my soul, with eyes uplift
And wide to heaven, or, straight like thunder, sunk
To the centre, of an instant ; or around
Turned calmly and inquisitive, to scan 10
The license and the limit, space and bound,
Allowed the truth made visible in man.
And, like that youth ye praised so, all I saw,
Over the canvas could my hand have flung,
Each face obedient to its passion's law,
Each passion clear proclaimed without a tongue ;
Whether Hope rose at once in all the blood,
A-tiptoe for the blessing of embrace,
Or Rapture drooped the eyes, as when her brood
Pull down the nesting dove's heart to its place ; 20

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, 30
 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 ! 40
 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 these 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, 50
 Count them for garniture and household-stuff,
 And where they live needs must our pictures live
 And see their faces, listen to their prate,
 Partakers of their daily pettiness,
 Discussed of, — “ This I love, or this I hate,
 This likes me more, and this affects me less ! ”
 Wherefore I chose my portion. If at whiles
 My heart sinks, as monotonous I paint
 These endless cloisters and eternal aisles
 With the same series, Virgin, Babe and Saint, 60
 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? 70
 Blown harshly, keeps the trump its golden cry?
 Tastes sweet the water with such specks of earth?

THE LOST LEADER

(1845)

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, honored
 him,
 Lived in his mild and magnificent eye, 10
 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 !

We shall march prospering, — not through 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 : 20

Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,
 One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,
 One more devils'-triumph and sorrow for angels,
 One wrong more to man, one more insult to God !
 Life's night begins : let him never come back to us !
 There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,
 Forced praise on our part — the glimmer of twilight,
 Never glad, confident morning again !
 Best fight on well, for we taught him — strike gallantly,
 Menace our heart ere we master his own ; 30
 Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,
 Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne !

HOME THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD

(1845)

Oh, to be in England
 Now that April 's there,
 And whoever wakes in England
 Sees, some morning, unaware,
 That the lowest boughs and the brush-wood sheaf
 Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
 While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
 In England — now !

And after April, when May follows,
 And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows ! 10
 Hark ! where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
 Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
 Blossoms and dewdrops — at the bent spray's edge
 That's the wise thrush ; he sings each song twice
 over,
 Lest you should think he never could recapture
 The first fine careless rapture !
 And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,
 All will be gay when noontide wakes anew
 The buttercups, the little children's dower
 — Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower ! 20

HOME THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA

(1845)

Nobly, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the Northwest
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 Northeast 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.

THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB AT
SAINT PRAXED'S CHURCH

ROME, 15 —

(1845)

Vanity, saith the preacher, vanity !
Draw round my bed : is Anselm keeping back ?
Nephews — sons mine . . . ah God, I know not !
Well —
She, men would have to be your mother once,
Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was !
What's done is done, and she is dead beside,
Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since,
And as she died so must we die ourselves,
And thence ye may perceive the world's a dream.
Life, how and what is it? As here I lie 10
In this state-chamber, dying by degrees,
Hours and long hours in the dead night, I ask
“ Do I live, am I dead? ” Peace, peace seems all.

Saint Praxed's ever was the church for peace ;
 And so, about this tomb of mine. I fought
 With tooth and nail to save my niche, ye know :
 — Old Gandolf cozened me, despite my care ;
 Shrewd was that snatch from out the corner South
 He graced his carrion with, God curse the same !
 Yet still my niche is not so cramped but thence 20
 One sees the pulpit o' the epistle-side,
 And somewhat of the choir, those silent seats,
 And up into the aery dome where live
 The angels, and a sunbeam 's sure to lurk :
 And I shall fill my slab of basalt there,
 And 'neath my tabernacle take my rest,
 With those nine columns round me, two and two,
 The odd one at my feet where Anselm stands :
 Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe,
 As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse. 30
 — Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-stone,
 Put me where I may look at him ! True peach,
 Rosy and flawless : how I earned the prize !
 Draw close : that conflagration of my church
 —What then? So much was saved if aught were
 missed !

My sons, ye would not be my death? Go dig
 The white-grape vineyard where the oil-press stood,
 Drop water gently till the surface sink,
 And if ye find . . . Ah God, I know not, I ! . . .
 Bedded in store of rotten fig-leaves soft, 40
 And corded up in a tight olive-frail,
 Some lump, ah God, of *lapis lazuli*,
 Big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape,
 Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast . . .
 Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas, all,
 That brave Frascati villa with its bath,
 So, let the blue lump poise between my knees,
 Like God the Father's globe on both his hands
 Ye worship in the Jesu Church so gay,
 For Gandolf shall not choose but see and burst ! 50
 Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years :
 Man goeth to the grave, and where is he?
 Did I say basalt for my slab, sons? Black —
 'T was ever antique-black I meant ! How else

Shall ye contrast my frieze to come beneath?
The bas-relief in bronze ye promised me,
Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and perchance
Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,
The Saviour at his sermon on the mount,
Saint Praxed in a glory, and one Pan 60
Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off,
And Moses with the tables . . . but I know
Ye mark me not! What do they whisper thee,
Child of my bowels, Anselm? Ah, ye hope
To revel down my villas while I gasp
Bricked o'er with beggar's mouldy travertine
Which Gandolf from his tomb-top chuckles at!
Nay, boys, ye love me — all of jasper, then!
'T is jasper ye stand pledged to, lest I grieve
My bath must needs be left behind, alas! 70
One block, pure green as a pistachio-nut,
There's plenty jasper somewhere in the world —
And have I not Saint Praxed's ear to pray
Horses for ye, and brown Greek manuscripts,
And mistresses with great smooth marbly limbs?
— That's if ye carve my epitaph aright,
Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every word,
No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second line —
Tully, my masters? Ulpian serves his need!
And then how I shall lie through centuries, 80
And hear the blessed mutter of the mass,
And see God made and eaten all day long,
And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste
Good strong thick stupefying incense-smoke!
For as I lie here, hours of the dead night,
Dying in state and by such slow degrees,
I fold my arms as if they clasped a crook,
And stretch my feet forth straight as stone can point,
And let the bedclothes, for a mortcloth, drop
Into great laps and folds of sculptor's-work: 90
And as yon tapers dwindle, and strange thoughts
Grow, with a certain humming in my ears,
About the life before I lived this life,
And this life too, popes, cardinals and priests,
Saint Praxed at his sermon on the mount,
Your tall pale mother with her talking eyes,

And new-found agate urns as fresh as day,
 And marble's language, Latin pure, discreet,
 — Aha, ELUCESCEBAT quoth our friend?
 No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best! 100
 Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage.
 All *lapis*, all, sons! Else I give the Pope
 My villas! Will ye ever eat my heart?
 Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,
 They glitter like your mother's for my soul,
 Or ye would heighten my impoverished frieze,
 Piece out its starved design, and fill my vase
 With grapes, and add a visor and a Term,
 And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx
 That in his struggle throws the thyrsus down, 110
 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 120
 — 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!

GARDEN FANCIES

(1845) .

THE FLOWER'S NAME

Here's the garden she walked across,
 Arm in my arm, such a short while since:
 Hark, now I push its wicket, the moss
 Hinders the hinges and makes them wince!

She must have reached this shrub ere she turned,
 As back with that murmur the wicket swung ;
 For she laid the poor snail, my chance foot
 spurned,
 To feed and forget it the leaves among.

Down this side of the gravel-walk
 She went, while her robe's edge brushed the box : 10
 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 !

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. 20
 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.

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, 30
 And ever I see her soft white fingers
 Searching after the bud she found.

Flower, you Spaniard, look that you grow not,
 Stay as you are and be loved forever !
 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 ? 40

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 !

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS

(1845)

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 !

Ours is a great wild country :

If you climb to our castle's top,

I don't see where your eye can stop ;

For when you 've passed the cornfield country,

Where vineyards leave off, flocks are packed, 10

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, 20

That 's one vast red drear burnt-up plain,

Branched through and through with many a

vein

Whence iron 's dug and copper 's dealt ;

Look right, look left, look straight before, —

Beneath they mine, above they smelt,

Copper-ore and iron-ore,

And forge and furnace mould and melt,

And so on, more and ever more,

Till at the last, for a bounding belt,

Comes the salt sand hoar of the great sea-shore, 30

— And the whole is our Duke's country!

I was born the day this present Duke was —

(And O, says the song, ere I was old !)

In the castle where the other Duke was —
 (When I was happy and young, not old !)
 I in the kennel, he in the bower :
 We are of like age to an hour.
 My father was huntsman in that day ;
 Who has not heard my father say
 That, when a boar was brought to bay, 40
 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 they passed 50
 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, 60
 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, his foot
 In a silken shoe for a leather boot,
 Petticoated like a herald, 70
 In a chamber next to an ante-room,
 Where he breathed the breath of page and
 groom,
 What he called stink, and they, perfume :
 — They should have set him on red Berold

Mad with pride, like fire to manage !
They should have got his cheek fresh tannage
Such a day as to-day in the merry sunshine !
Had they stuck on his fist a rough-foot merlin !
(Hark, the wind 's on the heath at its game !
Oh for a noble falcon-lanner 80
To flap each broad wing like a banner,
And turn in the wind, and dance like flame !)
Had they broached a white-beer cask from Berlin
— Or if you incline to prescribe mere wine
Put to his lips, when they saw him pine,
A cup of our own Moldavia fine,
Cotnar for instance, green as May sorrel
And rosy with sweet, — we shall not quarrel.

So, at home, the sick tall yellow Duchess
Was left with the infant in her clutches, 90
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.

And he came back the pertest little ape
That ever affronted human shape ; 100
Full of his travel, struck at himself.
You 'd say, he despised our bluff old ways ?
— Not he ! For in Paris they told the elf
Our rough North land was the Land of Lays,
The one good thing left in evil days ;
Since the Mid-Age was the Heroic Time,
And only in wild nooks like ours
Could you taste of it yet as in its prime,
And see true castles, with proper towers,
Young-hearted women, old-minded men, 110
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 show-
ing 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 ; 120
— 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 !

Well, such as he was, he must marry, we heard :
And out of a convent, at the word,
Came the lady, in time of spring.
— Oh, old thoughts they cling, they cling !
That day, I know, with a dozen oaths
I clad myself in thick hunting-clothes
Fit for the chase of urochs or buffle 130
In winter-time when you need to muffle.
But the Duke had a mind we should cut a figure,
And so we saw the lady arrive :
My friend, I have seen a white crane bigger !
She was the smallest lady alive,
Made in a piece of nature's madness,
Too small, almost, for the life and gladness
That over-filled her, as some hive
Out of the bears' reach on the high trees
Is crowded with its safe merry bees : 140
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 150
What its true name was, nor ever seemed tired —
If that was an eagle she saw hover,

And the green and gray 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 160
Chilled in the rear, like a wind to Nor'ward ;
And up, like a weary yawn, with its pulleys
Went, in a shriek, the rusty portcullis ;
And, like a glad sky the north-wind sullies,
The lady's face stopped its play,
As if her first hair had grown gray ;
For such things must begin some one day.

In a day or two she was well again ;
As who should say, " You labor in vain !
This is all a jest against God, who meant 170
I should ever be, as I am, content
And glad in his sight ; therefore, glad I will be."
So, smiling as at first went she.

She was active, stirring, all fire —
Could not rest, could not tire —
To a stone she might have given life !
(I myself loved once, in my day)
— For a shepherd's, miner's, huntsman's wife,
(I had a wife, I know what I say)
Never in all the world such an one ! 180
And here was plenty to be done,
And she that could do it, great or small,
She was to do nothing at all.
There was already this man in his post,
This in his station, and that in his office,
And the Duke's plan admitted a wife, at most,
'To meet his eye, with the other trophies,
Now outside the hall, now in it,
'To sit thus, stand thus, see and be seen,
At the proper place in the proper minute, 190
And die away the life between.

And it was amusing enough, each infraction
 Of rule — (but for after-sadness that came)
 To hear the consummate self-satisfaction
 With which the young Duke and the old dame
 Would let her advise and criticise,
 And, being a fool, instruct the wise,
 And, child-like, parcel out praise or blame :
 They bore it all in complacent guise,
 As though an artificer, after contriving 200
 A wheel-work image as if it were living,
 Should find with delight it could motion to strike him !
 So found the Duke, and his mother like him :
 The lady hardly got a rebuff —
 That had not been contemptuous enough,
 With his cursed smirk, as he nodded applause,
 And kept off the old mother-cat's claws.

So, the little lady grew silent and thin,
 Paling and ever paling,
 As the way is with a hid chagrin ; 210
 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.

Well, early in autumn, at first winter-warning,
 When the stag had to break with his foot, of a morn-
 ing,
 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, 220
 And another and another, and faster and faster,
 Till, dimpling to blindness, the wide water rolled :
 Then it so chanced that the Duke our master
 Asked himself what were the pleasures in season,
 And found, since the calendar bade him be hearty,
 He should do the Middle Age no treason
 In resolving on a hunting-party.
 Always provided old books showed the way of it !
 What meant old poets by their strictures ?
 And when old poets had said their say of it, 230

How taught old painters in their pictures ?
We must revert to the proper channels,
Workings in tapestry, paintings on panels,
And gather up woodcraft's authentic traditions :
Here was food for our various ambitions,
As on each case, exactly stated —
To encourage your dog, now, the properest chirrup,
Or best prayer to Saint Hubert on mounting your
stirrup —

We of the household took thought and debated.
Blessed was he whose back ached with the jerkin 240
His sire was wont to do forest-work in ;
Blesseder he who nobly sunk "ohs"
And "ahs" while he tugged on his grandsire's trunk-
hose ;

What signified hats if they had no rims on,
Each slouching before and behind like the scallop,
And able to serve at sea for a shallop,
Loaded with lacquer and looped with crimson ?
So that the deer now, to make a short rhyme on 't,
What with our Venerers, Prickers and Verderers,
Might hope for real hunters at length and not mur-
derers, 250
And oh the Duke's tailor, he had a hot time on 't !

Now you must know that when the first dizziness
Of flap-hats and buff-coats and jack-boots subsided,
The Duke put this question, "The Duke's part pro-
vided,

Had not the Duchess some share in the business ?"
For out of the mouth of two or three witnesses
Did he establish all fit-or-unfitnesses :
And, after much laying of heads together,
Somebody's cap got a notable feather
By the announcement with proper unction 260
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 disembowelling."

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 270
 Into a coop for a vulgar pigeon ;
 And if day by day and week by week
 You cut her claws, and sealed her eyes,
 And clipped her wings, and tied her beak,
 Would it cause you any great surprise
 If, when you decided to give her an airing,
 You found she needed a little preparing ?
 — I say, should you be such a curmudgeon,
 If she clung to the perch, as to take it in dudgeon ?
 Yet when the Duke to his lady signified, 280
 Just a day before, as he judged most dignified,
 In what a pleasure she was to participate, —
 And, instead of leaping wide in flashes,
 Her eyes just lifted their long lashes,
 As if pressed by fatigue even he could not dissipate,
 And duly acknowledged the Duke's forethought,
 But spoke of her health, if her health were worth aught,
 Of the weight by day and the watch by night,
 And much wrong now that used to be right,
 So, thanking him, declined the hunting, — 290
 Was conduct ever more affronting ?
 With all the ceremony settled —
 With the towel ready, and the sewer
 Polishing up his oldest ewer,
 And the jennet pitched upon, a piebald,
 Black-barred, cream-coated and pink eye-balled, —
 No wonder if the Duke was nettled !
 And when she persisted nevertheless, —
 Well, I suppose here 's the time to confess
 That there ran half-round our lady's chamber 300
 A balcony none of the hardest to clamber ;
 And that Jacynth the tire-woman, ready in waiting,
 Stayed in call outside, what need of relating ?
 And since Jacynth was like a June rose, why, a fervent
 Adorer of Jacynth of course was your servant ;
 And if she had the habit to peep through the casement,
 How could I keep at any vast distance ?
 And so, as I say, on the lady's persistence,
 The Duke, dumb-stricken with amazement,

Stood for a while in a sultry smother, 310
And then, with a smile that partook of the awful,
'Turned her over to his yellow mother
To learn what was held decorous and lawful ;
And the mother smelt blood with a cat-like instinct,
As her cheek quick whitened through all its quince-tinct.
Oh, but the lady heard the whole truth at once !
What meant she? — Who was she? — Her duty and
station,

The wisdom of age and the folly of youth, at once,
Its decent regard and its fitting relation —
In brief, my friend, set all the devils in hell free 320
And turn them out to carouse in a belfry
And treat the priests to a fifty-part canon,
And then you may guess how that tongue of hers ran
on !

Well, somehow or other it ended at last
And, licking her whiskers, out she passed ;
And after her, — making (he hoped) a face
Like Emperor Nero or Sultan Saladin,
Stalked the Duke's self with the austere grace
Of ancient hero or modern paladin,
From door to staircase — oh such a solemn 330
Unbending of the vertebral column !

However, at sunrise our company mustered ;
And here was the huntsman bidding unkennel,
And there 'neath his bonnet the pricker blustered,
With feather dank as a bough of wet fennel ;
For the court-yard walls were filled with fog
You might have cut as an axe chops a log —
Like so much wool for color and bulkiness ;
And out rode the Duke in a perfect sulkiness,
Since, before breakfast, a man feels but queasily, 340
And a sinking at the lower abdomen
Begins the day with indifferent omen.

And lo! as he looked around uneasily,
The sun ploughed the fog up and drove it asunder
This way and that from the valley under ;
And, looking through the court-yard arch,
Down in the valley, what should meet him
But a troop of Gypsies on their march?
No doubt with the annual gifts to greet him.

Now, in your land, Gypsies reach you, only 350
 After reaching all lands beside ;
 North they go, South they go, trooping or lonely,
 And still, as they travel far and wide,
 Catch them and keep now a trace here, a trace there,
 That puts you in mind of a place here, a place there.
 But with us, I believe they rise out of the ground,
 And nowhere else, I take it, are found
 With the earth-tint yet so freshly embrowned :
 Born, no doubt, like insects which breed on
 The very fruit they are meant to feed on. 360
 For the earth — not a use to which they don't turn it,
 The ore that grows in the mountain's womb,
 Or the sand in the pits like a honeycomb,
 They sift and soften it, bake it and burn it —
 Whether they weld you, for instance, a snaffle
 With side-bars never a brute can baffle ;
 Or a lock that's a puzzle of wards within wards ;
 Or, if your colt's forefoot inclines to curve inwards,
 Horseshoes they hammer which turn on a swivel
 And won't allow the hoof to shrivel. 370
 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 Gypsy 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, 380
 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. 390
 And up they wound till they reached the ditch,

Whereat all stopped save one, a witch
That I knew, as she hobbled from the group,
By her gait directly and her stoop,
I, whom Jacynth was used to importune
To let that same witch tell us our fortune,
The oldest Gypsy 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. 400
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 viols
When their ditties they go grinding
Up and down with nobody minding : 410
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 seashore stone holding a dozen fine pebbles,)
Or a porcelain mouthpiece 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, 420
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, 430
She, foolish to-day, would be wiser to-morrow ;
And who so fit a teacher of trouble
As this sordid crone bent well-nigh double ?

So, glancing at her wolf-skin vesture,
 (If such it was, for they grow so hirsute
 That their own fleece serves for natural fur-suit)
 He was contrasting, 't was plain from his gesture,
 The life of the lady so flower-like and delicate
 With the loathsome squalor of this helicat.
 I, in brief, was the man the Duke beckoned 440
 From out of the throng, and while I drew near
 He told the crone — as I since have reckoned
 By the way he bent and spoke into her ear
 With circumspection and mystery —
 The main of the lady's history,
 Her frowardness and ingratitude :
 And for all the crone's submissive attitude
 I could see round her mouth the loose plaits tightening,
 And her brow with assenting intelligence brightening,
 As though she engaged with hearty goodwill 450
 Whatever he now might enjoin to fulfil,
 And promised the lady a thorough frightening.
 And so, just giving her a glimpse
 Of a purse, with the air of a man who imp's
 The wing of the hawk that shall fetch the hern-shaw,
 He bade me take the Gypsy mother
 And set her telling some story or other
 Of hill or dale, oak-wood or fernshaw,
 To while away a weary hour
 For the lady left alone in her bower, 460
 Whose mind and body craved exertion
 And yet shrank from all better diversion.

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 : 470
 For, first, she had shot up a full head in stature,
 And her step kept pace with mine nor faltered,
 As if age had foregone its usurpature,
 And the ignoble mien was wholly altered,

And the face looked quite of another nature,
And the change reached too, whatever the change
meant,

Her shaggy wolf-skin cloak's arrangement :
For where its tatters hung loose like sedges,
Gold coins were glittering on the edges,
Like the band-roll strung with tomans 480
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, 490
Not a single word had the lady spoken :
They went in both to the presence together,
While I in the balcony watched the weather.

And now, what took place at the very first of all
I cannot tell, as I never could learn it.
Jacynth constantly wished a curse to fall
On that little head of hers and burn it,
If she knew how she came to drop so soundly
Asleep of a sudden, and there continue
The whole time sleeping as profoundly 500
As one of the boars my father would pin you
'T wixt 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 through the open country,
From where the bushes thinlier crested
The hillocks, to a plain where 's not one tree. 510
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, 520
 Was a queen — the Gypsy 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 530
 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 540
 From the crone's wide pair above unwinking,
 — Life's pure fire received without shrinking
 Into the heart and breast, whose heaving
 Told you no single drop they were leaving,
 — Life, that, filling her, passed redundant
 Into her very hair, back swerving
 Over each shoulder, loose and abundant,
 As her head thrown back showed the white throat
 curving ;
 And the very tresses shared in the pleasure,
 Moving to the mystic measure, 550
 Bounding as the bosom bounded.
 I stopped short, more and more confounded,
 As still her cheeks burned and eyes glistened,
 As she listened and she listened :
 When all at once a hand detained me,

The selfsame contagion gained me,
And I kept time to the wondrous chime,
Making out words and prose and rhyme,
Till it seemed that the music furled
Its wings like a task fulfilled, and dropped 560
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 Gypsy 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 570
Our long and terrible journey through,
And all thou art ready to say and do
In the trials that remain :
I trace them the vein and the other vein
That meet on thy brow and part again,
Making our rapid mystic mark ;
And I bid my people prove and probe
Each eye's profound and glorious globe
Till they detect the kindred spark
In those depths so dear and dark, 580
Like the spots that snap and burst and flee,
Circling over the midnight sea.
And on that round young cheek of thine
I make them recognize the tinge,
As when of the costly scarlet wine
They drip so much as will impinge
And spread in a thinnest scale afloat
One thick gold drop from the olive's coat
Over a silver plate whose sheen
Still through the mixture shall be seen. 590
For so I prove thee, to one and all,
Fit, when my people ope their breast,
To see the sign, and hear the call,
And take the vow, and stand the test
Which adds one more child to the rest —
When the breast is bare and the arms are wide,

And the world is left outside.
 For there is probation to decree,
 And many and long must the trials be
 Thou shalt victoriously endure, 600
 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 610
 With the thrill of the great deliverance,
 Into our arms forevermore ;
 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 ; 620
 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 630
 Which in such union grew their right :
 So, to approach at least that end,
 And blend, — as much as may be, blend
 Thee with us or us with thee, —
 As climbing plant or propping tree,
 Shall some one deck thee, over and down,
 Up and about, with blossoms and leaves ?
 Fix his heart's fruit for thy garland-crown,

Cling with his soul as the gourd-vine cleaves,
Die on thy boughs and disappear
While not a leaf of thine is sere? 640
Or is the other fate in store,
And art thou fitted to adore,
To give thy wondrous self away,
And take a stronger nature's sway?
I foresee and could foretell
Thy future portion, sure and well :
But those passionate eyes speak true, speak true,
Let them say what thou shalt do !
Only be sure thy daily life, 650
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, 660
For the good of us all, where the haters meet
In the crowded city's horrible street ;
Or thou step alone through the morass
Where never sound yet was
Save the dry quick clap of the stork's bill,
For the air is still, and the water still,
When the blue breast of the dipping coot
Dives under, and all is mute.
So, at the last shall come old age,
Decrepit as befits that stage ; 670
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, 680

And the outline of the whole,
 As round eve's shades their framework roll,
 Grandly fronts for once thy soul.
 And then as, 'mid the dark, a gleam
 Of yet another morning breaks,
 And, like the hand which ends a dream,
 Death, with the might of his sunbeam,
 Touches the flesh and the soul awakes,
 Then "—

Ay, then, indeed, something would happen !
 But what? For here her voice changed like a
 bird's ; [690
 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, 700
 And did it, not with hobnails but tintacks !
 But to return from this excursion, —
 Just, do you mark, when the song was sweetest,
 The peace most deep and the charm completest,
 There came, shall I say, a snap —
 And the charm vanished !
 And my sense returned, so strangely banished,
 And, starting as from a nap,
 I knew the crone was bewitching my lady,
 With Jacynth asleep ; and but one spring made I 710
 Down from the casement, round to the portal,
 Another minute and I had entered, —
 When the door opened, and more than mortal
 Stood, with a face where to my mind centred
 All beauties I ever saw or shall see,
 The Duchess: I stopped as if struck by palsy.
 She was so different, happy and beautiful,
 I felt at once that all was best,
 And that I had nothing to do, for the rest,

But wait her commands, obey and be dutiful. 720
Not that, in fact, there was any commanding ;
I saw the glory of her eye,
And the brow's height and the breast's expanding,
And I was hers to live or to die.
As for finding what she wanted,
You know God Almighty granted
Such little signs should serve wild creatures
To tell one another all their desires,
So that each knows what his friend requires,
And does its bidding without teachers. 730
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, 740
The court-yard like a desert-place,
The stable emptied of its small fry ;
I saddled myself the very palfrey
I remember patting while it carried her,
The day she arrived and the Duke married her.
And, do you know, though it's easy deceiving
One's self in such matters, I can't help believing
The lady had not forgotten it either,
And knew the poor devil, so much beneath her,
Would have been only too glad for her service 750
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, — 760
I say, although she never used me,

Yet when she was mounted, the Gypsy behind her,
 And I ventured to remind her,
 I suppose with a voice of less steadiness
 Than usual, for my feeling exceeded me,
 — Something to the effect that I was in readiness
 Whenever God should please she needed me, —
 Then, do you know, her face looked down on me
 With a look that placed a crown on me,
 And she felt in her bosom, — mark, her bosom — 770
 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, — 780
 This, see, which at my breast I wear,
 Ever did (rather to Jacynth's grudgment),
 And ever shall, till the Day of Judgment.
 And then, — and then, — to cut short, — this is idle,
 These are feelings it is not good to foster, —
 I pushed the gate wide, she shook the bridle,
 And the palfrey bounded — and so we lost her.

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 manni-
 kin, 790
 And what was the pitch of his mother's yellowness,
 How she turned as a shark to snap the sparerib
 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 pos-
 tern, 800

She that kept it in constant good-humor,
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 : 810
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 Gypsies have paid us a visit, I've
Noticed the couple were never inquisitive,
But told them they're folks the Duke don't want here,
And bade them make haste and cross the frontier.
Brief, the Duchess was gone and the Duke was glad
of it,
And the old one was in the young one's stead, 820
And took, in her place, the household's head,
And a blessed time the household had of it !
And were I not, as a man may say, cautious
How I trench, more than needs, on the nauseous,
I could favor you with sundry touches
Of the paint-smutches with which the Duchess
Heightened the mellowness of her cheek's yellowness
(To get on faster) until at last her
Cheek grew to be one master-plaster
Of mucus and fucus from mere use of ceruse : 830
In short, she grew from scalp to udder
Just the object to make you shudder.

You're my friend —
What a thing friendship is, world without end !
How it gives the heart and soul a stir-up,
As if somebody broached you a glorious runlet,
And poured out, all lovelily, sparkingly, sunlit,
Our green Moldavia, the streaky syrup,
Cotnar as old as the time of the Druids —

I shall go journeying, who but I, pleasantly !
Sorrow is vain and despondency sinful. 880
What 's a man's age? He must hurry more, that 's all ;
Cram in a day what his youth took a year to hold :
When we mind labor, then only, we 're too old —
What age had Methusalem when he begat Saul ?
And at last, as its haven some buffeted ship sees
(Come all the way from the north-parts with sperm oil),
I hope to get safely out of the turmoil
And arrive one day at the land of the Gypsies,
And find my lady, or hear the last news of her
From some old thief and son of Lucifer, 890
His forehead chapleted green with wreathy hop
Sunburned all over like an Æthiop.
And when my Cotnar begins to operate,
And the tongue of the rogue to run at a proper rate,
And our wine-skin, tight once, shows each flaccid dent,
I shall drop in with — as if by accident —
“ You never knew, then, how it all ended,
What fortune, good or bad, attended
The little lady your Queen befriended ? ”
— And when that 's told me, what 's remaining? 900
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, 910
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 !

EARTH'S IMMORTALITIES

(1845)

I. 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 gray lichens, plate o'er plate,
 Have softened down the crisp-cut name and date !

THE BOY AND THE ANGEL

(1845)

Morning, evening, noon and night,
 " Praise God ! " sang Theocrite.

Then to his poor trade he turned,
 Whereby the daily meal was earned.

Hard he labored, 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.

10

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.

20

With God a day endures always,
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.

30

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 :

40

“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 tiring-room close by
The great outer gallery,

50

With 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.

60

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.

70

“ With that weak voice of our disdain,
Take up creation’s pausing strain.

“ Back to the cell and poor employ :
Resume the craftsman and the boy ! ”

Theocrite grew old at home ;
A new Pope dwelt in Peter’s dome.

One vanished as the other died :
They sought God side by side.

THE GLOVE

(PETER RONSARD *loquitur*)

(1845)

“ 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.

10

And so, to the courtyard proceeding,
Our company, Francis was leading,
Increased by new followers tenfold
Before he arrived at the penfold ;

20

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, 30
 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, 40
 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,
 And whose faculties move in no small mist
 When he versifies David the Psalmist)
 I should study that brute to describe you
Illum Juda Leonem de Tribu. 50

One's whole blood grew curdling and creepy
 To see the black mane, vast and heapy,
 The tail in the air stiff and straining,
 The wide eyes, nor waxing nor waning,
 As over the barrier which bounded
 His platform, and us who surrounded
 The barrier, they reached and they rested
 On space that might stand him in best stead :
 For who knew, he thought, what the amazement,
 The eruption of clatter and blaze meant, 60
 And if, in this minute of wonder,
 No outlet, 'mid lightning and thunder,
 Lay broad, and, his shackles all shivered,

The lion at last was delivered?

Ay, that was the open sky o'erhead!

And you saw by the flash on his forehead,

By the hope in those eyes wide and steady,

He was leagues in the desert already,

Driving the flocks up the mountain,

Or, catlike, couched hard by the fountain 70

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: 80

But who 's he would prove so fool-hardy?

Not the best man of Marignan, pardie!"

The sentence no sooner was uttered,

Than over the rails a glove fluttered,

Fell close to the lion, and rested:

The dame 't was, 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. 90

Sound the trumpet, no true knight 's a tARRIER!

De Lorge made one leap at the barrier,

Walked straight to the glove, — while the lion

Ne'er moved, kept his far-reaching eye on

The palm-tree-edged desert-spring's sapphire,

And the musky oiled skin of the Kaffir, —

Picked it up, and as calmly retreated,

Leaped back where the lady was seated,

And full in the face of its owner

Flung the glove.

"Your heart's queen, you dethrone her? 100

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 merriment, —
 As if from no pleasing experiment
 She rose, yet of pain not much heedful
 So long as the process was needful, — 110
 As if she had tried in a crucible,
 To what “speeches like gold” were reducible,
 And, finding the finest prove copper,
 Felt the smoke in her face was but proper ;
 To know what she had *not* to trust to,
 Was worth all the ashes and dust too.
 She went out ’mid hooting and laughter ;
 Clement Marot stayed ; I followed after,
 And asked, as a grace, what it all meant ?
 If she wished not the rash deed’s recallment ? 120
 “ For I ” — so I spoke — “ am a poet :
 Human nature, — behooves that I know it ! ”

She told me, “ Too long had I heard
 Of the deed proved alone by the word :
 For my love — what De Lorge would not dare !
 With my scorn — what De Lorge could compare !
 And the endless descriptions of death
 He would brave when my lip formed a breath,
 I must reckon as braved, or, of course,
 Doubt his word and moreover, perforce, 130
 For such gifts as no lady could spurn,
 Must offer my love in return.
 When I looked on your lion, it brought
 All the dangers at once to my thought,
 Encountered by all sorts of men,
 Before he was lodged in his den, —
 From the poor slave whose club or bare hands
 Dug the trap, set the snare on the sands,
 With no King and no Court to applaud,
 By no shame, should he shrink, overawed, 140
 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 150
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 discolor my cheek?
But when the heart suffers a blow,
Will the pain pass so soon, do you know?"

I looked, as away she was sweeping,
And saw a youth eagerly keeping
As close as he dared to the doorway.
No doubt that a noble should more weigh 160
His life than befits a plebeian;
And yet, had our brute been Nemean —
(I judge by a certain calm fervor
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. 170

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 honor
De Lorge (who looked daggers upon her)
With the easy commission of stretching

His legs in the service, and fetching 180
 His wife, from her chamber, those straying
 Sad gloves she was always mislaying,
 While the King took the closet to chat in, —
 But of course this adventure came pat in.
 And never the King told the story,
 How bringing a glove brought such glory,
 But the wife smiled — “ His nerves are grown firmer :
 Mine he brings now and utters no murmur.”

Venienti occurrere morbo !

With which moral I drop my theorbo. 190

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS

(1855)

Where the quiet-colored end of evening smiles
 Miles and miles
 On the solitary pastures where our sheep,
 Half-asleep,
 Tinkle homeward through 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 10
 Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far
 Peace or war.

Now, — the country does not even boast a tree,
 As you see,
 To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills
 From the hills
 Intersect and give a name to, (else they run
 Into one,)
 Where the domed and daring palace shot its spires
 Up like fires 20
 O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall
 Bounding all,

Made of marble, men might march on nor be pressed,
Twelve abreast.

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.

Now, — the single little turret that remains
On the plains,

By the caper overrooted, by the gourd
Overscored,

While the patching houseleek's head of blossom winks
Through the chinks —

Marks the basement whence a tower in ancient time
Sprang sublime,

And a burning ring, all round, the chariots traced
As they raced,

And the monarch and his minions and his dames
Viewed the games.

And I know, while thus the quiet-colored eve
Smiles to leave

To their folding, all our many-tinkling fleece
In such peace,

And the slopes and rills in undistinguished gray
Melt away —

That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair
Waits me there

In the turret whence the charioteers caught soul
For the goal,

When the king looked, where she looks now, breath-
less, dumb

Till I come.

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, 70
 Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech .
 Each on each.

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 80
 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

(1855)

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 gray.

Runnels, which rilletts swell,
 Must be dancing down the dell,
 With a foaming head 10
 On the beryl bed

Paven smooth as a hermit's cell ;
Each with a tale to tell,
Could my Love but attend as well.

Dearest, three months ago !
When we lived blocked-up with snow, —
When the wind would edge
In and in his wedge,
In, as far as the point could go —
Not to our ingle, though, 20
Where we loved each the other so !

Laughs with so little cause !
We devised games out of straws,
We would try and trace
One another's face
In the ash, as an artist draws ;
Free on each other's flaws,
How we chattered like two church daws !

What 's in the "Times" ? — a scold
At the Emperor deep and cold ; 30
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.

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 — 40
Black neck and eyeballs keen,
Up a wild horse leaps between !

Try, will our table turn?
Lay your hands there light, and yearn
Till the yearning slips
Through the finger-tips

In a fire which a few discern,
 And a very few feel burn,
 And the rest, they may live and learn !

Then we would up and pace, 50
 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.

See, how she looks now, dressed
 In a sledging-cap and vest !
 'T is a huge fur cloak — 60
 Like a reindeer's yoke
 Falls the lappet along the breast :
 Sleeves for her arms to rest,
 Or to hang, as my Love likes best.

Teach me to flirt a fan
 As the Spanish ladies can,
 Or I tint your lip
 With a burnt stick's tip
 And you turn into such a man !
 Just the two spots that span
 Half the bill of the young male swan. 70

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 ?

Dearest, three months ago
 When we loved each other so,
 Lived and loved the same 80
 Till an evening came

When a shaft from the devil's bow
Pierced to our ingle-glow,
And the friends were friend and foe !

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 90
In the tongue, as the Preacher saith !

Woman, and will you cast,
For a word, quite off at last
Me, your own, your You, —
Since, as truth is true,
I was You all the happy past —
Me do you leave aghast
With the memories We amassed ?

Love, if you knew the light
That your soul casts in my sight, 100
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 !

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 — 110
Ear, when a straw is heard
Scratch the brain's coat of curd !

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!

Here 's the spring back or close, 120
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.

Could but November come,
Were the noisy birds struck dumb
At the warning slash
Of his driver's-lash — 130
I would laugh like the valiant Thumb
Facing the castle glum
And the giant's fee-faw-fum!

Then, were the world well stripped
Of the gear wherein equipped
We can stand apart,
Heart dispense with heart
In the sun, with the flowers unnipped, —
Oh, the world's hangings ripped,
We were both in a bare-walled crypt! 140

Each in the crypt would cry,
"But one freezes here! and why?
When a heart, as chill,
At my own would thrill
Back to life, and its fires out-fly?
Heart, shall we live or die?
The rest, . . . settle by and by!"

So, she 'd efface the score,
And forgive me as before. 150
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!

EVELYN HOPE

(1855)

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

Sixteen years old when she died !
Perhaps she had scarcely heard my name ; 10
It was not her time to love ; beside,
Her life had many a hope and aim,
Duties enough and little cares,
And now was quiet, now astir,
Till God's hand beckoned unawares, —
And the sweet white brow is all of her.

Is it too late then, Evelyn Hope ?
What, your soul was pure and true,
The good stars met in your horoscope,
Made you of spirit, fire and dew — 20
And, just because I was thrice as old
And our paths in the world diverged so wide,
Each was naught to each, must I be told ?
We were fellow mortals, naught beside ?

No, indeed ! for God above
Is great to grant, as mighty to make,
And creates the love to reward the love :
I claim you still, for my own love's sake !
Delayed it may be for more lives yet,
Through worlds I shall traverse not a few : 30
Much is to learn, much to forget,
Ere the time be come for taking you.

But the time will come, — at last it will,
 When, Evelyn Hope, what meant (I shall say)
 In the lower earth, in the years long still,
 That body and soul so pure and gay?
 Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,
 And your mouth of your own geranium's red —
 And what you would do with me, in fine,
 In the new life come in the old one's stead. 40

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 !

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while !
 My heart seemed full as it could hold ; 50
 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.

UP AT A VILLA — DOWN IN THE CITY

(AS DISTINGUISHED BY AN ITALIAN PERSON OF
QUALITY)

(1855)

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!

Something to see, by Bacchus, something to hear, at
least !
There, the whole day long, one's life is a perfect feast ;
While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it, no more
than a beast.

Well now, look at our villa ! stuck like the horn of a
bull
Just on a mountain-edge as bare as the creature's skull,
Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf to pull !
— I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if the hair's
turned wool. 10

But the city, oh the city — the square with the houses !
Why ?
They are stone-faced, white as a curd, there 's some-
thing 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.

What of a villa? Though winter be over in March by
rights,
'Tis May perhaps ere the snow shall have withered
well off the heights:
You've the brown ploughed land before, where the
oxen steam and wheeze,
And the hills over-smoked behind by the faint gray
olive-trees. 20

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.

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
foambows flash
On the horses with curling fish-tails, that prance and
paddle and pash
Round the lady atop in her conch — fifty gazers do
not abash,
Though all that she wears is some weeds round her
waist in a sort of sash. 30

All the year long at the villa, nothing to see though
you linger,
Except yon cypress that points like death's lean lifted
forefinger.
Some think fireflies pretty, when they mix i' the corn
and mingle,
Or 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 the seasons, — I spare you the months of
the fever and chill.

Ere you open 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. 40

By and by there's the travelling doctor gives pills, lets
blood, draws teeth ;

Or the Pulcinello-trumpet breaks up the market be-
neath.

At the post-office such a scene picture — the new play,
piping hot !

And a notice how, only this morning, three liberal
thieves were shot.

Above it, behold the Archbishop's most fatherly of
rebukes,

And beneath, with his crown and his lion, some little
new law of the Duke's !

Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the Reverend Don
So-and-so,

Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca, Saint Jerome, and
Cicero,

“And moreover,” (the sonnet goes rhyming,) “the
skirts of Saint Paul has reached,

Having preached us those six Lent-lectures more un-
ctuous than ever he preached.” 50

Noon strikes, — here sweeps the procession! 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.

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; 60

One, he carries a flag up straight, and another a cross
with handles,

And the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for the better
prevention of scandals:

Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the
fife.

Oh, a day in the city-square, there is no such pleasure
in life!

FRA LIPPO LIPPI

(1855)

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, 10
Weke, 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,
 I' 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! 20
 But you, sir, it concerns you that your knaves
 Pick up a manner nor discredit you:
 Zooks, are we pilchards, that they sweep the streets
 And count fair prize what comes into their net?
 He's Judas to a tittle, that man is!
 Just such a face! Why, sir, you make amends.
 Lord, I'm not angry! Bid your hangdogs go
 Drink out this quarter-florin to the health
 Of the munificent House that harbors me
 (And many more beside, lads! more beside!) 30
 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, 40
 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. 50
 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 moonlight, — three
 slim shapes,
 And a face that looked up . . . zooks, sir, flesh and
 blood, 60

That's all I'm made of! Into shreds it went,
 Curtain and counterpane and coverlet,
 All the bed-furniture — a dozen knots,
 There was a ladder! Down I let myself,
 Hands and feet scrambling somehow, and so dropped,
 And after them. I came up with the fun
 Hard by Saint Laurence, hail fellow, well met, —
Flower o' the rose,
If I've been merry, what matter who knows?
 And so as I was stealing back again 70
 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! 80

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, 90
 By the straight cut to the convent. Six words there,
 While I stood munching my first bread that month :
 "So, boy, you 're minded," quoth the good fat father,
 Wiping his own mouth, 't was refection-time,
 "To quit this very miserable world?
 Will you renounce" . . . "the mouthful of bread?"
 thought I ;

By no means ! Brief, they made a monk of me ;
 I did renounce the world, its pride and greed,
 Palace, farm, villa, shop, and banking-house,
 Trash, such as these poor devils of Medici 100
 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 bellyful,
 The warm serge and the rope that goes all round,
 And day-long blessed idleness beside !
 "Let 's see what the urchin 's fit for" — that came
 next.

Not overmuch their way, I must confess.
 Such a to-do ! They tried me with their books ;
 Lord, they 'd have taught me Latin in pure waste !
Flower o' the clove, 110

All the Latin I construe is "amo," I love!
 But, mind you, when a boy starves in the streets
 Eight years together, as my fortune was,

Watching folk's faces to know who will fling
 The bit of half-stripped grape-bunch he desires,
 And who will curse or kick him for his pains, —
 Which gentleman processional and fine,
 Holding a candle to the Sacrament,
 Will wink and let him lift a plate and catch
 The droppings of the wax to sell again, 120
 Or holla for the Eight and have him whipped, —
 How say I? — nay, which dog bites, which lets drop
 His bone from the heap of offal in the street, —
 Why, soul and sense of him grow sharp alike,
 He learns the look of things, and none the less
 For 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 antiphony's marge, 130
 Joined legs and arms to the long music-notes,
 Found eyes and nose and chin for A's and B's,
 And made a string of pictures of the world
 Betwixt the ins and outs of verb and noun,
 On the wall, the bench, the door. The monks looked
 black.

"Nay," quoth the Prior, "turn him out, d' ye say?
 In no wise. Lose a crow and catch a lark.
 What if at last we get our man of parts,
 We Carmelites, like those Camaldolese
 And Preaching Friars, to do our church up fine 140
 And put the front on it that ought to be!"
 And hereupon he bade me daub away.
 Thank you! my head being crammed, the walls a
 blank,

Never was such prompt disemburdening.
 First, every sort of monk, the black and white,
 I drew them, fat and lean: then, folk at church,
 From good old gossips waiting to confess
 Their cribs of barrel-droppings, candle-ends, —
 To the breathless fellow at the altar-foot,
 Fresh from his murder, safe and sitting there 150
 With the little children round him in a row
 Of admiration, half for his beard and half
 For that white anger of his victim's son

Shaking a fist at him with one fierce arm,
Signing himself with the other because of Christ
(Whose sad face on the cross sees only this
After the passion of a thousand years)
Till some poor girl, her apron o'er her head,
(Which the intense eyes looked through) came at eve
On tiptoe, said a word, dropped in a loaf, 160
Her pair of earrings 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 170
To care about his asthma : it 's the life !"
But there my triumph's straw-fire flared and faked ;
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, 180
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 vapor 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? 190
Why put all thoughts of praise out of our head
With wonder at lines, colors, 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 200
 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 naught.
 Why can't a painter lift each foot in turn,
 Left foot and right foot, go a double step,
 Make his flesh liker and his soul more like,
 Both in their order? Take the prettiest face,
 The Prior's niece . . . patron-saint — is it so pretty
 You can't discover if it means hope, fear, 210
 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 naught else,
 You get about the best thing God invents:
 That 's somewhat: and you 'll find the soul you have
 missed,
 Within yourself, when you return him thanks. 220
 "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! 230
 And yet the old schooling sticks, the old grave eyes
 Are peeping o'er my shoulder as I work,
 The heads shake still — "It 's art's decline, my son!
 You 're not of the true painters, great and old;
 Brother Angelico 's the man, you 'll find;

Brother Lorenzo stands his single peer :

Fag on at flesh, you 'll never make the third ! ”

Flower o' the pine,

You keep your mistr . . . manners, and I'll stick to mine !

I'm not the third, then : bless us, they must know ! 240

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, 250

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 may n't they ? all I want's the thing

Settled forever one way. As it is, 260

You tell too many lies and hurt yourself :

You don't like what you only like too much,

You do like what, if given you at your word,

You find abundantly detestable.

For me, I think I speak as I was taught ;

I always see the garden and God there

A-making man's wife : and, my lesson learned,

The value and significance of flesh,

I can't unlearn ten minutes afterwards.

You understand me : I'm a beast, I know. 270

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! 280
 You speak no Latin more than I, belike;
 However, you 're my man, you 've seen the world
 — The beauty and the wonder and the power,
 The shapes of things, their colors, lights, and shades,
 Changes, surprises, — and God made it all!
 — For what? Do you feel thankful, ay or no,
 For this fair town's face, yonder river's line,
 The mountain round it and the sky above,
 Much more the figures of man, woman, child,
 These are the frame to? What 's it all about? 290
 To be passed over, despised? or dwelt upon,
 Wondered at? oh, this last of course! — you say.
 But why not do as well as say, — paint these
 Just as they are, careless what comes of it?
 God's works — paint any one, and count it crime
 To let a truth slip. Don't object, "His works
 Are here already; nature is complete:
 Suppose you reproduce her — (which you can't)
 There 's no advantage! you must beat her, then."
 For, don't you mark? we 're made so that we love 300
 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, 310
 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 folk — remember matins,
 Or, mind you fast next Friday!" Why, for this
 What need of art at all? A skull and bones, 320
 Two bits of stick nailed crosswise, or, what's best,
 A bell to chime the hour with, does as well.
 I painted a Saint Laurence six months since
 At Prato, splashed the fresco in fine style :
 "How looks my painting, now the scaffold's down?"
 I ask a brother : "Hugely," he returns —
 "Already not one phiz of your three slaves
 Who turn the Deacon off his toasted side,
 But's scratched and prodded to our heart's content,
 The pious people have so eased their own 330
 With coming to say prayers there in a rage :
 We get on fast to see the bricks beneath.
 Expect another job this time next year,
 For pity and religion grow i' the crowd —
 Your painting serves its purpose!" Hang the fools!

— That is — you'll not mistake an idle word
 Spoke in a huff by a poor monk, God wot,
 Tasting the air this spicy night which turns
 The unaccustomed head like Chianti wine!
 Oh, the church knows! don't misreport me, now! 340
 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 o' my office. I shall paint
 God in the midst, Madonna and her babe,
 Ringed by a bowery, flowery angel-brood,
 Lilies and vestments and white faces, sweet 350
 As puff on puff of grated orris-root
 When ladies crowd to Church at midsummer.
 And then i' the front, of course a saint or two —
 Saint John, because he saves the Florentines,
 Saint Ambrose, who puts down in black and white
 The convent's friends and gives them a long day,

And Job, I must have him there past mistake,
 The man of Uz (and Us without the z,
 Painters who need his patience). Well, all these
 Secured at their devotion, up shall come 360
 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 moonstruck — I'm the man!
 Back I shrink — what is this I see and hear?
 I, caught up with my monk's-things by mistake,
 My old serge gown and rope that goes all round,
 I, in this presence, this pure company!
 Where's a hole, where's a corner for escape?
 Then steps a sweet angelic slip of a thing 370
 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 perfecit 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 380
 And play hot cockles, all the doors being shut,
 Till, wholly unexpected, in there pops
 The hothead husband! Thus I scuttle off
 To some safe bench behind, not letting go
 The palm of her, the little lily thing
 That spoke the good word for me in the nick,
 Like the Prior's niece . . . Saint Lucy, I would say.
 And so all's saved for me, and for the church
 A pretty picture gained. Go, six months hence!
 Your hand, sir, and good-bye: no lights, no lights! 390
 The street's hushed, and I know my way back,
 Don't fear me! There's the gray beginning.
 Zooks!

A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S

(1855)

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 !

Here you come with your old music, and here 's all
the good it brings.
What, they lived once thus at Venice, where the mer-
chants were the kings,
Where St. Mark's is, where the Doges used to wed the
sea with rings ?

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.

Did young people take their pleasure when the sea
was warm in May? 10
Balls and masks begun at midnight, burning ever to
mid-day,
When they made up fresh adventures for the morrow,
do you say ?

Was a lady such a lady, cheeks so round and lips so
red, —
On her neck the small face buoyant, like a bellflower
on its bed,
O'er the breast's superb abundance where a man might
base his head ?

Well, and it was graceful of them — they'd break talk
 off and afford
 — She, to bite her mask's black velvet — he, to finger
 on his sword,
 While you sat and played Toccatas, stately at the clavi-
 chord?

What? Those lesser thirds so plaintive, sixths dimin-
 ished, sigh on sigh,
 Told them something? Those suspensions, those
 solutions — “Must we die?” 20
 Those commiserating sevenths — “Life might last!
 we can but try!”

“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 an-
 swered to!

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!”

Then they left you for their pleasure: till in due time,
 one by one,
 Some with lives that came to nothing, some with deeds
 as well undone, 30
 Death stepped tacitly and took them where they never
 see the sun.

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 through
 every nerve.

Yes, you, like a ghostly cricket, creaking where a house
was burned :

“Dust and ashes, dead and done with, Venice spent
what Venice earned.

The soul, doubtless, is immortal — where a soul can be
discerned.

“Yours for instance : you know physics, something of
geology,

Mathematics are your pastime ; souls shall rise in their
degree ;

Butterflies may dread extinction, — you ’ll not die, it
cannot be ! 40

“As for Venice and her people, merely born to bloom
and drop,

Here on earth they bore their fruitage, mirth and folly
were the crop :

What of soul was left, I wonder, when the kissing had
to stop ?

“Dust and ashes !” So you creak it, and I want the
heart to scold.

Dear dead women, with such hair, too — what ’s be-
come of all the gold

Used to hang and brush their bosoms ? I feel chilly
and grown old.

BY THE FIRESIDE

(1855)

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

I shall be found by the fire, suppose,
 O'er a great wise book as beseemeth age,
 While the shutters flap as the cross-wind blows,
 And I turn the page, and I turn the page,
 Not verse now, only prose !

10

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 !"

I shall be at it indeed, my friends !
 Greek puts already on either side
 Such a branch-work forth as soon extends
 To a vista opening far and wide,
 And I pass out where it ends.

20

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

I follow wherever I am led,
 Knowing so well the leader's hand :
 Oh woman-country, wooed not wed,
 Loved all the more by earth's male-lands,
 Laid to their hearts instead !

30

Look at the ruined chapel again
Half-way up in the Alpine gorge!
Is that a tower, I point you plain,
Or is it a mill or an iron forge
Breaks solitude in vain?

A turn, and we stand in the heart of things ;
The woods are round us, heaped and dim ;
From slab to slab how it slips and springs,
The thread of water single and slim,
Through the ravage some torrent brings ! 40

Does it feed the little lake below ?
That speck of white just on its marge
Is Pella ; see, in the evening-glow,
How sharp the silver spear-heads charge
When Alp meets heaven in snow !

On our other side is the straight-up rock ;
And a path is kept 'twixt the gorge and it
By boulder-stones, where lichens mock
The marks on a moth, and small ferns fit
Their teeth to the polished block. 50

Oh, the sense of the yellow mountain-flowers,
And thorny balls, each three in one,
The chestnuts throw on our path in showers !
For the drop of the woodland fruit's begun,
These early November hours,

That crimson the creeper's leap 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-needed mat of moss, 60

By the rose-flesh mushrooms, undivulged
Last evening — nay, in to-day's first dew
Yon sudden coral nipple bulged,
Where a freaked, fawn-colored, flaky crew
Of toad-stools peep indulged.

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. 70

The chapel and bridge are of stone alike,
 Blackish-gray 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 !

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 — 80

To drop from the charcoal-burners' huts,
 Or climb from the hemp-dressers' low shed,
 Leave the grange where the woodman stores his nuts,
 Or the wattled cote where the fowlers spread
 Their gear on the rock's bare juts.

It has some pretension too, this front,
 With its bit of fresco half-moon-wise
 Set over the porch, Art's early wont :
 'T is John in the Desert, I surmise,
 But has borne the weather's brunt — 90

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.

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. 100

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 gray heads abhor?

For it leads to a crag's sheer edge with them ;
Youth, flowery all the way, there stops —
Not they ; age threatens and they contemn,
Till they reach the gulf wherein youth drops,
One inch from life's safe hem !

110

With me, youth led . . . I will speak now,
No longer watch you as you sit
Reading by fire-light, that great brow
And the spirit-small hand propping it
Mutely, my heart knows how —

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

120

My own, confirm me ! If I tread
This path back, is it not in pride
To think how little I dreamed it led
To an age so blest that, by its side,
Youth seems the waste instead?

My own, see where the years conduct !
At first 't was something our two souls
Should mix as mists do ; each is sucked
In each now : on the new stream rolls,
Whatever rocks obstruct.

130

Think, when our one soul understands
The great Word which makes all things new,
When earth breaks up and heaven expands,
How will the change strike me and you
In the house not made with hands?

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 !

140

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?

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 !

150

What did I say? — that a small bird sings
 All day long, save when a brown pair
 Of hawks from the wood float with wide wings
 Strained to a bell: 'gainst noon-day glare
 You count the streaks and rings.

But at afternoon or almost eve
 '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.

160

Hither we walked then, side by side,
 Arm in arm and cheek to cheek,
 And still I questioned or replied,
 While my heart, convulsed to really speak,
 Lay choking in its pride.

Silent the crumbling bridge we cross,
 And pity and praise the chapel sweet,
 And care about the fresco's loss,
 And wish for our souls a like retreat,
 And wonder at the moss.

170

Stoop and kneel on the settle under,
Look through the window's grated square :
Nothing to see ! For fear of plunder
The cross is down and the altar bare,
As if thieves don't fear thunder.

We stoop and look in through the grate,
See the little porch and rustic door,
Read duly the dead builder's date ;
Then cross the bridge that we crossed before,
Take the path again — but wait !

180

Oh, moment, one and infinite !
The water slips o'er stock and stone ;
The West is tender, hardly bright :
How gray at once is the evening grown —
One star its chrysolite !

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.

190

Oh, the little more, and how much it is !
And the little less, and what worlds away !
How a sound shall quicken content to bliss,
Or a breath suspend the blood's best play,
And life be a proof of this !

Had she willed it, still had stood the screen
So slight, so sure, 'twixt my love and her :
I could fix her face with a guard between,
And find her soul as when friends confer,
Friends — lovers that might have been.

200

For my heart had a touch of the woodland-time,
Wanting to sleep now over its best.
Shake the whole tree in the summer-prime,
But bring to the last leaf no such test !
“ Hold the last fast ! ” runs the rhyme.

For a chance to make your little much,
 To gain a lover and lose a friend,
 Venture the tree and a myriad such,
 When nothing you mar but the year can mend :
 But a last leaf — fear to touch ! 210

Yet should it unfasten itself and fall
 Eddying down till it find your face
 At some slight wind — best chance of all !
 Be your heart henceforth its dwelling-place
 You trembled to forestall !

Worth how well, those dark gray eyes,
 That hair so dark and dear, how worth
 That a man should strive and agonize,
 And taste a veriest hell on earth
 For the hope of such a prize ! 220

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.

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. 230

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.

The forest 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. 240

How the world is made for each of us !
How all we perceive and know in it
Tends to some moment's product thus,
When a soul declares itself — to wit,
By its fruit, the thing it does !

Be hate that fruit or love that fruit,
It forwards the general deed of man,
And each of the Many helps to recruit
The life of the race by a general plan ;
Each living his own, to boot. 250

I am named and known by that moment's feat ;
There took my station and degree ;
So grew my own small life complete,
As nature obtained her best of me —
One born to love you, sweet !

And to watch you sink by the fireside 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 ! 260

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

ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND

(1855)

My love, this is the bitterest, that thou —
Who art all truth, and who dost love me now
As thine eyes say, as thy voice breaks to say —
Shouldst love so truly, and couldst love me still
A whole long life through, had but love its will,
Would death that leads me from thee brook delay.

I have but to be by thee, and thy hand
 Will never let mine go, nor heart withstand
 The beating of my heart to reach its place.
 When shall I look for thee and feel thee gone? 10
 When cry for the old comfort and find none?
 Never, I know! Thy soul is in thy face.

Oh, I should fade — 't is willed so! Might I save,
 Gladly I would, whatever beauty gave
 Joy to thy sense, for that was precious too.
 It is not to be granted. But the soul
 Whence the love comes, all ravage leaves that whole;
 Vainly the flesh fades; soul makes all things new.

It would not be because my eye grew dim
 Thou couldst not find the love there, thanks to Him 20
 Who never is dishonored 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.

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! 30

And is it not the bitterer to think
 That disengage our hands and thou wilt sink,
 Although thy love was love in very deed?
 I know that nature! Pass a festive day,
 Thou dost not throw its relic-flower away
 Nor bid its music's loitering echo speed.

Thou let'st the stranger's glove lie where it fell;
 If old things remain old things, all is well.
 For thou art grateful as becomes man best:
 And hadst thou only heard me play one tune, 40
 Or viewed me from a window, not so soon
 With thee would such things fade as with the rest.

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 —
Three lines, my face comes at so slight a call :
And for all this, one little hour to thank !

But now, because the hour through years was fixed,
Because our inmost beings met and mixed, 50
Because thou once hast loved me — wilt thou dare
Say to thy soul and Who may list beside,
“ Therefore she is immortally my bride ;
Chance cannot change my love, nor time impair.

“ So, what if in the dusk of life that 's left,
I, a tired traveller of my sun bereft,
Look from my path when, mimicking the same,
The fire-fly glimpses past me, come and gone ?
— Where was it till the sunset ? Where anon
It will be at the sunrise ! What 's to blame ? ” 60

Is it so helpful to thee ? Canst thou take
The mimic up, nor, for the true thing's sake,
Put gently by such efforts at a beam ?
Is the remainder of the way so long,
Thou need'st the little solace, thou the strong ?
Watch out thy watch, let weak ones doze and
dream !

Ah, but the fresher faces ! “ Is it true, ”
Thou 'lt ask, “ some eyes are beautiful and new ?
Some hair, — how can one choose but grasp such
wealth ?
And if a man would press his lips to lips 70
Fresh as the wilding hedge-rose-cup there slips
The dewdrop out of, must it be by stealth ?

“ 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 ? ”

So must I see, from where I sit and watch,
 My own self sell myself, my hand attach 80
 Its warrant to the very thefts from me —
 Thy singleness of soul that made me proud,
 Thy purity of heart I loved aloud,
 Thy man's-truth I was bold to bid God see !

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 ! 90

Re-coin thyself and give it them to spend, —
 It all comes to the same thing at the end,
 Since mine thou wast, mine art and mine shalt be,
 Faithful or faithless, sealing up the sum
 Or lavish of my treasure, thou must come
 Back to the heart's place here I keep for thee !

Only, why should it be with stain at all?
 Why must I, 'twixt the leaves of coronal,
 Put any kiss of pardon on thy brow?
 Why need the other women know so much, 100
 And talk together, "Such the look and such
 The smile he used to love with, then as now !"

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 !

Why, time was what I wanted, to turn o'er
 Within my mind each look, get more and more 110
 By heart each word, too much to learn at first :
 And join thee all the fitter for the pause
 'Neath the low doorway's lintel. That were cause
 For lingering, though thou calledst, if I durst !

And yet thou art the nobler of us two :
What dare I dream of, that thou canst not do,
 Outstripping my ten small steps with one stride ?
I 'll say then, here 's a trial and a task : —
Is it to bear ? — if easy, I 'll not ask ;
 Though love fail, I can trust on in thy pride. 120

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 !

AN EPISTLE

CONTAINING THE STRANGE MEDICAL EXPERIENCE OF
KARSHISH, THE ARAB PHYSICIAN

(1855)

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 vapor from his mouth, man's soul),
— To Abib, all-sagacious in our art,
Breeder in me of what poor skill I boast,
Like me inquisitive how pricks and cracks
Befall the flesh through too much stress and strain, 10
Whereby the wily vapor 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. 20

My journeyings were brought to Jericho :
Thus I resume. Who, studious in our art,
Shall count a little labor 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 rumors of a marching hitherward :
Some say Vespasian cometh, some, his son.
A black lynx snarled and pricked a tufted ear ;
Lust of my blood inflamed his yellow balls : 30
I cried and threw my staff and he was gone.

Twice have the robbers stripped and beaten me,
And once a town declared me for a spy ;
But at the end, I reach Jerusalem,
Since this poor covert where I pass the night,
This Bethany, lies scarce the distance thence
A man with plague-sores at the third degree
Runs till he drops down dead. Thou laughest here !
'Sooth, it elates me, thus reposed and safe,
To void the stuffing of my travel-scrip 40
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-gray back ;
Take five and drop them . . . but who knows his mind,
The Syrian runagate I trust this to?
His service payeth me a sublimate 50
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-tragacanth
Scales off in purer flakes, shines clearer-grained,
Cracks 'twixt the pestle and the porphyry —
In fine, exceeds our produce. Scalp-disease
Confounds me, crossing so with leprosy —
Thou hadst admired one sort I gained at Zoar — 60
But zeal outruns discretion. Here I end.

Yet stay: my Syrian blinketh gratefully,
Protesteth his devotion is my price —
Suppose I write what harms not, though he steal?
I half resolve to tell thee, yet I blush,
What set me off a-writing first of all.
An itch I had, a sting to write, a tang!
For, be 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, 70
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 discourse.
 Thus then, and let thy better wit help all!

'T is but a case of mania — subinduced
 By epilepsy, at the turning-point 80
 Of trance prolonged unduly some three days :
 When, by the exhibition of some drug
 Or spell, exorcization, stroke of art
 Unknown to me and which '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 inscribe
 Whatever it was minded on the wall 90
 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
 Hath gotten now so thoroughly by heart
 That henceforth she will read or these or none.
 And first — the man's own firm conviction rests
 That he was dead (in fact, they buried him)
 — That he was dead, and then restored to life
 By a Nazarene physician of his tribe : 100
 — '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, 110
 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 premise,
Led in their friend, obedient as a sheep,
To bear my inquisition. While they spoke, 120
Now sharply, now with sorrow, — told the case, —
He listened not except I spoke to him,
But folded his two hands and let them talk,
Watching the flies that buzzed : and yet no fool.
And that 's a sample how his years must go.
Look, if a beggar, in fixed middle-life,
Should find a treasure, — can he use the same
With straightened habits and with tastes starved small,
And take at once to his impoverished brain
The sudden element that changes things, 130
That sets the undreamed-of rapture at his hand
And puts the cheap old joy in the scorned dust ?
Is he not such an one as moves to mirth —
Warily parsimonious when no need,
Wasteful as drunkenness at undue times ?
All prudent counsel as to what befits
The golden mean, is lost on such an one :
'The man's fantastic will is the man's law.
So here — we call the treasure knowledge, say,
Increased beyond the fleshly faculty — 140
Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth,
Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing heaven :
The man is witless of the size, the sum,
The value in proportion of all things,
Or whether it be little or be much.
Discourse to him of prodigious armaments
Assembled to besiege his city now,
And of the passing of a mule with gourds —
'T is one ! Then take it on the other side,
Speak of some trifling fact, — he will gaze rapt 150
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, 160
 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 170
 Some charm’s beginning, from that book of his,
 Able to bid the sun throb wide and burst
 All into stars, as suns grown old are wont.
 Thou and the child have each a veil alike
 Thrown o’er your heads, from under which ye both
 Stretch your blind hands and trifle with a match
 Over a mine of Greek fire, did ye know!
 He holds on firmly to some thread of life —
 (It is the life to lead perforcedly)
 Which runs across some vast distracting orb 180
 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” balked by “here it cannot be.” 190
 And oft the man’s soul springs into his face
 As if he saw again and heard again
 His sage that bade him “Rise” and he did rise.
 Something, a word, a tick o’ the blood within
 Admonishes: then back he sinks at once
 To ashes, who was very fire before,

In sedulous recurrence to his trade
Whereby he earneth him the daily bread ;
And studiously the humbler for that pride,
Professedly the faultier that he knows 200
God's secret, while he holds the thread of life.
Indeed the especial marking of the man
Is prone submission to the heavenly will —
Seeing it, what it is, and why it is.
' Sayeth he will wait patient to the last
For that same death which must restore his being
To equilibrium, body loosening soul
Divorced even now by premature full growth :
He will live, nay, it pleaseth him to live
So long as God please, and just how God please. 210
He even seeketh not to please God more
(Which meaneth, otherwise) than as God please.
Hence, I perceive not he affects to preach
The doctrine of his sect whate'er it be,
Make proselytes as madmen thirst to do :
How can he give his neighbor the real ground,
His own conviction? Ardent as he is —
Call his great truth a lie, why, still the old
" Be it as God please " reassureth him.
I probed the sore as thy disciple should : 220
" How, beast," said I, " this stolid carelessness
Sufficeth thee, when Rome is on her march
To stamp out like a little spark thy town,
Thy tribe, thy crazy tale and thee at once? "
He merely looked with his large eyes on me.
The man is apathetic, you deduce?
Contrariwise, he loves both old and young,
Able and weak, affects the very brutes
And birds — how say I? flowers of the field —
As a wise workman recognizes tools 230
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 —
And indignation which is promptly curbed :
As when in certain travel I have feigned
To be an ignoramus in our art,
According to some preconceived design,

And happed to hear the land's practitioners,
 Steeped in conceit sublimed by ignorance, 240
 Prattle fantastically on disease,
 Its cause and cure — and I must hold my peace!

Thou wilt object — Why have I not ere this
 Sought out the sage himself, the Nazarene
 Who wrought this cure, inquiring at the source,
 Conferring with the frankness that befits?
 Alas! it grieveth me, the learned leech
 Perished in a tumult many years ago,
 Accused — our learning's fate — of wizardry,
 Rebellion, to the setting up a rule 250
 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: 260
 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! 270
 — '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 280
Blue-flowering borage, the Aleppo sort,
Aboundeth, very nitrous. It is strange!

Thy pardon for this long and tedious case,
Which, now that I review it, needs must seem
Unduly dwelt on, prolixly set forth!
Nor I myself discern in what is writ
Good cause for the peculiar interest
And awe indeed this man has touched me with.
Perhaps the journey's end, the weariness,
Had wrought upon me first. I met him thus: 290
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. 300
Jerusalem's repose shall make amends
For time this letter wastes, thy time and mine;
'Till when, once more thy pardon and farewell!

The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?
So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too —
So, through the thunder comes a human voice,
Saying, "O heart I made, a heart beats here!
Face my hands fashioned, see it in myself!
Thou hast no power nor mayst conceive of mine,
But love I gave thee, with myself to love, 310
And thou must love me who have died for thee!"
The madman saith He said so: it is strange.

MY STAR

(1855)

All that I know
 Of a certain star
 Is, it can throw
 (Like the angled spar)
 Now a dart of red,
 Now a dart of blue ;
 Till my friends have said
 They would fain see, too,
 My star that dartles the red and the blue !
 Then it stops like a bird ; like a flower hangs furl'd : 10
 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.

INSTANS TYRANNUS

(1855)

Of the million or two, more or less,
 I rule and possess,
 One man, for some cause undefined,
 Was least to my mind.

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. 10

“Were the object less mean, would he stand
 At the swing of my hand !
 For obscurity helps him and blots
 The hole where he squats.”
 So, I set my five wits on the stretch

To inveigle the wretch.
All in vain! Gold and jewels I threw.
Still he couched there perdue ;
I tempted his blood and his flesh,
Hid in roses my mesh, 20
Choicest cates and the flagon's best spilth :
Still he kept to his filth.

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 ! 30
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.

Then a humor 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. 40
And, "no!" I admonished myself,
"Is one mocked by an elf,
Is one baffled by toad or by rat?
The gravamen 's in that!
How the lion, who crouches to suit
His back to my foot,
Would admire that I stand in debate !
But the small turns the great
If it vexes you, — that is the thing !
Toad or rat vex the king? 50
Though I waste half my realm to unearth
'Toad or rat, 't is well worth !"

So, I soberly laid my last plan
To extinguish the man.

Round his creep-hole, with never a break,
Ran my fires for his sake ;
Over-head, did my thunder combine
With my underground mine :
Till I looked from my labor content
To enjoy the event.

60

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 !

70

“CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK
TOWER CAME”

(See Edgar's song in *Lear*)

(1835)

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.

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 10
Would break, what crutch 'gin write my epitaph
For pastime in the dusty thoroughfare,

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.

For, what with my whole world-wide wandering,
What with my search drawn out through years, my
hope 20
Dwindled into a ghost not fit to cope
With that obstreperous joy success would bring, —
I hardly tried now to rebuke the spring
My heart made, finding failure in its scope.

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 ;") 30

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.

Thus, I had so long suffered in this quest, 1
 Heard failure prophesied so oft, been writ
 So many times among "The Band" — to wit,
 The knights who to the Dark Tower's search ad-
 dressed 40
 Their steps — that just to fail as they, seemed best,
 And all the doubt was now — should I be fit?

So, quiet as despair, I turned from him,
 That hateful cripple, out of his highway
 Into the path he pointed. All the day
 Had been a dreary one at best, and dim
 Was settling to its close, yet shot one grim
 Red leer to see the plain catch its estray.

For mark ! no sooner was I fairly found
 Pledged to the plain, after a pace or two, 50
 Than, pausing to throw backward a last view
 O'er the safe road, 't was gone ; gray plain all round :
 Nothing but plain to the horizon's bound.
 I might go on ; naught else remained to do.

So, on I went. I think I never saw
 Such starved, ignoble nature ; nothing throve :
 For flowers — as well expect a cedar grove !
 But cockle, spurge, according to their law
 Might propagate their kind, with none to awe,
 You 'd think : a burr had been a treasure trove. 60

No ! penury, inertness and grimace,
 In some strange sort, were the land's portion. “ See
 Or shut your eyes,” said Nature peevishly,
 “ It nothing skills ; I cannot help my case :
 ’T is the Last Judgment's fire must cure this place,
 Calcine its clods and set my prisoners free.”

If there pushed any ragged thistle-stalk
 Above its mates, the head was chopped ; the bents
 Were jealous else. What made those holes and rents
 In the dock's harsh swarth leaves, bruised as to balk 70
 All hope of greenness? ’t is a brute must walk
 Pashing their life out, with a brute's intents.

As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair
 In leprosy ; thin dry blades pricked the mud,
 Which underneath looked kneaded up with blood.
 One stiff blind horse, his every bone a-stare,
 Stood stupefied, however he came there :
 Thrust out past service from the devil's stud !

Alive? he might be dead for aught I know,
 With that red, gaunt and colloped neck a-strain, 80
 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.

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. 90

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.

Whose savage trample thus could pad the dank 130
Soil to a splash? Toads in a poisoned tank,
Or wild cats in a red-hot iron cage —

The fight must so have seemed in that fell cirque.
What penned them there, with all the plain to
choose?

No footprint 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.

And more than that — a furlong on — why, there !
What bad use was that engine for, that wheel, 140
Or break, 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.

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. 150

Now blotches rankling, colored gay and grim,
Now patches where some leanness of the soil 's
Broke into moss or substances like boils ;
Then came some palsied oak, a cleft in him
Like a distorted mouth that splits its rim
Gaping at death, and dies while it recoils.

And just as far as ever from the end !
Naught in the distance but the evening, naught
To point my footstep further ! At the thought,
A great black bird, Apollyon's bosom-friend, 160
Sailed past, nor beat his wide wing dragon-penned
That brushed my cap — perchance the guide I
sought.

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.

Yet half I seemed to recognize some trick
 Of mischief happened to me, God knows when — 170
 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 !

Burningly it came on me all at once,
 This was the place } those two hills on the right,
 Crouched like two bulls locked horn in horn in fight ;
 While to the left, a tall scalped mountain . . . Dunce,
 Dotard, a-dozing at the very nonce,
 After a life spent training for the sight ! 180

What in the midst lay but the Tower itself ?
 The round squat turret, blind as the fool's heart,
 Built of brown stone, without a counterpart
 In the whole world. The tempest's mocking elf
 Points to the shipman thus the unseen shelf
 He strikes on, only when the timbers start.

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 190
 Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay, —
 "Now stab and end the creature — to the heft !"

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.

There they stood, ranged along the hillsides, met
 To view the last of me, a living frame 200
 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."

RESPECTABILITY

(1855)

Dear, had the world in its caprice
 Deigned to proclaim "I know you both,
 Have recognized your plighted troth,
 Am sponsor for you : live in peace !" —
 How many precious months and years
 Of youth had passed, that speed so fast,
 Before we found it out at last,
 The world, and what it fears !

How much of priceless life were spent
 With men that every virtue decks, 10
 And women models of their sex,
 Society's true ornament, —
 Ere we dared wander, nights like this,
 Through wind and rain, and watch the Seine,
 And feel the Boulevard break again
 To warmth and light and bliss !

I know ! the world proscribes not love ;
 Allows my fingers to caress
 Your lips' contour and downiness,
 Provided it supply a glove. 20
 The world's good word ! — the Institute !
 Guizot receives Montalembert !
 Eh ? Down the court three lampions flare :
 Put forward your best foot !

THE STATUE AND THE BUST

(1855)

There 's a palace in Florence, the world knows well,
And a statue watches it from the square,
And this story of both do our townsmen tell.

Ages ago, a lady there,
At the farthest window facing the East,
Asked, "Who rides by with the royal air?"

The bridesmaids' prattle around her ceased ;
She leaned forth, one on either hand ;
They saw how the blush of the bride increased —

They felt by its beats her heart expand — 10
As one at each ear and both in a breath
Whispered, "The Great-Duke Ferdinand."

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 20
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. 30

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) 40
Turned in the midst of his multitude
At the bright approach of the bridal pair.

Face to face the lovers stood
A single minute and no more,
While the bridegroom bent as a man subdued —

Bowed till his bonnet brushed the floor —
For the Duke on the lady a kiss conferred,
As the courtly custom was of yore.

In a minute can lovers exchange a word ?
If a word did pass, which I do not think, 50
Only one out of a 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. 60

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.

70

“’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.”

80

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)

90

And smiled “’T was a very funeral,
Your lady will think, this feast of ours, —
A shame to efface, whate’er befall !

“What if we break from the Arno bowers,
And try if Petraja, cool and green,
Cure last night’s fault with this morning’s flowers?”

The bridegroom, not a thought to be seen
On his steady brow and quiet mouth,
Said, “Too much favor for me so mean!

“But, alas! my lady leaves the South; 100
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 — 110
Or I am the fool, and thou art the king!

“Yet my passion must wait a night, nor cool —
For to-night the Envoy arrives from France
Whose heart I unlock with thyself, my tool.

“I need thee still and might miss perchance.
To-day is not wholly lost, beside,
With its hope of my lady’s countenance:

“For I ride — what should I do but ride?
And, passing her palace, if I list
May glance at its window — well betide!” — 120

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, 130
With a gentle start, half smile, have 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 140
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. 150

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, 160
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, 170
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.’ 180

“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, 190
As a ghost might lean from a chink of sky,
The passionate pale lady’s face —

Eying ever, with earnest eye
 And quick-turned neck at its breathless stretch,
 Some one who ever is passing by —)

The Duke had sighed like the simplest wretch
 In Florence, "Youth — my dream escapes!
 Will its record stay?" And he bade them fetch

Some subtle moulder of brazen shapes —
 "Can the soul, the will, die out of a man
 Ere his body find the grave that gapes?" 200

"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!' 210

"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, 220
 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 through 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 230
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, 240

If you choose to play! — is my principle.
Let a man contend to the uttermost
For his life's set prize, be it what it will!

The counter our lovers staked was lost
As surely as if it were lawful coin:
And the sin I impute to each frustrate ghost

Is — the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,
Though the end in sight was a vice, I say.
You of the virtue (we issue join),
How strive you? *De te, fabula!* 250

HOW IT STRIKES A CONTEMPORARY

(1855)

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, 10
Scenting the world, looking it full in face,
An old dog, bald and blindish, at his heels.

They turned up, now, the alley by the church,
That leads nowhither ; now, they breathed themselves
On the main promenade just at the wrong time :
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 20

Trying the mortar's temper 'tween the chinks
Of some new shop a-building, French and fine.
He stood and watched the cobbler at his trade,
The man who slices lemons into drink,
The coffee-roaster's brazier, and the boys
That volunteer to help him turn its winch.

He glanced o'er books on stalls with half an eye,
And fly-leaf ballads on the vender's string,
And broad-edge bold-print posters by the wall.
He took such cognizance of men and things, 30

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 neighbor'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! 40
We merely kept a governor for form,
While this man walked about and took account
Of all thought, said and acted, then went home,
And wrote it fully to our Lord the King
Who has an itch to know things, he knows why,
And reads them in his bedroom of a night.
Oh, you might smile! there wanted not a touch,
A tang of . . . well, it was not wholly ease,
As back into your mind the man's look came.
Stricken in years a little, — such a brow 50
His eyes had to live under! — clear as flint
On either side the formidable nose
Curved, cut and colored 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 favorites manifold,
And shifts his ministry some once a month; 60
Our city gets new governors at whiles, —
But never word or sign, that I could hear,
Notified to this man about the streets
The King's approval of those letters conned
The last thing duly at the dead of night.
Did the man love his office? Frowned our Lord,
Exhorting when none heard — “Beseech me not!
Too far above my people, — beneath me!
I set the watch, — how should the people know?
Forget them, keep me all the more in mind!” 70
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 ! 80
 The whole street might o'erlook him as he sat,
 Leg crossing leg, one foot on the dog's back,
 Playing a decent cribbage with his maid
 (Jacynth, you're sure her name was) o'er the cheese
 And fruit, three red halves of starved winter-pears,
 Or treat of radishes in April. Nine,
 Ten, struck the church clock, straight to bed went he.

My father, like the man of sense he was,
 Would point him out to me a dozen times :
 " 'St — 'St," he 'd whisper, " the Corregidor ! " 90
 I had been used to think that personage
 Was one with lacquered breeches, lustrous belt,
 And feathers like a forest in his hat,
 Who blew a trumpet and proclaimed the news,
 Announced the bull-fights, gave each church its turn,
 And memorized the miracle in vogue !
 He had a great observance from us boys ;
 We were in error ; that was not the man.

I 'd like now, yet had haply been afraid,
 To have just looked, when this man came to die, 100
 And seen who lined the clean gay garret-sides
 And stood about the neat low truckle-bed,
 With the heavenly manner of relieving guard.
 Here had been, mark, the general-in-chief,
 Through 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, 110
 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 verse, — could you ?
 Let 's to the Prado and make the most of time.

THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER

(1855)

I said —Then, dearest, since 't is so,
Since now at length my fate I know,
Since 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, 10
 Your leave for one more last ride with me.

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, 20
So, one day more am I deified.
 Who knows but the world may end to-night ?

Hush ! if you saw some western cloud
All billowy bosomed, over-bowed
By many benedictions — sun's
And moon's and evening-star's at once —
 And so, you, looking and loving best,
Conscious grew, your passion drew
Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too,
Down on you, near and yet more near, 30
Till flesh must fade for heaven was here ! —
Thus leant she and lingered — joy and fear !
 Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

Then we began to ride. My soul
Smoothed itself out, a long-cramped scroll
Freshening and fluttering in the wind.
Past hopes already lay behind.

What need to strive with a life awry?
Had I said that, had I done this,
So might I gain, so might I miss. 40
Might she have loved me? just as well
She might have hated, who can tell!
Where had I been now if the worst befell?
And here we are riding, she and I.

Fail I alone, in words and deeds?
Why, all men strive, and who succeeds?
We rode; it seemed my spirit flew,
Saw other regions, cities new,
As the world rushed by on either side.
I thought, — All labor, yet no less 50
Bear up beneath their unsuccess.
Look at the end of work, contrast
The petty done, the undone vast,
This present of theirs with the hopeful past!
I hoped she would love me; here we ride.

What hand and brain went ever paired?
What heart alike conceived and dared?
What act proved all its thought had been?
What will but felt the fleshly screen?
We ride, and I see her bosom heave. 60
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.

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, 70
And place them in rhyme so, side by side.
'T is 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.

And you, great sculptor — so, you gave
A score of years to Art, her slave,
And that 's your Venus, whence we turn 80
To yonder girl that fords the burn!

You acquiesce, and shall I repine?
What, man of music, you grown gray
With notes and nothing else to say,
Is this your sole praise from a friend,
"Greatly his opera's strains intend,
But in music we know how fashions end!"
I gave my youth; but we ride, in fine.

Who knows what 's fit for us? Had fate
Proposed bliss here should sublimate 90
My being — had I signed the bond —
Still one must lead some life beyond,

Have a bliss to die with, dim-descried.
This foot once planted on the goal,
This glory-garland round my soul,
Could I descry such? Try and test!
I sink back shuddering from the quest.
Earth being so good, would heaven seem best?
Now, heaven and she are beyond this ride.

And yet — she has not spoke so long! 100
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 forever 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, forever ride? 110

THE PATRIOT

AN OLD STORY

(1855)

It was roses, roses, all the way,
 With myrtle mixed in my path like mad :
 The house-roofs seemed to heave and sway,
 The church-spires flamed, such flags they had,
 A year ago on this very day.

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 ?" 10

Alack, it was I who leaped at the sun,
 To give it my loving friends to keep !
 Naught man could do, have I left undone :
 And you see my harvest, what I reap
 This very day, now a year is run.

There 's nobody on the house-tops now —
 Just a palsied few at the windows set ;
 For the best of the sight is, all allow,
 At the Shambles' Gate — or, better yet,
 By the very scaffold's foot, I trow. 20

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.

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. 30

MEMORABILIA

(1855)

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!

But you were living before that,
And also you are living after;
And the memory I started at—
My starting moves your laughter!

I crossed a moor, with a name of its own
And a certain use in the world no doubt, 10
Yet a hand's-breadth of it shines alone
'Mid the blank miles round about:

For there I picked up on the heather,
And there I put inside my breast
A moulted feather, an eagle-feather!
Well, I forget the rest.

ANDREA DEL SARTO

CALLED "THE FAULTLESS PAINTER"

(1855)

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 ! 10
 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 ! 20
 Your soft hand is a woman of itself,
 And mine the man's bared breast she curls inside.
 Don't count the time lost, neither ; you must serve
 For each of the five pictures we require :
 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, 30
 And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,
 While she looks — no one's : very dear ; no less.
 You smile ? why, there 's my picture ready made,
 There 's what we painters call our harmony !
 A common grayness silvers everything, —

All in a twilight, you and I alike
— You, at the point of your first pride in me
(That 's gone, you know), — but I, at every point ;
My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down
To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole. 40
There 's the bell clinking from the chapel top ;
That length of convent-wall across the way
Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside ;
The last monk leaves the garden ; days decrease,
And autumn grows, autumn in everything.
Eh? the whole seems to fall into a shape
As if I saw alike my work and self
And all that I was born to be and do,
A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's hand.
How strange now looks the life he makes us lead ; 50
So free we seem, so fettered fast we are !
I feel he laid the fetter : let it lie !
This chamber for example — turn your head —
All that 's behind us ! You don't understand
Nor care to understand about my 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 thing should be —
Behold Madonna ! — I am bold to say,
I can do with my pencil what I know, 60
What I see, what at bottom of my heart
I wish for, if I ever wish so deep —
Do easily, too — when I say, perfectly,
I do not boast, perhaps : yourself are judge,
Who listened to the Legate's talk last week,
And just as much they used to say in France.
At any rate '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, 70
And fail in doing. I could count twenty such
On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,
Who strive — you don't know how the others strive
To paint a little thing like that you smeared
Carelessly passing with your robes afloat, —
Yet do much less, so much less, Someone says,
(I know his name, no matter) — so much less !

Well, less is more, Lucrezia : I am judged.
 There burns a truer light of God in them,
 In their vexed, beating, stuffed and stopped-up
 brain,

Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt 80
 This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.

Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,
 Reach many a time a heaven that 's shut to me,
 Enter and take their place there sure enough,
 Though they come back and cannot tell the world.

My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.

The sudden blood of these men ! at a word —

Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.

I, painting from myself and to myself, 90

Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame

Or their praise either. Somebody remarks

Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,

His hue mistaken ; what of that ? or else,

Rightly traced and well ordered ; what of that ?

Speak as they please, what does the mountain care ?

Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,

Or what 's a heaven for ? All is silver-gray

Placid and perfect with my art : the worse !

I know both what I want and what might gain, 100

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.

('T is copied, George Vasari sent it me.)

Well, I can fancy how he did it all,

Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,

Reaching, that heaven might so replenish him,

Above and through his art — for it gives way ; 110

That arm is wrongly put — and there again —

A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,

Its body, so to speak : its soul is right,

He means right — that, a child may understand.

Still, what an arm ! and I could alter it :

But all the play, the insight and the stretch —

Out of me, out of me ! And wherefore out ?

Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,
We might have risen to Rafael, I and you !
Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think — 120
More than I merit, yes, by many times.
But had you — oh, with the same perfect brow,
And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,
And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird
The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare —
Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind !
Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged
"God and the glory ! never care for gain.
The present by the future, what is that ?
Live for fame, side by side with Agnolo ! 130
Rafael is waiting : up to God, all three !"
I might have done it for you. So it seems :
Perhaps not. All is as God overrules.
Besides, incentives come from the soul's self ;
The rest avail not. Why do I need you ?
What wife had Rafael, or has Agnolo ?
In this world, who can do a thing, will not ;
And who would do it, cannot, I perceive :
Yet the will's somewhat — somewhat, too, the power —
And thus we half-men struggle. At the end, 140
God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.
'T is safer for me, if the award be strict,
That I am something underrated here,
Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth.
I dared not, do you know, leave home all day,
For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.
'The best is when they pass and look aside ;
But they speak sometimes ; I must bear it all.
Well may they speak ! That Francis, that first time,
And that long festal year at Fontainebleau ! 150
I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,
Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,
In that humane great monarch's golden look, —
One finger in his beard or twisted curl
Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile,
One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,
The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,
I painting proudly with his breath on me,
All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,

Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls 160
 Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts, —
 And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,
 This in the background, waiting on my work,
 To crown the issue with a last reward!
 A good time, was it not, my kingly days?
 And had you not grown restless . . . but I know —
 'T is done and past; 't was right, my instinct said;
 Too live the life grew, golden and not gray,
 And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt
 Out of the grange whose four walls make his world. 170
 How could it end in any other way?
 You called me, and I came home to your heart.
 The triumph was — to reach and stay there; since
 I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost?
 Let my hands frame your face in your hair's gold,
 You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine!
 "Rafael did this, Andrea painted that;
 The Roman's is the better when you pray,
 But still the other's Virgin was his wife" —
 Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge 180
 Both pictures in your presence; clearer grows
 My better fortune, I resolve to think.
 For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,
 Said one day Agnolo, his very self,
 To Rafael . . . I have known it all these years . . .
 (When the young man was flaming out his thoughts
 Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see,
 Too lifted up in heart because of it)
 "Friend, there's a certain sorry little scrub
 Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how, 190
 Who, were he set to plan and execute
 As you are, pricked on by your popes and kings,
 Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours!"
 To Rafael's! — And indeed the arm is wrong.
 I hardly dare . . . yet, only you to see,
 Give the chalk here — quick, thus the line should go!
 Ay, but the soul! he's Rafael! rub it out!
 Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,
 (What he? why, who but Michel Agnolo?
 Do you forget already words like those?) 200
 If really there was such a chance, so lost, —

Is, whether you 're — not grateful — but more pleased.
Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed !
This hour has been an hour ! Another smile ?
If you would sit thus by me every night
I should work better, do you comprehend ?
I mean that I should earn more, give you more.
See, it is settled dusk now ; there 's a star ;
Morello 's gone, the watch-lights show the wall,
The cue-owls speak the name we call them by. 210
Come from the window, love, — come in, at last,
Inside the melancholy little house
We built to be so gay with. God is just.
King Francis may forgive me : oft at nights
When I look up from painting, eyes tired out,
The walls become illumined, brick from brick
Distinct, instead of mortar, fierce bright gold,
That gold of his I did cement them with !
Let us but love each other. Must you go ?
That Cousin here again ? he waits outside ? 220
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 gray remainder of the evening out,
Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly
How I could paint, were I but back in France,
One picture, just one more — the Virgin's face. 230
Not yours this time ! I want you at my side
To hear them — that is, Michel Agnolo —
Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.
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, 240
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. 250
 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 labored 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 — 260

Four great walls in the New Jerusalem,
 Meted on each side by the angel's reed,
 For Leonard, Rafael, Agnolo, and me
 To cover — the three first without a wife,
 While I have mine! So — still they overcome,
 Because there's still Lucrezia, — as I choose.

Again the Cousin's whistle! Go, my Love.

OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE

(1855)

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.

River and bridge and street and square
Lay mine, as much at my beck and call, 10
Through the live translucent bath of air,
As the sights in a magic crystal ball.
And of all I saw and of all I praised,
The most to praise and the best to see
Was the startling bell-tower Giotto raised :
But why did it more than startle me ?

Giotto, how, with that soul of yours,
Could you play me false who loved you so ?
Some slights if a certain heart endures
Yet it feels, I would have your fellows know ! 20
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.

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 afternoons,
By a gift God grants me now and then, 30
In the mild decline of those suns like moons,
Who walked in Florence, besides her men,

They might chirp and chaffer, come and go
 For pleasure or profit, her men alive —
 My business was hardly with them, I trow,
 But with empty cells of the human hive ;
 — With the chapter-room, the cloister-porch,
 The church's apsis, aisle or nave,
 Its crypt, one fingers along with a torch,
 Its face set full for the sun to shave. 40

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.

For oh, this world and the wrong it does !
 They are safe in heaven with their backs to it, 50
 The Michaels and Rafaels, you hum and buzz
 Round the works of, you of the little wit !
 Do their eyes contract to the earth's old scope,
 Now that they see God face to face,
 And have all attained to be poets, I hope ?
 'T is their holiday now, in any case.

Much they reckon of your praise and you !
 But the wronged great souls — can they be quit
 Of a world where their work is all to do,
 Where you style them, you of the little wit, 60
 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.

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, 70

Called Nature's Ape, and the world's despair
For his peerless painting? (See Vasari.)

There stands the Master. Study, my friends,
What a man's work comes to! So he plans it,
Performs it, perfects it, makes amends
For the toiling and moiling, and then, *sic transit!*
Happier the thrifty blind-folk labor,
With upturned eye while the hand is busy,
Not sidling a glance at the coin of their neighbor!
'T is looking downward that makes one dizzy. 80

"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.

So you saw yourself as you wished you were,
As you might have been, as you cannot be; 90
Earth here, rebuked by Olympus there:
And grew content in your poor degree
With your little power, by those statues' god-head,
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.

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. 100
You're wroth — can you slay your snake like Apollo?
You're grieved — still Niobe 's the grander!
You live — there 's the Racers' frieze to follow:
You die — there 's the dying Alexander.

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 110
 That receives life in parts to live in a whole,
 And grow here according to God's clear plan.

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. 120

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, nowise polished:
 They stand for our copy, and, once invested
 With all they can teach, we shall see them abolished.

'T is a life-long toil till our lump be leaven —
 The better! What's come to perfection perishes. 130
 Things learned on earth, we shall practise in heaven:
 Works done least rapidly, Art most cherishes.
 Thyself shalt afford the example, Giotto!
 Thy one work, not to decrease or diminish,
 Done at a stroke, was just (was it not?) "O!"
 Thy great Campanile is still to finish.

Is it true that we are now, and shall be hereafter,
 But what and where depend on life's minute?
 Hails heavenly cheer or infernal laughter
 Our first step out of the gulf or in it? 140
 Shall Man, such step within his endeavor,
 Man's face, have no more play and action
 Than joy which is crystallized forever,
 Or grief, an eternal petrification?

On which I conclude, that the early painters,
To cries of "Greek Art and what more wish
you?" —

Replied, "To become now self-acquainters,
And paint man, man, whatever the issue!
Make new hopes shine through the flesh they fray,
New fears aggrandize the rags and tatters: 150
To bring the invisible full into play!
Let the visible go to the dogs — what matters?"

Give these, I exhort you, their guerdon and glory
For daring so much, before they well did it.
The first of the new, in our race's story,
Beats the last of the old; 't is no idle quiddit.
The worthies began a revolution,
Which if on earth you intend to acknowledge,
Why, honor them now! (ends my allocution)
Nor confer your degree when the folk leave
college. 160

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.

Yet I hardly know. When a soul has seen
By the means of Evil that Good is best, 170
And, through earth and its noise, what is heaven's
serene, —

When our faith in the same has stood the test —
Why, the child grown man, you burn the rod,
The uses of labor are surely done;
There remaineth a rest for the people of God:
And I have had troubles enough, for one.

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? 180
 Nor ever was man of them all indeed,
 From these to Ghiberti and Ghirlandajo,
 Could say that he missed my critic-meed.
 So, now to my special grievance — heigh-ho!

Their ghosts still stand, as I said before,
 Watching each fresco flaked and rasped,
 Blocked up, knocked out, or whitewashed o'er :
 — No getting again what the church has grasped !
 The works on the wall must take their chance ;
 “Works never conceded to England's thick
 clime !” 190

(I hope they prefer their inheritance
 Of a bucketful of Italian quick-lime.)

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? 200

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 Monaco ?

Could not the ghost with the close red cap,
 My Pollajolo, the twice a craftsman, 210
 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?

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?) 220
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 honor.

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 230
At naked High Art, and in ecstasies
Before some clay-cold vile Carlino !

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? 240

I, that have haunted the dim San Spirito,
(Or was it rather the Ognissanti?)
Patient on altar-step planting a weary toe !
Nay, I shall have it yet ! *Detur amanti !*
My Koh-i-noor — or (if that 's a platitude)
Jewel of Giamschid, the Persian Sofi's eye ;
So, in anticipative gratitude,
What if I take up my hope and prophesy?

When the hour grows ripe, and a certain dotard
Is pitched, no parcel that needs invoicing, 250
To the worst side of the Mont St. Gothard,
We shall begin by way of rejoicing ;

None of that shooting the sky (blank cartridge),
 Nor a civic guard, all plumes and lacquer,
 Hunting Radetzky's soul like a partridge
 Over Morello with squib and cracker.

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*) 260
 Shall ponder, once Freedom restored to Florence,
 How Art may return that departed with her.
 Go, hated house, go each trace of the Loraine's,
 And bring us the days of Orgagna hither!

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 270
 Out of the bear's shape into Chimæra's,
 While Pure Art's birth is still the republic's.

Then one shall propose in a speech (curt Tuscan,
 Expurgate and sober, with scarcely an "*issimo*,")
 To end now our half-told tale of Cambuscan,
 And turn the bell-tower's *alt* to *altissimo*:
 And, fine as the beak of a young beccaccia,
 The Campanile, the Duomo's fit ally,
 Shall soar up in gold full fifty braccia,
 Completing Florence, as Florence Italy. 280

Shall I be alive that morning the scaffold
 Is broken away, and the long-pent fire,
 Like the golden hope of the world, unbaffled
 Springs from its sleep, and up goes the spire,
 While, "God and the People" plain for its motto,
 Thence the new tricolor flaps at the sky?
 At least, to foresee that glory of Giotto
 And Florence together, the first am I!

SAUL

(1855)

Said Abner, " At last thou art come ! Ere I tell, ere
thou speak,

Kiss my cheek, wish me well !" Then I wished it,
and did kiss his cheek.

And he : " Since the King, O my friend, for thy
countenance sent,

Neither drunken nor eaten have we ; nor until from
his tent

Thou return with the joyful assurance the King liveth
yet,

Shall our lip with the honey be bright, with the water
be wet.

For out of the black mid-tent's silence, a space of
three days,

Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants, of prayer
nor of praise,

To betoken that Saul and the Spirit have ended their
strife,

And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch sinks back
upon life. 10

" 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 !"

Then I, as was meet,
Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and rose on my
feet,

And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder. The tent
was unlooped ;

I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and under I
stooped ;

Hands and knees on the slippery grass-patch, all
 withered and gone,
 That extends to the second enclosure, I groped my
 way on
 Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open. Then once
 more I prayed, 20
 And opened the foldskirts and entered, and was not
 afraid,
 But spoke, "Here is David, thy servant!" And no
 voice replied.
 At the first I saw naught but the blackness: but soon
 I descried
 A something more black than the blackness—the
 vast, the upright
 Main prop which sustains the pavilion; and slow into
 sight
 Grew a figure against it, gigantic and blackest of all.
 Then a sunbeam, that burst through the tent-roof,
 showed Saul.

He stood as erect as that tent-prop, both arms
 stretched out wide
 On the great cross-support in the centre, that goes to
 each side;
 He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there as, caught in
 his pangs 30
 And waiting his change, the king-serpent all heavily
 hangs,
 Far away from his kind, in the pine, till deliverance
 come
 With the spring-time, — so agonized Saul, drear and
 stark, blind and dumb.

Then I tuned my harp, — took off the lilies we twine
 round its chords
 Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the 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 40
 Into eve and the blue far above us, — so blue and so
 far !

— Then the tune for which quails on the cornland will
 each leave his mate
 To fly after the player ; then, what makes the crickets
 elate
 Till for boldness they fight one another ; and then,
 what has weight
 To set the quick jerboa a-musing outside his sand
 house —
 There are none such as he for a wonder, half bird and
 half mouse !
 God made all the creatures and gave them our love
 and our fear,
 To give sign we and they are his children, one family
 here.

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers, their wine-
 song, when hand
 Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good friendship, and
 great hearts expand 50
 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 vaunt
 As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling. — And then,
 the great march

Wherein man runs to man to assist him and buttress
 an arch
 Naught can break ; who shall harm them, our friends?
 Then, the chorus intoned
 As the Levites go up to the altar in glory enthroned. 60
 But I stopped here : for here in the darkness Saul
 groaned.

And I paused, held my breath in such silence, and
 listened apart ;
 And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered ; and
 sparkles 'gan dart
 From the jewels that woke in his turban at once with
 a start,
 All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies courageous at
 heart.
 So the head : but the body still moved not, still hung
 there erect.
 And I bent once again to my playing, pursued it
 unchecked,
 As I sang : —

“ Oh, our manhood's prime vigor ! No spirit feels
 waste,
 Not a muscle is stopped in its playing, nor sinew
 unbraced.
 Oh, the wild joys of living ! the leaping from rock up
 to rock, 70
 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 bul-
 rushes tell
 That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and
 well.

How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to
 employ
 All the heart and the soul and the senses forever in
 joy!
 Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father, whose
 sword thou didst guard 80
 When he trusted thee forth with the armies, for glorious
 reward?
 Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother, held up
 as men sung
 The low song of the nearly-departed, and hear her
 faint tongue
 Joining in while it could to the witness, 'Let one
 more attest,
 I have lived, seen God's hand through a life-time, and
 all was for best '?
 Then they sung through their tears in strong triumph,
 not much, but the rest.
 And thy brothers, the help and the contest, the work-
 ing 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, — 90
 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 labor and lets the
 gold go),
 High ambition and deeds which surpass it, fame
 crowning them, — all
 Brought to blaze on the head of one creature — King
 Saul ! ”

And lo, with that leap of my spirit, — heart, hand,
 harp, and voice,
 Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow, each bidding
 rejoice

Saul's fame in the light it was made for — as when,
 dare I say,
 The Lord's army, in rapture of service, strains through
 its array, 100
 And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot — "Saul!" cried
 I, and stopped,
 And waited the thing that should follow. Then Saul,
 who hung propped
 By the tent's cross-support in the centre, was struck
 by his name.
 Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy summons goes
 right to the aim,
 And some mountain, the last to withstand her, that
 held (he alone,
 While the vale laughed in freedom and flowers) on a
 broad bust of stone
 A year's snow bound about for a breastplate, — leaves
 grasp of the sheet?
 Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunderously down
 to his feet,
 And there fronts you, stark, black, but alive yet, your
 mountain of old,
 With his rents, the successive bequeathings of ages
 untold — 110
 Yea, each harm got in fighting your battles, each fur-
 row and scar
 Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the tempest — all
 hail, there they are!
 — Now again to be softened with verdure, again hold
 the nest
 Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young to the green
 on his crest
 For their food in the ardors of summer. One long
 shudder thrilled
 All the tent till the very air tingled, then sank and was
 stilled
 At the King's self left standing before me, released and
 aware.
 What was gone, what remained? All to traverse 'twixt
 hope and despair,
 Death was past, life not come: so he waited. Awhile
 his right hand

Held the brow, helped the eyes left too vacant forth-
 with to remand 120
 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.

What spell or what charm,
 (For awhile there was trouble within me,) what next
 should I urge
 To sustain him where song had restored him? — Song
 filled to the verge
 His cup with the wine of this life, pressing all that it
 yields 130
 Of mere fruitage, the strength and the beauty: beyond,
 on what fields,
 Glean a vintage more potent and perfect to brighten
 the eye
 And bring blood to the lip, and commend them the
 cup they put by?
 He saith, "It is good;" still he drinks not: he lets
 me praise life,
 Gives assent, yet would die for his own part.

Then fancies grew rife
 Which had come long ago on the pasture, when round
 me the sheep
 Fed in silence — above, the one eagle wheeled slow
 as in sleep;
 And I lay in my hollow and mused on the world that
 might lie
 'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip 'twixt the
 hill and the sky:

And I laughed — “Since my days are ordained to be
 passed with my flocks, 140
 Let me people at least, with my fancies, the plains and
 the rocks,
 Dream the life I am never to mix with, and image the
 show
 Of mankind as they live in those fashions I hardly shall
 know!
 Schemes of life, its best rules and right uses, the
 courage that gains,
 And the prudence that keeps what men strive for.”
 And now these old trains
 Of vague thought came again ; I grew surer ; so, once
 more the string
 Of my harp made response to my spirit, as thus —

“Yea, my King,”

I began — “thou dost well in rejecting mere comforts
 that spring
 From the mere mortal life held in common by man
 and by brute :
 In our flesh grows the branch of this life, in our soul
 it bears fruit. 150
 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,
 E’en the good that comes in with the palm-fruit. Our
 dates shall we slight,
 When their juice brings a cure for all sorrow? or care
 for the plight
 Of the palm’s self whose slow growth produced them?
 Not so ! stem and branch
 Shall decay, nor be known in their place, while the
 palm-wine shall stanch
 Every wound of man’s spirit in winter. I pour thee
 such wine.

Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit for! the spirit be
thine! 160

By the spirit, when age shall o'ercome thee, thou still
shalt enjoy

More indeed than, at first when unconscious, the life of
a boy.

Crush that life, and behold its wine running! Each
deed thou hast done

Dies, revives, goes to work in the world; until e'en as
the sun,

Looking down on the earth, though clouds spoil him,
though tempests efface,

Can find nothing his own deed produced not, must
everywhere trace

The results of his past summer-prime, — so, each ray
of thy will,

Every flash of thy passion and prowess, long over,
shall thrill

Thy whole people, the countless, with ardor, till they
too give forth

A like cheer to their sons, who in turn fill the South
and the North 170

With the radiance thy deed was the germ of. Ca-
rouse in the past!

But the license of age has its limit; thou diest at
last:

As the lion when age dims his eyeball, the rose at her
height,

So with man — so his power and his beauty forever
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 gray 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 180

In great characters cut by the scribe, — Such was Saul,
 so he did ;
 With the sages directing the work, by the populace
 chid, —
 For not half, they 'll affirm, is comprised there ! Which
 fault to amend,
 In the grove with his kind grows the cedar, whereon
 they shall spend
 (See, in tablets 't is level before them) their praise, and
 record,
 With the gold of the graver, Saul's story, — the states-
 man's great word
 Side by side with the poet's sweet comment. The
 river 's a-wave
 With smooth paper-reeds grazing each other when
 prophet-winds rave :
 So the pen gives unborn generations their due and
 their part
 In thy being ! Then, first of the mighty, thank God
 that thou art !” 190

And behold while I sang . . . but O Thou who didst
 grant me that day,
 And before it not seldom hast granted thy help to essay,
 Carry on and complete an adventure, — my shield and
 my sword
 In that act where my soul was thy servant, thy word
 was my word, —
 Still be with me, who then, at the summit of human
 endeavor
 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, 200
 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 gray dewy covert, while Hebron
 upheaves
 The dawn struggling with night on his shoulder, and
 Kidron retrieves
 Slow the damage of yesterday's sunshine.

I say then, — my song

While I sang thus, assuring the monarch, and ever
 more strong
 Made a proffer of good to console him — he slowly
 resumed
 His old motions and habitudes kingly. The right
 hand replumed
 His black locks to their wonted composure, adjusted
 the swathes
 Of his turban, and see — the huge sweat that his
 countenance bathes, 210
 He wipes off with the robe ; and he girds now his
 loins as of yore,
 And feels slow for the armlets of price, with the clasp
 set before.
 He is Saul, ye remember in glory, — ere error had
 bent
 The broad brow from the daily communion ; and still,
 though much spent
 Be the life and the bearing that front you, the same
 God did choose
 To receive what a man may waste, desecrate, never
 quite lose.
 So sank he along by the tent-prop till, stayed by the
 pile
 Of his armor and war-cloak and garments, he leaned
 there awhile,
 And sat out my singing, — one arm round the tent-
 prop, to raise
 His bent head, and the other hung slack — till I
 touched on the praise 220
 I foresaw from all men in all time, to the man patient
 there ;
 And thus ended, the harp falling forward. Then first
 I was 'ware

That he sat, as I say, with my head just above his vast
 knees,
 Which were thrust out on each side around me, like
 oak roots which please
 To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I looked up to
 know
 If the best I could do had brought solace : he spoke
 not, but slow
 Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he laid it with
 care
 Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on my brow :
 through 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. 230
 Thus held he me there with his great eyes that scrutin-
 ized mine —
 And oh, all my heart how it loved him ! but where
 was the sign?
 I yearned — “ Could I help thee, my father, inventing
 a bliss,
 I would add, to that life of the past, both the future
 and this ;
 I would give thee new life altogether, as good, ages
 hence,
 As this moment, — had love but the warrant love’s
 heart to dispense ! ”

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

“ I have gone the whole round of creation : I saw and
 I spoke :
 I, a work of God’s hand for that purpose, received in
 my brain
 And pronounced on the rest of his handwork — re-
 turned him again 240
 His creation’s approval or censure : I spoke as I saw :
 I report, as a man may of God’s work — all ’s love,
 yet all ’s law.

Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me. Each
 faculty tasked
 To perceive him has gained an abyss where a dewdrop
 was asked.
 Have I knowledge? confounded it shrivels at Wisdom
 laid bare.
 Have I forethought? how purblind, how blank, to the
 Infinite Care!
 Do I task any faculty highest, to image success?
 I but open my eyes, — and perfection, no more and
 no less,
 In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and God is seen
 God
 In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and
 the clod. 250
 And thus looking within and around me, I ever renew
 (With that stoop of the soul which in bending upraises
 it too)
 The submission of man's nothing-perfect to God's all-
 complete,
 As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to his
 feet.
 Yet with all this abounding experience, this deity
 known,
 I shall dare to discover some province, some gift of
 my own.
 There's a faculty pleasant to exercise, hard to hood-
 wink,
 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! 260
 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 appall?
 In the least things have faith, yet distrust in the great-
 est of all?

Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate
 gift,
 That I doubt his own love can compete with it?
 Here, the parts shift?
 Here, the creature surpass the Creator, — the end,
 what Began?
 Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this
 man,
 And dare doubt He alone shall not help him, who yet
 alone can? 270
 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 mis-
 take,
 Saul the failure, the ruin he seems now, — and bid him
 awake 280
 From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to find
 himself set
 Clear and safe in new light and new life, — a new
 harmony yet
 To be run, and continued, and ended — who knows?
 — or endure!
 The man taught enough by life's dream, of the rest to
 make sure;
 By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning intensified
 bliss,
 And the next world's reward and repose, by the
 struggles in this.

"I believe it! 'T is thou, God, that givest, 't is 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. 290
 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 impuissance? 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! 300
 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, 310
 Thou shalt love and be loved by, forever: a Hand
 like this hand
 Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See
 the Christ stand!"

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 strug-
 glingly 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, 320
 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 gray 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 ^{33°}
 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 ! ”

“ DE GUSTIBUS — ”

(1855)

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, 10
 With the beanflowers' boon,
 And the blackbird's tune,
 And May, and June !

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) — 20
 In a sea-side house to the farther South,

Where the baked cicala dies of drouth,
 And one sharp tree — 't is a cypress — stands,
 By the many hundred years red-rusted,
 Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'ercrusted,
 My sentinel to guard the sands
 To the water's edge. For, what expands
 Before the house, but the great opaque
 Blue breadth of sea without a break?
 While, in the house, forever crumbles 30
 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 — 40
 (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!

HOLY-CROSS DAY

ON WHICH THE JEWS WERE FORCED TO ATTEND AN
 ANNUAL CHRISTIAN SERMON IN ROME

(1855)

"Now was come about Holy-Cross Day, and now
 must my lord preach his first sermon to the Jews: as
 it was of old cared for in the merciful bowels of the
 Church, that, so to speak, a crumb at least from her
 conspicuous table here in Rome should be, though
 but once yearly, cast to the famishing dogs, under-
 trampled and bespitten-upon beneath the feet of the
 guests. And a moving sight in truth, this, of so many

of the besotted blind restif and ready-to-perish Hebrews ! now maternally brought — nay, (for He saith, ‘Compel them to come in’) haled, as it were, by the head and hair, and against their obstinate hearts, to partake of the heavenly grace. What awakening, what striving with tears, what working of a yeasty conscience ! Nor was my lord wanting to himself on so apt an occasion ; witness the abundance of conversions which did incontinently reward him : though not to my lord be altogether the glory.” — *Diary by the Bishop’s Secretary*, 1600.

What the Jews really said, on thus being driven to church, was rather to this effect : —

* Fee, faw, fum ! bubble and squeak !
 Blessedest Thursday ’s the fat of the week.
 Rumble and tumble, sleek and rough,
 Stinking and savory, smug and gruff,
 Take the church-road, for the bell’s due chime
 Gives us the summons — ’t is sermon-time ! *

Boh, here ’s Barnabas ! Job, that ’s you ?
 Up stumps Solomon — bustling too ?
 Shame, man ! greedy beyond your years
 To handsel the bishop’s shaving-shears ? 10
 Fair play ’s a jewel ! Leave friends in the lurch ?
 Stand on a line ere you start for the church !

Higgledy piggedly, packed we lie,
 Rats in a hamper, swine in a sty,
 Wasps in a bottle, frogs in a sieve,
 Worms in a carcass, fleas in a sleeve.
 Hist ! square shoulders, settle your thumbs
 And buzz for the bishop — here he comes.

Bow, wow, wow — a bone for the dog !
 I liken his Grace to an acorned hog. 20
 What, a boy at his side, with the bloom of a lass,
 To help and handle my lord’s hour-glass !
 Didst ever behold so lithe a chine ?
 His cheek hath laps like a fresh-singed swine.

Aaron's asleep — shove hip to haunch,
 Or somebody deal him a dig in the paunch !
 Look at the purse with the tassel and knob,
 And the gown with the angel and thingumbob !
 What's he at, quotha? reading his text !
 Now you've his curtsey — and what comes next? 30

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 !

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 ! 40
 Here's a knife, clip quick — it's a sign of grace —
 Or he ruins us all with his hanging-face.

Whom now is the bishop a-leering at?
 I know a point where his text falls pat.
 I'll tell him to-morrow, a word just now
 Went to my heart and made me vow
 I meddlé no more with the worst of trades —
 Let somebody else pay his serenades.

Groan all together now, whee — hee — hee !
 It's a-work, it's a-work, ah, woe is me ! 50
 It began, when a herd of us, picked and placed,
 Were spurred through the Corso, stripped to the waist ;
 Jew brutes, with sweat and blood well spent
 To usher in worthily Christian Lent.

It grew, when the hangman entered our bounds,
 Yelled, pricked us out to his church like hounds :
 It got to a pitch, when the hand indeed
 Which gutted my purse would throttle my creed :
 And it overflows, when, to even the odd,
 Men I helped to their sins helped me to their God. 60

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.

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. 70
But what, or where ? at the last or first ?
In one point only we sinned, at worst.

"The Lord will have mercy on Jacob yet,
And again in his border see Israel set.
When Judah beholds Jerusalem,
The stranger-seed shall be joined to them :
To Jacob's House shall the Gentiles cleave.
So the Prophet saith and his sons believe.

"Ay, the children of the chosen race
Shall carry and bring them to their place : 80
In the land of the Lord shall lead the same,
Bondsmen and handmaids. Who shall blame,
When the slaves enslave, the oppressed ones o'er
The oppressor triumph forevermore ?

"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. 90

"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 —

“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, 100
 Whose life laughs through and spits at their creed,
 Who maintain thee in word, and defy thee in deed!

“We withstood Christ then? Be mindful how
 At least we withstand Barabbas now!
 Was our outrage sore? But the worst we spared,
 To have called these — Christians, had we dared!
 Let defiance to them pay mistrust of thee,
 And Rome make amends for Calvary!

“By the torture, prolonged from age to age,
 By the infamy, Israel’s heritage, 110
 By the Ghetto’s plague, by the garb’s disgrace,
 By the badge of shame, by the felon’s place,
 By the branding-tool, the bloody whip,
 And the summons to Christian fellowship, —

“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!”¹ 120

¹ Pope Gregory XVI. abolished this bad business of the Sermon. — R. B.

CLEON

(1855)

“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 lisp
“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: 10
And one white she-slave from the group dispersed
Of black and white slaves (like the chequer-work
Pavement, at once my nation's work and gift,
Now covered with this settle-down of doves),
One lyric woman, in her crocus vest
Woven of sea-wools, with her two white hands
Commends to me the strainer and the cup
Thy lip hath bettered ere it blesses mine.

Well-counselled, king, in thy munificence!
For so shall men remark, in such an act 20
Of love for him whose song gives life its joy,
Thy recognition of the use of life;
Nor call thy spirit barely adequate
To help on life in straight ways, broad enough
For vulgar souls, by ruling and the rest.
Thou, in the daily building of thy tower, —
Whether in fierce and sudden spasms of toil,
Or through dim lulls of unapparent growth,
Or when the general work 'mid good acclaim
Climbed with the eye to cheer the architect, — 30
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 — 40
 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. 50
 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, 60
 Inventing one. In brief, all arts are mine ;
 Thus much the people know and recognize,
 Throughout our seventeen islands. Marvel not.
 We of these latter days, with greater mind
 Than our forerunners, since more composite,
 Look not so great, beside their simple way,
 To a judge who only sees one way at once,
 One mind-point and no other at a time, —
 Compares the small part of a man of us
 With some whole man of the heroic age, 70
 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 analyzed to parts,
 But each part having reference to all, —
 How shall a certain part, pronounced complete,
 Endure effacement by another part? 80
 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, 90
 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 labor ends.
 Now mark me ! those divine men of old time
 Have reached, thou sayest well, each at one point
 The outside verge that rounds our faculty ;
 And where they reached, who can do more than
 reach ?
 It takes but little water just to touch
 At some one point the inside of a sphere, 100
 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 ; 110
 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 120
 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 labor 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, 130
 Through culture, than the wild wealth of the rock;
 The suave plum than the savage-tasted drupe;
 The pastured honey-bee drops choicer sweet;
 The flowers turn double, and the leaves turn flowers;
 That young and tender crescent-moon, thy slave,
 Sleeping above her robe as buoyed by clouds,
 Refines upon the women of my youth.
 What, and the soul alone deteriorates?
 I have not chanted verse like Homer, no —
 Nor swept string like Terpander, no — nor carved 140
 And painted men like Phidias and his friend:
 I am not great as they are, point by point,
 But I have entered into sympathy
 With these four, running these into one soul,
 Who, separate, ignored each other's art.
 Say, is it nothing that I know them all?
 The wild flower was the larger; I have dashed
 Rose-blood upon its petals, pricked its cup's
 Honey with wine, and driven its seed to fruit,
 And show a better flower if not so large: 150
 I stand myself. Refer this to the gods
 Whose gift alone it is! which, shall I dare,
 (All pride apart) upon the absurd pretext
 That such a gift by chance lay in my hand,
 Discourse of lightly or depreciate?
 It might have fallen to another's hand: what then?
 I pass too surely: let at least truth stay!

And next, of what thou followest on to ask,
 This being with me as I declare, O king,
 My works, in all these varicolored kinds, 160
 So done by me, accepted so by men, —
 Thou askest, if (my soul thus in men's hearts)
 I must not be accounted to attain
 The very crown and proper end of life?
 Inquiring thence how, now life closeth up,
 I face death with success in my right hand :
 Whether I fear death less than dost thyself
 The fortunate of men? "For" (writest thou)
 "Thou leavest much behind, while I leave naught.
 Thy life stays in the poems men shall sing, 170
 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?
 The brazen statue to o'erlook my grave,
 Set on the promontory which I named.
 And that — some supple courtier of my heir
 Shall use its robed and sceptred arm, perhaps,
 To fix the rope to, which best drags it down.
 I go then : triumph thou, who dost not go !" 180

Nay, thou art worthy of hearing my whole mind.
 Is this apparent, when thou turn'st to muse
 Upon the scheme of earth and man in chief,
 That admiration grows as knowledge grows?
 That imperfection means perfection hid,
 Reserved in part, to grace the after-time?
 If, in the morning of philosophy,
 Ere aught had been recorded, nay perceived,
 Thou, with the light now in thee, couldst have looked
 On all earth's tenantry, from worm to bird, 190
 Ere man, her last, appeared upon the stage —
 Thou wouldst have seen them perfect, and deduced
 The perfectness of others yet unseen.
 Conceding which, — had Zeus then questioned thee,
 "Shall I go on a step, improve on this,
 Do more for visible creatures than is done?"
 Thou wouldst have answered, "Ay, by making each
 Grow conscious in himself — by that alone,

That there 's a world of capability
 For joy, spread round about us, meant for us, 240
 Inviting us ; and still the soul craves all
 And still the flesh replies, " Take no jot more
 Than ere thou clombst the tower to look abroad !
 Nay, so much less as that fatigue has brought
 Deduction to it." We struggle, fain to enlarge
 Our bounded physical recipiency,
 Increase our power, supply fresh oil to life,
 Repair the waste of age and sickness : no,
 It skills not ! life 's inadequate to joy,
 As the soul sees joy, tempting life to take. 250
 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 : 260
 And so a man can use but a man's joy,
 While he sees God's. Is it for Zeus to boast,
 " See, man, how happy I live, and despair —
 That I may be still happier — for thy use !"
 If this were so, we could not thank our lord,
 As hearts beat on to doing ; '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, 270
 O king, with thy profound discouragement,
 Who seest the wider but to sigh the more.
 Most progress is most failure : thou sayest well.

The last point now : — thou dost except a case —
 Holding joy not impossible to one
 With artist-gifts — to such a man as I,
 Who leave behind me living works indeed ;
 For, such a poem, such a painting, lives.
 What ? dost thou verily trip upon a word,
 Confound the accurate view of what joy is

(Caught somewhat clearer by my eyes than thine) 280
 With feeling joy? confound the knowing how
 And showing how to live (my faculty)
 With actually living? — Otherwise
 Where is the artist's vantage o'er the king?
 Because in my great epos I display
 How divers men, young, strong, fair, wise, can act —
 Is this as though I acted? if I paint,
 Carve the young Phœbus, am I therefore young?
 Methinks I'm older that I bowed myself
 The many years of pain that taught me art! 290
 Indeed, to know is something, and to prove
 How all this beauty might be enjoyed, is more :
 But, knowing naught, to enjoy is something too ;
 Yon rower, with the moulded muscles there,
 Lowering the sail, is nearer it than I.
 I can write love-odes : thy fair slave 's an ode.
 I get to sing of love, when grown too gray
 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! 300

“ But,” sayest thou — (and I marvel, I repeat,
 To find thee trip on such a mere word) “ what
 Thou writest, paintest, stays ; that does not die :
 Sappho survives, because we sing her songs,
 And Æschylus, because we read his plays! ”
 Why, if they live still, let them come and take
 Thy slave in my despite, drink from thy cup,
 Speak in my place. Thou diest while I survive?
 Say rather that my fate is deadlier still,
 In this, that every day my sense of joy 310
 Grows more acute, my soul (intensified
 By power and insight) more enlarged, more keen ;
 While every day my hairs fall more and more,
 My hand shakes, and the heavy years increase —
 The horror quickening still from year to year,
 The consummation coming past escape,
 When I shall know most, and yet least enjoy —
 When all my works wherein I prove my worth,
 Being present still to mock me in men's mouths,
 Alive still in the praise of such as thou, 320

I, I, the feeling, thinking, acting man,
 The man who loved his life so over-much,
 Sleep in my urn. It is so horrible,
 I dare at times imagine to my need
 Some future state revealed to us by Zeus,
 Unlimited in capability
 For joy as this is in desire for joy,
 — To seek which, the joy-hunger forces us :
 That, stung by straitness of our life, made strait
 On purpose to make prized the life at large — 330
 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. 340
 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 circumcised,
 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 350
 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.

TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA

(1855)

I wonder do you feel to-day
 As I have felt since, hand in hand,
 We sat down on the grass, to stray
 In spirit better through the land,
 This morn of Rome and May?

For me, I touched a thought, I know,
 Has tantalized me many times
 (Like turns of thread the spiders throw
 Mocking across our path) for rhymes
 To catch at and let go.

10

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,

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

20

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

Such life here, through such lengths of hours,
 Such miracles performed in play,
 Such primal naked forms of flowers,
 Such letting nature have her way
 While heaven looks from its towers!

30

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?

I would that you were all to me,
You that are just so much, no more.
Nor yours nor mine, nor slave nor free!
Where does the fault lie? What the core
O' the wound, since wound must be? 40

I would I could adopt your will,
See with your eyes, and set my heart
Beating by yours, and drink my fill
At your soul's springs, — your part my part
In life, for good and ill.

No. I yearn upward, touch you close,
Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,
Catch your soul's warmth, — I pluck the rose
And love it more than tongue can speak —
Then the good minute goes. 50

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?

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. 60

A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL

(SHORTLY AFTER THE REVIVAL OF LEARNING IN
EUROPE)

(1855)

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, 10
 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. 20
 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 ! 30
 He, whom we convoy to his grave aloft,
 Singing together,
 He was a man born with thy face and throat,
 Lyric Apollo !

Long he lived nameless : how should Spring take note
 Winter would follow?
Till lo, the little touch, and youth was gone!
 Cramped and diminished,
Moaned he, "New measures, other feet anon!
 My dance is finished"? 40
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, 50
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. 60
Let me know all! Prate not of most or least,
 Painful or easy!
Even to the crumbs I 'd fain eat up the feast,
 Ay, nor feel queasy."
Oh, such a life as he resolved to live
 When he had learned it,
When he had gathered all books had to give!
 Sooner, he spurned it.
Image the whole, then execute the parts —
 Fancy the fabric 70
Quite, ere you build, ere steel strike fire from quartz,
 Ere mortar dab brick!

(Here 's the town-gate reached : there 's the market-
 place
 Gaping before us.)

Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace
 (Hearten our chorus!)
 That before living he 'd learn how to live —
 No end to learning :
 Earn the means first — God surely will contrive
 Use for our earning. 80
 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, 90
 Step two abreast, the way winds narrowly !)
 Not a whit troubled,
 Back to his studies, fresher than at first,
 Fierce as a dragon
 He (soul-hydroptic with a sacred thirst)
 Sucked at the flagon.
 Oh, if we draw a circle premature,
 Heedless of far gain,
 Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure
 Bad is our bargain ! 100
 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 : 110
 " Wilt thou trust death or not ? " He answered " Yes !
 Hence with life's pale lure !"
 That low man seeks a little thing to do,
 Sees it and does it :
 This high man, with a great thing to pursue,
 Dies ere he knows it.

That low man goes on adding one to one,
His hundred 's soon hit :
This high man, aiming at a million,
Misses an unit. 120
That, has the world here — should he need the next,
Let the world mind him !
This, throws himself on God, and, unperplexed,
Seeking shall find him.
So, with the throttling hands of death at strife,
Ground he at grammar ;
Still, through the rattle, parts of speech were rife :
While he could stammer
He settled *Hoti's* business — let it be ! —
Properly based *Oun* — 130
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 ? 140
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.

“TRANSCENDENTALISM: A POEM
IN TWELVE BOOKS”

(1855)

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 display,
Such turning and adjustment of the harp,
And taking it upon your breast, at length,
Only to speak dry words across its strings?
Stark-naked thought is in request enough: 10
Speak prose, and hollo it till Europe hears!
The six-foot Swiss tube, braced about with bark,
Which helps the hunter's voice from Alp to Alp —
Exchange our harp for that, — who hinders you?

But here's your fault: grown men want thought,
you think;
Thought's what they mean by verse, and seek in
verse:

Boys seek for images and melody,
Men must have reason — so, you aim at men.
Quite otherwise! Objects throng our youth, 't is true;
We see and hear and do not wonder much: 20
If you could tell us what they mean, indeed!
As German Boehme never cared for plants
Until it happed, a-walking in the fields,
He noticed all at once that plants could speak,
Nay, turned with loosened tongue to talk with him,
That day the daisy had an eye indeed —
Colloquized with the cowslip on such themes!
We find them extant yet in Jacob's prose.
But by the time youth slips a stage or two
While reading prose in that tough book he wrote 30
(Collating and emandating the same

And settling on the sense most to our mind),
 We shut the clasps and find life's summer past.
 Then, who helps more, pray, to repair our loss —
 Another Boehme, with a tougher book
 And subtler meanings of what roses say, —
 Or some stout Mage like him of Halberstadt,
 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, 40
 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, believe,
 Was your own boy-face o'er the finer chords
 Bent, following the cherub at the top 50
 That points to God with his paired half-moon wings.

MISCONCEPTIONS

(1855)

This is a spray the Bird clung to,
 Making it blossom with pleasure,
 Ere the high tree-top she sprung to,
 Fit for her nest and her treasure.
 Oh, what a hope beyond measure
 Was the poor spray's, which the flying feet hung to, —
 So to be singled out, built in, and sung to!

This is a heart the Queen leant on,
 Thrilled in a minute erratic,
 Ere the true bosom she bent on, 10
 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!

ONE WORD MORE

TO E. B. B.

(1855)

There they are, my fifty men and women,
 Naming me the fifty poems finished !
 Take them, Love, the book and me together :
 Where the heart lies, let the brain lie also.

Rafael made a century of sonnets,
 Made and wrote them in a certain volume
 Dinted with the silver-pointed pencil
 Else he only used to draw Madonnas :
 These, the world might view — but one, the volume.
 Who that one, you ask ? Your heart instructs you. 10
 Did she live and love it all her lifetime ?
 Did she drop, his lady of the sonnets,
 Die, and let it drop beside her pillow
 Where it lay in place of Rafael's glory,
 Rafael's cheek so duteous and so loving —
 Cheek, the world was wont to hail a painter's,
 Rafael's cheek, her love had turned a poet's ?

You and I would rather read that volume,
 (Taken to his beating bosom by it)
 Lean and list the bosom-beats of Rafael, 20
 Would we not ? than wonder at Madonnas —
 Her, San Sisto names, and Her, Foligno,
 Her, that visits Florence in a vision,
 Her, that 's left with lilies in the Louvre —
 Seen by us and all the world in circle.

You and I will never read that volume.
 Guido Reni, like his own eye's apple
 Guarded long the treasure-book and loved it.
 Guido Reni dying, all Bologna
 Cried, and the world cried too, " Ours, the treasure ! " 30
 Suddenly, as rare things will, it vanished.

Dante once prepared to paint an angel :
Whom to please? You whisper "Beatrice."
While he mused and traced it and retraced it,
(Peradventure with a pen corroded
Still by drops of that hot ink he dipped for,
When, his left-hand i' the hair o' the wicked,
Back he held the brow and pricked its stigma,
Bit into the live man's flesh for parchment,
Loosed him, laughed to see the writing rankle, 40
Let the wretch go festering through Florence) —
Dante, who loved well because he hated,
Hated wickedness that hinders loving,
Dante standing, studying his angel, —
In there broke the folk of his Inferno.
Says he — "Certain people of importance"
(Such he gave his daily dreadful line to)
"Entered and would seize, forsooth, the poet."
Says the poet — "Then I stopped my painting."

You and I would rather see that angel, 50
Painted by the tenderness of Dante,
Would we not? — than read a fresh Inferno.

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 importance :"
We and Bice bear the loss forever.

What of Rafael's sonnets, Dante's picture?
This : no artist lives and loves, that longs not
Once, and only once, and for one only, 60
(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, 70

So to be the man and leave the artist,
Gain the man's joy, miss the artist's sorrow.

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, beside, the deed in doing.
While he smites, how can he but remember,
So he smote belike, in such a peril, 80
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 savors 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, 90
Sees and knows again those phalanxed faces,
Hears, yet one time more, the 'customed prelude —
" How shouldst thou, of all men, smite, and save us? "
Guesses what is like to prove the sequel —
" Egypt's flesh-pots — nay, the drought was better. "

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

Did he love one face from out the thousands, 100
(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.

I shall never, in the years remaining,
Paint you pictures, no, nor carve you statues, 110
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 !

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. 120
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 through bronze, may breathe through
 silver,
Fitly serenade a slumbrous princess.
He who writes, may write for once as I do.

Love, you saw me gather men and women,
Live or dead or fashioned by my fancy, 130
Enter each and all, and use their service,
Speak from every mouth, — the speech, a poem.
Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows,
Hopes and fears, belief and disbelieving :
I am mine and yours — the rest be all men's,
Karshish, Cleon, Norbert, and the fifty,
Let me speak this once in my true person,
Not as Lippo, Roland, or Andrea,
Though the fruit of speech be just this sentence :
Pray you, look on these my men and women, 140
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.

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 color,
 Drifted over Fiesole by twilight,
 Came she, our new crescent of a hair's-breadth.
 Full she flared it, lamping Samminiato, 150
 Rounder 'twixt the cypresses and rounder,
 Perfect till the nightingales applauded.
 Now, a piece of her old self, impoverished,
 Hard to greet, she traverses the house-roofs,
 Hurries with unhandsome thrift of silver,
 Goes dispiritedly, glad to finish.

What, there's nothing in the moon noteworthy?
 Nay: for if that moon could love a mortal,
 Use, to charm him (so to fit a fancy),
 All her magic ('t is the old sweet mythos), 160
 She would turn a new side to her mortal,
 Side unseen of herdsman, huntsman, steersman —
 Blank to Zoroaster on his terrace,
 Blind to Galileo on his turret,
 Dumb to Homer, dumb to Keats — him, even!
 Think, the wonder of the moonstruck mortal —
 When she turns round, comes again in heaven,
 Opens out anew for worse or better!
 Proves she like some portent of an iceberg

Swimming full upon the ship it founders, 170
 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!

What were seen? None knows, none ever shall
 know, 180
 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 !

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 ! 190

There, in turn I stand with them and praise you —
Out of my own self, I dare to phrase it.
But the best is when I glide from out them,
Cross a step or two of dubious twilight,
Come out on the other side, the novel,
Silent silver lights and darks undreamed of,
Where I hush and bless myself with silence.

Oh, their Rafael of the dear Madonnas,
Oh, their Dante of the dread Inferno,
Wrote one song — and in my brain I sing it, 200
Drew one angel — borne, see, on my bosom !

JAMES LEE'S WIFE

(1864)

I

JAMES LEE'S WIFE SPEAKS AT THE WINDOW

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.

Look in my eyes !
 Wilt thou change too ?
 Should I fear surprise ? 10
 Shall I find aught new
 In the old and dear,
 In the good and true,
 With the changing year ?

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, 20
 Me, to hold embraced.

II

BY THE FIRESIDE

Is all our fire of shipwreck wood,
 Oak and pine ?
 Oh, for the ills half-understood,
 The dim dead woe
 Long ago

Befallen this bitter coast of France !
Well, poor sailors took their chance ;
 I take mine.

A ruddy shaft our fire must shoot 30
 O'er the sea :
Do sailors eye the casement — mute,
 Drenched and stark,
 From their bark —
And envy, gnash their teeth for hate
O' the warm, safe house and happy freight
 — Thee and me ?

God help you, sailors, at your need !
 Spare the curse !
For some ships, safe in port indeed, 40
 Rot and rust,
 Run to dust,
All through worms i' the wood, which crept,
Gnawed our hearts out while we slept :
 That is worse.

Who lived here before us two ?
 Old-world pairs.
Did a woman ever — would I knew ! —
 Watch the man
 With whom began 50
Love's voyage full-sail, — (now gnash your teeth !)
When planks start, open hell beneath
 Unawares ?

III

IN THE DOORWAY

The swallow has set her six young on the rail,
 And looks seaward :
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 ! 60

Our fig-tree, that leaned for the saltness, has furled
 Her five fingers,
 Each leaf like a hand opened wide to the world
 Where there lingers
 No glint of the gold, Summer sent for her sake :
 How the vines writhe in rows, each impaled on its
 stake !
 My heart shrivels up and my spirit shrinks curled.

Yet here are we two ; we have love, house enough,
 With the field there,
 This house of four rooms, that field red and rough, 70
 Though it yield there,
 For the rabbit that robs, scarce a blade or a bent ;
 If a magpie alight now, it seems an event ;
 And they both will be gone at November's rebuff.

But why must cold spread ? but wherefore bring change
 To the spirit
 God meant should mate his with an infinite range,
 And inherit
 His power to put life in the darkness and cold ?
 Oh, live and love worthily, bear and be bold ! 80
 Whom Summer made friends of, let Winter estrange !

IV

ALONG THE BEACH

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 ?

^χI took you — how could I otherwise ?
 For a world to me and more ;
 For all, love greatens and glorifies
 Till God's aglow, to the loving eyes,
 In what was mere earth before. ^χ

Yes, earth — yes, mere ignoble earth!
Now do I mis-state, mistake?
Do I wrong your weakness and call it worth?
Expect all harvest, dread no dearth,
Seal my sense up for your sake?

Oh, Love, Love, no, Love! not so indeed!
You were just weak earth, I knew:
With much in you waste, with many a weed,
And plenty of passions run to seed, 100
But a little good grain too.

And such as you were, I took you for mine:
Did not you find me yours,
To watch the olive and wait the vine,
And wonder when rivers of oil and wine
Would flow, as the Book assures?

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, 110
And, either or both, to love.

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 despair
Fit subject for some new song:

“How the light, light love, he has wings to fly
At suspicion of a bond:
My wisdom has bidden your pleasure good-by,
Which will turn up next in a laughing eye, 120
And why should you look beyond?”

V

ON THE CLIFF

I leaned on the turf,
I looked at a rock
Left dry by the surf:

For the turf, to call it grass were to mock :
 Dead to the roots, so deep was done
 The work of the summer sun.

And the rock lay flat
 As an anvil's face ;
 No iron like that ! 130
 Baked dry ; of a weed, of a shell, no trace ;
 Sunshine outside, but ice at the core,
 Death's altar by the lone shore.

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.

On the rock, they scorch 140
 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 !

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,— 150
 Love settling unawares !

VI

READING A BOOK, UNDER THE CLIFF

“ Still ailing, Wind ? Wilt be appeased or no ?
 Which needs the other's office, thou or I ?
 Dost want to be disburdened of a woe,
 And can, in truth, my voice untie
 Its links, and let it go ?

“Art thou a dumb, wronged thing that would be
righted?

Entrusting thus thy cause to me? Forbear!
No tongue can mend such pleadings; faith, requited
With falsehood, — love, at last aware 160
Of scorn, — hopes, early blighted, —

“We have them; but I know not any tone
So fit as thine to falter forth a sorrow:
Dost think men would go mad without a moan,
If they knew any way to borrow
A pathos like thy own?

“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 170
The straw she shivers on;

“You had not thought she was so tall: and spent,
Her shrunk lids open, her lean fingers shut
Close, close, their sharp and livid nails indent
The clammy palm; then all is mute:
That way, the spirit went.

“Or wouldst thou rather that I understand
Thy will to help me? — like the dog I found
Once, pacing sad this solitary strand,
Who would not take my food, poor hound, 180
But whined and licked my hand.”

All this and more, comes from some young man's pride
Of power to see, — in failure and mistake,
Relinquishment, disgrace, on every side, —
Merely examples for his sake,
Helps to his path untried:

Instances he must — simply recognize?
Oh, more than so! — must, with a learner's zeal,
Make doubly prominent, twice emphasize
By added touches that reveal 190
The god in babe's disguise.

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 !

Whence, judge if he learn forthwith what the wind
 Means in its moaning — by the happy, prompt,
 Instinctive way of youth, I mean ; for kind,
 Calm years, exacting their account 200
 Of pain, mature the mind :

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, —

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 210
 The limit time assigns.”

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, — Nevermore !

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, 220
 His soul's wings never furled !

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 !

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! — 230
O'er all he 'd sink to save.

VII

AMONG THE ROCKS

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 twitters sweet.

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, 240
Love were clear gain, and wholly well for you:
Make the low nature better by your throes!
Give earth yourself, go up for gain above!

VIII

BESIDE THE DRAWING-BOARD

“As like as a Hand to another Hand!”
Whoever said that foolish thing
Could not have studied to understand
The councils 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 250
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, 260
 Its beauty mounted into my brain,
 And a fancy seized me ; I was fain
 To efface my work, begin anew,
 Kiss what before I only drew ;
 Ay, laying the red chalk 'twixt my lips,
 With soul to help if the mere lips failed,
 I kissed all right where the drawing ailed,
 Kissed fast the grace that somehow slips
 Still from one's soulless finger-tips.

'Tis a clay cast, the perfect thing, 270
 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 280
 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, 290
 For him in heaven, his soul's fit bride.

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? 300
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! Confessed!
‘Art is null and study void!’
So sayest thou? So said not I,
Who threw the faulty pencil by,
And years instead of hours employed, 310
Learning the veritable use
Of flesh and bone and nerve beneath
Lines and hue of the outer sheath,
If haply I might reproduce
One motive of the powers profuse,
Flesh and bone and nerve, that make
The poorest, coarsest human hand
An object worthy to be scanned
A whole life long for their sole sake.
Shall earth and the cramped moment-space 320
Yield the heavenly crowning grace?
Now the parts and then the whole!
Who art thou, with stinted 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! 330

Go, little girl with the poor coarse hand!
I have my lesson, shall understand.

IX

ON DECK

There is nothing to remember in me,
 Nothing I ever said with a grace,
 Nothing I did that you care to see,
 Nothing I was that deserves a place
 In your mind, now I leave you, set you free.

Conceded! In turn, concede to me,
 Such things have been as a mutual flame.
 Your soul's locked fast; but, love for a key, 340
 You might let it loose, till I grew the same
 In your eyes, as in mine you stand: strange plea!

For then, then, what would it matter to me
 That I was the harsh, ill-favored 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.

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, 350
 Who never lifted the hand in vain —
 Will hold mine yet, from over the sea!

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 "'T is She!"

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, 360
 A passion to stand as your thoughts approve,
 A rapture to fall where your foot might be.

But did one touch of such love for me
 Come in a word or a look of yours,
 Whose words and looks will, circling, flee
 Round me and round while life endures, —
 Could I fancy “As I feel, thus feels He;”

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, — 370
 You might turn myself! — should I know or care,
 When I should be dead of joy, James Lee?

DÎS ALITER VISUM;

OR, LE BYRON DE NOS JOURS

(1864)

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? —

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 — 10

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;

“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: 20

“ 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 skull ? ”

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, — 30

Did you determine, as we stepped
 O’er the lone stone fence, “ Let me get
 Her for myself, and what’s the earth
 With all its art, verse, music, worth —
 Compared with love, found, gained, and kept ? ”

“ 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 ? ” 40

And did you, when we entered, reached
 The votive frigate, soft aloft
 Riding on air this hundred years,
 Safe-smiling at old hopes and fears, —
 Did you draw profit while she preached ?

Resolving, “ Fools we wise men grow !
 Yes, I could easily blurt out curt
 Some question that might find reply
 As prompt in her stopped lips, dropped eye,
 And rush of red to cheek and brow : ” 50

“ Thus were a match made, sure and fast,
 ’Mid the blue weed-flowers round the mound
 Where, issuing, we shall stand and stay
 For one more look at baths and bay,
 Sands, sea-gulls, and the old church last —

“ A match 'twixt me, bent, wiggled 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 unblamed, — 60

“ And this young beauty, round and sound
 As a mountain-apple, youth and truth
 With loves and doves, at all events
 With money in the Three per Cents ;
 Whose choice of me would seem profound : —

“ 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. 70

“ 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 !

“ ‘ My friend makes verse and gets renown ;
 Have they all fifty years, his peers ?
 He knows the world, firm, quiet and gay ;
 Boys will become as much one day :
 They're fools ; he cheats, with beard less brown. 80

“ ‘ 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 !’

“ 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. 90

“ ‘What? All I am, was, and might be,
 All books taught, art brought, life’s whole strife,
 Painful results since precious, just
 Were fitly exchanged, in wise disgust,
 For two cheeks freshened by youth and sea?

“ ‘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 ! ” 100

That ended me. You judged the porch
 We left by, Norman ; took our look
 At sea and sky ; wondered so few
 Find out the place for air and view ;
 Remarked the sun began to scorch ;

Descended, soon regained the baths,
 And then, good-by ! 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. 110

Now I may speak : you fool, for all
 Your lore ! WHO made things plain in vain ?
 What was the sea for ? What, the gray
 Sad church, that solitary day,
 Crosses and graves and swallows’ call ?

Was there naught better than to enjoy ?
 No feat which, done, would make time break
 And let us pent-up creatures through
 Into eternity, our due ?
 No forcing earth teach heaven’s employ ? 120

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 ?

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. 130

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?

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. 140

But what's whole can increase no more,
Is dwarfed and dies, since here's its sphere.
The devil laughed at you in his sleeve !
You knew not? That I well believe ;
Or you had saved two souls : nay, four.

For Stephanie sprained last night her wrist,
Ankle, or something. "Pooh," cry you?
At any rate she danced, all say,
Vilely ; her vogue has had its day.
Here comes my husband from his whist. 150

ABT VOGLER

(AFTER HE HAS BEEN EXTEMPORIZING UPON THE MUSICAL
INSTRUMENT OF HIS INVENTION)

(1864)

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!

Would it might tarry like his, the beautiful building of
mine,
This which my keys in a crowd pressed and impor-
tuned to raise ! 10
Ah, one and all, how they helped, would dispart now
and now combine,
Zealous to hasten the work, heighten their master
his praise !
And one would bury his brow with a blind plunge
down to hell,
Burrow awhile and build, broad on the root of
things,
Then up again swim into sight, having based me my
palace well,
Founded it, fearless of flame, flat on the nether
springs.

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, ²⁰

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.

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 splendors 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, ³⁰

For earth had attained to heaven, there was no more near nor far.

Nay more ; for there wanted not who walked in the glare and glow,

Presences plain in the place ; or, fresh from the Protoplast,

Furnished for ages to come, when a 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. 40

All through my keys that gave their sounds to a wish
 of my soul,

All through my soul that praised as its wish flowed
 visibly forth,

All through music and me ! For think, had I painted
 the whole,

Why, there it had stood, to see, nor the process so
 wonder-worth :

Had I written the same, made verse — still, effect
 proceeds from cause,

Ye know why the forms are fair, ye hear how the
 tale is told ;

It is all triumphant art, but art in obedience to laws.

Painter and poet are proud in the artist-list en-
 rolled : —

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 ! 50

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
 naught :

It is everywhere in the world — loud, soft, and all
 is said :

Give it to me to use ! I mix it with two in my
 thought :

And there ! Ye have heard and seen : consider
 and bow the head !

Well, it is gone at last, the palace of music I reared ;

Gone ! and the good tears start, the praises that
 come too slow ;

For one is assured at first, one scarce can say that he
feared,

That he even gave it a thought, the gone thing was
to go, 60

Never to be again! But many more of the kind

As good, nay, better perchance: is this your com-
fort to me?

To me, who must be saved because I cling with my
mind

To the same, same self, same love, same God: ay,
what was, shall be.

Therefore to whom turn I but to thee, the ineffable
Name?

Builder and maker, thou, of houses not made with
hands!

What, have fear of change from thee who art ever the
same?

Doubt that thy power can fill the heart that thy
power expands?

There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall
live as before;

The evil is null, is naught, is silence implying
sound; 70

What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much
good more;

On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven a
perfect round.

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good
shall exist;

Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, nor good,
nor power

Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the
melodist

When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.

The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth
too hard,

The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the
sky,

Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard;

Enough that he heard it once: we shall hear it by
and by. 80

And what is our failure here but a triumph's evidence
 For the fulness of the days? Have we withered or
 agonized?
 Why else was the pause prolonged but that singing
 might issue thence?
 Why rushed the discords in, but that harmony
 should be prized?
 Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow to clear,
 Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of the weal
 and woe:
 But God has a few of us whom he whispers in the
 ear;
 The rest may reason and welcome: 't is we musi-
 cians know.

Well, it is earth with me; silence resumes her reign:
 I will be patient and proud, and soberly acqui-
 esce. 90
 Give me the keys. I feel for the common chord
 again,
 Sliding by semitones till I sink to the minor, — yes,
 And I blunt it into a ninth, and I stand on alien
 ground,
 Surveying awhile the heights I rolled from into the
 deep;
 Which, hark, I have dared and done, for my resting-
 place is found,
 The C Major of this life: so, now I will try to
 sleep.

RABBI BEN EZRA

(1864)

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!"

Not that, amassing flowers,
Youth sighed, "Which rose make ours,
Which lily leave and then as best recall?"
Not that, admiring stars, 10
It yearned, "Nor Jove, nor Mars;
Mine be some figured flame which blends, transcends
them all!"

Not for such hopes and fears,
Annulling youth's brief years,
Do I remonstrate: folly wide the mark!
Rather I prize the doubt
Low kinds exist without,
Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark.

Poor vaunt of life indeed,
Were man but formed to feed 20
On joy, to solely seek and find and feast:
Such feasting ended, then
As sure an end to men;
Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt the maw-
crammed beast?

Rejoice we are allied
To that which doth provide
And not partake, effect and not receive!
A spark disturbs our clod;
Nearer we hold of God
Who gives, than of his tribes that take, I must
believe. 30

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!

For thence, — a paradox
Which comforts while it mocks, —
Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:

What I aspired to be, 40
 And was not, comforts me :
 A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the
 scale.

What is he but a brute
 Whose flesh has soul to suit,
 Whose spirit works lest arms and legs want play ?
 'To man, propose this test —
 Thy body at its best,
 How far can that project thy soul on its lone way ?

Yet gifts should prove their use :
 I own the Past profuse 50
 Of power each side, perfection every turn :
 Eyes, ears took in their dole,
 Brain treasured up the whole ;
 Should not the heart beat once, "How good to live
 and learn" ?

Not once beat, "Praise be thine !
 I see the whole design,
 I, who saw power, see now Love perfect too :
 Perfect I call thy plan :
 Thanks that I was a man !
 Maker, remake, complete, — I trust what thou shalt
 do ! " 60

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 !

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, 70
 Let us cry, "All good things
 Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh
 helps soul !"

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.

And I shall thereupon
Take rest, ere I be gone 80
Once more on my adventure brave and new :
Fearless and unperplexed,
When I wage battle next,
What weapons to select, what armor to indue.

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. 90

For note, when evening shuts,
A certain moment cuts
The deed off, calls the glory from the gray :
A whisper from the west
Shoots — " Add this to the rest,
Take it and try its worth : here dies another day."

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, 100
That acquiescence vain :
The Future I may face, now I have proved the Past."

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.

As it was better youth
 Should strive, through acts uncouth, 110
 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!

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. 120

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!

Now, who shall arbitrate?
 Ten men love what I hate,
 Shun what I follow, slight what I receive;
 Ten, who in ears and eyes 130
 Match me: we all surmise,
 They this thing, and I that: whom shall my soul
 believe?

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:

But all the world's coarse thumb
 And finger failed to plumb, 140
 So passed in making up the main account;

All instincts immature,
 All purposes unsure,
 That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's
 amount :

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. 150

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 ! "

Fool ! All that is, at all,
 Lasts ever, past recall ;
 Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure :
 What entered into thee, 160
That was, is, and shall be :
 Time's wheel runs back or stops : Potter and clay
 endure.

He fixed thee 'mid this dance
 Of plastic circumstance,
 This Present, thou, forsooth, would fain arrest :
 Machinery just meant
 To give thy soul its bent,
 Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.

What though the earlier grooves,
 Which ran the laughing loves 170
 Around thy base, no longer pause and press ?
 What though, about thy rim,
 Skull-things in order grim
 Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner stress ?

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 aglow !
 Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what needst thou
 with earth's wheel? 180

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 colors rife,
 Bound dizzily — mistake my end, to slake thy thirst :

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 ! 190
 Perfect the cup as planned !
 Let age approve of youth, and death complete the
 same !

A DEATH IN THE DESERT

(1864)

[Supposed of Pamphylax the Antiochene :
It is a parchment, of my rolls the fifth,
Hath three skins glued together, is all Greek,
And goeth from *Epsilon* down to *Mu* :
Lies second in the surnamed Chosen Chest,
Stained and conserved with juice of terebinth,
Covered with cloth of hair, and lettered *X i*,
From Xanthus, my wife's uncle, now at peace :
Mu and *Epsilon* stand for my own name.
I may not write it, but I make a cross
To show I wait His coming, with the rest,
And leave off here : beginneth Pamphylax.]

10

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."

20

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.

30

Beyond, and halfway up the mouth o' the cave,
 The Bactrian convert, having his desire,
 Kept watch, and made pretence to graze a goat
 That gave us milk, on rags of various herb,
 Plantain and quitch, the rocks' shade keeps alive :
 So that if any thief or soldier passed, 40
 (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. 50
 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 splendor of a sudden thought,
 And fetched the seventh plate of graven lead 60
 Out of the secret chamber, found a place,
 Pressing with finger on the deeper dints,
 And spoke, as 't were his mouth proclaiming first,
 “I am the Resurrection and the Life.”

Whereat he opened his eyes wide at once,
 And sat up of himself, and looked at us ;
 And thenceforth nobody pronounced a word :
 Only, outside, the Bactrian cried his cry
 Like the lone desert-bird that wears the ruff,
 As signal we were safe, from time to time. 70

First he said, " If a friend declared to me,
This my son Valens, this my other son,
Were James and Peter, — nay, declared as well
This lad was very John, — I could believe !
— Could, for a moment, doubtlessly believe :
So is myself withdrawn into my depths,
The soul retreated from the perished brain
Whence it was wont to feel and use the world
Through these dull members, done with long ago.
Yet I myself remain ; I feel myself : 80
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, 90
Useth the first with its collected use,
And feeleth, thinketh, willeth, — is what Knows :
Which, duly tending upward in its turn,
Grows into, and again is grown into
By the last soul, that uses both the first,
Subsisting whether they assist or no,
And, constituting man's self, is what Is —
And leans upon the former, makes it play,
As that played off the first : and, tending up,
Holds, is upheld by, God, and ends the man . 100
Upward in that dread point of intercourse,
Nor needs a place, for it returns to Him.
What Does, what Knows, what Is : three souls, one
man,
I give the glossa as Theotypas.]

And then, " A stick, once fire from end to end ;
Now, ashes save the tip that holds a spark !
Yet, blow the spark, it runs back, spreads itself
A little where the fire was : thus I urge

The soul that served me, till it task once more
 What ashes of my brain have kept their shape, 110
 And these make effort on the last o' the flesh,
 Trying to taste again the truth of things" —
 (He smiled) — "their very superficial truth ;
 As that ye are my sons, that it is long
 Since James and Peter had release by death,
 And I am only he, your brother John,
 Who saw and heard, and could remember all.
 Remember all ! It is not much to say.
 What if the truth broke on me from above
 As once and oft-times ? Such might hap again : 120
 Doubtlessly He might stand in presence here,
 With head wool-white, eyes flame, and feet like brass,
 The sword and the seven stars, as I have seen —
 I who now shudder only and surmise,
 ' How did your brother bear that sight and live ? '

" If I live yet, it is for good, more love
 Through me to men : be naught 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 !) 130
 — Saw with his eyes and handled with his hands
 That which was from the first, the Word of Life.
 How will it be when none more saith ' I saw ' ?

" Such ever was love's way : to rise, it stoops.
 Since I, whom Christ's mouth taught, was bidden
 teach,
 I went, for many years, about the world,
 Saying ' It was so ; so I heard and saw,'
 Speaking as the case asked : and men believed.
 Afterward came the message to myself
 In Patmos isle ; I was not bidden teach, 140
 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 : 150
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 ? 160
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, 170
Fed through such years, familiar with such light,
Guarded and guided still to see and speak)
Of new significance and fresh result ;
What first were guessed as points, I now knew stars,
And named them in the Gospel I have writ.
For men said, ' It is getting long ago :
Where is the promise of his coming ?' — asked
These young ones in their strength, as loth to wait,
Of me who, when their sires were born, was old.
I, for I loved them, answered, joyfully, 180
Since I was there, and helpful in my age ;
And, in the main, I think such men believed.
Finally, thus endeavoring, I fell sick,
Ye brought me here, and I supposed the end,
And went to sleep with one thought that, at least,
Though the whole earth should lie in wickedness,
We had the truth, might leave the rest to God.
Yet now I wake in such decrepitude
As I had slidden down and fallen afar,

Past even the presence of my former self, 190
 Grasping the while for stay at facts which snap,
 Till I am found away from my own world,
 Feeling for foothold 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, 200
 Living and learning still as years assist
 Which wear the thickness thin, and let man see —
 With me who hardly am withheld at all,
 But shudderingly, scarce a shred between,
 Lie bare to the universal prick of light?
 Is it for nothing we grow old and weak,
 We whom God loves? When pain ends, gain ends
 too.

To me, that story — ay, that Life and Death
 Of which I wrote 'it was' — to me, it is ;
 — Is, here and now : I apprehend naught else. 210
 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? 220
 I saw the power ; I see the Love, once weak,
 Resume the Power : and in this word 'I see,'
 Lo, there is recognized the Spirit of both
 That, moving o'er the spirit of man, unblinds
 His eye and bids him look. These are, I see ;
 But ye, the children, his beloved ones too,
 Ye need, — as I should use an optic glass
 I wondered at erewhile, somewhere i' the world,

It had been given a crafty smith to make ;
A tube, he turned on objects brought too close, 230
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, 240
Stay there at gaze, till it dispart, dispread,
As though a star should open out, all sides,
Grow the world on you, as it is my world.

“ For life, with all it yields of joy and woe,
And hope and fear, — believe the aged friend, —
Is just our chance o’ the prize of learning love,
How love might be, hath been indeed, and is ;
And that we hold thenceforth to the uttermost
Such prize, despite the envy of the world,
And, having gained truth, keep truth : that is all. — 250
But see the double way wherein we are led,
How the soul learns diversely from the flesh !
With flesh, that hath so little time to stay,
And yields mere basement for the soul’s emprise,
Expect prompt teaching. Helpful was the light,
And warmth was cherishing and food was choice
To every man’s flesh, thousand years ago,
As now to yours and mine ; the body sprang
At once to the height, and stayed : but the soul, —
no !

Since sages who, this noontide, meditate 260
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 possible,
 Building new barriers as the old decay, 270
 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 Love's fiery flower, grows
 old 280

(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 290
 Crumble ; for he both reasons and decides,
 Weighs first, then chooses : will he give up fire
 For gold or purple, once he knows its worth?
 Could he give Christ up were his worth as plain?
 Therefore, I say, to test man, the proofs shift,
 Nor may he grasp that fact like other fact,
 And straightway in his life acknowledge it,
 As, say, the indubitable bliss of fire.
 Sigh ye, 'It had been easier once than now' ?
 To give you answer I am left alive ; 300
 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:' 310
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 forever, then? Not so.
Already had begun the silent work
Whereby truth, deadened of its absolute blaze, 320
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!' 330
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 burden 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, 340
Grew to a boy here, heard us praise the sun,
Yet had but yon sole glimmer in light's place, —
One loving him and wishful he should learn,
Would much rejoice himself was blinded first
Month by month here, so made to understand
How eyes, born darkling, apprehend amiss:
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!'
 It is a heavy burden you shall bear 350
 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 360
 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;' 370
 What truth was ever told the second day?
 Wonders, that would prove doctrine, go for naught.
 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 380
 We had such love already in ourselves,
 Knew first what else we should not recognize.
 '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, 390
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, 400
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. 410
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 ? 420
All else projection from the mind of man !'

“ Nay, do not give me wine, for I am strong,
But place my gospel where I put my hands.

“ I say that man was made to grow, not stop ;
That help he needed once, and needs no more,
Having grown but an inch by, is withdrawn :
For he hath new needs, and new helps to these,
This imports solely, man should mount on each
New height in view ; the help whereby he mounts,

The ladder-rung his foot has left, may fall, 43°
 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, 44°
 Which proved once underneath lay store of seed,
 But to the herb's self, by what light ye boast,
 For what fruit's signs are. This book's fruit is plain,
 Nor miracles need prove it any more.
 Doth the fruit show? Then miracles bade 'ware
 At first of root and stem, saved both till now
 From trampling ox, rough boar and wanton goat.
 What! Was man made a wheelwork to wind up,
 And be discharged, and straight wound up anew?
 No!—grown, his growth lasts ; taught, he ne'er
 forgets: 45°
 May learn a thousand things, not twice the same.

“This might be pagan teaching: now hear mine.

“I say, that as the babe, you feed awhile,
 Becomes a boy and fit to feed himself,
 So, minds at first must be spoon-fed with truth :
 When they can eat, babe's nurture is withdrawn.
 I fed the babe whether it would or no :
 I bid the boy or feed himself or starve.
 I cried once, ‘That ye may believe in Christ,
 Behold this blind man shall receive his sight!’ 46°
 I cry now, ‘Urgest thou, *for I am shrewd*
And smile at stories how John's word could cure—
Repeat that miracle and take my faith?’
 I say, that miracle was duly wrought
 When, save for it, no faith was possible.
 Whether a change were wrought i' the shows o' the
 world,
 Whether the change came from our minds which see

Of shows o' the world so much as and no more
Than God wills for his purpose, — (what do I
See now, suppose you, there where you see rock — 470
Round us?) — I know not ; such was the effect,
So faith grew, making void more miracles
Because too much : they would compel, not help.
I say, the acknowledgment of God in Christ
Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee
All questions in the earth and out of it,
And has so far advanced thee to be wise.
Wouldst thou unprove this to re-prove the proved?
In life's mere minute, with power to use that proof,
Leave knowledge and revert to how it sprung? 480
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?' 490
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 500
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, 510
 Rejecteth Christ through every 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 520
 O' the manner of the gift, its profit fail?
 And why refuse what modicum of help
 Had stopped the after-doubt, impossible
 I' the face of truth — truth absolute, uniform?
 Why must I hit of this and miss of that,
 Distinguish just as I be weak or strong,
 And not ask of thee and have answer prompt,
 Was this once, was it not once? — then and now
 And evermore, plain truth from man to man.
 Is John's procedure just the heathen bard's? 530
 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 540
 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?' 550
Much less replied, 'First, last, and best of things.'
Man takes that title now if he believes
Might can exist with neither will nor love,
In God's case — what he names now Nature's Law —
While in himself he recognizes love
No less than might and will : and rightly takes.
Since if man prove the sole existent thing
Where these combine, whatever their degree,
However weak the might or will or love,
So they be found there, put in evidence, 560
He is as surely higher in the scale
Than any might with neither love nor will,
As life, apparent in the poorest midge,
(When the faint dust-speck flits, ye guess its wing,).
Is marvellous beyond dead Atlas' self —
Given to the nobler midge for resting-place !
Thus, man proves best and highest — God, in fine,
And thus the victory leads but to defeat,
The gain to loss, best rise to the worst fall,
His life becomes impossible, which is death. 570

" 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, 580
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, 590
 And guesses changed to knowledge absolute,
 Than motion wait his body, were all else
 Than it the solid earth on every side,
 Where now through space he moves from rest to rest.
 Man therefore, thus conditioned, must expect
 He could not, what he knows now, know at first ;
 What he considers that he knows to-day,
 Come but to-morrow, he will find misknown ;
 Getting increase of knowledge, since he learns
 Because he lives, which is to be a man, 600
 Set to instruct himself by his past self :
 First, like the brute, obliged by facts to learn,
 Next, as man may, obliged by his own mind,
 Bent, habit, nature, knowledge turned to law.
 God's gift was that man should conceive of truth
 And yearn to gain it, catching at mistake
 As midway help till he reach fact indeed.
 The statuary ere he mould a shape
 Boasts a like gift, the shape's idea, and next
 The aspiration to produce the same ; 610
 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 indeed 620
 In what is still flesh-imitating clay.
 Right in you, right in him, such way be man's !
 God only makes the live shape at a jet.
 Will ye renounce this pact of creatureship ?
 The pattern on the Mount subsists no more,
 Seemed awhile, then returned to nothingness ;
 But copies, Moses strove to make thereby,
 Serve still and are replaced as time requires :

By these, make newest vessels, reach the type !
If ye demur, this judgment on your head,
Never to reach the ultimate, angels' law, 630
Indulging every instinct of the soul
There where law, life, joy, impulse are one thing !

“ Such is the burden 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. 640
Though I should tarry a new hundred years !”

But he was dead : 't was 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 : 650
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. 660
Believe ye will not see him any more
About the world with his divine regard !
For all was as I say, and now the man
Lies as he lay once, breast to breast with God.

[Cerinthus read and mused ; one added this :

" If Christ, as thou affirmest, be of men
 Mere man, the first and best but nothing more, —
 Account him, for reward of what he was,
 Now and forever, wretchedest of all.
 For see : himself conceived of life as love, 670
 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, 680
 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 't was Cerinthus that is lost.]

CONFESSIONS

(1864)

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 !

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.

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 ?

To mine, it serves for the old June weather
Blue above lane and wall ;
And that farthest bottle labelled " Ether "
Is the house o'ertopping all.

At a terrace, somewhere near the stopper,
There watched for me, one June,
A girl : I know, sir, it 's improper,
My poor mind 's out of tune. 20

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."

What right had a lounge up their lane ?
But, by creeping very close,
With the good wall's help, — their eyes might strain
And stretch themselves to Oes,

Yet never catch her and me together,
As she left the attic, there, 30
By the rim of the bottle labelled " Ether,"
And stole from stair to stair,

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 !

PROSPICE

(1864)

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, 10
 Though a battle 's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,
 The reward of it all.
 I was ever a fighter, so — one fight more,
 The best and the last !
 I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and
 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. 20
 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 !

A FACE

(1864)

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-colored buds to kiss
 And capture 'twixt the lips apart for this. 10
 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), 20
 All heaven, meanwhile, condensed into one eye
 Which fears to lose the wonder, should it wink.

APPARENT FAILURE

“ We shall soon lose a celebrated building.”

Paris Newspaper.

(1864)

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 ?

Only the Doric little Morgue ! 10
 The dead-house where you show your drowned :
 Petrarch's Vacluse 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 balked !

First came the silent gazers ; next,
 A screen of glass, we 're thankful for ; 20

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.

Poor men, God made, and all for that !
 The reverence struck me ; o'er each head
 Religiously was hung its hat, 30
 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 asphalt seemed best.

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 ? 40
 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 !

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 50
 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 !

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, 60
Though a wide compass round be fetched ;
That what began best, can't end worst,
Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst.

EPILOGUE TO DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

(1864)

FIRST SPEAKER, *as David*

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, —

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, — 10

When the singers lift up their voice,
And the trumpets made endeavor,
Sounding “ In God rejoice ! ”
Saying, “ In Him rejoice
Whose mercy endureth forever ! ” —

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, 20
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 ? 30
 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 protesting 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 40
 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 50
 The star which chose to stoop and stay for us ?
 Unroll the records ! Hailed ye such advance
 Indeed, and did your hope vanish thus ?
 Watchers of twilight, is the worst averred ?
 We shall not look up, know ourselves are seen,
 Speak, and be sure that we again are heard,
 Acting or suffering, have the disk's serene
 Reflect our life, absorb an earthly flame,
 Nor doubt that, were mankind inert and numb,
 Its core had never crimsoned all the same, 60
 Nor, missing ours, its music fallen dumb ?
 Oh, dread succession to a dizzy post,
 Sad sway of sceptre whose mere touch appalls,
 Ghastly dethronement, cursed by those the most
 On whose repugnant brow the crown next falls !

THIRD SPEAKER

Witless alike of will and way divine,
How heaven's high with earth's low should intertwine!
Friends, I have seen through your eyes : now use mine !

Take the least man of all mankind, as I ;
Look at his head and heart, find how and why 70
He differs from his fellows utterly :

Then, like me, watch when nature by degrees
Grows alive round him, as in Arctic seas
(They said of old) the instinctive water flees

Toward some elected point of central rock,
As though, for its sake only, roamed the flock
Of waves about the waste : awhile they mock

With radiance caught for the occasion, — hues
Of blackest hell now, now such reds and blues
As only heaven could fitly interfuse, — 80

The mimic monarch of the whirlpool, king
O' the current for a minute : then they wring
Up by the roots and oversweep the thing,

And hasten off, to play again elsewhere
The same part, choose another peak as bare,
They find and flatter, feast and finish there.

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

His worth, and — once the life, his product,
gained — 90
Roll away elsewhere, keep the strife sustained,
And show thus real, a thing the North but feigned —

When you acknowledge that one world could do
All the diverse work, old yet ever new,
Divide us, each from other, me from you, —

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?

That one Face, far from vanish, rather grows,
 Or decomposes but to recompose, 100
 Become my universe that feels and knows!

PROLOGUE TO FIFINE AT THE FAIR

(1872)

AMPHIBIAN

The fancy I had to-day,
 Fancy which turned a fear!
 I swam far out in the bay,
 Since waves laughed warm and clear.

I lay and looked at the sun,
 The noon-sun looked at me:
 Between us two, no one
 Live creature, that I could see.

Yes! There came floating by
 Me, who lay floating too, 10
 Such a strange butterfly!
 Creature as dear as new:

Because the membraned wings
 So wonderful, so wide,
 So sun-suffused, were things
 Like soul and naught beside.

A handbreadth overhead!
 All of the sea my own,
 It owned the sky instead;
 Both of us were alone. 20

I never shall join its flight,
 For, naught buoys flesh in air.
 If it touch the sea — good night!
 Death sure and swift waits there.

Can the insect feel the better
For watching the uncouth play
Of limbs that slip the fetter,
Pretend as they were not clay?

Undoubtedly I rejoice
That the air comports so well 30
With a creature which had the choice
Of the land once. Who can tell?

What if a certain soul
Which early slipped its sheath,
And has for its home the whole
Of heaven, thus look beneath.

Thus watch one who, in the world,
Both lives and likes life's way,
Nor wishes the wings unfurled
That sleep in the worm, they say? 40

But sometimes when the weather
Is blue, and warm waves tempt
To free one's self of tether,
And try a life exempt

From worldly noise and dust,
In the sphere which overbrims
With passion and thought, — why, just
Unable to fly, one swims!

By passion and thought upborne,
One smiles to one's self — "They fare 50
Scarce better, they need not scorn
Our sea, who live in the air!"

Emancipate through passion
And thought, with sea for sky,
We substitute, in a fashion,
For heaven — poetry :

Which sea, to all intent,
Gives flesh such noon-disport
As a finer element
Affords the spirit-sort. 60

Whatever they are, we seem :
 Imagine the thing they know ;
 All deeds they do, we dream ;
 Can heaven be else but so ?

And meantime, yonder streak
 Meets the horizon's verge ;
 That is the land, to seek
 If we tire or dread the surge :

Land the solid and safe —
 To welcome again (confess !)
 When, high and dry, we chafe
 The body, and don the dress.

70

Does she look, pity, wonder
 At one who mimics flight,
 Swims — heaven above, sea under,
 Yet always earth in sight ?

NATURAL MAGIC

(1876)

All I can say is — I saw it !
 The room was as bare as your hand.
 I locked in the swarth little lady, — I swear,
 From the head to the foot of her — well, quite as bare !
 “No Nautch shall cheat me,” said I, “taking my
 stand
 At this bolt which I draw !” And this bolt — I with-
 draw it,
 And there laughs the lady, not bare, but embowered
 With — who knows what verdure, o'erfruited, o'er-
 flowered ?
 Impossible ! Only — I saw it !

All I can sing is — I feel it !
 This life was as blank as that room ;
 I let you pass in here. Precaution, indeed ?
 Walls, ceiling and floor, — not a chance for a weed !

10

Wide opens the entrance : where's cold now, where's
 gloom?
 No May to sow seed here, no June to reveal it,
 Behold you enshrined in these blooms of your bring-
 ing,
 'These fruits of your bearing — nay, birds of your
 winging!
 A fairy-tale! 'Only — I feel it!

MAGICAL NATURE

(1876)

Flower — I never fancied, jewel — I profess you!
 Bright I see and soft I feel the outside of a flower.
 Save but glow inside and — jewel, I should guess you,
 Dim to sight and rough to touch: the glory is the
 dower.

You, forsooth, a flower? Nay, my love, a jewel —
 Jewel at no mercy of a moment in your prime!
 Time may fray the flower-face: kind be time or cruel,
 Jewel, from each facet, flash your laugh at time!

HERVÉ RIEL

(1876)

On the sea and at the Hogue, sixteen hundred ninety-
 two,
 Did the English fight the French, — woe to France!
 And, the thirty-first of May, helter-skelter through the
 blue,
 Like a crowd of frightened porpoises a shoal of sharks
 pursue,
 Came crowding ship on ship to Saint Malo on the
 Rance,
 With the English fleet in view.

'Twas the squadron that escaped, with the victor in
full chase ;

First and foremost of the drove, in his great ship,
Damefreville ;

Close on him fled, great and small,

Twenty-two good ships in all ; 10

And they signalled to the place

“ Help the winners of a race !

Get us guidance, give us harbor, take us quick — or,
quicker still,

Here 's the English can and will ! ”

Then the pilots of the place put out brisk and leapt
on board ;

“ Why, what hope or chance have ships like these to
pass ? ” laughed they :

“ Rocks to starboard, rocks to port, all the passage
scarred and scored,

Shall the ‘ Formidable ’ here with her twelve and eighty
guns

Think to make the river-mouth by the single narrow
way,

Trust to enter where 't is ticklish for a craft of twenty
tons, 20

And with flow at full beside ?

Now, 't is slackest ebb of tide.

Reach the mooring ? Rather say,

While rock stands or water runs,

Not a ship will leave the bay ! ”

Then was called a council straight.

Brief and bitter the debate :

“ Here 's the English at our heels ; would you have
them take in tow

All that 's left us of the fleet, linked together stern and
bow,

For a prize to Plymouth Sound ? 30

Better run the ships aground ! ”

(Ended Damefreville his speech).

“ Not a minute more to wait !

Let the Captains all and each

Shove ashore, then blow up, burn the vessels on the
beach !

France must undergo her fate.

“Give the word !” But no such word

Was ever spoke or heard ;

For up stood, for out stepped, for in struck amid all
these

— A Captain? A Lieutenant? A Mate — first, sec-
ond, third? 40

No such man of mark, and meet

With his betters to compete!

But a simple Breton sailor pressed by Tourville
for the fleet,

A poor coasting-pilot he, Hervé Riel the Croisickese.

And “What mockery or malice have we here?” cries
Hervé Riel:

“Are you mad, you Malouins? Are you cowards,
fools, or rogues?

Talk to me of rocks and shoals, me who took the
soundings, tell

On my fingers every bank, every shallow, every swell
'Twi't the offing here and Grève where the river
disembogues?

Are you bought by English gold? Is it love the
lying's for? 50

Morn and eve, night and day,

Have I piloted your bay,

Entered free and anchored fast at the foot of Solidor.

Burn the fleet and ruin France? That were worse
than fifty Hogues!

Sirs, they know I speak the truth! Sirs, believe
me there's a way!

Only let me lead the line,

Have the biggest ship to steer,

Get this 'Formidable' clear,

Make the others follow mine.

And I lead them, most and least, by a passage I know
well, 60

Right to Solidor past Grève,

And there lay them safe and sound ;

And if one ship misbehave,
 — Keel so much as grate the ground,
 Why, I've nothing but my life, — here's my head!"
 cries Hervé Riel.

Not a minute more to wait.

"Steer us in, then, small and great!

Take the helm, lead the line, save the squadron!"
 cried its chief.

Captains, give the sailor place!

He is Admiral, in brief.

70

Still the north-wind, by God's grace!

See the noble fellow's face

As the big ship, with a bound,

Clears the entry like a hound,

Keeps the passage as its inch of way were the wide
 sea's profound!

See, safe through shoal and rock,

How they follow in a flock,

Not a ship that misbehaves, not a keel that grates the
 ground,

Not a spar that comes to grief!

The peril, see, is past,

80

All are harbored to the last,

And just as Hervé Riel hollas "Anchor!" — sure as
 fate,

Up the English come — too late!

So, the storm subsides to calm:

They see the green trees wave

On the heights o'erlooking Grève.

Hearts that bled are stanch'd with balm.

"Just our rapture to enhance,

Let the English rake the bay,

Gnash their teeth and glare askance

90

As they cannonade away!

'Neath rampired Solidor pleasant riding on the
 Rance!"

How hope succeeds despair on each Captain's coun-
 tenance!

Out burst all with one accord,

"This is Paradise for Hell!

Let France, let France's King
Thank the man that did the thing!"
What a shout, and all one word,
"Hervé Riel!"
As he stepped in front once more, 100
Not a symptom of surprise
In the frank blue Breton eyes,
Just the same man as before.

Then said Damfreville, "My friend,
I must speak out at the end,
Though I find the speaking hard.
Praise is deeper than the lips:
You have saved the King his ships,
You must name your own reward.
'Faith, our sun was near eclipse!" 110
Demand whate'er you will,
France remains your debtor still.
Ask to heart's content and have! or my name's not
Damfreville."

Then a beam of fun outbroke
On the bearded mouth that spoke,
As the honest heart laughed through
Those frank eyes of Breton blue:
"Since I needs must say my say,
Since on board the duty's done,
And from Malo Roads to Croisic Point, what is it
but a run? —" 120
Since 't is ask and have, I may —
Since the others go ashore —
Come! A good whole holiday!
Leave to go and see my wife, whom I call the Belle
Aurore!"
That he asked and that he got, — nothing more.

Name and deed alike are lost:
Not a pillar nor a post
In his Croisic keeps alive the feat as it befell;
Not a head in white and black
On a single fishing-smack, 130

In memory of the man but for whom had gone to
wrack

All that France saved from the fight whence Eng-
land bore the bell.

Go to Paris : rank on rank

Search the heroes flung pell-mell

On the Louvre, face and flank !

You shall look long enough ere you come to Hervé
Riel.

So, for better and for worse,

Hervé Riel, accept my verse !

In my verse, Hervé Riel, do thou once more

Save the squadron, honor France, love thy wife the
Belle Aurore ! 140

EPILOGUE TO PACCHIAROTTO

μεστοὶ . . .

οἱ δ' ἀμφορῆς οἴνου μέλανος ἀνθοσμίου.

(1876)

“The poets pour us wine —”

Said the dearest poet I ever knew,

Dearest and greatest and best to me.

You clamor athirst for poetry —

We pour. “But when shall a vintage be” —

You cry — “strong grape, squeezed gold from
screw.

Yet sweet juice, flavored flowery-fine?

That were indeed the wine !”

One pours your cup — stark strength,

Meat for a man ; and you eye the pulp 10

Strained, turbid still, from the viscous blood

Of the snaky bough : and you grumble “ Good !

For it swells resolve, breeds hardihood ;

Dispatch it, then, in a single gulp !”

So, down, with a wry face, goes at length

The liquor : stuff for strength.

One pours your cup — sheer sweet, .
The fragrant fumes of a year condensed :
Suspicion of all that's ripe or rathe, 20
From the bud on branch to the grass in swathe
“ We suck mere milk of the seasons,” saith
A curl of each nostril — “ dew, dispensed
Nowise for nerving man to feat :
Boys sip such honeyed sweet !”

And thus who wants wine strong,
Waves each sweet smell of the year away ;
Who likes to swoon as the sweets suffuse
His brain with a mixture of beams and dews
Turned syrupy drink — rough strength eschews :
“ What though in our veins your wine-stock stay? 30
The lack of the bloom does our palate wrong.
Give us wine sweet, not strong !”

Yet wine is — some affirm —
Prime wine is found in the world somewhere,
Of portable strength with sweet to match.
You double your heart its dose, yet catch —
As the draught descends — a violet-smatch,
Softness — however it came there,
Through drops expressed by the fire and worm :
Strong sweet wine — some affirm. 40

Body and bouquet both?
'T is easy to ticket a bottle so ;
But what was the case in the cask, my friends?
Cask? Nay, the vat — where the maker mends
His strong with his sweet (you suppose) and blends
His rough with his smooth, till none can know
How it comes you may tipple, nothing loth,
Body and bouquet both.

“ You ” being just — the world.
No poets — who turn, themselves, the winch 50
Of the press ; no critics — I 'll even say,
(Being flustered and easy of faith, to-day,)
Who for love of the work have learned the way
Till themselves produce home-made, at a pinch :

No! You are the world, and wine ne'er purled
 Except to please the world!

“For, oh the common heart!
 And, ah the irremissible sin
 Of poets who please themselves, not us!
 Strong wine yet sweet wine pouring thus, 60
 How please still — Pindar and Æschylus! —
 Drink — dipt into by the bearded chin
 Alike and the bloomy lip — no part
 Denied the common heart!

“And might we get such grace,
 And did you moderns but stock our vault
 With the true half-brandy half-attar-gul,
 How would seniors indulge at a hearty pull
 While juniors tossed off their thimbleful!
 Our Shakespeare and Milton escaped your fault, 70
 So, they reign supreme o'er the weaker race
 That wants the ancient grace!”

If I paid myself with words
 (As the French say well) I were dupe indeed!
 I were found in belief that you quaffed and bowsed
 At your Shakespeare the whole day long, caroused
 In your Milton pottle-deep nor drowsed
 A moment of night — topped on, took heed
 Of nothing like modern cream-and-curds.
 Pay me with deeds, not words! 80

For — see your cellarage!
 There are forty barrels with Shakespeare's brand.
 Some five or six are abroach: the rest
 Stand spigoted, fauceted. Try and test
 What yourselves call best of the very best!
 How comes it that still untouched they stand?
 Why don't you try tap, advance a stage
 With the rest in cellarage?

For — see your cellarage!
 There are four big butts of Milton's brew. 90
 How comes it you make old drips and drops

Do duty, and there devotion stops?
Leave such an abyss of malt and hops
Embellied in butts which bungs still glue?
You hate your bard! A fig for your rage!
Free him from cellarage!

'T is said I brew stiff drink,
But the deuce a flavor of grape is there.
Hardly a May-go-down, 't is just
A sort of a gruff Go-down-it-must— 100
No Merry-go-down, no gracious gust
Commingles the racy with Springtide's rare!
"What wonder," say you, "that we cough, and blink
At Autumn's heady drink?"

Is it a fancy, friends?
Mighty and mellow are never mixed,
Though mighty and mellow be born at once.
Sweet for the future, — strong for the nonce!
Stuff you should stow away, ensconce
In the deep and dark, to be found fast fixed 110
At the century's close: such time strength spends
A-sweetening for my friends!

And then — why, what you quaff
With a smack of lip and a cluck of tongue,
Is leakage and leavings — just what haps
From the tun some learned taster taps
With a promise "Prepare your watery chaps!
Here 's properest wine for old and young!
Dispute its perfection — you make us laugh!
Have faith, give thanks, but — quaff!" 120

Leakage, I say, or — worse —
Leavings suffice pot-valiant souls.
Somebody, brimful, long ago,
Frothed flagon he drained to the dregs; and, lo,
Down whisker and beard what an overflow!
Lick spilth that has trickled from classic jowls,
Sup the single scene, sip the only verse —
Old wine, not new and worse!

I grant you : worse by much !

Renounce that new where you never gained 130

One glow at heart, one gleam at head,

And stick to the warrant of age instead !

No dwarf's lap ! Fatten, by giants fed !

You fatten, with oceans of drink undrained ?

You feed — who would choke did a cobweb smutch

The Age you love so much ?

A mine 's beneath a moor :

Acres of moor roof fathoms of mine

Which diamonds dot where you please to dig ;

Yet who plies spade for the bright and big ? 140

Your product is — truffles, you hunt with a pig !

Since bright-and-big, when a man would dine,

Suits badly : and therefore the Koh-i-noor

May sleep in mine 'neath moor !

Wine, pulse in might from me !

It may never emerge in must from vat,

Never fill cask nor furnish can,

Never end sweet, which strong began —

God's gift to gladden the heart of man ;

But spirit 's at proof, I promise that ! 150

No sparing of juice spoils what should be

Fit brewage — mine for me.

Man's thoughts and loves and hates !

Earth is my vineyard, these grew there :

From grape of the ground, I made or marred

My vintage ; easy the task or hard,

Who set it — his praise be my reward !

Earth's yield ! Who yearn for the Dark Blue Sea's,

Let them "lay, pray, bray" — the addle-pates !

Mine be Man's thoughts, loves, hates ! 160

But some one says, "Good Sir !"

("T is a worthy versed in what concerns

The making such labor turn out well,)

"You don't suppose that the nosegay-smell

Needs always come from the grape ? Each bell

At your foot, each bud that your culture spurns,

The very cowslip would act like myrrh
 On the stiffest brew — good Sir!

“Cowslips, abundant birth

O'er meadow and hillside, vineyard too, 170
 — Like a schoolboy's scrawlings in and out
 Distasteful lesson-book — all about
 Greece and Rome, victory and rout —
 Love-verses instead of such vain ado!
 So, fancies frolic it o'er the earth
 Where thoughts have rightlier birth.

“Nay, thoughtlings they themselves :

Loves, hates — in little and less and least!
 Thoughts? ‘*What is a man beside a mount!*’
 Loves? ‘*Absent — poor lovers the minutes count!*’ 180
 Hates? ‘*Fie — Pope's letters to Martha Blount!*’
 These furnish a wine for a children's-feast:
 Insipid to man, they suit the elves
 Like thoughts, loves, hates themselves.”

And, friends, beyond dispute

I too have the cowslips dewy and dear.
 Punctual as Springtide forth peep they:
 I leave them to make my meadow gay.
 But I ought to pluck and impound them, eh?
 Not let them alone, but deftly shear 190
 And shred and reduce to — what may suit
 Children, beyond dispute?

And, here 's May-month, all bloom,

All bounty: what if I sacrifice?
 If I out with shears and shear, nor stop
 Shearing till prostrate, lo, the crop?
 And will you prefer it to ginger-pop
 When I've made you wine of the memories
 Which leave as bare as a churchyard tomb
 My meadow, late all bloom? 200

Nay, what ingratitude

Should I hesitate to amuse the wits
 That have pulled so long at my flask, nor grudged

The headache that paid their pains, nor budged
 From bunghole before they sighed and judged
 “ Too rough for our taste, to-day, befits
 The racy and right when the years conclude ! ”
 Out on ingratitude !

Grateful or ingrate — none,
 No cowslip of all my fairy crew 210
 Shall help to concoct what makes you wink,
 And goes to your head till you think you think !
 I like them alive : the printer’s ink
 Would sensibly tell on the perfume too.
 I may use up my nettles, ere I ’ve done ;
 But of cowslips — friends get none !

Don’t nettles make a broth
 Wholesome for blood grown lazy and thick ?
 Maws out of sorts make mouths out of taste.
 My Thirty-four Port — no need to waste 220
 On a tongue that ’s fur and a palate — paste !
 A magnum for friends who are sound ! the sick —
 I ’ll posset and cosset them, nothing loth,
 Henceforward with nettle-broth !

LA SAISIAZ

(1878)

I

Good, to forgive ;
Best, to forget !
Living, we fret ;
Dying, we live.
Fretless and free,
Soul, clap thy pinion !
Earth have dominion,
Body, o'er thee !

II

Wander at will,
Day after day, — 10
Wander away,
Wandering still —
Soul that canst soar !
Body may slumber :
Body shall cumber
Soul-flight no more.

III

Waft of soul's wing !
What lies above ?
Sunshine and Love,
Skyblue and Spring ! 20
Body hides — where ?
Ferns of all feather,
Mosses and heather,
Yours be the care !

LA SAISIAZ,

A. E. S. SEPTEMBER 14, 1877.

Dared and done : at last I stand upon the summit,
 Dear and True !
 Singly dared and done ; the climbing both of us were
 bound to do.
 Petty feat and yet prodigious : every side my glance
 was bent
 O'er the grandeur and the beauty lavished through the
 whole ascent.
 Ledge by ledge, out broke new marvels, now minute
 and now immense :
 Earth's most exquisite disclosure, heaven's own God
 in evidence !
 And no berry in its hiding, no blue space in its out-
 spread,
 Pleaded to escape my footstep, challenged my emerging
 head,
 (As I climbed or paused from climbing, now o'er-
 branched by shrub and tree,
 Now built round by rock and boulder, now at just a
 turn set free, 10
 Stationed face to face with — Nature? rather with
 Infinitude,)
 —No revelation of them all, as singly I my path
 pursued,
 But a bitter touched its sweetness, for the thought
 stung “ Even so
 Both of us had loved and wandered just the same, five
 days ago ! ”
 Five short days, sufficient hardly to entice, from out
 its den
 Splintered in the slab, this pink perfection of the
 cyclamen ;
 Scarce enough to heal and coat with amber gum the
 sloe-tree's gash,
 Bronze the clustered wilding apple, redden ripe the
 mountain-ash :

Yet of might to place between us — Oh the barrier!
Yon Profound
Shrinks beside it, proves a pin-point: barrier this,
without a bound! 20
Boundless though it be, I reach you: somehow seem
to have you here
— Who are there. Yes, there you dwell now, plain
the four low walls appear;
Those are vineyards, they enclose from; and the
little spire which points
— That's Collonge, henceforth your dwelling. All
the same, howe'er disjoints
Past from present, no less certain you are here, not
there: have dared,
Done the feat of mountain-climbing, — five days since,
we both prepared
Daring, doing, arm in arm, if other help should haply
fail.
For you asked, as forth we sallied to see sunset from
the vale,
“Why not try for once the mountain, — take a fore-
taste, snatch by stealth
Sight and sound, some unconsidered fragment of the
hoarded wealth? 30
Six weeks at its base, yet never once have we together
won
Sight or sound by honest climbing: let us two have
dared and done
Just so much of twilight journey as may prove to-
morrow's jaunt
Not the only mode of wayfare — wheeled to reach the
eagle's haunt!”
So, we turned from the low grass-path you were pleased
to call “your own,”
Set our faces to the rose-bloom o'er the summit's
front of stone
Where Salève obtains, from Jura and the sunken sun
she hides,
Due return of blushing “Good Night,” rosy as a borne-
off bride's,
For his masculine “Good Morrow” when, with sun-
rise still in hold,

Gay he hails her, and, magnificent, thrilled her black
 length burns to gold. 40
 Up and up we went, how careless — nay, how joyous !
 All was new,
 All was strange. “ Call progress toilsome? that were
 just insulting you !
 How the trees must temper noontide ! Ah, the
 thicket’s sudden break !
 What will be the morning glory, when at dusk thus
 gleams the lake ?
 Light by light puts forth Geneva : what a land — and,
 of the land,
 Can there be a lovelier station than this spot where now
 we stand ?
 Is it late, and wrong to linger ? True, to-morrow
 makes amends.
 Toilsome progress? child’s play, call it — specially
 when one descends !
 There, the dread descent is over — hardly our adven-
 ture, though !
 Take the vale where late we left it, pace the grass-
 path, ‘ mine,’ you know ! 50
 Proud completion of achievement ! ” And we paced
 it, praising still
 That soft tread on velvet verdure as it wound through
 hill and hill ;
 And at very end there met us, coming from Collonge,
 the pair
 — All our people of the Chalet — two, enough and
 none to spare.
 So, we made for home together, and we reached it as
 the stars
 One by one came lamping — chiefly that prepotency
 of Mars —
 And your last word was “ I owe you this enjoyment ! ”
 — met with “ Nay :
 With yourself it rests to have a month of morrows like
 to-day ! ”
 Then the meal, with talk and laughter, and the news of
 that rare nook
 Yet untroubled by the tourist, touched on by no
 travel-book, 60

All the same — though latent — patent, hybrid birth
of land and sea,
And (our travelled friend assured you) — if such
miracle might be —
Comparable for completeness of both blessings — all
around
Nature, and, inside her circle, safety from world's
sight and sound —
Comparable to our Saisiaz. “ Hold it fast and guard
it well !
Go and see and vouch for certain, then come back
and never tell
Living soul but us ; and haply, prove our sky from
cloud as clear,
There may we four meet, praise fortune just as now,
another year ! ”

Thus you charged him on departure : not without the
final charge,
“ Mind to-morrow's early meeting ! We must leave
our journey marge 70
Ample for the wayside wonders : there's the stoppage
at the inn
Three-parts up the mountain, where the hardships of
the track begin ;
There's the convent worth a visit ; but, the triumph
crowning all —
There's Salève's own platform facing glory which
strikes greatness small,
— Blanc, supreme above his earth-brood, needles red
and white and green,
Horns of silver, fangs of crystal set on edge in his
demesne.
So, some three weeks since, we saw them : so, to-
morrow we intend
You shall see them likewise ; therefore Good Night
till to-morrow, friend ! ”
Last, the nothings that extinguish embers of a vivid
day :
“ What might be the Marshal's next move, what
Gambetta's counter-play ? ” 80

Till the landing on the staircase saw escape the latest
 spark :
 "Sleep you well!" "Sleep but as well, you!" —
 lazy love quenched, all was dark.

Nothing dark next day at sundawn! Up I rose and
 forth I fared :
 Took my plunge within the bath-pool, pacified the
 watch-dog scared,
 Saw proceed the transmutation — Jura's black to one
 gold glow,
 Trod your level path that let me drink the morning
 deep and slow,
 Reached the little quarry — ravage recompensed by
 shrub and fern —
 Till the overflowing ardors told me time was for
 return.
 So, return I did, and gayly. But, for once, from no
 far mound
 Waved salute a tall white figure. "Has her sleep
 been so profound? 90
 Foresight, rather, prudent saving strength for day's
 expenditure!
 Ay, the chamber-window's open: out and on the
 terrace, sure!"

No, the terrace showed no figure, tall, white, leaning
 through the wreaths,
 Tangle-twine of leaf and bloom that intercept the air
 one breathes,
 Interpose between one's love and Nature's loving, hill
 and dale
 Down to where the blue lake's wrinkle marks the
 river's inrush pale
 — Mazy Arve: whereon no vessel but goes sliding
 white and plain,
 Not a steamboat pants from harbor but one hears
 pulsate amain,
 Past the city's congregated peace of homes and pomp
 of spires
 — Man's mild protest that there's something more
 than Nature, man requires, 100

And that, useful as is Nature to attract the tourist's
 foot,
 Quiet, slow, sure money-making proves the matter's
 very root, —
 Need for body, — while the spirit also needs a com-
 fort reached
 By no help of lake or mountain, but the texts whence
 Calvin preached.
 "Here's the veil withdrawn from landscape: up to
 Jura and beyond,
 All awaits us ranged and ready; yet she violates the
 bond,
 Neither leans nor looks nor listens: why is this?"
 A turn of eye
 Took the whole sole answer, gave the undisputed
 reason "why"!

This dread way you had your summons! No pre-
 monitory touch,
 As you talked and laughed ('t is told me) scarce a
 minute ere the clutch 110
 Captured you in cold forever. Cold? nay, warm you
 were as life
 When I raised you, while the others used, in passionate
 poor strife,
 All the means that seemed to promise any aid, and all
 in vain.
 Gone you were, and I shall never see that earnest face
 again
 Grow transparent, grow transfigured, with the sudden
 light that leapt
 At the first word's provocation, from the heart-deeps
 where it slept.

Therefore, paying piteous duty, what seemed You
 have we consigned
 Peacefully to — what I think were, of all earth-beds, to
 your mind
 Most the choice for quiet, yonder: low walls stop the
 vines' approach,
 Lovingly Salève protects you; village-sports will ne'er
 encroach 120

On the stranger lady's silence, whom friends bore so
 kind and well
 Thither "just for love's sake," — such their own word
 was: and who can tell?
 You supposed that few or none had known and loved
 you in the world:
 Maybe! flower that's full-blown tempts the butterfly,
 not flower that's furred.
 But more learned sense unlocked you, loosed the
 sheath and let expand
 Bud to bell and outspread flower-shape at the least
 warm touch of hand
 — Maybe, throb of heart, beneath which — quickening
 farther than it knew —
 Treasure oft was disembosomed, scent all strange and
 unguessed hue.
 Disembosomed, re-embosomed, — must one memory
 suffice,
 Prove I knew an Alpine-rose which all beside named
 Edelweiss?

130

Rare thing, red or white, you rest now: two days
 slumbered through; and since
 One day more will see me rid of this same scene
 whereat I wince,
 Tetchy at all sights and sounds and pettish at each
 idle charm
 Proffered me who pace now singly where we two went
 arm in arm, —
 I have turned upon my weakness: asked, "And what,
 forsooth, prevents
 That, this latest day allowed me, I fulfil of her in-
 tents
 One she had the most at heart — that we should thus
 again survey
 From Salève Mont Blanc together?" Therefore, —
 dared and done to-day
 Climbing, — here I stand: but you — where?

If a spirit of the place
 Broke the silence, bade me question, promised answer,
 — what disgrace

140

Did I stipulate " Provided answer suit my hopes, not
 fears !"
 Would I shrink to learn my lifetime's limit — days,
 weeks, months or years?
 Would I shirk assurance on each point whereat I can
 but guess —
 " Does the soul survive the body? Is there God's
 self, no or yes? "
 If I know my mood, 't were constant — come in what-
 soe'er uncouth
 Shape it should, nay, formidable — so the answer were
 but truth.

Well, and wherefore shall it daunt me, when 't is I
 myself am tasked,
 When, by weakness weakness questioned, weakly
 answers — weakly asked?
 Weakness never needs be falseness: truth is truth in
 each degree
 — Thunder-pealed by God to Nature, whispered by
 my soul to me. 150
 Nay, the weakness turns to strength and triumphs in
 a truth beyond:
 " Mine is but man's truest answer — how were it did
 God respond? "
 I shall no more dare to mimic such response in futile
 speech,
 Pass off human lisp as echo of the sphere-song out of
 reach,
 Than, — because it well may happen yonder, where
 the far snows blanch
 Mute Mont Blanc, that who stands near them sees and
 hears an avalanche, —
 I shall pick a clod and throw, — cry, " Such the sight
 and such the sound !
 What though I nor see nor hear them? Others do,
 the proofs abound !"
 Can I make my eye an eagle's, sharpen ear to
 recognize
 Sound o'er league and league of silence? Can I know,
 who but surmise? 160
 If I dared no self-deception when, a week since, I and you

Walked and talked along the grass-path, passing
 lightly in review
 What seemed hits and what seemed misses in a certain
 fence-play, — strife
 Sundry minds of mark engaged in “On the Soul and
 Future Life,” —
 If I ventured estimating what was come of parried
 thrust,
 Subtle stroke, and rightly, wrongly, estimating could
 be just
 — Just, though life so seemed abundant in the form
 which moved by mine,
 I might well have played at feigning, fooling, — laughed
 “What need opine
 Pleasure must succeed to pleasure, else past pleasure
 turns to pain,
 And this first life claims a second, else I count its
 good no gain?” — 170
 Much less have I heart to palter when the matter
 to decide
 Now becomes “Was ending ending once and always,
 when you died?”
 Did the face, the form I lifted as it lay, reveal the loss
 Not alone of life but soul? A tribute to yon flowers
 and moss,
 What of you remains beside? A memory! Easy to
 attest
 ‘Certainly from out the world that one believes who
 knew her best
 Such was good in her, such fair, which fair and good
 were great perchance
 Had but fortune favored, bidden each shy faculty
 advance;
 After all — who knows another? Only as I know, I
 speak.”
 So much of you lives within me while I live my year or
 week. 180
 Then my fellow takes the tale up, not unwilling to aver
 Duly in his turn, “I knew him best of all, as he knew
 her:
 Such he was, and such he was not, and such other
 might have been

But that somehow every actor, somewhere in this
earthly scene,
Fails." And so both memories dwindle, yours and
mine together linked,
Till there is but left for comfort, when the last spark
proves extinct,
This — that somewhere new existence, led by men and
women new,
Possibly attains perfection coveted by me and you;
While ourselves, the only witness to what work our
life evolved,
Only to ourselves proposing problems proper to be
solved 190
By ourselves alone, — who working ne'er shall know
if work bear fruit
Others reap and garner, heedless how produced by
stalk and root, —
We who, darkling, timed the day's birth, — struggling,
testified to peace, —
Earned, by dint of failure, triumph, — we, creative
thought, must cease
In created word, thought's echo, due to impulse long
since sped !
Why repine? There 's ever some one lives although
ourselves be dead !

Well, what signifies repugnance? Truth is truth how-
e'er it strike.
Fair or foul the lot apportioned life on earth, we bear
alike.
Stalwart body idly yoked to stunted spirit, powers, that
fain
Else would soar, condemned to grovel, groundlings
through the fleshly chain, — 200
Help that hinders, hindrance proved but help dis-
guised when all too late, —
Hindrance is the fact acknowledged, howsoe'er ex-
plained as Fate,
Fortune, Providence : we bear, own life a burthen more
or less.
Life thus owned unhappy, is there supplemental hap-
piness

Possible and probable in life to come? or must we
count

Life a curse and not a blessing, summed-up in its
whole amount,

Help and hindrance, joy and sorrow?

Why should I want courage here?

I will ask and have an answer, — with no favor, with
no fear, —

From myself. How much, how little, do I inwardly
believe

True that controverted doctrine? Is it fact to which
I cleave, 210

Is it fancy I but cherish, when I take upon my lips

Phrase the solemn Tuscan fashioned, and declare the
soul's eclipse

Not the soul's extinction? take his "I believe and I
declare —

Certain am I — from this life I pass into a better, there
Where that lady lives of whom enamored was my soul "

— where this

Other lady, my companion dear and true, she also is?

I have questioned and am answered. Question, an-
swer presuppose

Two points: that the thing itself which questions,
answers, — *is*, it knows;

As it also knows the thing perceived outside itself, —
a force

Actual ere its own beginning, operative through its
course, 220

Unaffected by its end, — that this thing likewise needs
must be;

Call this — God, then, call that — soul, and both —
the only facts for me.

Prove them facts? that they o'erpass my power of
proving, proves them such:

Fact it is I know I know not something which is fact
as much.

What before caused all the causes, what effect of all
effects

Haply follows, — these are fancy. Ask the rush if it
suspects

Whence and how the stream which floats it had a rise,
 and where and how
 Falls or flows on still! What answer makes the rush
 except that now
 Certainly it floats and is, and, no less certain than
 itself,

Is the everyway external stream that now through shoal
 and shelf 230

Floats it onward, leaves it — maybe — wrecked at last,
 or lands on shore

There to root again and grow and flourish stable ever-
 more.

— Maybe! mere surmise not knowledge: much con-
 jecture styled belief,

What the rush conceives the stream means through
 the voyage blind and brief.

Why, because I doubtless am, shall I as doubtless be?
 "Because

God seems good and wise." Yet under this our life's
 apparent laws

Reigns a wrong which, righted once, would give quite
 other laws to life.

"He seems potent." Potent here, then: why are
 right and wrong at strife?

Has in life the wrong the better? Happily life ends
 so soon!

Right predominates in life? Then why two lives and
 double boon? 240

"Anyhow, we want it: wherefore want?" Because,
 without the want,

Life, now human, would be brutish: just that hope,
 however scant,

Makes the actual life worth leading; take the hope
 therein away,

All we have to do is surely not endure another
 day.

This life has its hopes for this life, hopes that promise
 joy: life done —

Out of all the hopes, how many had complete fulfil-
 ment? None.

"But the soul is not the body:" and the breath is not
 the flute;
 Both together make the music: either marred, and all
 is mute.
 Truce to such old sad contention whence, according
 as we shape
 Most of hope or most of fear, we issue in a half-
 escape: 250
 "We believe" is sighed. I take the cup of comfort
 proffered thus,
 Taste and try each soft ingredient, sweet infusion, and
 discuss
 What their blending may accomplish for the cure of
 doubt, till — slow,
 Sorrowful, but how decided! needs must I o'erturn it
 — so!
 Cause before, effect behind me — blanks! The mid-
 way point I am,
 Caused, itself — itself efficient: in that narrow space
 must cram
 All experience — out of which there crowds conjecture
 manifold,
 But, as knowledge, this comes only — things may be
 as I behold,
 Or may not be, but, without me and above me, things
 there are;
 I myself am what I know not — ignorance which proves
 no bar 260
 To the knowledge that I am, and, since I am, can
 recognize
 What to me is pain and pleasure: this is sure, the rest
 — surmise.
 If my fellows are or are not, what may please them and
 what pain, —
 Mere surmise: my own experience — that is knowl-
 edge, once again!

I have lived, then, done and suffered, loved and hated,
 learnt and taught
 This — there is no reconciling wisdom with a world
 distraught,

Goodness with triumphant evil, power with failure in
the aim,
If — (to my own sense, remember! though none other
feel the same!)
If you bar me from assuming earth to be a pupil's
place,
And life, time — with all their chances, changes —
just probation-space, 270
Mine, for me. But those apparent other mortals —
theirs, for them?
Knowledge stands on my experience: all outside its
narrow hem,
Free surmise may sport and welcome! Pleasures, pains
affect mankind
Just as they affect myself? Why, here's my neighbor
color-blind,
Eyes like mine to all appearance: "green as grass"
do I affirm?
"Red as grass" he contradicts me; — which employs
the proper term?
Were we two the earth's sole tenants, with no third for
referee,
How should I distinguish? Just so, God must judge
'twixt man and me.
To each mortal peradventure earth becomes a new
machine,
Pain and pleasure no more tally in our sense than red
and green; 280
Still, without what seems such mortal's pleasure, pain,
my life were lost
— Life, my whole sole chance to prove — although at
man's apparent cost —
What is beautiful and what ugly, right to strive for,
right to shun,
Fit to help and fit to hinder, — prove my forces every
one,
Good and evil, — learn life's lesson, hate of evil, love
of good,
As 't is set me, understand so much as may be under-
stood —
Solve the problem: "From thine apprehended scheme
of things, deduce

Praise or blame of its contriver, shown a niggard or
 profuse
 In each good or evil issue ! nor miscalculate alike
 Counting one the other in the final balance, which to
 strike, 290
 Soul was born and life allotted : ay, the show of things
 unfurled
 For thy summing-up and judgment, — thine, no other
 mortal's world !”

What though fancy scarce may grapple with the com-
 plex and immense
 — “ His own world for every mortal ? ” Postulate
 omnipotence !
 Limit power, and simple grows the complex : shrunk
 to atom size,
 That which loomed immense to fancy low before my
 reason lies, —
 I survey it and pronounce it work like other work :
 success
 Here and there, the workman's glory, — here and there,
 his shame no less,
 Failure as conspicuous. Taunt not “ Human work
 ape work divine ? ”
 As the power, expect performance ! God's be God's
 as mine is mine ! 300
 God whose power made man and made man's wants,
 and made, to meet those wants,
 Heaven and earth which, through the body, prove the
 spirit's ministrants,
 Excellently all, — did he lack power or was the will in
 fault
 When he let blue heaven be shrouded o'er by vapors
 of the vault,
 Gay earth drop her garlands shrivelled at the first in-
 fecting breath
 Of the serpent pains which herald, swarming in, the
 dragon death ?
 What, no way but this that man may learn and lay to
 heart how rife
 Life were with delights would only death allow their
 taste to life ?

Must the rose sigh "Pluck — I perish!" must the
 eve weep "Gaze — I fade!"

— Every sweet warn "'Ware my bitter!" every shine
 bid "Wait my shade" ? 310

Can we love but on condition, that the thing we love
 must die?

Needs there groan a world in anguish just to teach us
 sympathy —

Multitudinously wretched that we, wretched too, may
 guess

What a preferable state were universal happiness?

Hardly do I so conceive the outcome of that power
 which went

To the making of the worm there in yon clod its
 tenement,

Any more than I distinguish aught of that which, wise
 and good,

Framed the leaf, its plain of pasture, dropped the dew,
 its fineless food.

Nay, were fancy fact, were earth and all it holds illu-
 sion mere,

Only a machine for teaching love and hate and hope
 and fear 320

To myself, the sole existence, single truth 'mid false-
 hood, — well!

If the harsh throes of the prelude die not off into the swell
 Of that perfect piece they sting me to become a-strain
 for, — if

Roughness of the long rock-clamber lead not to the
 last of cliff,

First of level country where is sward my pilgrim-foot
 can prize, —

Plainlier! if this life's conception new life fail to
 realize, —

Though earth burst and proved a bubble glassing hues
 of hell, one huge

Reflex of the devil's doings — God's work by no sub-
 terfuge —

(So death's kindly touch informed me as it broke the
 glamour, gave

Soul and body both release from life's long nightmare
 in the grave) — 330

Still, — with no more Nature, no more Man as riddle
 to be read,
 Only my own joys and sorrows now to reckon real
 instead, —
 I must say — or choke in silence — “Howsoever
 came my fate,
 Sorrow did and joy did nowise — life well weighed —
 preponderate.”
 By necessity ordained thus? I shall bear as best I
 can ;
 By a cause all-good, all-wise, all-potent? No, as I am
 man !
 Such were God : and was it goodness that the good
 within my range
 Or had evil in admixture or grew evil’s self by
 change ?
 Wisdom — that becoming wise meant making slow and
 sure advance
 From a knowledge proved in error to acknowledged
 ignorance ? 34°
 Power! ’t is just the main assumption reason most
 revolts at ! power
 Unavailing for bestowment on its creature of an hour,
 Man, of so much proper action rightly aimed and
 reaching aim,
 So much passion, — no defect there, no excess, but still
 the same, —
 As what constitutes existence, pure perfection bright
 as brief
 For yon worm, man’s fellow-creature, on yon happier
 world — its leaf !
 No, as I am man, I mourn the poverty I must impute :
 Goodness, wisdom, power, all bounded, each a human
 attribute !

But, O world outspread beneath me ! only for myself
 I speak,
 Nowise dare to play the spokesman for my brothers
 strong and weak, 35°
 Full and empty, wise and foolish, good and bad, in
 every age,

Every clime, I turn my eyes from, as in one or other
stage
Of a torture writhe they, Job-like couched on dung
and crazed with blains
— Wherefore? whereto? ask the whirlwind what the
dread voice thence explains!
I shall “vindicate no way of God’s to man,” nor
stand apart,
“Laugh, be candid,” while I watch it traversing the
human heart!
Traversed heart must tell its story uncommented on:
no less
Mine results in, “Only grant a second life; I ac-
quiesce
In this present life as failure, count misfortune’s worst
assaults
Triumph, not defeat, assured that loss so much the
more exalts 360
Gain about to be. For at what moment did I so
advance
Near to knowledge as when frustrate of escape from
ignorance?
Did not beauty prove most precious when its opposite
obtained
Rule, and truth seem more than ever potent because
falsehood reigned?
While for love — Oh how but, losing love, does whoso
loves succeed
By the death-pang to the birth-throe — learning what
is love indeed?
Only grant my soul may carry high through death her
cup unspilled,
Brimming though it be with knowledge, life’s loss drop
by drop distilled,
I shall boast it mine — the balsam, bless each kindly
wrench that wrung
From life’s tree its inmost virtue, tapped the root
whence pleasure sprung, 370
Barked the bole, and broke the bough, and bruised
the berry, left all grace
Ashes in death’s stern alembic, loosed elixir in its
place!”

Witness, Dear and True, how little I was 'ware of —
 not your worth
 — That I knew, my heart assures me — but of what a
 shade on earth
 Would the passage from my presence of the tall white
 figure throw
 O'er the ways we walked together ! Somewhat narrow,
 somewhat slow,
 Used to seem the ways, the walking : narrow ways
 are well to tread
 When there 's moss beneath the footstep, honeysuckle
 overhead :
 Walking slow to beating bosom surest solace soonest
 gives,
 Liberates the brain o'erloaded — best of all restora-
 tives. 380
 Nay, do I forget the open vast where soon or late
 converged
 Ways though winding? — world-wide heaven-high sea
 where music slept or surged
 As the angel had ascendant, and Beethoven's Titan
 mace
 Smote the immense to storm, Mozart would by a
 finger's lifting chase?
 Yes, I knew — but not with knowledge such as thrills
 me while I view
 Yonder precinct which henceforward holds and hides
 the Dear and True.
 Grant me (once again) assurance we shall each meet
 each some day.
 Walk — but with how bold a footstep ! on a way — but
 what a way !
 — Worst were best, defeat were triumph, utter loss
 were utmost gain.
 Can it be, and must, and will it?

Silence ! Out of fact's domain, 390

Just surmise prepared to mutter hope, and also fear —
 dispute
 Fact's inexorable ruling, "Outside fact, surmise be
 mute !"
 Well !

Ay, well and best, if fact's self I may force the
 answer from!
 'Tis surmise I stop the mouth of! Not above in
 yonder dome
 All a rapture with its rose-glow, — not around, where
 pile and peak
 Strainingly await the sun's fall, — not beneath, where
 crickets creak,
 Birds assemble for their bedtime, soft the tree-top
 swell subsides, —
 No, nor yet within my deepest sentient self the knowl-
 edge hides.
 Aspiration, reminiscence, plausibilities of trust
 — Now the ready "Man were wronged else," now the
 rash "and God unjust" — 400
 None of these I need. Take thou, my soul, thy
 solitary stand,
 Umpire to the champions Fancy, Reason, as on either
 hand
 Amicable war they wage, and play the foe in thy
 behoof!
 Fancy thrust and Reason parry! Thine the prize who
 stand aloof!

FANCY

I concede the thing refused: henceforth no certainty
 more plain
 Than this mere surmise that after body dies soul lives
 again.
 Two, the only facts acknowledged late, are now in-
 creased to three —
 God is, and the soul is, and, as certain, after death
 shall be.
 Put this third to use in life, the time for using fact!

REASON

I do:
 Find it promises advantage, coupled with the other
 two. 410
 Life to come will be improvement on the life that's
 now; destroy

Body's thwartings, there's no longer screen betwixt
 soul and soul's joy.
 Why should we expect new hindrance, novel tether?
 In this first
 Life, I see the good of evil, why our world began at
 worst :
 Since time means amelioration, tardily enough dis-
 played,
 Yet a mainly onward moving, never wholly retrograde.
 We know more though we know little, we grow stronger
 though still weak,
 Partly see though all too purblind, stammer though we
 cannot speak.
 There is no such grudge in God as scared the ancient
 Greek, no fresh
 Substitute of trap for drag-net, once a breakage in the
 mesh. 42°
 Dragons were, and serpents are, and blindworms will
 be : ne'er emerged
 Any new-created python for man's plague since earth
 was purged.
 Failing proof, then, of invented trouble to replace the
 old,
 O'er this life the next presents advantage much and
 manifold :
 Which advantage — in the absence of a fourth and
 farther fact
 Now conceivably surmised, of harm to follow from
 the act —
 I pronounce for man's obtaining at this moment.
 Why delay?
 Is he happy? happiness will change : anticipate the day !
 Is he sad? there's ready refuge : of all sadness death's
 prompt cure !
 Is he both, in mingled measure? cease a burden to
 endure ! 43°
 Pains with sorry compensations, pleasures stinted in
 the dole,
 Power that sinks and pettiness that soars, all halved
 and nothing whole,
 Idle hopes that lure man onward, forced back by as
 idle fears —

What a load he stumbles under through his glad sad
seventy years,
When a touch sets right the turmoil, lifts his spirit
where, flesh-freed,
Knowledge shall be rightly named so, all that seems
be truth indeed !
Grant his forces no accession, nay, no faculty's in-
crease,
Only let what now exists continue, let him prove in
peace
Power whereof the interrupted unperfected play en-
ticed
Man through darkness, which to lighten any spark of
hope sufficed, — 44°
What shall then deter his dying out of darkness into
light ?
Death itself perchance, brief pain that's pang, con-
densed and infinite ?
But at worst, he needs must brave it one day, while,
at best, he laughs, —
Drops a drop within his chalice, sleep not death his
science quaffs !
Any moment claims more courage, when, by crossing
cold and gloom,
Manfully man quits discomfort, makes for the pro-
vided room
Where the old friends want their fellow, where the
new acquaintance wait,
Probably for talk assembled, possibly to sup in
state !
I affirm and reaffirm it therefore : only make as
plain
As that man now lives, that, after dying, man will live
again, — 45°
Make as plain the absence, also, of a law to con-
travene
Voluntary passage from this life to that by change of
scene, —
And I bid him — at suspicion of first cloud athwart
his sky,
Flower's departure, frost's arrival — never hesitate,
but die !

FANCY

Then I double my concession : grant, along with new
 life sure
 This same law found lacking now : ordain that, whether
 rich or poor,
 Present life is judged in aught man counts advantage
 — be it hope,
 Be it fear that brightens, blackens most or least his
 horoscope, —
 He, by absolute compulsion such as made him live at all,
 Go on living to the fated end of life whate'er befall. 460
 What though, as on earth he darkling grovels, man
 descry the sphere,
 Next life's — call it, heaven of freedom, close above
 and crystal-clear?
 He shall find — say, hell to punish who in aught
 curtails the term,
 Fain would act the butterfly before he has played out
 the worm!
 God, soul, earth, heaven, hell, — five facts now : what
 is to desiderate?

REASON

Nothing! Henceforth man's existence bows to the
 monition "Wait!
 Take the joys and bear the sorrows — neither with
 extreme concern!
 Living here means nescience simply: 't is next life
 that helps to learn.
 Shut those eyes, next life will open, — stop those ears,
 next life will teach
 Hearing's office, — close those lips, next life will give
 the power of speech! 470
 Or, if action more amuse thee than the passive
 attitude,
 Bravely bustle through thy being, busy thee for ill or
 good,
 Reap this life's success or failure! Soon shall things
 be unperplexed
 And the right and wrong, now tangled, lie unravelled
 in the next."

FANCY

Not so fast! Still more concession! not alone do I
 declare
 Life must needs be borne, — I also will that man be-
 come aware
 Life has worth incalculable, every moment that he
 spends
 So much gain or loss for that next life which on this
 life depends.
 Good, done here, be there rewarded, — evil, worked
 here, there amerced!
 Six facts now, and all established, plain to man the
 last as first. 480

REASON

There was good and evil, then, defined to man by this
 decree?
Was — for at its promulgation both alike have ceased
 to be.
 Prior to this last announcement, “Certainly as God
 exists,
 As He made man’s soul, as soul is quenchless by the
 deathly mists,
 Yet is, all the same, forbidden premature escape from
 time
 To eternity’s provided purer air and brighter clime, —
 Just so certainly depends it on the use to which man
 turns
 Earth, the good or evil done there, whether after death
 he earns
 Life eternal, — heaven, the phrase be, or eternal death,
 — say hell.
 As his deeds, so proves his portion, doing ill or doing
 well!” 490
 — Prior to this last announcement, earth was man’s
 probation-place:
 Liberty of doing evil gave his doing good a grace;
 Once lay down the law, with Nature’s simple “Such
 effects succeed
 Causes such, and heaven or hell depends upon man’s
 earthly deed

Just as surely as depends the straight or else the
 crooked line
 On his making point meet point or with or else with-
 out incline," —
 Thenceforth neither good nor evil does man, doing
 what he must.
 Lay but down that law as stringent "Wouldst thou
 live again, be just!"
 As this other "Wouldst thou live now, regularly draw
 thy breath!
 For, suspend the operation, straight law's breach re-
 sults in death" — 500
 And (provided always, man, addressed this mode, be
 sound and sane)
 Prompt and absolute obedience, never doubt, will law
 obtain!
 Tell not me "Look round us! nothing each side but
 acknowledged law,
 Now styled God's — now, Nature's edict!" Where's
 obedience without flaw
 Paid to either? What's the adage rife in man's
 mouth? Why, "The best
 I both see and praise, the worst I follow" — which,
 despite professed
 Seeing, praising, all the same he follows, since he dis-
 believes
 In the heart of him that edict which for truth his head
 receives.
 There's evading and persuading and much making law
 amends
 Somehow, there's the nice distinction 'twixt fast foes
 and faulty friends, 510
 — Any consequence except inevitable death when,
 "Die,
 Whoso breaks our law!" they publish, God and Na-
 ture equally.
 Law that's kept or broken — subject to man's will and
 pleasure! Whence?
 How comes law to bear eluding? Not because of
 impotence:
 Certain laws exist already which to hear means to
 obey;

Therefore not without a purpose these man must,
 while those man may
 Keep and, for the keeping, haply gain approval and
 reward.

Break through this last superstructure, all is empty air
 — no sward

Firm like my first fact to stand on, “ God there is, and
 soul there is,”

And soul’s earthly life-allotment : wherein, by hypoth-
 esis, 520

Soul is bound to pass probation, prove its powers, and
 exercise

Sense and thought on fact, and then, from fact educing
 fit surmise,

Ask itself, and of itself have solely answer, “ Does the
 scope

Earth affords of fact to judge by warrant future fear or
 hope?”

Thus have we come back full circle : fancy’s footsteps
 one by one

Go their round, conducting reason to the point where
 they begun,

Left where we were left so lately, Dear and True !
 When, half a week

Since, we walked and talked and thus I told you, how
 suffused a cheek

You had turned me had I sudden brought the blush
 into the smile

By some word like “ Idly argued ! you know better all
 the while !” 530

Now, from me — Oh not a blush, but, how much more,
 a joyous glow,

Laugh triumphant, would it strike did your “ Yes, bet-
 ter I do know”

Break my warrant for assurance ! which assurance may
 not be

If, supplanting hope, assurance needs must change
 this life to me.

So, I hope — no more than hope, but hope, — no less
 than hope, because

I can fathom, by no plumb-line sunk in life's apparent
 laws,
 How I may in any instance fix where change should
 meetly fall
 Nor involve, by one revisal, abrogation of them all :
 — Which again involves as utter change in life thus law-
 released,
 Whence the good of goodness vanished when the ill
 of evil ceased. 54°
 Whereas, life and laws apparent reinstated, — all we
 know,
 All we know not, — o'er our heaven again cloud
 closes, until, lo, —
 Hope the arrowy, just as constant, comes to pierce its
 gloom, compelled
 By a power and by a purpose which, if no one else
 beheld,
 I behold in life, so — hope !

Sad summing-up of all to say !

Athanasius contra mundum, why should he hope more
 than they ?
 So are men made notwithstanding, such magnetic vir-
 tue darts
 From each head their fancy haloes to their unresisting
 hearts !
 Here I stand, methinks a stone's throw from yon vil-
 lage I this morn
 Traversed for the sake of looking one last look at its
 forlorn 55°
 Tenement's ignoble fortune : through a crevice, plain
 its floor
 Piled with provender for cattle, while a dung-heap
 blocked the door.
 In that squalid Bossex, under that obscene red roof,
 arose,
 Like a fiery flying serpent from its egg, a soul —
 Rousseau's.
 Turn thence ! Is it Diodati joins the glimmer of the
 lake !
 There I plucked a leaf, one week since, — ivy, plucked
 for Byron's sake.

Famed unfortunates! And yet, because of that phosphoric fame
Swathing blackness' self with brightness till putridity
looked flame,
All the world was witched: and wherefore? what
could lie beneath, allure
Heart of man to let corruption serve man's head as
cynosure? 560
Was the magic in the dictum "All that's good is gone
and past;
Bad and worse still grows the present, and the worst
of all comes last:
Which believe — for I believe it"? So preached one
his gospel-news;
While melodious moaned the other, "Dying day with
dolphin-hues!
Storm, for loveliness and darkness like a woman's eye!
Ye mounts
Where I climb to 'scape my fellow, and thou sea
wherein he counts
Not one inch of vile dominion! What were your
especial worth
Failed ye to enforce the maxim 'Of all objects found
on earth
Man is meanest, much too honored when compared
with — what by odds
Beats him — any dog: so, let him go a-howling to his
gods!' 570
Which believe — for I believe it!" Such the comfort
man received
Sadly since perforce he must; for why? the famous
bard believed!

Fame! Then, give me fame, a moment! As I
gather at a glance
Human glory after glory vivifying yon expanse,
Let me grasp them altogether, hold on high and
brandish well
Beacon-like above the rapt world ready, whether
heaven or hell
Send the dazzling summons earthward, to submit itself
the same,

Take on trust the hope or else despair flashed full on
 face by — Fame !
 Thanks, thou pine-tree of Makistos, wide thy giant
 torch I wave !
 Know ye whence I plucked the pillar, late with sky
 for architrave ? 580
 This the trunk, the central solid Knowledge, kindred
 core, began
 Tugging earth-deeps, trying heaven-heights, rooted
 yonder at Lausanne.
 This which flits and spits, the aspic, — sparkles in and
 out the boughs
 Now, and now condensed, the python, coiling round
 and round, allows
 Scarce the bole its due effulgence, dulled by flake on
 flake of Wit —
 Laughter so bejewels Learning, — what but Ferney
 nourished it ?
 Nay, nor fear — since every resin feeds the flame —
 that I dispense
 With yon Bossex terebinth-tree's all-explosive Elo-
 quence :
 No, be sure ! nor, any more than thy resplendency,
 Jean-Jacques,
 Dare I want thine, Diodati ! What though monkeys
 and macaques 590
 Gibber "Byron" ? Byron's ivy rears a branch beyond
 the crew,
 Green forever, no deciduous trash macaques and mon-
 keys chew !
 As Rousseau, then, eloquent, as Byron prime in poet's
 power, —
 Detonations, fulgurations, smiles — the rainbow, tears
 — the shower, —
 Lo, I lift the coruscating marvel — Fame ! and, famed,
 declare
 — Learned for the nonce as Gibbon, witty as wit's self,
 Voltaire . . .
 Oh, the sorriest of conclusions to whatever man of
 sense
 'Mid the millions stands the unit, takes no flare for
 evidence !

Yet the millions have their portion, live their calm or
troubled day,
Find significance in fireworks: so, by help of mine,
they may 600
Confidently lay to heart and lock in head their life
long — this:
“He there with the brand flamboyant, broad o’er
night’s forlorn abyss,
Crowned by prose and verse; and wielding, with Wit’s
bauble, Learning’s rod” . . .
Well? Why, he at least believed in Soul, was very
sure of God!

So the poor smile played, that evening: pallid smile
long since extinct
Here in London’s mid-November! Not so loosely
thoughts were linked,
Six weeks since as I, descending in the sunset from
Salève,
Found the chain, I seemed to forge there, flawless till
it reached your grave, —
Not so filmy was the texture, but I bore it in my
breast
Safe thus far. And since I found a something in me
would not rest 610
Till I, link by link, unravelled any tangle of the chain,
— Here it lies, for much or little! I have lived all o’er
again
That last pregnant hour: I saved it, just as I could
save a root
Disinterred for reinterment when the time best helps
to shoot.
Life is stocked with germs of torpid life; but may I
never wake
Those of mine whose resurrection could not be with-
out earthquake!
Rest all such, unraised forever! Be this, sad yet
sweet the sole
Memory evoked from slumber! Least part this: then
what the whole?

EPILOGUE TO THE TWO POETS OF
CROISIC

(1878)

What a pretty tale you told me
 Once upon a time
 —Said you found it somewhere (scold me!)
 Was it prose or was it rhyme,
 Greek or Latin? Greek, you said,
 While your shoulder propped my head.

Anyhow there 's no forgetting
 'This much if no more,
 That a poet (pray, no petting!)
 Yes, a bard, sir, famed of yore, 10
 Went where suchlike used to go,
 Singing for a prize, you know.

Well, he had to sing, nor merely
 Sing but play the lyre :
 Playing was important clearly
 Quite as singing : I desire,
 Sir, you keep the fact in mind
 For a purpose that 's behind.

There stood he, while deep attention
 Held the judges round, 20
 —Judges able, I should mention,
 'To detect the slightest sound
 Sung or played amiss : such ears
 Had old judges, it appears !

None the less he sang out boldly,
 Played in time and tune,
 Till the judges, weighing coldly
 Each note's worth, seemed, late or soon,
 Sure to smile " In vain one tries
 Picking faults out : take the prize ! " 30

When, a mischief! Were they seven
Strings the lyre possessed?
Oh, and afterwards eleven,
Thank you! Well, sir, — who had guessed
Such ill luck in store? — it happed
One of those same seven strings snapped.

All was lost, then! No! a cricket
(What “cicada?” Pooh!)
— Some mad thing that left its thicket
For mere love of music — flew 40
With its little heart on fire,
Lighted on the crippled lyre.

So that when (Ah, joy!) our singer
For his truant string
Feels with disconcerted finger,
What does cricket else but fling
Fiery heart forth, sound the note
Wanted by the throbbing throat?

Ay and, ever to the ending,
Cricket chirps at need, 50
Executes the hand's intending,
Promptly, perfectly, — indeed,
Saves the singer from defeat
With her chirrup low and sweet.

Till, at ending, all the judges
Cry with one assent:
“Take the prize — a prize who grudges
Such a voice and instrument?
Why, we took your lyre for harp,
So it shrilled us forth F sharp!” 60

Did the conqueror spurn the creature,
Once its service done?
That 's no such uncommon feature
In the case when Music's son
Finds his Lotte's power too spent
For aiding soul-development.

No ! This other, on returning
 Homeward, prize in hand,
 Satisfied his bosom's yearning :
 (Sir, I hope you understand !)
 — Said " Some record there must be
 Of this cricket's help to me ! " 70

So, he made himself a statue :
 Marble stood, life-size ;
 On the lyre, he pointed at you,
 Perched his partner in the prize ;
 Never more apart you found
 Her, he throned, from him, she crowned.

That 's the tale : its application ?
 Somebody I know 80
 Hopes one day for reputation
 Through his poetry that 's — Oh,
 All so learned and so wise
 And deserving of a prize !

If he gains one, will some ticket,
 When his statue 's built,
 Tell the gazer " 'T was a cricket
 Helped my crippled lyre, whose lilt,
 Sweet and low, when strength usurped
 Softness' place i' the scale, she chirped ? 90

" For as victory was nighest,
 While I sang and played, —
 With my lyre at lowest, highest,
 Right alike, — one string that made
 ' Love ' sound soft was snapt in twain,
 Never to be heard again, —

" Had not a kind cricket fluttered,
 Perched upon the place
 Vacant left, and duly uttered
 ' Love, Love, Love, ' whene'er the bass 100
 Asked the treble to atone
 For its somewhat sombre drone."

But you don't know music! Wherefore
 Keep on casting pearls
 To a — poet? All I care for
 Is — to tell him that a girl's
 "Love" comes aptly in when gruff
 Grows his singing. (There, enough!)

PHEIDIPPIDES

(1879)

Χαίρετε, νικῶμεν.

First I salute this soil of the blessed, river and rock!
 Gods of my birthplace, dæmons and heroes, honor to
 all!
 Then I name thee, claim thee for our patron, co-equal
 in praise
 — Ay, with Zeus the Defender, with Her of the ægis
 and spear!
 Also, ye of the bow and the buskin, praised be your
 peer.
 Now, henceforth and forever, — O latest to whom I
 upraise
 Hand and heart and voice! For Athens, leave pas-
 ture and flock!
 Present to help, potent to save, Pan — patron I call!

Archons of Athens, topped by the tettix, see, I
 return!
 See, 't is myself here standing alive, no spectre that
 speaks! 10
 Crowned with the myrtle, did you command me,
 Athens and you,
 "Run, Pheidippides, run and race, reach Sparta for
 aid!
 Persia has come, we are here, where is She?" Your
 command I obeyed,
 Ran and raced: like stubble, some field which a fire
 runs through,

Was the space between city and city : two days, two
 nights did I burn
 Over the hills, under the dales, down pits and up peaks.

Into their midst I broke : breath served but for
 " Persia has come !
 Persia bids Athens proffer slaves'-tribute, water and
 earth ;
 Razed to the ground is Eretria — but Athens, shall
 Athens sink,
 Drop into dust and die — the flower of Hellas utterly
 die, 20
 Die, with the wide world spitting at Sparta, the stupid,
 the stander-by?
 Answer me quick, what help, what hand do you
 stretch o'er destruction's brink?
 How, — when? No care for my limbs ! — there's
 lightning in all and some —
 Fresh and fit your message to bear, once lips give it
 birth ! "

O my Athens — Sparta love thee? Did Sparta re-
 spond?
 Every face of her leered in a furrow of envy, mistrust,
 Malice, — each eye of her gave me its glitter of grati-
 fied hate !
 Gravely they turned to take counsel, to cast for ex-
 cuses. I stood
 Quivering, — the limbs of me fretting as fire frets, an
 inch from dry wood :
 " Persia has come, Athens asks aid, and still they
 debate? 30
 Thunder, thou Zeus ! Athene, are Spartans a quarry
 beyond
 Swing of thy spear? Phoibos and Artemis, clang
 them ' Ye must ' ! "

No bolt launched from Olumpos ! Lo, their answer
 at last !

" Has Persia come, — does Athens ask aid, — may
 Sparta befriend ?

Nowise precipitate judgment — too weighty the issue
at stake !
Count we no time lost time which lags through re-
spect to the gods !
Ponder that precept of old, ‘ No warfare, whatever
the odds
In your favor, so long as the moon, half-orbed, is
unable to take
Full-circle her state in the sky ! ’ Already she rounds
to it fast :
Athens must wait, patient as we — who judgment
suspend.”

40

Athens, — except for that sparkle, — thy name, I had
mouldered to ash !
That sent a blaze through my blood ; off, off and away
was I back,
— Not one word to waste, one look to lose on the
false and the vile !
Yet “ O gods of my land ! ” I cried, as each hillock
and plain,
Wood and stream, I knew, I named, rushing past
them again,
“ Have ye kept faith, proved mindful of honors we
paid you erewhile ?
Vain was the filleted victim, the fulsome libation !
Too rash
Love in its choice, paid you so largely service so slack !

“ Oak and olive and bay, — I bid you cease to en-
wreath
Brows made bold by your leaf ! Fade at the Persian’s
foot, 50
You that, our patrons were pledged, should never
adorn a slave !
Rather I hail thee, Parnes, — trust to thy wild waste
tract !
Treeless, herbless, lifeless mountain ! What matter if
slacked
My speed may hardly be, for homage to crag and to
cave

No deity deigns to drape with verdure? at least I can
 breathe,
 Fear in thee no fraud from the blind, no lie from the
 mute!"

Such my cry as, rapid, I ran over Parnes' ridge ;
 Gully and gap I clambered and cleared till, sudden, a
 bar
 Jutted, a stoppage of stone against me, blocking the way.
 Right! for I minded the hollow to traverse, the fissure
 across: 60
 "Where I could enter, there I depart by! Night in
 the fosse?
 Athens to aid? Though the dive were through
 Erebus, thus I obey—
 Out of the day dive, into the day as bravely arise!
 No bridge
 Better!"—when—ha! what was it I came on, of
 wonders that are?

There, in the cool of a cleft, sat he—majestical Pan!
 Ivy drooped wanton, kissed his head, moss cushioned
 his hoof:

All the great god was good in the eyes grave-kindly—
 the curl

Carved on the bearded cheek, amused at a mortal's
 awe,

As, under the human trunk, the goat-thighs grand I
 saw.

"Halt, Pheidippides!"—halt I did, my brain of a
 whirl: 70

"Hither to me! Why pale in my presence?" he
 gracious began:

"How is it,—Athens, only in Hellas, holds me aloof?

"Athens, she only, rears me no fane, makes me no
 feast!

Wherefore? Than I what godship to Athens more
 helpful of old?

Ay, and still, and forever her friend! Test Pan, trust
 me!

Go, bid Athens take heart, laugh Persia to scorn, have
faith
In the temples and tombs! Go, say to Athens, 'The
Goat-God saith:
When Persia — so much as strews not the soil — is
cast in the sea,
Then praise Pan who fought in the ranks with your
most and least,
Goat-thigh to greaved-thigh, made one cause with the
free and the bold!' 80

"Say Pan saith: 'Let this, foreshowing the place, be
the pledge!'"

(Gay, the liberal hand held out this herbage I bear
— Fennel — I grasped it a-tremble with dew — what-
ever it bode)

"While, as for thee" . . . But enough! He was
gone. If I ran hitherto —

Be sure that, the rest of my journey, I ran no longer,
but flew.

Parnes to Athens — earth no more, the air was my road:
Here am I back. Praise Pan, we stand no more on
the razor's edge!

Pan for Athens, Pan for me! I too have a guerdon
rare!

Then spoke Miltiades. "And thee, best runner of
Greece,

Whose limbs did duty indeed, — what gift is promised
thyself? 90

Tell it us straightway, — Athens the mother demands
of her son!"

Rosily blushed the youth: he paused: but, lifting at
length

His eyes from the ground, it seemed as he gathered
the rest of his strength

Into the utterance — "Pan spoke thus: 'For what
thou hast done

Count on a worthy reward! Henceforth be allowed
thee release

From the racer's toil, no vulgar reward in praise or in
pelf!"

" I am bold to believe, Pan means reward the most to
 my mind!
 Fight I shall, with our foremost, wherever this fennel
 may grow, —
 Pound — Pan helping us — Persia to dust, and, under
 the deep,
 Whelm her away forever; and then, — no Athens to
 save, — 100
 Marry a certain maid, I know keeps faith to the
 brave, —
 Hie to my house and home: and, when my children
 shall creep
 Close to my knees, — recount how the God was
 awful yet kind,
 Promised their sire reward to the full — rewarding
 him — so!"

Unforeseeing one! Yes, he fought on the Marathon
 day:
 So, when Persia was dust, all cried " To Akropolis!
 Run, Pheidippides, one race more! the need is thy
 due!
 ' Athens is saved, thank Pan,' go shout!" He flung
 down his shield,
 Ran like fire once more: and the space 'twixt the
 Fennel-field
 And Athens was stubble again, a field which a fire
 runs through, 110
 Till in he broke: " Rejoice, we conquer!" Like
 wine through clay,
 Joy in his blood bursting his heart, he died — the
 bliss!

So, to this day, when friend meets friend, the word of
 salute
 Is still " Rejoice!" — his word which brought re-
 joicing indeed.
 So is Pheidippides happy forever, — the noble strong
 man
 Who could race like a god, bear the face of a god,
 whom a god loved so well;

He saw the land saved he had helped to save, and
 was suffered to tell
 Such tidings, yet never decline, but, gloriously as he
 began,
 So to end gloriously — once to shout, thereafter be
 mute :
 “ Athens is saved ! ” — Pheidippides dies in the shout
 for his meed. 120

MULÉYKEH

(1880)

If a stranger passed the tent of Hóseyñ, he cried
 “ A churl’s ! ”
 Or haply “ God help the man who has neither salt nor
 bread ! ”
 — “ Nay,” would a friend exclaim, “ he needs nor
 pity nor scorn
 More than who spends small thought on the shore-
 sand, picking pearls,
 — Holds but in light esteem the seed-sort, bears instead
 On his breast a moon-like prize, some orb which of
 night makes morn.

“ What if no flocks and herds enrich the son of Sinán ?
 They went when his tribe was mulct, ten thousand
 camels the due,
 Blood-value paid perforce for a murder done of old.
 ‘ God gave them, let them go ! But never since time
 began, 10
 Muléykeh, peerless mare, owned master the match of
 you,
 And you are my prize, my Pearl : I laugh at men’s
 land and gold ! ’

“ So in the pride of his soul laughs Hóseyñ — and
 right, I say.
 Do the ten steeds run a race of glory ? Outstripping
 all,

Ever Mulýkeh stands first steed at the victor's staff.
Who started, the owner's hope, gets shamed and named,
that day.

'Silence,' or, last but one, is 'The Cuffed,' as we use
to call

Whom the paddock's lord thrusts forth. Right,
Hóseyñ, I say, to laugh!"

"Boasts he Mulýkeh the Pearl?" the stranger re-
plies: "Be sure

On him I waste nor scorn nor pity, but lavish both 20
On Duhl the son of Sheybán, who withers away in
heart

For envy of Hóseyñ's luck. Such sickness admits no
cure.

A certain poet has sung, and sealed the same with an
oath,

'For the vulgar — flocks and herds! The Pearl is a
prize apart.'

Lo, Duhl the son of Sheybán comes riding to Hóseyñ's
tent,

And he casts his saddle down, and enters and
"Peace!" bids he.

"You are poor, I know the cause: my plenty shall
mend the wrong.

'T is said of your Pearl — the price of a hundred
camels spent

In her purchase were scarce ill paid: such prudence
is far from me

Who proffer a thousand. Speak! Long parley may
last too long." 30

Said Hóseyñ, "You feed young beasts a many, of
famous breed,

Slit-eared, unblemished, fat, true offspring of Múzen-
nem:

There stumbles no weak-eyed she in the line as it
climbs the hill.

But I love Mulýkeh's face: her forefront whitens
indeed

Like a yellowish wave's cream-crest. Your camels —
go gaze on them!
Her fetlock is foam-splashed too. Myself am the
richer still."

A year goes by: lo, back to the tent again rides Duhl.
"You are open-hearted, ay — moist-handed, a very
prince.
Why should I speak of sale? Be the mare your simple
gift!
My son is pined to death for her beauty: my wife
prompts ' Fool, 40
Beg for his sake the Pearl! Be God the rewarder,
since
God pays debts seven for one: who squanders on Him
shows thrift.'"

Said Hóseyñ, "God gives each man one life, like a
lamp, then gives
That lamp due measure of oil: lamp lighted — hold
high, wave wide
Its comfort for others to share! once quench it, what
help is left?
The oil of your lamp is your son: I shine while
Mulýkeh lives.
Would I beg your son to cheer my dark if Mulýkeh
died?
It is life against life: what good avails to the life-
bereft?"

Another year, and — hist! What craft is it Duhl
designs?
He alights not at the door of the tent as he did last
time, 50
But, creeping behind, he gropes his stealthy way by
the trench
Half-round till he finds the flap in the folding, for
night combines
With the robber — and such is he: Duhl, covetous
up to crime,
Must wring from Hóseyñ's grasp the Pearl, by what-
ever the wrench.

"He was hunger-bitten, I heard : I tempted with half
 my store,
 And 'a gibe was all my thanks. Is he generous like
 Spring dew?
 Account the fault to me who chattered with such an
 one !
 He has killed, to feast chance comers, the creature he
 rode : nay, more —
 For a couple of singing-girls his robe has he torn in
 two :
 I will beg ! Yet I nowise gained by the tale of my
 wife and son. 60

"I swear by the Holy House, my head will I never
 wash
 Till I filch his Pearl away. Fair dealing I tried, then
 guile,
 And now I resort to force. He said we must live or
 die :
 Let him die, then, — let me live ! Be bold — but not
 too rash !
 I have found me a peeping-place : breast, bury your
 breathing while
 I explore for myself ! Now, breathe ! He deceived
 me not, the spy !

"As he said — there lies in peace Hóseyn — how
 happy ! Beside
 Stands tethered the Pearl : thrice winds her headstall
 about his wrist :
 'T is therefore he sleeps so sound — the moon through
 the roof reveals.
 And, loose on his left, stands too that other, known far
 and wide, 70
 Buhéyseh, her sister born : fleet is she yet ever missed
 The winning tail's fire-flash a-stream past the
 thunderous heels.

"No less she stands saddled and bridled, this second,
 in case some thief
 Should enter and seize and fly with the first, as I
 mean to do.

What then? The Pearl is the Pearl: once mount her
we both escape.”
Through the skirt-fold in glides Duhl, — so a serpent
disturbs no leaf
In a bush as he parts the twigs entwining a nest: clean
through,
He is noiselessly at his work: as he planned, he per-
forms the rape.

He has set the tent-door wide, has buckled the girth,
has clipped
The headstall away from the wrist he leaves thrice
bound as before, 80
He springs on the Pearl, is launched on the desert
like bolt from bow.
Up starts our plundered man: from his breast though
the heart be ripped,
Yet his mind has the mastery: behold, in a minute
more,
He is out and off and away on Buhéyseh, whose worth
we know!

And Hóseyñ — his blood turns flame, he has learned
long since to ride,
And Buhéyseh does her part, — they gain — they are
gaining fast
On the fugitive pair, and Duhl has Ed-Dárraj to cross
and quit,
And to reach the ridge El-Sabán, — no safety till that
be spied!
And Buhéyseh is, bound by bound, but a horse-length
off at last,
For the Pearl has missed the tap of the heel, the touch
of the bit. 90

She shortens her stride, she chafes at her rider the
strange and queer:
Buhéyseh is mad with hope — beat sister she shall and
must,
Though Duhl, of the hand and heel so clumsy, she
has to thank.
She is near now, nose by tail — they are neck by croup
— joy! fear!

What folly makes Hóseyñ shout " Dog Duhl, Damned
son of the Dust,
Touch the right ear and press with your foot my
Pearl's left flank ! "

And Duhl was wise at the word, and Mulýkeh as
prompt perceived
Who was urging redoubled pace, and to hear him was
to obey,
And a leap indeed gave she, and evanished forever-
more.

And Hóseyñ looked one long last look as who, all
bereaved, 100
Looks, fain to follow the dead so far as the living may :
Then he turned Buhýseh's neck slow homeward,
weeping sore.

And, lo, in the sunrise, still sat Hóseyñ upon the
ground
Weeping : and neighbors came, the tribesmen of Bénu-
Asád
In the vale of green Er-Rass, and they questioned
him of his grief ;
And he told from first to last how, serpent-like, Duhl
had wound
His way to the nest, and how Duhl rode like an ape,
so bad !
And how Buhýseh did wonders, yet Pearl remained
with the thief.

And they jeered him, one and all : " Poor Hóseyñ is
crazed past hope !
How else had he wrought himself his ruin, in fortune's
spite ? 110
To have simply held the tongue were a task for boy or
girl,
And here were Mulýekh again, the eyed like an
antelope,
The child of his heart by day, the wife of his breast by
night ! " —

" And the beaten in speed ! " wept Hóseyñ.
" You never have loved my Pearl."

EPILOGUE TO DRAMATIC IDYLS
SECOND SERIES

(1880)

“ Touch him ne’er so lightly, into song he broke :
Soil so quick-receptive, — not one feather-seed,
Not one flower-dust fell but straight its fall awoke
Vitalizing virtue : song would song succeed
Sudden as spontaneous — prove a poet-soul ! ”

Indeed?

Rock ’s the song-soil rather, surface hard and bare :
Sun and dew their mildness, storm and frost their rage
Vainly both expend, — few flowers awaken there :
Quiet in its cleft broods — what the after-age
Knows and names a pine, a nation’s heritage. 10

WANTING IS — WHAT?

(1883)

Wanting is — what?
Summer redundant,
Blueness abundant,
— Where is the blot?

Beamy the world, yet a blank all the same,
— Framework which waits for a picture to frame :
What of the leafage, what of the flower?
Roses embowering with naught they embower !
Come then, complete incompleteness, O come,
Pant through the blueness, perfect the summer ! 10
Breathe but one breath
Rose-beauty above,
And all that was death
Grows life, grows love,
Grows love !

NEVER THE TIME AND THE PLACE

(1883)

Never the time and the place
 And the loved one all together !
 This path — how soft to pace !
 This May — what magic weather !
 Where is the loved one's face ?
 In a dream that loved one's face meets mine,
 But the house is narrow, the place is bleak
 Where, outside, rain and wind combine
 With a furtive ear, if I strive to speak,
 With a hostile eye at my flushing cheek, 10
 With a malice that marks each word, each sign !
 O enemy sly and serpentine,
 Uncoil thee from the waking man !
 Do I hold the Past
 Thus firm and fast
 Yet doubt if the Future hold I can ?
 This path so soft to pace shall lead
 Through the magic of May to herself indeed !
 Or narrow if needs the house must be,
 Outside are the storm and strangers : we — 20
 Oh, close, safe, warm sleep I and she,
 — I and she !

EPILOGUE TO FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

(1884)

Oh, Love — no, Love ! All the noise below, Love,
 Groanings all and moanings — none of Life I lose !
 All of Life 's a cry just of weariness and woe, Love —
 “ Hear at least, thou happy one ! ” How can I,
 Love, but choose ?

Only, when I do hear, sudden circle round me
— Much as when the moon's might frees a space
from cloud —
Iridescent splendors : gloom — would else confound
me —
Barriered off and banished far — bright-edged the
blackest shroud !

Thronging through the cloud-rift, whose are they, the
faces
Faint revealed yet sure divined, the famous ones of
old? 10
“ What ” — they smile — “ our names, our deeds so
soon erases
Time upon his tablet where Life's glory lies en-
rolled ?

“ Was it for mere fool's-play, make-believe and mum-
ming,
So we battled it like men, not boylike sulked or
whined ?
Each of us heard clang God's ‘ Come ! ’ and each was
coming :
Soldiers all, to forward-face, not sneaks to lag be-
hind !

“ How of the field's fortune ? That concerned our
Leader !
Led, we struck our stroke nor cared for doings left
and right :
Each as on his sole head, failer or succeder,
Lay the blame or lit the praise : no care for cowards :
fight ! ” 20

Then the cloud-rift broadens, spanning earth that's
under,
Wide our world displays its worth, man's strife and
strife's success ;
All the good and beauty, wonder crowning wonder,
Till my heart and soul applaud perfection, nothing
less.

Only, at heart's utmost joy and triumph, terror
 Sudden turns the blood to ice: a chill wind disen-
 charms

All the late enchantment! What if all be error —
 If the halo irised round my head were, Love, thine
 arms?

PALAZZO GIUSTINIAN-RECANTI,
 VENICE, December 1, 1883.

PROLOGUE TO ASOLANDO

(1889)

“The Poet's age is sad: for why?
 In youth, the natural world could show
 No common object but his eye
 At once involved with alien glow —
 His own soul's iris-bow.

“And now a flower is just a flower:
 Man, bird, beast are but beast, bird, man —
 Simply themselves, uninct by dower
 Of dyes which, when life's day began,
 Round each in glory ran.” 10

Friend, did you need an optic glass,
 Which were your choice? A lens to drape
 In ruby, emerald, chrysopras,
 Each object — or reveal its shape
 Clear outlined, past escape,

The naked very thing? — so clear
 That, when you had the chance to gaze,
 You found its inmost self appear
 Through outer seeming — truth ablaze,
 Not falsehood's fancy-haze? 20

How many a year, my Asolo,
 Since — one step just from sea to land —
 I found you, loved yet feared you so —
 For natural objects seemed to stand
 Palpably fire-clothed! No —

No mastery of mine o'er these !

Terror with beauty, like the Bush

Burning but unconsumed. Bend knees,

Drop eyes to earthward ! Language? Tush !

Silence 't is awe decrees.

30

And now? The lambent flame is — where?

Lost from the naked world : earth, sky,

Hill, vale, tree, flower, — Italia's rare

O'er-running beauty crowds the eye —

But flame? The Bush is bare.

Hill, vale, tree, flower — they stand distinct,

Nature to know and name. What then?

A Voice spoke thence which straight unlinked

Fancy from fact : see, all 's in ken :

Has once my eyelid winked?

40

No, for the purged ear apprehends

Earth's import, not the eye late dazed.

The Voice said, " Call my works thy friends !

At Nature dost thou shrink amazed?

God is it who transcends."

ASOLO, September 6, 1889.

POETICS

(1889)

“So say the foolish!” Say the foolish so, Love?
 “Flower she is, my rose” — or else, “My very
 swan is she” —
 Or perhaps, “Yon maid-moon, blessing earth below,
 Love,
 That art thou!” — to them, belike: no such vain
 words from me.

“Hush, rose, blush! no balm like breath,” I chide
 it:
 “Bend thy neck its best, swan, — hers the whiter
 curve!”
 Be the moon the moon: my Love I place beside it:
 What is she? Her human self, — no lower word
 will serve.

SUMMUM BONUM

(1889)

All the breath and the bloom of the year in the bag of
 one bee:
 All the wonder and wealth of the mine in the heart
 of one gem:
 In the core of one pearl all the shade and the shine of
 the sea:
 Breath and bloom, shade and shine, — wonder,
 wealth, and — how far above them —
 Truth, that’s brighter than gem,
 Trust, that’s purer than pearl, —
 Brightest truth, purest trust in the universe — all were
 for me
 In the kiss of one girl.

A PEARL, A GIRL

(1889)

A simple ring with a single stone,
 To the vulgar eye no stone of price :
 Whisper the right word, that alone —
 Forth starts a sprite, like fire from ice,
 And lo, you are lord (says an Eastern scroll)
 Of heaven and earth, lord whole and sole
 Through the power in a pearl.

A woman ('t is I this time that say)
 With little the world counts worthy praise :
 Utter the true word — out and away 10
 Escapes her soul : I am wrapt in blaze,
 Creation's lord, of heaven and earth
 Lord whole and sole — by a minute's birth —
 Through the love in a girl!

SPECULATIVE

(1889)

Others may need new life in Heaven —
 Man, Nature, Art — made new, assume !
 Man with new mind old sense to leaven,
 Nature, — new light to clear old gloom,
 Art that breaks bounds, gets soaring-room.

I shall pray : “ Fugitive as precious —
 Minutes which passed, — return, remain !
 Let earth's old life once more enmesh us,
 You with old pleasure, me — old pain,
 So we but meet nor part again ! ” 10

EPILOGUE TO ASOLANDO

(1889)

At the midnight in the silence of the sleep-time,
 When you set your fancies free,
 Will they pass to where — by death, fools think,
 imprisoned —
 Low he lies who once so loved you, whom you loved
 so,
 — Pity me?

Oh to love so, be so loved, yet so mistaken!
 What had I on earth to do
 With the slothful, with the mawkish, the unmanly?
 Like the aimless, helpless, hopeless, did I drive!
 — Being — who? 10

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

No, at noonday in the bustle of man's work-time
 Greet the unseen with a cheer!
 Bid him forward, breast and back as either should be,
 "Strive and thrive!" cry "Speed, — fight on, fare
 ever
 There as here!" 20

NOTES

FIRST PERIOD: -1841

ROBERT BROWNING was born May 7, 1812. It is not without its significance that this poet, in whom was

A principle of restlessness,
Which would be all, have, see, know, taste, feel, all,

should have been born, like his great predecessor, Milton, in the busy metropolis of London, and of an ancestry which united taste and refinement with the ordinary activities of men of business. His home influences were in many respects like those of Milton two centuries earlier, and like Milton he was ever ready in later life to pay tribute to the father's self-sacrifice and the mother's tender and sympathetic guidance. Living at Camberwell, a suburb of London, he was not deprived of nature's attractions in rivers, woods, and hills, while enjoying the sights and sounds of the busy haunts of men. Nature and human life thus came to be of interest to him almost simultaneously with the arts of poetry, painting, and music. It is no wonder that under the influences of such an environment, the child came to live in dreams. He was educated at home, in music, singing, dancing, boxing, riding, and fencing, until he was ten years of age, when he was placed in a day school at Peckham, where he remained until he was fourteen. During these days he seemed more in love with nature than with books. He began to seek melodious expression for his feelings, sometimes after the manner of Pope, but oftener in a Byronic vein. His father, fearing the results of such a revolutionary spirit, often inveighed against the temper of this "new fangled Byron." When only twelve, Browning gave his mother some manuscript ballads for which he had failed to find a publisher, and she with a true motherly instinct showed them to some friends, who detected the latent poetic fervor in them. These manuscripts came into possession of Mr. W. J. Fox, "who thought," says Mr. Edmund Gosse, "that his verse was so full and melodious

his snare would be a too gorgeous scale of language and tenuity of thought, concealed by metrical audacity." Soon after, he came under the spell of the "Sun-treader" Shelley, much as about the same time the young Tennyson did under the wizard fascination of Byron. His mother bought for him a pirated volume of Shelley's *Queen Mab and Other Poems*, and one of Keats. Soon after this, as he said, "two nightingales strove one against the other," and he became possessed of the spirits of these romancers.

After completing his studies at the school he remained at home with a tutor, and fed his appetite on history, poetry, music, and experimental science. In *Pauline* he said, while looking back to these days :

So, as I grew, I rudely shaped my life
To my immediate wants; yet strong beneath
Was a vague sense of power, though folded up —
A sense that, though those shades and times were past,
Their spirit dwelt in me, with them should rule.

He attended lectures at London University for a short time, and then began that study in the greater University of men and things through travel. He was twenty, and had already planned "a series of monodramatic epics, narratives of the lives of typical souls," — the vein which he worked so assiduously and successfully through life. His first production in this line was *Pauline; A Fragment of a Confession*, a poem so full of autobiographical pictures that we have selected parts of it by which to introduce the student to his mind and art. It was published anonymously in 1833, when he was twenty-one years of age, and the expense of printing was borne by his aunt. How little it attracted readers of poetry is revealed in the fact that it was not republished until 1868. It presents man thinking in monologue, his earliest "attempt at poetry always dramatic in principle," in contrast to Shakespeare, who presents man acting and revealing himself in dialogue. It is the confession of a youth of noble ideals, but weak in will. In its somewhat morbid exaggeration it resembles Byron, "a healthy morbidity: a kind of intellectual measles," says Mr. Chesterton; while in its picturesque elements and sensuousness it suggests Shelley.

PAULINE

1833

A REFLECTION

The two great questions in regard to the mind and art of a poet are, What is his attitude toward nature on the one hand, and, on the other hand, what is his revelation of human life? In some poets these questions are not answered definitely in their earlier work, there are only hints; but with Browning, as with Wordsworth, we have a clear revelation of both,— what may be called the *Theme*.

In this "reflection" we have a miniature landscape from memory, a revelation merely of what sight revealed to him. It is a brief, vivid, and fresh bit of painting, something to be enjoyed for itself; and yet it contains a suggestive symbolism of the awakening consciousness in his own heart to high ideals, — the advent of Spring in his soul, somewhat after the manner of Shelley.

HIS EARLY IDEAL

ll. 1-10. Here is a very marked illustration of the maturity of thought in the young poet, not unlike that to be found in Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey*.

l. 11, etc. It is not to be wondered at that the ideals of Shelley, the apostle of a new era for man, clothed in radiant song, should touch the emotional and imaginative nature of this sensitive youth. Shelley is the poet of youth. He is a revealer of the aspiration, the rapture, the beauty, and the pleasures of youth. When he deals with the problems which belong to age, when he observes and meditates, he lacks reality and balance. This praise of his young ideal — the sacred spring which brought the spirit of revolt, new vigor, and new enthusiasm — suggests the tributes of other young poets to their inspirers, especially that of Tennyson to Byron:

The hero and the bard is gone.

Tennyson once wrote to James Spedding: "Byron and Shelley, however mistaken they may be, did yet give the world another heart and new pulses, and so are we kept going. Blessed be those who grease the wheels of the old world, inasmuch as to move on is better than to stand still."

The treatment of nature here, too, is marked by that exuberance of thought and feeling in relation to man which is of youth.

Regarding the influence of Shelley in the genesis of *Pauline*, the *Monthly Repository* published the following happy conceit, based upon the fact that Browning loaned his copy of Shelley's *Rosalind and Helen* to Miss Flower, who lost it in a wood. "Last autumn L—— dropped a poem of Shelley's down there in the wood amongst the thick, damp, rotting leaves, and this spring someone found a delicate exotic-looking plant growing wild on the very spot, with *Pauline* hanging from its slender stock." Cf. *Memorabilia*.

A REVELATION

To catch the significance of these few lines is to get near to Browning's fundamental idea of personality, the power of a true life through the use of that supreme intellectual faculty, — the imagination.

Professor Dowden says of *Pauline*: "Rarely does a poem by a writer so young deserve better to be read for its own sake. It is an interesting document in the history of its author's mind."

IMAGINATIVE DELIGHT

This is a bit of philosophy to be found everywhere in Wordsworth — especially in *The Prelude* — the influence of early environment with books and nature.

Our childhood sits,
Our simple childhood sits upon a throne
That hath more power than all the elements.

Prelude, v. 507-508.

It is a tribute to the wisdom of his parents, who created such a wholesome atmosphere for his imagination, in ballad, epic, and chronicle. When, in later life, some one said to him, "There is no romance now except in Italy," he replied, "Well, I should make an exception of Camberwell;" such were his memories of youth.

A CRISIS

Here the intellectual search of the student stifles the higher imaginative powers, as was the case with Wordsworth when, in the disappointment at the course of the French Revolution, he took to studying forms of Government.

Demanding formal proof,
 And seeking it in everything. I lost
 All feeling of conviction, and, in fine,
 Sick, wearied out with contrarities,
 Yielded up moral questions in despair.

Prelude, xi. 301-305.

Tennyson had a similar experience in *In Memoriam* :

I will not shut me from my kind,
 And lest I stiffen into stone
 I will not eat my heart alone
 Nor feed with sighs a passing wind.

RECOVERY

Renewal of faith comes through new and unselfish activities, as was the case with Wordsworth when his sister led him back to the love of rivers, woods, and hills, and through that to the love of God and humanity. Here the teaching of *Pauline* reveals how

Men may rise on stepping stones of their dead selves to higher things.

Of *Pauline* he wrote to a friend, when republishing it in 1868: "The only remaining crab of the shapely Tree of Life in my Fool's Paradise." Mr. Stopford Brooke says of *Pauline*: "Out of the same quarry from which *Pauline* was hewn the rest were hewn. . . . Few have been so consistent as Browning, few so true to their early inspiration."

Some early reviews of *Pauline* remind us of those of Jeffrey on Wordsworth. The *Literary Gazette*, March, 1833, said: "This is a dreary volume, without an object, and unfit for publication." Tait's *Edinburgh Magazine*, August, 1833, said: "A piece of pure bewilderment."

PARACELSUS

1835

Pauline made but little stir in the literary world of its day, although it attracted a few of the poet's personal friends. Mr. W. J. Fox, editor of the *Monthly Repository*, was the earliest of Browning's sympathetic critics, and to him the poet owed much. That the poem attracted so few seems the more surprising when we consider that hardly any first publication of an English poet revealed so much of promise.

Soon after *Pauline* was given to the world, Browning visited St. Petersburg for a time with the Russian Consul-General. He returned to England early in 1834 with this thought in his heart:

Oh to be in England,
Now that April's there!

and during the fall and winter he wrote *Paracelsus*, which was published in the summer of 1835 at his father's expense. What he had somewhat roughly sketched in *Pauline* in regard to man, nature, and human life, and their inter-relation, he carefully wrought out in *Paracelsus*. So sure was the foundation laid here that it remained throughout a long and active literary career.

We can hardly lay too much stress upon the fact that in *Pauline* and *Paracelsus* are to be found those fundamental truths on God, man, and nature, which he gave a lifetime to expand and enrich, and which filled his life with a radiant hope in an endless future.

If we master the principles to be found in *Pauline* and *Paracelsus*, we shall have the key to Browning's mind and art, and shall find but few "obscurities" in any of his poems of the first order. In *Pauline* he had said, "I am made up of intensest life," and this is first made evident in *Paracelsus*. The scientific spirit of the fifteenth century, in its chivalrous quest of knowledge, its noble enthusiasm in life, fascinated him. The story of Paracelsus, that pioneer of modern chemistry, is that of the struggle of a great soul to attain its idea while passing through the fires of its own weakness within, and of persecution without. Paracelsus is aroused to aspire by this thought: "Men know, and therefore rule: I too will know;" but his two friends warn him that a course which produces carelessness to human love cannot be safe; more than knowledge is needed to attain to the highest, for knowledge breeds pride, but love breeds humility. It was through this poem, which reveals the fallacy of the intellect, that the most intellectual poet of our time became introduced to the literary world.

PARACELSUS ASPIRES

In these lines we have the reply of Paracelsus to the warning of his friends as he starts on his travels in search of knowledge.

Line 13 sounds the fundamental note in Browning's theory of knowledge, and reveals his familiarity with Plato.

APRILE'S SONG

After a quest of nine years, in which Paracelsus travels from Würzburg to Constantinople and "attains," he pauses to think over his gains. With youth gone, worn in mind and body, he recalls what his friends told him ere he set out, and while musing he hears the voice of a young Italian poet singing these notes, which reveal a yearning for love like his own for knowledge, and a like failure, because each is working apart from God.

APRILE'S REVELATION

Aprile and Paracelsus meet, and each sees in the failure of the other the one thing needful for him. Paracelsus begs Aprile to tell him

What thou wouldst be, and what I am,

and the reply is given in this selection. It reveals Browning's youthful poetical ideal. Few passages are to be found in English poetry more beautiful in conception or more perfect in execution than the first, or more pathetic than the last lines. At the close of Aprile's revelation, Paracelsus voices the following noble ideal :

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.
I, too, have sought to *know*, as thou to *love* —
Excluding love as thou refusedst knowledge.

To this Aprile, dying, replies :

I see, now : God is the perfect poet.

SONG : " Heap cassia, sandalbuds and stripes "

It has often been said that Browning's personality shines clear in every one of his characters, but in this charming lyric there is surely an exception to his characteristic method. The poet is at one with the philosopher of an age long past, and every thought and feeling is contemporary with this wanderer in the world of subtle symbolism. This is a lyric of an alchemist's delight in his simples, and anticipates some of the elements in the epistle of Karshish the Arabian physician.

SONG: "Thus the Mayne glideth"

The three great teachers, Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning, by virtue of the vision and faculty divine, while musing

On Man, on Nature, and on Human Life,

have revealed the same essential truth, — the divinity of Nature and Man. In scientific accuracy of description, Tennyson and Browning are much alike. They often describe aspects of nature and animal life for their own sakes; while Wordsworth does this rarely. If he portrays the shadow which the daisy casts, it is to reveal its almost human purpose —

To protect the lingering dewdrop from the sun.

PARACELSUS ATTAINS

Paracelsus does not understand Aprile's final message. He continues his aspiration for knowledge, while trying to unite knowledge and love; but still feels that knowledge is higher than love; so he goes back to the world. He is made professor at Basil, where he lectures and practises his art of healing with great success, but as he is too revolutionary in that age of revolutions, he is driven from the University as a quack, and decides in spite of pleadings of his friend Festus to enjoy all as well as to know all. He starts again on his travels, and, after years of wandering, lies dying in his cell at the hospital at Salzburg. Festus is watching by his bedside in the stillness of the night, while his mind is tossing like a sea in a tempest; at the dawn he becomes calm, and conscious of the presence of his friend. Festus asks him to declare the meaning of life. This selection is his reply, through which he attains to something better than he sought — a conception that his success and his failures reveal a means by which God's creatures struggle to the higher life. His idea of evolution given here is that of a theist. Browning wrote to Dr. Furnivall in 1881: "All that seems proved in Darwin's scheme was a conception familiar to me from the beginning." Cf. Tennyson, *The Making of Man, By an Evolutionist*, and *Wages*; John Fiske, *Idea of God, Destiny of Man, Through Nature to God*.

To every form of being is assigned
An *active* principle : — how'er removed
From sense and observation, it subsists
In all things, in all natures; in the stars
Of azure heaven, the unenduring clouds,
In flower and tree, in every pebbly stone

That paves the brooks, the stationary rocks,
 The moving waters, and the invisible air.
 Whate'er exists hath properties that spread
 Beyond itself, communicating good,
 A simple blessing, or with evil mixed;
 Spirit that knows no insulated spot,
 No chasm, no solitude; from link to link
 It circulates, the Soul of all the worlds.

WORDSWORTH, *The Excursion*, book ix, 1-14.

Professor Dowden says: "Aprile is the victim of the temptations of a passionate heart; Paracelsus of an aspiring intellect." In these two types we have the two extremes of poetry, — that which relies upon the intensity and depth of emotion as a motive power to action, and consequently reveals poetic moods of imagination and passion; and that which requires intellectual agility and subtle penetration. The great poetry of the world has influenced men by its power to inspire lofty ideals of conduct and beauty rather than by its wealth of intellectual information. The poet who is gifted with the impulse to know will run some risk of neglecting the weightier matters of poetic art, which require that the medium through which the thought is to be revealed, should be in perfect harmony with the idea on the one hand and the emotion on the other. In this poem Browning at times reveals a mastery of that most difficult poetic utterance, blank verse. In dignity, strength, purity, and power it resembles Milton. It is in complete harmony with the noble thoughts it enshrines. There are few of those perversities of form, those "thumps upon the back," which disfigure many of his later poems.

SECOND PERIOD: 1841-1868

PIPPA PASSES

1841

NEW YEAR'S HYMN

The publication of *Paracelsus* extended Browning's social circle. On meeting friends at dinner at Sargeant Talfourd's, the toast "The Poets of England" was proposed, with a kindly reference to the young poet, the author of *Paracelsus*. Wordsworth, who was present, leaned across the table and graciously said, "I am proud to drink your health, Mr. Browning." Browning's father had removed to Hatcham, and in 1835 his friendship with the actor Macready began and brought with

it significant consequences; for Macready requested him to write a play, and from 1837 to 1846 he became a writer of plays. *Strafford*, the first of these, was played by Macready at Covent Garden, but without financial success. In the spring of 1838 he set out upon his first visit to Italy. *Sordello*, a companion to *Paracelsus*, was begun in 1835, but as he wished to execute a part of the work in Italy it was not published until 1840. It is "the history of a soul," and although the theme may be clear, the language is so strangely and wildly perplexing—"a type of shorthand," as Professor Dowden says—that few have been able to decipher it. Yet loyalty to it has at times been made a test of discipleship to Browning.

On his return from Italy, *Pippa Passes*, the dramas, *King Victor and King Charles*, and *The Return of the Druses* occupied his attention. At the same time he began short lyrical pieces, and in 1841 issued the first series of his poems in a pamphlet called *Bells and Pomegranates*. (Cf. *Exodus*, xxviii. 33, 34.) This idea was suggested by Moxon the publisher, and the expense of publication was borne by his father. The first of this series was *Pippa Passes*, a lyrical mask, suggested by his visit to Asolo, his first love among Italian cities, which was destined to be his last love as well. Mrs. Orr says that the idea of this poem came to Browning when he was walking alone in Dulwich wood, from thinking of one walking alone through life, apparently too humble to have any influence, and yet unconsciously affecting the lives of others.

Pippa is a little silk-weaver of Asolo, in the Trevisan, who on waking early one New Year's day, her only holiday in the year, plans how she will celebrate. She remembers four representative types—"four happiest ones"—the wealthy Ottima, the young bride Phene, the young patriot Luigi, and the Bishop. As her fancy works, she says:

For am I not, this day,
Whate'er I please? What shall I please to-day?
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 Asolo.

Then she bursts forth in this dewy morning *Song of Service*, her New Year's Hymn, as she takes the street, fancy free.

SONG: "The year's at the spring"

This radiantly beautiful song, with its liquid melody, Pippa sings as she ascends the hill where Ottima sits with her para-

mour Sebald, who, after having killed her husband Luca, is about to crown her; as they hear it, they are arrested in their vicious lives and change their manners. The song bears marks of the influence of Keats.

SONG: "Give her but a least excuse," etc.

Some art students, learning that one of their number is in love with a young Greek girl, who is an artist's model, play a trick on him by sending to him letters as from her, which lead him to believe she is a woman of birth and culture. When they are married he learns that she is only an ignorant peasant girl and is about to discard her with a sum of money, but he hears Pippa singing this song as she passes, his manhood is awakened, and he repents.

SONG: "A king lived long ago"

(This song was first published in the *Monthly Repository*, 1835-1836.)

Luigi, a young patriot who thinks all kings are tyrants, is believed to have joined the secret society of the Carbonari, and is under suspicion by the authorities. He is visiting his mother, and is urged by her not to think so rashly of the Emperor, when he hears Pippa singing this old folk-song as she passes the tower where he is. He sees how he has misjudged his ruler, and becomes a real patriot.

SONG: "Over-head the tree-tops meet"

As Pippa passes the house of the bishop, he is planning her death because she is the child of his brother, at whose death he connived and whose property he is enjoying. When he hears this song his conscience is aroused and he repents. Mr. Chesterton thinks that in this episode of the poem Browning made a literary mistake. He says: "The whole central and splendid idea of the drama is the fact that Pippa is utterly remote from the grand folk whose lives she troubles and transforms. To make her in the end turn out to be the niece of one of them is like a whiff from an Adelphi melodrama."

THE DAY'S CLOSE IN ASOLO

At last, tired out with her day's fancies, Pippa returns to her squalid room, unconscious of the great work she has done. As she lies down to sleep, she thinks of the silk she may weave

as possibly destined to adorn Ottima's cloak, and this song voices itself. It is full of Browning's revelation of the truth that Pippa, having rekindled the flame of love and devotion in the hearts of these great ones, is happier than they. Speaking of the happy instinct which caused Browning to make the central character here a woman, Mr. Chesterton says: "A man's good work is effected by doing what he does, a woman's by being what she is." "The dust of the dead Keats and Shelley turned to flower-seed in the brain of the young poet," says Mr. Edmund Gosse. "There had been nothing in the pastoral kind written so delightfully since the days of the Jacobean dramatists. . . . Of the lyrical interludes and seed-pearls of song, it is a commonplace to say that nothing more exquisite or natural was ever written, or rather warbled." "Poetry," says Augustine Birrell, "should be vital, either stirring our blood by its divine movement, or snatching our breath by its divine perfection. To do both is supreme glory; to do either is enduring fame." *Pippa Passes* has already won a place among poems of supreme glory, which means enduring fame for its author. It suggests Wordsworth's little poem written in the album of his god-daughter:

Small service is true service while it lasts :
Of humblest friends, bright creature !
Scorn not one :
The daisy, by the shadow that it casts,
Protects the lingering dewdrop from the sun.

Mr. Stopford Brooke says: "Those portions of *Pippa Passes* which belong to Pippa herself, the most natural, easy, and simplest portions, will be the source of the greatest pleasure and the deepest thought. They are filled with youth and its delight, alike of the body and the soul. What Browning's spirit felt and lived when he was young and his heart beating with the life of the universe, is in them, and it is their greatest charm."

There are in this poem no bewildering byways and obscure nooks of a remote time to be examined by the intellect; only the natural passion of a simple and wholesome child-life to be enjoyed by tender and delicate imaginative insight.

It is worth noting that one of the first reviews of *Pippa Passes* was that by Margaret Fuller in the *Dial*, April, 1843.

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP

1842

(The original title was *Camp*.)

The events of this poem were associated with the siege of Ratisbon, a city of Bavaria. In 1809 Napoleon stormed the town. The blending of the lyrical element in the young soldier's nature — his delight in serving the Emperor — with the dramatic situation — the silent, brooding, anxious Napoleon — renders the ballad vivid, picturesque, tragic. Browning's expression is most luminous when his passion is the deepest; hence it is in dealing with the feelings of men and women, rather than with their intricate thinking, that he is master of poetic expression.

SOLILOQUY IN THE SPANISH CLOISTER

1842

(The original title was *Cloister*.)

In contrast to the last poem of devotion to an ideal, we have here an example of spite, hatred, and envy toward one who is loyal to his calling and delights in his work. The situation would be unbearable but for the humor.

Mr. Walter Bagehot, in contrasting the three types of literary art — the pure in Wordsworth, the ornate in Tennyson, and the grotesque in Browning — says: "This [grotesque] art works by contrasts. . . . It shows you what ought to be by what ought not to be; when complete, it reminds you of the perfect image by showing you the distorted and imperfect image. . . . An exceptional monstrosity of horrid ugliness cannot be made pleasing except it be made to suggest — to recall — the perfection, the beauty from which it is a deviation."

Browning's love of the grotesque was a serious and conscious element of his art; it produced some of his greatest work and was the cause of some of his grievous failures.

Mr. Matthew Arnold insisted that the two requirements for high poetic art were "beauty and felicity of form, and truth and seriousness of subject." While both Tennyson and Browning united these in their work of the first order, the former is primarily a literary artist, and the latter a searcher after truth. Mr. Hallam Tennyson says: "My father used to rally Browning playfully on his harshness of rhythm, the obscurity

and length of his poems. The retort would be, 'I cannot alter myself; the people must take me as they find me.' My father would repeat his usual dictum about literary work, 'An artist should get his workmanship as good as he can, and make his work as perfect as possible. A small vessel, built on fine lines, is likely to float further down the stream of time than a big raft.' They would laugh heartily together at Browning's faculty for absurd and abstruse rhymes."

WARING

1842

The subject of this poem was Mr. Alfred Domett, a friend of the poet, born in Camberwell in 1811. He was a Cambridge man, a lawyer and writer. Being of a restless nature, he went to New Zealand and became a leader in affairs of state, for which service he was created Companion of the order of St. Michael and St. George. He returned to London in 1871, renewed his friendship with Browning, published a volume of poems, in one of which he paid a tribute to Browning alluding to the

Strange Melodies,
That lustrous Song-Child languished to impart,
Breathing his boundless love through boundless Art.

And again he calls him :

Subtlest Asserter of the Soul in Song.

On one occasion he wrote a satirical poem, *On a Certain Critique on Pippa Passes* (*Query: Passes — what? The critic's comprehension.*)

Mr. Stopford Brooke calls this poem an impressionist picture long before impressionism came.

CRISTINA

1842

This little poem is full of that idealism so characteristic of Browning when treating of the subtle moments in the lives of men and women.

What the man gained is infinite, eternal; we are left to conjecture what was the real loss to the woman, exchanging the infinite for the finite. There was a bit of the tragedy of life here, as Browning viewed it.

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

1842

This child's poem, full of fancy and moving melody, was written and inscribed to a little son of the actor, William Macready, who was confined to the house by illness. The lad had some talent for drawing, and Browning had previously written a poem for him to illustrate, founded on the death of the Pope's legate at the Council of Trent. This poem was never printed, but the boy made such clever drawings for it, the poet wrote *The Pied Piper*. "The daintiest bit of folklore in English verse," says Mr. E. C. Stedman. It carried Browning's name into myriads of homes in England and America.

HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS
FROM GHENT TO AIX

1845

In 1843 series iv and v of *Bells and Pomegranates* were published; the former a tragedy, *The Return of the Druses*; and the latter a tragedy, *Blot in the 'Scutcheon*. Mrs. Orr says that in 1844 he visited Italy, and on his return journey stopped at Leghorn with the purpose of meeting E. J. Trelawney, who had known Byron and was the last man to see Shelley alive. In 1844 series vi, a drama, *Colombe's Birthday*, was issued; and in 1845 series vii, *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics*. This series contained twenty-five poems in which the poet is seen ascending the heights — his Mount of Vision.

It was during the year 1845 that he met for the first time Miss Elizabeth Barrett, the gifted poet, who was living at Wimpole Street, London. She was living an invalid life, and in grief at the death of a favorite brother. The meeting of the two was brought about by the kindly offices of that friend of poets, John Kenyon, who was Miss Barrett's cousin. He had shown her Browning's poems, and had sent hers to Browning's sister, who naturally showed them to the poet. When Browning found in these poems praise of his *Paracelsus*, he wrote an appreciation of hers in return, and through this avenue a meeting of the two was but natural. For a revelation of the new life which thus came to two souls, one should read *Letters of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett*. The first letter of his begins, "I love your verses with all my heart, dear Miss

Barrett." In her reply she says, "Such a letter from such a hand! Sympathy is dear — very dear to me. . . . Shall I have courage to see you soon, I wonder!"

Letter follows letter in rapid succession, each full of good-natured banter, literary and personal. Here are a few types: He writes, "Do you know I was once not very far from seeing — really seeing you?" She replies, "If you had entered the 'Crypt,' you might have caught cold or been tired to death." Again she writes, "I hear of the 'old room' and the 'Bells lying about,' with an interest you may guess at, perhaps." On hearing of her excuses for not allowing him to call, 'ill health, east winds,' etc., he sends this greeting, "But if my truest heart's wishes avail, . . . you shall laugh at east winds yet. . . . Always when you write, though about your own works . . . put me in *always* a little official bulletin-line that shall say, 'I am better,' or 'still better,' will you?" When she hears he has been ill, she inquires, "May I ask how the head is? just under the bag? Just a word, to say how you are." When thinking of meeting her, he exclaims, "You do *not* know what I shall estimate that permission at, nor do I, quite. . . . You must help me with all my new romances and lyrics, and lays and plays, and read them and heed them, and end them and mend them." When he felt the first visit to be near, we have: "I will call at two on Tuesday. . . . You see it is high time you *saw* me, for I have clearly written myself *out*." She replies, "Before you come, try to forgive me for my 'infinite kindness' in the manner of consenting to see you."

The result of the meeting was a letter bearing at least an implied offer of marriage. Feeling that marriage to an invalid would be fatal to his future, after much agitation Miss Barrett insisted that they must remain only friends. This little stanza reveals how she felt:

Love you seek for, presupposes
 Summer heat and sunny glow.
 Tell me, do you find moss-roses
 Budding in the snow?
 Snow might kill the rose-tree's root,
 Shake it quickly from your foot,
 Lest it harm you as you go.

He asked that the letter be returned; the wish was honored and the letter destroyed. Visits were continued, and discussions held on the nature of poetry and the arts; often he left his manuscript for her correction, while he took away

one of hers for review. On learning of her home troubles at the hands of a selfish and autocratic father,—for, “since the days of *Clarissa Harlowe* there never was such a preposterous family despot,” says Leslie Stephen—he breaks over the barriers, but is again repulsed. She longed to go to a milder climate for her health, but the imperious will of the father prevented. “He came and prayed over her,” says Mr. Chesterton, “with a kind of melancholy glee, and with the avowed solemnity of a watcher by a deathbed.” Yet, in spite of all this paternal cruelty, she did not lose courage; her love of her art saved her for the love of a personal embodiment of that art, and she continued to write the cleverest poetry yet produced by an Englishwoman.

Miss Barrett had already written of *Bells and Pomegranates* :

Or from Browning some “Pomegranate” which, if cut
 deep down the middle,
 Shows a heart within blood-tinctured, of a veined humanity.

And it was for the volume of 1845 she had the greatest admiration.

This spirited poem, which has no historical foundation, was conceived by Browning on his first visit to Italy in 1838, “and written on shipboard off the African coast,” says Professor Dowden, “when the fancy of a gallop ‘on the back of a certain good horse York,’ which he often rode at Hatcham, suddenly presented itself in pleasant contrast to the tedium of hours on shipboard.” It was written on the fly-leaf of Bartoli’s *Simbali*.

PICTOR IGNOTUS

1845

This poem, revealing the soul of an unknown painter as he thinks of the popularity of one of his compeers, is the first of the series by Browning in which he deals with those types among the great Italian painters.

Some critics have interpreted Browning here as teaching that the painter failed because of timidity, fearing the ignoble touch of the base world, when he should have dared all for his art; while others have thought that the poem teaches the dignity of the great artist in not being tempted to work for a price or for praise, but only for the glory of God,—the motif of all great art, whether poetry, painting, architecture, or

music. What Professor Dowden has said of Wordsworth's unconcern of the applause of the world applies here: "When the singing robe or prophetic mantle is on, a man does not peer about anxiously for auditors." Browning's early love of art and artists was stimulated by frequent visits with his father to Dulwich Gallery, not far from his home.

THE LOST LEADER

1845

While this poem has been considered as a direct thrust at Wordsworth for the conservatism of his later life, yet it was intended to reveal rather a type than any particular character, as Browning himself confessed. He says: "I did in my hasty youth presume to use the great and venerated personality of Wordsworth as a sort of painter's model, one from which this or the other particular feature may be selected and turned to account: had I intended more, above all, such a boldness as portraying the entire man, I should not have talked about 'handfuls of silver and bits of riband.' These never influenced the change of politics in the great poet."

Professor Dowden says: "It may be questioned whether Wordsworth, after he had parted with his democratic convictions and earned the name of renegade, did not retain a truer democratic sense of the dignity of manhood than is possessed by writers who deal fluently in the platitudes of fervid republicanism, and do lip worship to Humanity, while they exhibit in their temper and their themes all that can render humanity the reverse of worshipful."

Browning himself became more conservative and tolerant later in life, for he once said of the English county gentleman, "Talk of abolishing that class of men! They are the salt of the earth!"

The late Senator Hoar wrote of the sentiments of the poem as follows: "I would not speak without reverence of the great genius of Browning, or of the gentle Shelley without a pitying love. . . . I am speaking only of their relation to righteousness and liberty as wrought out in the conduct of states. I am speaking of the history of England for a hundred years. What did they do for it? What accomplishment for humanity have they to show outside their place in literature? What great moral battlefield, what great victory, did they win? What are the deeds these great men did while Wordsworth

'boasts his quiescence'? I am speaking solely of political achievements. What great leader in the battle of freedom points for inspiration to Robert Browning or Shelley? . . . The name that Browning would blot out shines like a constellation in the sky. The 'lost soul' of Wordsworth, as he said of Milton's, was

Like a star and dwelt apart,
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free."

HOME THOUGHTS FROM ABROAD

1845

(As first printed, this title included three poems, *Oh to be in England*; *Here's to Nelson's Memory*; and *Nobly Cape Saint Vincent*.)

This poem and the one which follows it were bits from Browning's experience when abroad in 1838, and reveal almost the only note typically English to be found in his works. Everywhere in Tennyson the note is personal, English, of the country to which he belonged. His scenery, men and women, social and political ideals, are thoroughly English. Wordsworth's sympathies and ideals are universal, they "span the total of humanity," and yet the atmosphere which pervades his work is English. Although at heart a true Englishman, delighting in England's natural charms and proud of her power and influence, Browning is in no sense a historian of English life and its ideals.

THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB

1845

(First printed in *Hood's Magazine*, March, 1845.)

This poem is a notable illustration of Browning's singular power of creating a character and then setting him free to live his own life in his appropriate age. What went into this graphic picture of the decaying Renaissance? The decline of religion into a weak paganism; iniquity in the highest church officials; lust of material possessions, — jewels, precious stones, and costly marble; hypocrisy and petty jealousies; love of voluptuous splendor; base pride in death; inglorious ambitions, — even to the best Latin inscription; vanities of the world and the flesh; a passing civilization, — all revealed in a single character.

Cf. Tennyson, *Palace of Art*, for a picture of individual decay and recovery.

l. 91. The Bishop's mind wanders here; cf. line 59.

l. 99. "Elucescebat." Not the type of Latin desired by the Bishop, as it partakes of Gandolf's "gaudy verse," l. 78.

Browning called this "dog-latin," and "Ulpian the golden Jurist, a copper latinist." (Letter to D. G. Rossetti.)

THE FLOWER'S NAME

1845

(First printed in *Hood's Magazine*, June, 1845, under the title *Garden Fancies*.)

In his treatment of the various activities of love—as a memory, a present possession, and an anticipation—Browning touches chords to which our common humanity vibrates in unison. This poem needs no comment, no explanation, no analysis; it is simple, sensuous, passionate.

THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS

1845

(Written at Hatcham.)

This poem was suggested by the memory of a line,

Following the Queen of the Gypsies, O!

which Browning, when a boy, heard sung by a woman on Guy Fawkes day. The first two hundred lines were sent to Hood in April, 1845, for publication in his magazine. At that time Hood was ill and in need.

As the old huntsman tells the story, full of romantic passion, vivid in pictures of nature and animal life, in irregular galloping verse, we are soon under the spell, and in full sympathy with him in his chivalrous work of setting free the young bird from its stiff cage of conventionalism. The aid which the decrepit old gypsy was able to give to the yearning young convent girl is another illustration of the old text, "God useth the simple things of the world to confound the subtleties of the crafty." The suggestion of the gypsy that the Duchess is of her own class is a beautiful symbol of their similarity of nature, love of freedom, life in the fresh air and under the

clear sky, full of health, truth, and naturalness. On Thursday May 2, 1845, Miss Barrett wrote, "Oh! the *Flight of the Duchess* — do let us hear more of her." The power of the gypsy's song and the smile of the Duchess to move the huntsman and stir within him the passion to follow on the quest (after his duty to his master is done) is one of the finest touches of the poet's art. Professor Dowden says: "Such a small prisoner, all life and fire, was before many months actually delivered from her cage in Wimpole Street, and Robert Browning himself, growing in stature among his incantations, played the part of the gypsy." Cf. note to *Evelyn Hope*.

Mr. E. Gurney speaks of the grotesque effects of some of the double and triple rhymes in this poem as "producing the effect of jokes made during the performance of a symphony."

l. 322. "Fifty-part canon." "A canon, in music, is a piece wherein the subject is repeated in various keys. . . . To manage three is enough of an achievement for a good musician." (Dr. Berdoe.)

FAME

1845

Immortality hoped for through fame on the one hand and through love on the other can at the longest be only temporary, and while they may rightly be cherished as stepping stones, they cannot satisfy the human heart; only the hope of personal immortality can do that.

THE BOY AND THE ANGEL

1845

(First printed in *Hood's Magazine*, August, 1844.)

In this simple legend, breathing the atmosphere of Catholic Europe, Browning has enshrined the most moving truth of the Christian religion: that human praise emanating from the soul joyous in its simple work is more pleasing to the Lord than that which often clothes itself in the garments of formal religious worship.

Thrice blest whose lives are faithful prayers,
Whose loves in higher love endure;
What souls possess themselves so pure,
Or is there blessedness like theirs?

In Memoriam, xxxii.

THE GLOVE

1845

This old story, originating at the court of Francis I., and repeated in many languages, by Schiller in German and Leigh Hunt in English, is retold by Browning with suggestive variations, in order to make the implicit truth explicit. By some critics the act of the woman had been condemned as originating in vanity rather than in love; but he takes the lady's part, and in contrast to her happiness makes De Lorge's future somewhat troubled by episodes of his wife's gloves.

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS

1855

In 1846 series viii, the last of *Bells and Pomegranates*, *Luria*, and *A Soul's Tragedy* was published. Miss Barrett now began to grow stronger, to take drives and even walks. "Something like a miracle of the healing of the sick," says Professor Dowden, "had been effected." Longer resistance to the natural gravitation of the two toward each other was impossible. In March they were engaged, and planned marriage in the late summer, with a visit to Italy. But the opportune moment did not come until the Barretts planned to go to Tunbridge; it was then decided they must act. He wrote on September 10th, "We must be *married directly* and go to Italy. I will go for a license to-day and we can be married on Saturday. I will call to-morrow at three and arrange everything with you." On the 11th she wrote: "But come to-morrow, come. Almost everybody is to be away at Richmond, at a picnic, and we shall be free on all sides." A license was procured, and on September 12th they were privately married at Marylebone church, being attended by only two witnesses and Miss Barrett's maid, not even their most intimate friends knowing of the act. After the marriage ceremony they parted. Mrs. Browning drove to the house of a friend, where she made the event known to her sisters and then returned home. On "Sept. 12 — 4½ P.M.," she wrote: "I write a word that you may read it and know how all is safe so far, and that I am not slain downright with the day. Oh, *such a day!*" For the next week there was much letter writing in preparation for their flight, and on the eve of the day before she left home she wrote (it is the last of

the published *Letters*): "It is dreadful . . . dreadful . . . to have to give pain here by a voluntary act — for the first time in my life." On the 19th she quietly left Wimpole Street forever, taking with her Flush, her pet dog, and her maid. She said to Flush, "O Flush, if you make a noise, I am lost." She met her husband at a stationer's shop, and they were soon on their way to Havre, completing thus the most romantic first act in the lives of two poets. Mr. Barrett, after the marriage, said: "I've no objection to the young man, but my daughter should have been thinking of another world."

How complete a secret the engagement and marriage had been is revealed by the following: Mrs. Jameson, the distinguished writer, and friend of Miss Barrett, had invited her to be her companion in Paris for the winter of 1846, but she replied that she could not accept, as her health would not permit. What was Mrs. Jameson's surprise therefore, shortly after her arrival in Paris, to receive a note from Mr. Browning saying that he and his wife had just come from London on their way to Italy. They remained in Paris two weeks, and then, in company with Mrs. Jameson, set out for Italy. Mrs. Jameson wrote to a friend at the time as follows: "Both excellent; but God help them! for I know not how the two poet heads and poet hearts will get on through this prosaic world."

They travelled slowly, owing to Mrs. Browning's health, and decided to spend the winter in Pisa. Of the life here, Mrs. Browning wrote, "I never was so happy before." Their housekeeping was as plain as their thinking was high. "Their custom was," says Mr. Edmund Gosse, "to write alone, and not to show each other what they had written. This was a rule which he sometimes broke, but she never. He worked in a room down stairs, where their meals were served; she in a room on the floor above. One day early in 1847, their breakfast being over, Mrs. Browning went up stairs, while her husband stood at the window watching the street till the table should be cleared. He was presently aware of some one behind him, although the servant was gone. It was Mrs. Browning, who held him by the shoulder to prevent his turning to look at her, and at the same time pushed a packet of papers, the very notes and chronicle of her betrothal, into the pocket of his coat, and then she fled again to her own room." The parcel contained the *Sonnets from the Portuguese* which have now made her name so famous because they reveal her highest imaginative flights, her keenest emotions, and her subtlest technical skill, as illustrated in the following:

I lived with visions for my company
 Instead of men and women, years ago,
 And found them gentle mates, nor thought to know
 A sweeter music than they played to me.
 But soon their trailing purple was not free
 Of this world's dust, — their lutes did silent grow,
 And I myself grew faint and blind below
 Their vanishing eyes. Then THOU didst come, . . . to be,
 Beloved, what they *seemed*. Their shining fronts,
 Their songs, their splendours . . . (better, yet the same, . . .
 As river water hallowed into fountains . . .)
 Met in thee, and from out thee overcame
 My soul with satisfaction of all wants —
 Because God's gifts put man's best dreams to shame.

In April they went to Florence, first living in an apartment at Via delle Belle Donne and later in the Palazzo Guidi, the *Casa Guidi* of Mrs. Browning's poems. "We are as happy," wrote Browning, "as two owls in a hole, two toads under a tree-stump, or any other queer two poking creatures that we let live after the fashion of their black hearts, only Ba [his wife] is fat and rosy; yes, indeed!" In this year the memorable friendship with the American sculptor, W. W. Story, began. During the next two years he was busy preparing for the press an edition of his poems, and *Christmas Eve and Easter Day*, and she was at work upon *Aurora Leigh*. In March, 1849, a son was born to them. "A lovely, fat, strong child, with double chin and rosy cheeks, and a great wide chest," is the mother's description of him. But the joy of the event was soon colored with sorrow at the death of Browning's mother.

In 1850 *Christmas Eve and Easter Day* was published, and Mrs. Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. "I dared not reserve for myself," said Browning, "the finest sonnets written in any language since Shakespeare's." It was natural that these years should be fruitful ones. He wrote an essay on his young ideal, Shelley, his only significant prose work. In 1851 they returned to London, and the circle of friends was widened; but the climate did not suit Mrs. Browning, and they went to Rome. Mrs. Orr says, "Browning commemorated his marriage in a manner all his own. He went to the church in which it was solemnized, and kissed the paving stones in front of the door." In 1853 Story wrote Lowell from the baths of Lucca: "Of society there is none we care to meet but the Brownings, who are living here. With them we have constant and delightful intercourse. They are so simple, unaffected, and sympathetic."

Mrs. Browning writes: "You know Mr. and Mrs. Story. She and I go backward and forward to tea, drinking and gossiping at one another's houses, and our husbands hold the reins." They returned to Florence in May, 1853. Plans were now made for the publication of *Men and Women*, in two volumes, and two volumes of Mrs. Browning's; this necessitated their going to London to superintend the work.

In these volumes, *Men and Women*, we get nearer to the real Browning, as the personal note is clearer. They reveal three types or aspects of love: first, personal; second, for art; and third, for religious ideals. *Love Among the Ruins* belongs to the first of these.

In his studies of the feeling of love Browning contrasts, as he does in art, that spirit which dares to assert itself even against conventional laws, and thus succeeds, with that base spirit which calculates consequences and loses.

A LOVERS' QUARREL

1855

Matthew Arnold has said that the poet must be painter and musician too, for he must the aspect of the moment show, as does the former; and, the feeling of the moment know, as does the latter.

But, ah! then comes his sorest spell
Of toil, he must life's *movement* tell.

Grave, gay, child, parent, husband, wife,
He follows home, and lives their life.

No poet since Shakespeare has so well illustrated this as has Browning. In this touching remembrance on the part of the lover the poet has crowded gladness and sadness, the former of nature and the latter of man, in distinctive contrast and with most impassioned warmth.

EVELYN HOPE

1855

In this poem the passion has become by the death of its object a spiritual longing for its realization in the next world. It is as fresh and wholesome as Wordsworth's *Lucy Poems*, or Landor's *Rose Aylmer*; it appeals to all classes, because

free from the atmosphere of the laboratory on the one hand and of the cloister on the other. Here, assuredly, Browning agrees with the greatest poetic artists that

Song's our art.

“Not the saintly ascetic,” says Mr. C. H. Herford, “nor the doer of good works, but the artist and lover dominated his imagination.” Cf. Wordsworth, *Highland Girl*, for a contrast in treatment of love.

UP AT A VILLA — DOWN IN THE CITY

1855

This picture is full of that subtle play of humor which is Browning's best. Its revelations are true to much of the life of a large class of the present day, — a class of men and women who have no resources within themselves, and who when alone with books and nature are most miserable. Their nerves are worn so bare that rest is pain; activity in the busy crowd is their only recreation.

In these poems of 1855 we find interesting varieties of Browning's verse forms; the most are original and melodious, and yet there are many exhibitions of caprice and waywardness.

FRA LIPPO LIPPI

1855

This poem, in many ways the highest achievement of Browning's art, was the result of a visit to the Belle Arti, where he saw the picture here described (l. 347, etc.). It presents that stage in the history of Renaissance art, when, satiated with the portrayal of the religious life revealed in the New Testament, the lives of the Saints in earth and heaven, it turned to the presentation of the characters of men and women as they actually lived and loved in our world as it is. Professor Dowden says: “Fra Lippo, with his outbreaks of frank sensuality, is far nearer to Browning's kingdom of heaven than is the faultless painter.”

All the circumstances of this poem reveal as by a flash the early springtime of the new life in art, and its surprises are symbolized by the monk being caught out of bounds, enjoying for a moment the life of the senses. The holiness of art

according to Browning is in its truth to what is fundamental in God's created things,—its wholeness, body, mind, and soul.

l. 143. "Thank you!" An illustration of Browning's so-called dramatic method. It is in reply to a supposed remark perhaps in praise of his work.

l. 345. "There's for you." He tips them to keep this meeting secret.

l. 347. "I shall paint," etc. The picture of the Coronation of the Virgin.

A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S

1855

This overture or "touch piece," by the Italian musician of the early eighteenth-century Venice, is being played by the poet, who sees reflected in its notes the pathos of the butterfly life of the great voluptuous city, loving pleasure, and even knowledge, for themselves merely. The subtle analysis of the details of this musical composition, and the suggestiveness of each to the Venetians of the two classes, lovers of pleasure and lovers of knowledge, is at times baffling, even to the musical expert. "Through this music of the hours of love and pleasure," says Professor Dowden, "we hear, as it were, the fall of the clay upon a coffin-lid." Nothing in Browning more fully reveals his ideal of the work of a subjective poet, "embodying," as he says in his essay on Shelley, "the thing he perceives, not so much with reference to the many below as to the One above him."

ll. 37-39. Knowledge even of material things may lead to higher aspirations, but of itself gives little more basis for immortality than the existence of a butterfly's life of pleasure.

BY THE FIRESIDE

1855

One who has followed the story of the poet's life up to this time will not fail to hear the personal note in this poem. It is full of the wealth coming from serene and joyous love.

ANY WIFE TO ANY HUSBAND

1855

The treatment here of the fundamental difference in the nature of the love of man and that of woman is exceedingly

skilful in its freedom from any suggestion of criticism upon the jealousy of the one or the weakness of the other. Yet the poet reveals that the wife in her sense of superiority feels something of pity for the husband's temptations. Mr. Stopford Brooke thinks that Browning got the idea from the frankness of his wife upon such things, for "she had studied her own sex in herself and in other women."

AN EPISTLE OF KARSHISH

1855

Browning's mastery of the elements of the past gives this picture its strangeness, weirdness, and vividness; while his presentation of those peculiar types of mind in the present day — minds which, trained in the sphere of fact, and while doubting are ready to investigate the basis of faith in others — gives it strange fascination. Although it never presents argument, it flashes such revelations that even though the reason is ashamed to admit them for a hearing, the heart feels their solemn significance and the scoffing is silenced in wonder. The union of the objective, picturesque elements with the subjective, underlying verities is a triumph of art, — the goal which Browning always kept in sight but not always attained.

Mr. Stopford Brooke says: "I do not think Browning ever wrote a poem the writing of which he more enjoyed."

MY STAR

1855

This poem might be styled "Any Husband to any Wife," in its revelation of

The gleam,
The light that never was, on sea or land,
The consecration and the poet's dream.

It is without doubt Browning's tribute to his wife. Cf. Wordsworth, *She was a Phantom of Delight*.

INSTANS TYRANNUS

1855

The theme of this poem was suggested by Horace's Ode *Justum et Tenacem* (Book iii. Ode 3).

The righteous man, of purpose fixed and strong,
 Scorns the depraved commands
 Of angry faction clamouring for wrong,
 Nor fears the despot's frown.

This sketch of one whose hateful nature drove him to the basest action against an unoffending subject has in it the two elements common in Browning's poetry: baseness, as in *Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister*, and nobility, as in *Pippa Passes*. The contrast between the serenity of this poor creature who prays, and by whose side God stands, and the sudden terror of the tyrant, is one of the most striking to be found in literature. Mr. Stopford Brooke says: "Browning was not one of our modern realists who love to paddle and splash in the sewers of humanity."

CHILDE ROLAND

1855

Art is its own excuse for being; but we are so wedded to the idea that nothing of itself will come, that we are not satisfied until the meddling intellect misshapes the beautiful forms of things; we must get the specific lesson which the artist intended to be taught by each work of art. In the case of Browning the lesson in most cases is evident enough; but this romantic story, born out of the folk-lore of a far-away past when action was preferred to speculation, has thus far baffled all the motive-hunters.

It is easy to make it an allegory of various types of activity, but there is no evidence that the poet intended it to be allegorical. It has its roots in the romantic soil. In rapidity of action, weirdness, natural magic, and fateful catastrophe, it is one with the old ballads.

The following quotations illustrate the extremes of interpretation of this poem. Dr. Berdoe says: "I consider it an allegory of an age of materialistic science, which aims at the destruction of all our noblest ideals of religion and faith in the unseen. The pilgrim is a truth seeker, misdirected by the lying spirit." Mr. James Fotheringham says: "It seems to me a romance of the soul in one of its hardest tasks, the task of keeping true to itself against itself, the task of keeping on when the fire of life burns low and experience looks not so much painful as hideous and futile." Mr. Stopford

Brooke considers it "a gallop over the moorlands of the imagination," and Professor Dowden, "a forlorn romance of weary and depressed heroism." Pres. Theodore Roosevelt says: "Those who admire the coloring of Turner, those who like to read how — and to wonder why — *Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came*, do not wish always to have the ideas presented to them with cold, hard, definite outlines; and to a man with a poetic temperament it is inevitable that life should often appear clothed with a certain sad mysticism."

The image of the horse was created from a red horse standing behind a dun one on a large tapestry that hung in his drawing-room.

RESPECTABILITY

1855

Here is a wholesome bit of young lover's philosophy, insisting that the unconventional may yet be truer, and even holier, than the ceremonial of the *beau monde*, where "lampions flare" and one must put forward the best foot of convention or be condemned. The Poet teaches that the immorality of conventionalism is often more dangerous than that of license. Cf. Wordsworth, "*A Poet! he hath put his heart to school.*"

THE STATUE AND THE BUST

1855

(First appeared in pamphlet form, 1855.)

Browning often startles us by raising some strange question of ethics. Here is a study of the passion of love under circumstances where to the ordinary mind success would be a crime, and where the failure was almost as great a crime. Around the simple fact of the statue of the grand duke in the piazza of SS. Annunciata at Florence, with head turned toward the Riccardi Palace, Browning weaves this story of the weakness of will in two clandestine lovers. After the first strong passion had passed as a dream, they were satisfied with the posthumous fame of the Statue and the Bust.

The poet implies that to have carried out their first plan of union would have been success in contrast to the defeat in weakness.

HOW IT STRIKES A CONTEMPORARY

1855

A Spaniard is telling a friend of the only poet he ever knew — a man who was mistaken by the popular imagination for a spy in the employ of the inquisitorial king. The people pictured his sumptuous living at the very time he was starving and dying in a garret. It is the purpose of the artist to reveal that while he was despised by men he was dear to God. Here Browning illustrates his own ideal of the subjective poet as he expressed it in his *Essay on Shelley* by showing, "not what man sees, but what God sees — the ideas of Plato, seeds of creation lying burningly in the Divine Hand."

THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER

1855

Browning's habit of concentrating fundamental thought and feeling into a moment of one's life was never more clearly revealed than in this little poem of resignation under the trial of unrequited love. In such moments the poet flashes upon us the truth of a soul's ascent to the heights of life, — heights never to be lost, come what may, and from which there are visions of heights that are higher. This power to rise on stepping stones of apparent failure is to his mind the only progress; all else is failure. M. Milsand says: "His imagination is attracted and brought into play no less by small things than by great; if it has a preference, it is for great truths manifesting themselves in trifling episodes." In this method he is a natural successor of Wordsworth.

In common things that round us lie
Some random truth he can impart, —
The harvest of a quiet eye
That broods and sleeps on his own heart.

THE PATRIOT

1855

Browning as a student of things eternal becomes the historian of the human heart. He reaches solid ground when amid the revelations of fickleness of popular applause with its tragic consequences, he assures us that with God there is "no

variableness nor shadow of turning." While the characters and environment of this poem are Italian, the lesson to be drawn from the striking contrast of what was to what is, "'T is God shall repay: I am safer so," is of universal import.

MEMORABILIA

1855

"Composed," says Dr. Berdoe, "in the Roman Campagna in the winter of 1853-54."

This poem originated in the fact that when on one occasion Browning was in a London bookstore, he overheard a stranger say that he had seen and spoken to Shelley. Years after this Browning wrote: "I have not yet forgotten how strangely the sight of one who had spoken with Shelley affected me."

It is one of the few poems in which Browning lays aside his dramatic masque and speaks in *propria persona*. The memory of his first discovery of Shelley while crossing a tract of life otherwise uninteresting, gives the time and place distinction by suggesting as did the eagle's feather that there are men who, while they inhabit the upper regions, at times drop celestial plumage in the path of ordinary mortals.

What Browning's idea of Shelley was in 1885 is seen in a letter which he wrote to Dr. Furnivall, quoted by Professor Dowden: "For myself I painfully contrast my notions of Shelley the *man* and Shelley, well, even the poet, with what they were sixty years ago."

ANDREA DEL SARTO

1855

Of the origin of this poem Professor Dowden says (quoting Mrs. Andrew Crosse): "When the Brownings were living in Florence, Kenyon had begged them to procure for him a copy of the portrait in the Pitti of Andrea del Sarto and his wife. Mr. Browning was unable to get the copy made with any promise of satisfaction, and so wrote the exquisite poem of *Andrea del Sarto* and sent it to Kenyon."

This poem is a contrast to *Fra Lippo Lippi* in that what Lippo yearns for is now attained in Italian art, and more, — faultless technique in painting the actual, — but at the expense of

Infinite passion and pain,
Of finite hearts that yearn.

In *Andrea*, Browning makes the attainment of the artist's ideal earthly love in the handsome and faithless *Lucrezia*, together with his attainment of perfection in technique, the cause of his ruin. *Andrea's* own dishonesty in dealing with others, especially his friend the king who had trusted him, his treatment of his parents, and complicity with his wife's immorality, were reasons enough why he could not reach the heaven of art granted to *Leonardo* and *Raphael*.

This is almost the only poem of Browning's in which there is not some one character to be admired: we neither admire nor pity the man and woman; we despise both.

This poem has been pronounced by artists of high authority "an autobiography of *Andrea*."

ll. 33-47. "You smile," etc. Mr. Stopford Brooke says: "No better sketch could be given of the sudden spiritual fashion in which great pictures are generated."

Mrs. Oliphant says of the days in 1529 when *Michael Angelo* was fortifying the city of *Florence*: "It is touching to find that they paused at the sight of the fresco painted recently by *Andrea del Sarto*, and spared the half-ruined walls for the sake of the picture, like true art-loving *Florentines*."

l. 120. "Nay, Love," etc. This implies that *Lucrezia* has been offended by what has just been said.

l. 146. "Paris lords." *Andrea* had been commissioned by *Francis I.* of *France* to purchase works of art for him, and had misused the funds entrusted to him to keep *Lucrezia* in luxury.

ll. 149-165. *Andrea* visited the *French* court at the invitation of the king, and had been honored by him.

l. 220. "That cousin." One of his wife's paramours has whistled to her.

OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE

1855

This vision of the campanile and what it suggested to the poet constitutes one of the most significant revelations of the spirit of great art to be found in literature. It is a recognition of the new life for art brought in through the fundamental truth of Christianity. The contrast of the idea of the physical perfection of the classic era with that of the spiritual aspiration of Christian art has repeated itself in history in various reforms in art,—noticeably that of *Wordsworth* in poetry, and *Turner* in painting.

Keats alludes to the decadence of the classic arts as follows :

The winds of heaven blew, the ocean roll'd
 Its gathering waves — ye felt it not. The blue
 Bared its eternal bosom, and the dew
 Of summer nights collected still to make
 The morning precious : beauty was awake — !
 Why were ye not awake ?

Wordsworth asserts the new spirit thus :

How does the meadow-flower its bloom unfold ?
 Because the lovely little flower is free
 Down to its root, and, in that freedom, bold ;
 And so the grandeur of the forest-tree
 Comes not by casting in a formal mould,
 But from its *own* divine vitality.

In reviewing the mundane fate of the great masters, Browning mildly chides Giotto for permitting such treatment of art by a secular age, and especially for not directing him to where he might find a coveted bit of his work. He concludes with the hope of a new day in the life of art for Italy, when what these great painters began will be appreciated and carried a step farther.

l. 15. "Bell-tower." The famous campanile. Cf. Mrs. Oliphant, *Makers of Florence ; The Cathedral Builders*.

Here where Giotto planted
 His campanile, like an unperplexed
 Question to Heaven !

Casa Guidi Windows.

l. 30. "Gift." "That first great gift the vital soul." Wordsworth. Cf. Tennyson, *Merlin and the Gleam*.

ll. 44-48. "Stands One." A graphic picture of the spirits of the wronged great watching the abuse of their work. The origin of the strong figure in line 45 was evidently from an experience Browning had in very early youth. Mrs. Orr says that his mother used to read to him from Croxall's fables, and that one of the stories was of a lion kicked to death by an ass. It affected him so painfully that he hid the book from his mother.

l. 81. Said by one who fears the criticism of the previous stanza. It gives the poet an opportunity to assert the claims of Greek classic art and to show its limitations. It was a stage, an important stage, in the development of art, and the world must learn to appreciate it as a preparation for the next great revelation of Christian art.

l. 135. "O." The reigning pope, Boniface VIII. or Benedict XI., sent a messenger into Tuscany for the best specimen procurable from each master. He came to Giotto, who gave him only the perfect O drawn with a turn of the hand as his elbow rested in his side to form a compass. As a result he was selected to go to Rome to adorn St. Peter's.

ll. 149-152. "Early Christian art, even by faultily presenting spiritual ideals not to be attained on earth but to be pursued through an immortal life, taught men to aspire." (E. Dowden.) Browning's intimate friend, Mr. W. W. Story, the American sculptor, says: "No perfect work was ever made, or ever will be made. Success is a relative term. It is not victory, but the battle that delights."

l. 236. "Tablet." The "Last Supper" which had been lost, but was afterwards found. Browning saw it when in Florence.

l. 260. "Casa Guidi." Mrs. Browning's poem inspired by the struggles in Italy.

l. 271. "Curt Tuscan." Dignified literary language of Italy.

l. 274. "issimo." Superlative.

l. 275. "To end," etc. Alluding to his own unfinished story — the Campanile:

Or call up him that left half told
The story of Cambuscan bold.

MILTON, *Il Penseroso*.

Milton of course has Chaucer in mind, who left the *Squier's Tale* in the *Canterbury Tales* incomplete.

l. 285. "God and the People." Browning and his wife were deeply interested in Italy's struggle for freedom in 1847-1848, but were discouraged at the fickleness of the people. They still hoped for what is expressed in this stanza, but their hope was a vain one.

SAUL

1855

Sections 1-9 were published in 1845; the remainder in 1855. The first version (Sections 1-9) was in short lines — three feet in one and two in the next. In the last revision the poet united the two in one strong line.

More than any other poet of modern times, Browning pays indirect compliment to his readers, for though he does not

frequent the highways of thought and action that most of us travel for the strange and unfrequented byways, he assumes that we are as familiar with the conditions there as he himself is. This is the main reason for the oft-repeated charge of obscurity, which is in reality no obscurity in the poet, but darkness in our own minds. Goethe said that the plainest of handwriting would be obscure by twilight.

One of the distinctive features of Browning's nature is a god-like sympathy with souls at the crisis of a struggle which to the superficial world seems failure. In this he is like the great poet who in the twelfth chapter of Hebrews sings the epic of failure.

In the study of the art of healing as revealed to the human soul, Browning has attained the highest rank, and nowhere does his art show itself more divinely than in his treatment of *Saul*. The subtlety of the various stages in the process of healing at the hands of David is a triumph of the artist. The young physician first ministers to the physical nature through those songs of "the wild joys of living;" then he voices those which appeal to the sense of pride in action, "motions and habitudes kingly;" and lastly, those which give the final revelation to the soul through the love of the singer, which would

Wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to enrich,

by which is revealed the Christ-nature in man. The poem is so simple, so sensuous, so impassioned, that it becomes the most inevitable of the poet's works. The teaching that sympathy is the law which unites God, man, and nature, and to which they respond, is made prophetic of the Messianic ideal of self-sacrifice.

O Saul, it shall be a Face like my face that receives thee.

The serenity, sweetness, and beauty of the closing scene where David returns to his simple task of tending his flocks, when all nature is alive with the new impulse and pronounces the benediction on his efforts, is not surpassed by anything in our literature.

Only in a few of Browning's longer poems do we find such sanity in distributing poetic values as appears in *Saul*. By a series of vivid and impassioned movements, we are led by natural degrees to the great illumination. The element of growth is revealed through these movements by a most vigorous and original manifestation of poetic complications

and resolutions, concluding in that picturesque and tranquil dawn when the voice of God in nature pronounced, "E'en so, it is so!" Truth and seriousness of subject Browning always has, but he often lacks beauty and felicity of form. In *Saul* the intellectual interest is rich, the descriptions brilliant, the passion intense, and the style has a sweetness, grace, and finish. Browning is less of an intellectual apologist here and more of a poet. Every detail of the oriental scene, picturing the life with nature, is made to contribute to the impressiveness of the theme, "a Messianic oratorio."

Mr. J. T. Nettleship says of *Saul*: "It is a noble illustration of the power of the prayer spirit of the Jewish people, which Christians may well follow."

l. 46. "Jerboa." It is interesting to note that at a very early age Browning made friends with the birds and beasts. He kept owls, monkeys, eagles, snakes, hedgehogs, and other creatures. His eye thus became very keen in observing.

"DE GUSTIBUS —"

1855

This poem reveals how thoroughly Italian in taste Browning was; for in it he good-naturedly contrasts himself with a friend who admires England. If we take Tennyson as the friend, we have an interesting picture, for Tennyson is as typically English in taste as Browning is Italian. If we take the conclusion here, "*de gustibus est non disputandum*," as Browning's ultimatum to the critics, we shall make a mistake, for he would never question the fact that, while there should be liberty in matters of taste, there must be such a thing as authority; he would affirm authority to rest with true genius itself, which reveals the universal.

HOLY CROSS DAY

1855

In *Old Pictures in Florence* Browning indulged in a playful humor; in this poem he uses satire not unlike that in *Hudibras* to great advantage against those Christians who would make followers of the Cross by a system of tyranny devilish in

all its nature. The poet is a draughtsman working with a burnt stick, and yet in its clear and expressive lines every feature is disclosed with the vividness of a Rembrandt or a Retzsch. In the realistic presentation of the motley crowd elbowing its way to the church in a masquerade of piety, in the piteous and pathetic undertone of revolt against the inhumanity of man culminating in that lurid line which flashes the sublime truth of the momentary scene upon us —

Men I helped to their sins, help me to their God,

Browning reveals a genuine Shakespearean humor; while in the refuge of the sufferer in meditation upon Rabbi Ben Ezra's *Song of Death*, he has a genuine Shakespearean pity for a people persecuted by this "devil's crew" of Christianity. Perhaps the highest dramatic touch is in the conclusion, where, through their faith in the Messiah, they call upon Christ to help them against their Christian tormentors.

Some critics have maintained that a subject so repulsive in its nature cannot be a proper subject for art, and perhaps the best statement of their case is to be found in Mr. Walter Bagehot's *Pure, Ornate, and Grotesque Art in English Poetry. Literary Studies*, vol. ii.

CLEON

1855

(First printed in pamphlet, privately, 1855.)

The best introduction to this great poem is that chapter in Professor Butcher's interesting book, *Some Aspects of the Greek Genius*, where he discusses *The Melancholy of the Greeks*. Professor Butcher says: "The first conscious sigh over the mortality of man that is found in Greek poetry is in the words spoken by Glaucus to Diomedes when the two warriors met in single combat, *Iliad*, vi, 146-9." The pathetic in Greek poetry is often not far from the sublime, when the sense of man's feebleness heightens his energy of will as with Cleon.

Browning lays the scene of this poem at a time in the Greco-Roman civilization when the feeling of the vanity of life had brought paralysis to creative effort, and in the two characters presented we have types of this period. In Greek art may be found anticipations in many ways of the great awakening which revealed itself in the sublime utterances of the Syrian Peasant, culminating in the Sermon on the Mount. So

the poet takes as his text the testimony of St. Paul, when invited to declare his message on Mars Hill, to the fact that many of the fundamental truths of Christianity were implicit in the Greek poets: "As certain of your own poets have said, for we also are his offspring." (Acts xvii. 28.) They were seeking the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him. Protus, the man of action, has achieved the fame and material success which men of his type strive for, while he has not neglected the culture of art and poetry nor the association with those men who had led lives of contemplation; but he has arrived at the period in life when he looks before and after, and pines for what is not, — the very completeness of his success brings pain, and so he turns to Cleon, the poet, artist, and philosopher, who has sought truth in a life of meditation, and asks if he has achieved what he most desired, in the activities of creation and appreciation of the things of beauty. Cleon's reply, written from the courtyard of his house in the sprinkled isles, reveals first of all (lines 1-30) the luxury of sensuous beauty in which a Greek of his period delighted, and in it is a compliment to King Protus in that he has appreciated Cleon's art enough to make such splendid material return for it. The various steps of the poem are clear and impressive; they reveal thoughts which have again and again sounded the deepest yearnings of the human soul. Cleon is sure that he has progressed, in that he has combined the individual excellences of his predecessors into one personality, and gets satisfaction from the thought that all has been done that was possible to do. And when Protus sees immortality in the work which Cleon has done, and only vanity in his own, it does not satisfy the poet; such Positivist ideals do not satisfy him in the decline of life, — death is real. The most human of all feelings is this revolt of Cleon to the cold philosophy which only intensifies his misery; it is the cry of the soul for personal immortality; and here we find the clear revelation of Browning's own ideal: that neither material possessions, honor and fame, nor intellectual and moral culture, avail to satisfy the soul when "most progress is most failure."

Cleon, being contemporary with St. Paul, has heard of his teaching, but with a characteristic Greek skepticism he dismisses the idea that any revelation of the destiny of man can come from a "barbarian Jew." Cf. Tennyson's treatment of this idea in *The Palace of Art* and *Wages*.

TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA

1855

In this poem we find a method, not uncommon in Browning, by which some minute and delicate observation of nature is made to lead up to a tender and touching mood of the soul. It has been susceptible of two types of interpretation; one critic finding in it "Browning's hunger for eternity in the midst of mortality, in which all the hunger for earthly love is burnt to dust;" and the other viewing it "as the expression of a love almost but not altogether complete."

The Campagna, with its restfulness and beauty, is a fitting scene for this poem of unrest and search for infinity. The suffering man seeks rest and satisfaction in finite love, and almost reaches his goal, only to be startled with the feeling that it will not satisfy, as the infinite is summoning him on. It is a graphic picture of one moved by a dual passion, — earthly love, and hunger for eternity in which alone is completeness.

The moral significance of the principle of love is the richest revelation to be found in Browning's poetry. Love everywhere, even in its most unenlightened manifestations, encumbered with its earthy vesture, has infinite attraction for him because of its possibilities in developing the human soul. Cf. *My Star*, for a revelation of love's complete development in his own life.

A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL

1855

The most prominent and important features of Greek education were comprised under Grammar and Rhetoric, — the one including the study of literature, especially poetry; the other, literary expression and forensic argument. At the Revival of Learning, when Greek had to be mastered as a foreign language, grammar came to mean a study of the structure and laws of language as a prerequisite to mastery of its literature. In such a period Browning lays the scene of this poem. "The glorious pedant," as Professor Dowden calls him, whose enthusiasm over little things has often been the subject of satire, is canonized by the poet, not for what he actually did, but for the spirit which lifted him out of the ruts of drudgery to the heights of enjoyment.

It is a glowing picture of the aspiration of the Revival of Learning, by which routine was softened and ennobled by a god-like idealism. Here, as so often, Browning the thinker outshines Browning the poet; the intellectual and imaginative elements are of the highest order, but the lyrical form is at times strained and awkward. The rhapsody of thought and feeling is not always revealed in a corresponding rhapsody of emotional language. Nothing could be finer than the harmony which exists between the aspects of nature and the conception of the spirit of this great devotee of the new Learning. As the sun shines clearer and the joyous procession climbs higher, leaving the vulgar thorpes each safe in its tether, the air grows fresher and more invigorating and the prospect more extended, — symbolic of the infinities of knowledge beyond the earth. It is full of the individuality of Browning himself, and it has a specific lesson for our time in that it suggests that righteousness may be found in the spirit of intense and laborious specialization. Mr. Stopford Brooke says: "I wish Browning had been buried on a mountain top, all Italy below him."

Among English poets of the first order, Milton stands alone in his absolute devotion to his art. No phase of artistic work tempts him from his path. Wordsworth at times yields to the seductions of his theory of simplicity; Tennyson occasionally loses the poet in his quest of finish; and Browning, in subtle thinking about his thoughts. When these artists are at their best, it is useless, if not immoral, to indulge in the petty gossip of the classroom as to which is the greatest.

“TRANSCENDENTALISM”

1855

Poets are sensitive creatures, and feel acutely the sting of criticism; consequently, somewhere in their writings one may find an *Ars Poetica* full of individuality. This poem is Browning's reply to his critics, who had accused him of too much "naked thought." Had he lived up to his creed as here revealed, thought more of song and less of subtle intellectual research, what an abundance of 'rose glory' we should have had! He would have been, as he often is, a veritable magician.

Prof. W. J. Courthope, in speaking of the exaggeration of the individual element in modern poetry and the neglect of the universal, says of Browning: "Should future generations be

less inclined than our own to surrender their imaginations to his guidance, he will not be able to appeal to them through that element of life which lies in the universal."

l. 22. Jacob Boehme.

l. 37. John of Halberstadt.

ONE WORD MORE

1855

This epilogue to his "fifty men and women" is Browning's *Epithalamium*,—his expression of joy, peace, and high endeavor which his marriage brought him; in it the poet "attains." It should be read with the similar revelations of domestic happiness of his two great contemporaries, Wordsworth and Tennyson, who owed quite as much of their success as poets to noble women as did Browning, albeit in a different way. They all reveal the power of the woman of their love to keep them true to a high ideal of art and life. See Wordsworth, "O dearer far than light and life are dear," and Tennyson, "Dear, near and true, no truer time itself," etc.

JAMES LEE'S WIFE

1864

(The original title was *James Lee*.)

Before *Men and Women* issued from the press in the fall of 1855, the Brownings went to Paris and spent the winter there. They returned to London in June, 1856, because of their anxiety for the health of their friend, John Kenyon. In the autumn they went to Florence. *Aurora Leigh*, dedicated to Kenyon, was published and at once won popular recognition; but the pleasure this brought was clouded because of Kenyon's death. He had always been a friend of those in need; he had given the Brownings a hundred pounds annually, and in his will he put them forever beyond anxiety in regard to worldly maintenance by leaving them £11,000.

It was in 1858 that Hawthorne and other Americans became acquainted with the Brownings, and it is from them that we get some of the most interesting and valuable information of their life in Florence.

Of his first meeting the Brownings at Casa Guidi, Hawthorne writes: "Really I do not see how Mr. Browning can suppose that he has an earthly wife. . . . She will flit away from him some day when he least thinks of it. She is a good and kind fairy, however, and sweetly disposed toward the human race, only remotely akin to it. It is wonderful to see how small she is, how pale her cheek, how bright and dark her eyes. There is not such another figure in the world. . . . I could not form any judgment about her age; it may range anywhere within the limits of human life or elfin life. . . . I am rather surprised that Browning's conversation should be so clear, and so much to the purpose at the moment, since his poetry can seldom proceed far without roaming into the high grass of latent meanings and obscure allusions."

l. 22. San Sisto. In Dresden . . . Foligno. In the Vatican.

ll. 23, 24. In the Pitti Palace . . . In the Louvre.

l. 57. Bice. Beatrice.

Mr. William Sharp says: "It is, strangely enough, from Americans that we have the best accounts of the Brownings in their life at Casa Guidi. From R. H. Stoddard, Bayard Taylor, Nathaniel Hawthorne, George Stillman Hillard, and W. W. Story." In this year they spent some time in Paris, where Browning's father was living. On returning to Florence the winter was found to be too severe for Mrs. Browning, and they went to Rome. From this time until 1861 they lived either in Rome or in Florence. Browning was now modelling in clay in the studio of his friend Story, but no diversion could drive away the feeling of anxiety for his wife's health. Suffering from a bronchial attack not considered serious, early in the morning of June 29, 1861, "while talking, jesting, and giving expression to her love in tenderest moods," says W. W. Story, she passed from him, at Casa Guidi. She was buried in the Protestant Cemetery at Florence, where now stands the beautiful memorial of her designed by Lord Leighton.

The municipality of Florence placed a tablet in the walls of Casa Guidi with the following from the poet Tommaseo:

Here lived and died Elizabeth Barrett Browning,
Who in her woman's heart reconciled the science of
Learning with the spirit of poetry, and made of her
Verse a golden ring between Italy and England.

Grateful Florence places this tablet. 1861.

Browning's nature was a strong one, but the loss of such associations as had glorified his life and art was well-nigh in-

supportable. "I shall grow still, I hope," he said, "but my root is taken." Special help came to him at this time from a generous and gifted American lady, Mrs. Blagden, who had been a friend of the family in Florence. In August he and his son went to Paris and spent two months with his father and sister. At this time Story wrote: "The home at Florence is broken up, and I have lost my best friend. . . . For three years now we've been always together. . . . All the last winter he worked with me daily for three hours in my studio." They then went to London, chiefly in order to give his son an English education. In his home at Warwick Crescent he lived in retirement and loneliness save for an occasional vacation in the Pyrenees or in Brittany, although hard at work on a new volume of his poems. Early in 1863 he abandoned his habit of seclusion, as being "morbid and unworthy," as Mr. Gosse says, "and began to seek recreation at dining-table, concert-hall, and places of refined entertainment," as means of escape for his restless energy. In 1864 the new volume, *Dramatis Personæ*, eighteen poems, was published. The interest of the poet here is in types of love, and problems of art and religion, as in *Men and Women*.

The first poem of this volume is *James Lee's Wife*. The landscape, forms, and colors which furnish the setting of the poem are those of the little hamlet on the coast of Brittany, where he visited in 1862-1863. Of the series of soliloquies, i-iv and ix are addressed to the husband, who is not present. "The first six stanzas of vi," says Professor Corson, "were written in Browning's twenty-third year and published in 1836 in the *Monthly Repository*, and entitled simply 'Lines.'" In a series of meditative lyrics Browning reveals the stages of disappointment from anxiety to final action through which the woman passes. Is her action true self-sacrifice, or self-interest? James Lee's story has not been told. Mrs. Orr says: "We learn from the two last monologues that she was a plain woman. This may throw some light on the situation."

DÏS ALITER VISUM

1864

In the mingling of elements Virgilian and Byronic in the title, Browning seems to reveal the fact that time, place, and circumstance, however heterogeneous they may seem to the average mind, assume a unity to him who views life as a

whole. The characters and incidents given in this poem are not on the whole such as one would think interesting for purposes of art; they become interesting only when viewed in relation to the poet's idea of time as related to eternity in the lives of men and women. Tennyson would have expanded the elements of this poem into a series full of incident, character, and action.

ABT VOGLER

1864

This is a companion piece to *The Grammarian's Funeral* and a necessary supplement to *A Toccata of Galuppi's*. It reveals a permanent pleasure instead of an ephemeral one. Thought and feeling are glorified by imagination in a noble, stately, and rapturous movement to the climax in the line, —

Therefore to whom turn I but to Thee, the ineffable Name?

which is the note of Browning's nature destined to sound through the ages to cheer and strengthen humanity. It then dies away in a cadence subtle, sweet, solemn, and restful.

Professor Dowden says: "Never were a ghostly troop of souls reanimated and incarnated into industrious life more actually than by Browning's verse. The poem touches the border-land where art and religion meet. . . . It is the song of triumph of devout old age."

In this poem we have the highest poetic mood of Browning; thought and feeling steal gently upon him as they did so often upon Wordsworth and Tennyson. He is usually too intellectually alert to be surprised by such imaginative moods. It illustrates what Mr. Edmund Gosse says of his escape in the volume of 1855 from the designation of "that unintelligible man who married a poet." There is no wilful eccentricity and interlunar darkness of style here . . . heights were scaled of melodious and luminous thought."

RABBI BEN EZRA

1864

In this poem, a natural supplement to *Cleon*, we have Hebrew optimism in its noblest manifestation. It is deeply suggestive that in this type of a "Happy warrior who wrought upon the

plan which pleased his boyish thought," and who "when the mortal mist was gathering drew his breath in confidence of Heaven's applause," Browning selected an aged Rabbi. It is not the first time that he has shown knowledge of and admiration for what was most characteristic in the nature of the Jew. Mr. Stopford Brooke says: "I do not know whether Browning had any Jewish blood in his body by descent, but he certainly had Jewish elements in his intellect, spirit, and character."

To the Rabbi life is a thing to be enjoyed to the utmost only when it is considered as a divine training for nobler functions in the world of the future, a fashioning of the vessel meet for the Master's use. Such a life is never to be judged merely by what's done, but rather by what's striven for. Satisfaction is in the struggle, even if actual material attainment be not reached; noble exercise of noble ideals is attainment. Tennyson touches this idea in *By an Evolutionist*, and elaborates it in that noble poem of faith and achievement, *In Memoriam*; Wordsworth, in the *Ode to Duty*, *Ode on Intimations of Immortality*, and *Character of the Happy Warrior*. In all of these death is only a call to start on that "adventure brave and new." "At no time," says Professor Dowden, "did Browning write verse which soars with a more steadfast and impassioned libration of wing."

A DEATH IN THE DESERT

1864

This *Apologia pro Fide sua* touches that sphere of modern theology which was so characteristic of Browning's age. It is so penetrated with noble emotion and illumined with lofty imagination that in spite of its abounding in subtle thought it will be read for its essential poetic power. That historical accuracy of detail in life and its environment which others travel far to find Browning reached here by a gift God gave him now and then. The grotto in the desert, where the beloved disciple lies dying, the rugged hills and sandy waste, the Bactrian waiting for the camels, and the little group of witnesses, are sketched with a picturesqueness, vividness, dignity, and simplicity which is of the highest art.

Those who would base faith in Christianity upon the testimony of mere facts, rather than upon the witness of the race

to the certainty of divine love and its power through humanity to transform the world, are not doing the highest service to mankind. Bishop Brooks once said that when Christianity returns to its original state it will be a children's religion. The first fourteen lines of Coleridge's *Poems of Sleep* is an expression of such childlike faith. The late Senator Hoar called these lines "the best statement of religious faith, and our relation to the great unseen mysteries, in all literature since the New Testament."

Cf. *The Witness to the Influence of Christ*, W. Boyd Carpenter, Bishop of Ripon.

ll. 1-12. This explanation of the parchment recording the last words of St. John purports to have been written by the writer, whose wife was a niece of Xanthus. Pamphylax and Xanthus with two others are watching the dying Apostle.

CONFESSIONS

1864

Like *A Flower's Name*, this poem reveals the delights which come through memory to many who are weary and heavy-laden with the world's work and worry, — delights that illumine the past and create hope for the future.

PROSPICE

1864

(First appeared in *Atlantic Monthly*, June, 1864.)

In *Rabbi Ben Ezra* death was a friend to be anticipated; here it is an enemy to be conquered. *By the Fireside*, *One Word More*, and *Prospice* are full of revelations of the poet's personal love: the first two, of his love in association with his wife; the last, written in the autumn following her death, is his heroic determination, through the memory of her love, to meet and conquer all the enemies of faith and hope in personal immortality. It is a trumpet-call to all who are wavering. It is as characteristic of Browning as *Crossing the Bar* is of Tennyson.

A FACE

1864

Professor Dowden says : " No poem in the volume of *Dramatis Personæ* is connected with pictorial art, unless it be the few lines entitled *A Face*, lines of which Emily Patmore, the poet's wife, was the subject, and written, as Browning seldom wrote, for the mere record of beauty. That 'little head of hers' is transferred to Browning's panel in the manner of an early Tuscan piece of ideal loveliness."

APPARENT FAILURE

1864

This poem, so characteristic of Browning's splendid optimism in the presence of human frailty — and wickedness, so called — reveals an outlook so broad and a feeling so catholic that those reformers who have always in hand

A broom

To rid the world of nuisances,

have rejected its conclusions with scorn. It is in harmony with Wordsworth's *Old Cumberland Beggar* —

'T is nature's law

That none, the meanest of created things,
Of forms created the most vile and brute,
The dullest or most noxious, should exist
Divorced from good.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

EPILOGUE

1864

The thought of this poem supplements that in *Death in the Desert*. It presents three stages in the history of religion : that of the Old Testament, with David as the representative ; that of nineteenth century skepticism, with Renan as spokesman ; and that of which Browning, and the great poets

of his time, prophesy, — a type of religion which recognizes God immanent in his universe.

Cf. John Fiske, *Through Nature to God*: "I often think, when working over my plants, of what Linnæus once said of the unfolding of a blossom: 'I saw God in His glory passing near me, and bowed my head in worship.'"

The great English scientist, Sir Oliver Lodge, recently said of the arrogance of certain scientists: "In the presence of a poet witnessing the cloud-glories of a sunset, who is constrained to ascribe this wealth and prodigality of beauty to the joy of the eternal being in his own existence, to an anticipation, as it were, of the developments which lie before the universe in which he is at work, tending toward an unimaginable perfection, it behooves the man of science to put his hand upon his mouth."

THIRD PERIOD, 1868-1889

AMPHIBIAN

PROLOGUE TO FIFINE AT THE FAIR

1872

Between 1865 and 1876 Browning lived in London, but made frequent visits to France, Normandy, and Scotland. The loss of his father, and of his sister-in-law, Miss Arabella Barrett, bore heavily upon him. Honor came to him from an increasing number of readers of his poetry. As so many were young men of Oxford and Cambridge, he wrote: "All my new cultivators are young men." He was made honorary Fellow of Balliol through his friendship with the great teacher Benjamin Jowett. In 1872 his life was again saddened by the death of his friend, Mrs. Blagden. All of this time he was busy at his work, for he published from 1868 to 1876 no less than nine poems, all of them of considerable length. *The Ring and the Book* contains over twenty-one thousand lines. Through *The Ring and the Book* his poetic genius gained full recognition, and henceforth his works had a ready sale. The poems of the early third period of his work were on classical subjects — studies often baffling in their subtle psychology — and sketches. Intellect was usurping the place of imagination.

This prologue to *Fifine* was written while he was at Pornic on the coast of Brittany, where he was enjoying the quieting

and refreshing sights and sounds of the sea. It reveals his dual nature, the physical and the spiritual, and that as man may leave the land and, "unable to fly, swims," so at times he may quit the sphere of the material and, "emancipate through passion," sport in the atmosphere of poetry. Stanza eighteen reveals what Browning did too often in these later years, — return too frequently to the world of scientific fact.

NATURAL MAGIC

1876

After the death of Mrs. Blagden, who had been so much to Browning and his son, Miss Ann Egerton-Smith, a woman of wealth and refinement, whom he had known in Florence, became an inmate of his home and an influence in his life.

In 1876 he published a volume of miscellaneous poetry characterized by much of his early vigor of imagination and delicacy of passion, but marred at times by a somewhat caustic wit aimed at his critics.

In *Natural Magic* and *Magical Nature*, the short love lyrics, the beauty is without any disfigurement and is its own excuse for being, compelling admiration. The first, a fairy tale of how a thing of beauty vanishes; the second, a revelation of how the same thing of beauty becomes a joy forever — no fading flower, but an imperishable gem.

HERVÉ RIEL

1876

This spirited ballad was written during Browning's visit to Le Croisic, a little town in Brittany, in 1867. It was first printed in the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1871, and the proceeds (£100) sent to the people of Paris, who were suffering from the results of the Franco-Prussian war. The facts regarding the Breton sailor as given by the poet are essentially historical, but had been forgotten until this poem recalled them. Records show that the holiday was for life. It is significant of the poet's sympathies that this dashing ballad of the sea, heroic in devotion to home and fatherland, should be in every detail of thought and feeling instinct with the soul of a Breton sailor. For a similar type of English sailors' heroism see Tennyson's *Revenge*.

EPILOGUE TO
PACCHIAROTTO, WITH OTHER POEMS

1876

In 1872 Browning dedicated a volume of his poems "To Alfred Tennyson. In poetry illustrious and consummate; in friendship noble and sincere." In the preface to that volume he paid his compliments to those who had complained that he was obscure, saying, "Nor do I apprehend any more charges of being wilfully obscure, unconsciously careless, or perversely harsh." About this time he wrote to a friend: "I can have little doubt that my writing has been in the main too hard for many I should have been pleased to communicate with; but I never designedly tried to puzzle people, as some of my critics have supposed. On the other hand, I never pretended to offer such literature as should be a substitute for a cigar or a game at dominoes to an idle man. So, perhaps, on the whole, I get my deserts and something over,—not a crowd, but a few I value more."

In Wordsworth's letter to Lady Beaumont we have a revelation of what Browning was experiencing. Wordsworth says: "Every great and original writer, in proportion as he is great and original, must himself create the taste by which he is to be relished; he must teach the art by which he is to be seen, and this must be the work *of time*."

In this Epilogue Browning is not so calm in his own defence, nor so thorough a reader of his own poetic art, as was Wordsworth in his letter to Lady Beaumont. He misses the point when he argues that sweetness and strength, beauty and truth, can be divorced in great poetry; his own poetry, where it is of the first order, refutes his teaching here. The allusion in the second line is to Mrs. Browning. Cf. Mrs. Browning's *Wine of Cyprus*.

LA SAISIAZ
(Savoyard for the Sun)

1878

In 1877 Browning made an attempt to translate the *Agamemnon* of Æschylus into English verse, but the result proved that his premises were wrong,—a verse translation "literal at

every cost ;” or that his genius was unequal to the task of translation from the Greek to the English.

La Saisiaz had its origin in events of this same year, when Browning, his sister, and Miss Egerton-Smith were spending a vacation at La Saisiaz (Salève) near Geneva. The natural beauty of the place, its repose, its wealth of prospect, refreshed and inspired him. He bathed twice every day in a mountain stream; he wrote, he read, he climbed the hills, and delighted in nature and the society of his two friends. But the holidays came to a tragic close in the sudden death of Miss Egerton-Smith while preparing for a climb up Salève. The old yearning of the soul in regard to the great question, “If a man die, shall he live again?” took possession of him and these movements of his mind and spirit, records of a solitary climb up Salève, are given to us in this poem, his *In Memoriam*.

The introductory movement of the poem reveals to us that he has lost none of his early power to detect the minutest details of the sights of nature; that he has still a quick response to her gentlest whisper. In Wordsworth’s greatest poems nature is viewed as the revelation of personality in harmony with man, to be communed with, loved, and adored; in Tennyson, nature is impersonal, merely the appropriate background or framework for his art; but in Browning nature is used for the purpose of teaching us to aspire to know what is above and beyond—the Infinite God.

The poem can hardly be called an argument; it is only a meditation. Its action is in the sphere of the subjective, like Wordsworth’s great *Ode*, and Tennyson’s *In Memoriam*. Emerson says: “I am a better believer, and all serious souls are better believers, in immortality than we can give grounds for. The real evidence is too subtle, or is higher than we can write down in propositions, and therefore Wordsworth’s *Ode* is the best modern essay on the subject.”

Tennyson says in *In Memoriam*:

If these brief lays, of sorrow born,
Were taken to be such as closed
Grave doubts and answers here proposed,
Then these were such as men might scorn.

And so with Browning. He writes not to refute or prove, not as a theist or agnostic, or Christian even, but rather as a man, to reveal what he himself has found to be true in a very large way for his own soul, in at least one great crisis of his life. There are no facts reviewed either of science or religion, as in

In Memoriam. What it may be worth to us he does not imply, beyond the fact that he hopes to interest us in what has interested him.

The stages in his meditation interest us, therefore, because of the nature of the subject and the character of the poet. These stages reveal deliberation, modesty, candor, and directness of an open mind — the method of Browning the poet and thinker. His line of procedure is a simple and familiar one: Our existence here is the result of blind force on the one hand or of conscious purpose on the other; and each one must decide this question for himself in the face of such evidence as he has. Browning at first doubts here; but finally nothing less than belief in the latter will satisfy the conditions as he finds them. Having satisfied himself upon this point, the next step is taken by viewing the present stage of man's development as an end in itself, or as a means to a higher attainment. He accepts the latter view as the only possible one in the premises; then all seems clear. Each act of life has a meaning because related to every other, and earth becomes "a pupil's place;" ignorance of the to-morrow is the only possible means of attaining, for absolute assurance would defeat the end for which we are here. This is no new conclusion on the part of the poet; every word he has written from the days of *Pauline* has implied or expressed this. His idea of life as a probation makes it inevitable that the *fact* of immortality should be impossible of attainment. In this apparent failure to attain lies the real success of human activity in faith and hope, "the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen." This satisfied the yearning soul of the poet; if it fails to satisfy us, he has nothing to say.

"May not our ignorance of the future life be providential? May it not be that, while we have enough of faith in the future life to enlarge our vision of human possibilities, we have not enough to prevent us from putting our best into the life that now is?" (Rev. F. B. Hornbrooke.)

l. 543. "Hope the arrowy," etc. Professor Dowden says: "This conclusion is in entire accordance with what Browning wrote two years previously to a lady who supposed herself to be dying, and who had thanked him for help derived from his poems. 'All the help I can offer, in my poor degree, is the assurance that I see ever *more* reason to hold by the same hope.' To Dr. Moncure Conway, who had lost a son, he wrote: 'If I, who cannot, would restore your son, He who can, will.'"

Mr. John Fiske, the distinguished historian and philosopher, held opinions upon this great subject quite like those of the poet. He says: "For my own part I believe in the immortality of the soul, not in the sense in which I accept the demonstrable truths of science, but as a supreme act of faith in the reasonableness of God's work. Such a belief, relating to regions quite inaccessible to experience, cannot of course be clothed in terms of definite and tangible meaning. For the experience which alone can give us such terms, we must await that solemn day which is to overtake us all."—*Destiny of Man*, p. 116.

Mr. Henry Drummond, after reviewing the processes of nature as revealed in the *Evolutionist*, writes: "Kindled even by this past, man may surely say, 'I shall arrive!' The further evolution must go on, Higher Kingdoms come,—first the blade, where we are to-day; then the ear, where we shall be to-morrow; then the full corn in the ear."—*The Ascent of Man*, chap. x.

ll. 550, etc. Looking down upon Geneva, Browning associates with the place some famous men who did a part of their work there. Each of these men held opinions which conservative thinkers called heretical. Rousseau, who led the revolt against the religion and philosophy of his time; Diodati, who was expelled from Italy because of his religious views, and taught Hebrew in Geneva (he was the uncle of Charles Diodati, the young friend of Milton); Byron, who wrote his *Prisoner of Chillon* at Ouchy by the lake; Voltaire, who built a church at Ferney with the inscription "*Deo erexit Voltaire*;" Gibbon, who wrote a part of his great history at Lausanne: all of these Browning believed helped to pass on the torch of truth, because they

At least believed in Soul, were very sure of God.

l. 580. "Makistos." Alluding probably to the town from whose watch-tower the beacon flashed the news of the capture of Troy by the Greeks, as in *Agamemnon*:

So as on high to skim the broad sea's back
The stalwart fire rejoicing went its way;
The pine-wood, like a sun, sent forth its light,
Of golden radiance to Makistos' watch.

In a letter written soon after the death of Mr. W. W. Story's little son, Browning wrote: "I can't look on the earth side of death. When I look deathward, I look over death and upward, or I can't look that way at all."

THE TWO POETS OF CROISIC

1878

EPILOGUE

After the death of his wife, Browning did not return to Italy until the fall of 1878, from which time until his death he spent a part of each year at Venice or Asolo.

The *Two Poets of Croisic* was written in London soon after *La Saisiaz*. The only part of the poem which is in Browning's best vein is the *Epilogue*, in which he pays a delicate compliment to those women who by their love have added that "treble" to his otherwise "sombre drone."

PHEIDIPPIDES

1879

In 1879 Browning published the first series of *Dramatic Idyls*. While he is interested mainly in the Epic of Thought, which yields a philosophy of life, he often has the genuine Homeric delight in the Epic of Action, which attracts us by pictures of noble personalities. In Hervé Riel and Pheidippides, heroic idyls of different times and nations, he touches those feelings which respond to the folk-lore of all peoples. He gives us the riches of ballad literature,—a natural, as contrasted with a literary poetry.

This idyl of heroic devotion is based on Greek legendary history as given by Herodotus (Book VI) and others. It falls naturally into three parts. The first reveals how the Athenian athlete Pheidippides ran two days and two nights to reach Sparta and implore her aid against the Persians; when the Spartans delayed answer, and at last replied that they could not go to war while the moon was not yet at full, the hero started back, calling upon the gods, and while passing Parnassus at the top of his speed he saw Pan and heard the voice commanding him to halt. The god asks why Athens does not follow him, and commands the runner to say that he will nevertheless aid them, giving as a token a sprig of fennel. Pheidippides then flew to Athens with the shout, "Praise Pan, we stand no more in danger!" The second part introduces Miltiades, asking what reward Pan promised him. The youth replies, "No vulgar

reward," only release from his toil and union with the girl he loved, the founding of a house in Athens. The third part, revealing the pathos and power of the old story, shows how the youth fought at Marathon, and, when victory had been won, throwing down his shield, he ran to the Acropolis and shouted *χαίρετε, νικῶμεν*, "Rejoice, we conquer!" and fell dead in exultant joy,—the reward of Pan for well doing. This is another illustration of Browning's "apparent failure" which is highest success; in this respect Browning's narrative ballads differ from the old folk-ballads, which never reach a climax of passion; the feeling is distributed throughout. Cf. Mrs. Browning's *The Dead Pan*.

Mrs. Orr calls attention to the metre here, which the poet created as specially fit for such a poem.

MULÉYKEH

1880

In 1880 Browning made the acquaintance of an American lady, Mrs. Arthur Bronson, who was living at Asolo. Through her generous hospitality and ready sympathy, she became associated with the remaining years of his life. In this year he published the second series of *Dramatic Idyls*.

In *Muléykeh*, a pathetic idyl of the East, Browning makes central a characteristic feature of oriental character,—the affection of man for his noble associate, the horse. In *How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix*, this is merely suggested. Such a poem as this, full of action and passion, would seem naturally to belong to the period of youth rather than to that of age. Here Browning reveals his power "to recapture the first fine careless rapture." The pathetic close, as Professor Dowden says, "shows that to perfect love, pride in the supremacy of the beloved is more than possession."

Cf. Kipling's *The Ballad of East and West*.

EPILOGUE TO DRAMATIC IDYLS

This poem is of interest as revealing Browning's theory of contrasts between ephemeral poetry and that which endures. The same is shown in Wordsworth's definition of poetry as "Emotion recollected in tranquillity," and Tennyson's —

I think not much of yours or mine,
I hear the roll of the ages.

WANTING IS — WHAT? ✓

1883

In 1881 the English Browning Society was established and gave new impetus to the increasing interest in his life and work. To it we owe much that is interesting and valuable. To Browning himself, as to some others, at first it seemed somewhat excessive in its enthusiasm, for he wrote: "That there is a grotesque side to the thing is certain. The Browning Society, I need not say, as well as Browning himself, is a fair game for criticism. . . . I had no more to do with founding it than a babe unborn." That he appreciated the origin and purpose of the society is certain.

In 1883 he published the volume *Jocoseria*, "grave and gay." The little poem, *Wanting is — What?* which stood first in the volume, reveals in terse and rugged form the power and potency of love — the Christ spirit — to complete incompleteness, which is his message so frequently in longer poems. It is related to his work much as Wordsworth's "My heart leaps up" is to his.

NEVER THE TIME AND THE PLACE

1883

Some think this poem is in remembrance of his wife, while others consider it purely imaginative; at any rate, it is a delightful bit of work, which should be read with *By the Fireside*. It is full of that subtle and pervasive power which conquers all obstacles by its lovely idealism, as did his early love for Miss Barrett while beating its wings against the cage of adverse circumstances.

FERISHTAH'S FANCIES

EPILOGUE

1884

In 1884, owing to the ill-health of his sister, Browning did not travel much, but remained at the charming villa of an American friend, Mrs. Bloomfield Moore, at St. Moritz.

In this "delicious mountain air," he writes, "my sister is absolutely herself again; I was hardly in want of such doctoring."

He published this year *Ferishtah's Fancies*, — a series of poems under this fanciful Persian title which reveal that a young man's heart still beats in his breast, but to the rhythm of an old man's wisdom.

The note here is —

'T is life, not death, for which we pant;
More life and fuller that we want,

and this is heard most clearly in the *Epilogue*. None of the great problems of life can be settled by mere intellect; until the halo of individual passion envelops, warms, and stimulates them, they fail to move men and women to noble action.

Here he builds upon the plan that pleased his boyish thought, and the result is the essential Browning.

ASOLANDO

PROLOGUE

1889

From 1884 to 1889 Browning's life was quiet and uneventful, although full of interest; there was little searching, but much rest and peace in the enjoyment of those truths of the heart which, once wakened, perish never. There was a sweetness and graciousness in his old age born of serenity and the assurance that he had attained, not to the very things for which he had sought, but to something infinitely higher, that

Through love, through hope, and faith's transcendent dower,
We feel that we are greater than we knew.

"Love, honor, troops of friends," came to him, and he acknowledged them all with a full heart.

He spent a part of almost every year in travel, mostly in Italy, and when in 1885 his son visited there, for the first time since childhood, he thought of securing a haven of rest from the storms of age, and negotiated for the Palazzo Manzoni, which he considered the loveliest house in Venice. When the bargain was about to be closed, he found to his great disappointment that the foundations were not sound, and the cherished hope had to be abandoned.

In 1887 he published a volume, *Parleyings with Certain People*, which revealed that he still loved the intellectual gymnastics of his middle life. While the subjects are varied, only here and there is to be found the fascinating lyrical cry, or any descriptive beauty, and it is evident, as Mr. Stopford Brooke says, that "imagination such as belongs to a poet has deserted Browning."

It was in this year that he changed his London residence from Warwick Crescent to De Vere Gardens. In Italy he and his sister were guests of Mrs. Bronson in Venice. In 1888 his son, soon after his marriage, acquired the Palazzo Rezzonico, on the Grand Canal, and there he found a "corner for his old age." In the spring of 1889 he was in England, but returned to Italy in July. He was delighted to visit Asolo, fragrant with the memory of Pippa's songs, and said to Mrs. Bronson: "I was right to fall in love with the place fifty years ago, was I not?" He even planned to purchase a house there, where he might spend his summers, enjoying the life with nature. "It shall have a tower," he said, "whence I can see Venice at every hour of the day, and I shall call it Pippa's Tower." On his return to Venice in November, full of plans for the future, he began to have some discomfort from shortness of breath, which interfered with vigorous exercise; and, having taken cold, physicians perceived the gravity of the situation. He had already arranged for a new volume of his poems, *Asolando*, to be brought out in England, and on the evening of December 12, as he lay in bed, he heard the great bell of San Marco strike ten and asked if there were any news of the volume. His son read him a telegram telling that it was that day published, and of the great prospects of its sale. The aged poet smiled and said, "How gratifying!" and passed away.

"Browning had said that he wished to be buried where he died," says Mrs. Orr: "if in England, with his mother; if in France, with his father; if in Italy, with his wife." But Dean Stanley offered a grave in the old Abbey, and the offer was accepted, partly because the cemetery at Florence in which his wife was buried was closed. A private service was held in the Palazzo Rezzonico, and then the coffin was borne to the chapel on the island of San Michele. Mr. William Sharp says: "Venice has never in modern times afforded a more impressive sight than those craped processional gondolas following the high flower-strewn funeral barge through the thronged waterways and out across the lagoon to the desolate Isle of the Dead." Thence the body was taken to De Vere

Gardens; and on the last day of the year, amid a throng of mourners of all classes, to the music of Mrs. Browning's "He giveth his beloved sleep," it was laid at rest in Westminster Abbey.

The city of Venice affixed a memorial tablet to the Rezzonico Palace with the following inscription :

A
ROBERTO BROWNING
MORTO EN QUESTO PALAZZO
Il 12 Dicembre 1889
VENEZIE

POSE
"Open my heart and you will see
Graved inside it, 'Italy.'"

Asolo also placed a tablet on the house which Browning had occupied there.

Asolando was dedicated "To Mrs. Arthur Bronson. To whom but you, dear Friend, should I dedicate verses — some few written, all of them supervised, in the comfort of your presence."

The volume reveals the sights and sounds, the joyous reveries and noble emotions, his vespers on that evening of Extraordinary Beauty and Splendor — his closing years.

But 't is endued with power to stay,
And sanctify one closing day,
That frail mortality may see —
What is ? — ah no, but what *can* be.

Surely,

The sunrise
Well warranted our faith in this full noon.

The *Prologue* sounds the note of Wordsworth in the great *Ode*. He thinks of that hour of splendor in the grass and beauty in the flower, when he first visited Asolo; and feels that there hath passed away a glory from the earth. But in the poems which follow he reveals

Those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
Are yet a master light of all our seeing.

And in the noble *Epilogue* he is clear and strong in the determination that he

Will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind;
In the primal sympathy
Which, having been, must ever be:
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death,
In the years that bring the philosophic mind.

In his interesting essay, *Browning in Westminster Abbey*, Mr. Henry James writes: "A good many oddities and a good many great writers have been entombed in the Abbey; but none of the odd ones have been so great, and none of the great ones so odd. . . . His voice sounds loudest, and also clearest, for the things that, as a race, we like best,—the fascination of faith, the acceptance of life, the respect for its mysteries, the endurance of its changes, the vitality of the will, the validity of character, the beauty of action, the seriousness, above all, of the great human passion."

Mr. C. H. Herford says: "Browning's poetry is one of the most potent of the influences which in the nineteenth century helped to break down the shallow and mischievous distinction between the 'sacred' and the 'secular,' and to set in its place the profounder division between man enslaved by apathy, routine, and mechanical morality, and man lifted by the law of love into a service which is perfect freedom, into an approximation to God which is only the fullest realization of humanity."

REFERENCES

BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL

- ALEXANDER, W. H. Introduction to the Poetry of Robert Browning.
- BAGEHOT, W. Literary Studies. Vol. II. Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning.
- BERDOE, E. Browning's Message to his Time.
— The Browning Cyclopedia.
- BIRRELL, A. Essays and Addresses. Robert Browning.
— Obiter Dicta. First Series. On the Alleged Obscurity of Mr. Browning's Poetry.
- BRONSON, Mrs. A. Browning in a Solo. Century Magazine. 1900.
— Browning in Venice. Century Magazine. 1900.
- BROWNING, R., and Elizabeth Barrett. Letters.
- BROWNING SOCIETY PAPERS. Boston.
- BROWNING SOCIETY PAPERS. London.
- BURT, M. E. Browning's Women.
- CHESTERTON, G. K. Robert Browning. (English Men of Letters.)
- COOKE, G. W. Poets and Problems.
- CORSON, H. Introduction to the Study of Robert Browning's Poetry.
- DAWSON, W. J. Makers of Modern English. Robert Browning.
- DOWDEN, E. Studies in Literature. Mr. Browning and Mr. Tennyson.
— Robert Browning.
- FOTHERINGHAM, J. Studies in the Poetry of Robert Browning.
- GOSSE, E. Critical Kit-Kats. The Sonnets from the Portuguese.
— Robert Browning Personalia.
- HAWTHORNE, N. Italian Note Books.
- HERFORD, C. H. Robert Browning. (Modern Writers.)
- HUTTON, R. H. Literary Essays. Mr. Browning.
- JAMES, H. William Wetmore Story and his friends.

- JONES, H. Browning as a Religious and Philosophical Teacher.
- NETTLESHIP, J. T. Essays on Browning's Poetry.
- NOEL, R. Essays on Poetry and Poets. Robert Browning.
- ORR, Mrs. S. Hand Book to Robert Browning's Works.
— Robert Browning, Life and Letters.
- RITCHIE, Mrs. ANNE THACKERAY. Records of Tennyson, Ruskin, and Browning.
- SCUDDER, Miss V. The Life of the Spirit in the Modern English Poets.
- SHARP, W. Robert Browning. (Great Writers Series.)
- STEDMAN, E. C. Victorian Poets.
- STEPHEN, L. Studies of a Biographer. Vol. III. The Browning Letters.
- STORY, W. W. Conversations in a Studio.
- SYMONS, A. Introduction to the Study of Robert Browning.
- WISE, T. J. Bibliography of Browning's Poetry.

INDEX TO POEMS

	PAGE
ABT VOGLER	240
Amphibian	276
Andrea del Sarto	164
Any Wife to Any Husband	125
Apparent Failure	271
Asolando, Prologue to	340
" Epilogue to	344
BISHOP, The, Orders his Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church	55
Boot and Saddle	26
Boy, The, and the Angel	84
By the Fireside	118
CAMPAGNA, Two in the	210
Cavalier Tunes	25
"Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came"	141
Cleon	201
Confessions	268
Cristina	39
Croisic, The Two Poets of, Epilogue to	322
"DE GUSTIBUS—"	195
Death in the Desert, A	251
Dûs Aliter Visum ; or, Le Byron de nos Jours	235
Dramatic Idyls, Second Series, Epilogue to	337
Dramatis Personæ, Epilogue to	273
Duchess, My Last	27
Duchess, The Flight of the	61
EARTH'S Immortalities	84
Epistle, An, containing the Strange Medical Experience of Karshish, the Arab Physician	130
Evelyn Hope	99
FACE, A	270
Failure, Apparent	271
Fame	84

	PAGE
Ferishtah's Fancies, Epilogue to	338
Fifine at the Fair, Prologue to	276
Flight of the Duchess, The	61
Florence, Old Pictures in	171
Flower's Name, The	58
Fra Lippo Lippi	105
French Camp, Incident of the	28
GALUPPI'S, A Toccata of	115
Garden Fancies	58
"Ghent to Aix, How they brought the Good News from "	49
Girl, A Pearl, a	343
Give a Rouse	26
Glove, The	87
Grammarians's Funeral, A	212
HERVÉ RIEL	279
Holy-Cross Day	196
Home Thoughts, from Abroad	54
Home Thoughts, from the Sea	55
How it Strikes a Contemporary	156
"How they brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix "	49
INCIDENT of the French Camp	28
Instans Tyrannus	138
JAMES LEE'S Wife	224
LA SAISIAZ	291
Last Duchess, My	27
Last Ride Together, The	159
Lippo Lippi, Fra	105
Lost Leader, The	53
Love Among the Ruins	92
Lovers' Quarrel, A	94
MAGICAL Nature	279
Marching Along	25
Memorabilia	163
Misconceptions	217
Mulýkeh	331
My Last Duchess	27
My Star	138
NATURAL Magic	278
Never the Time and the Place	338

	PAGE
OLD Pictures in Florence	171
One Word More. To E. B. B.	218
PACCHIAROTTO, and how he Worked in Distemper,	
Epilogue to	284
Paracelsus, Selections from	7
Patriot, The — An Old Story	162
Pauline, Selections from	1
Pearl, a Girl, A	343
Pheidippides	325
Pictor Ignotus	51
Pictures, Old, in Florence	171
Pied Piper of Hamelin, The — A Child's Story	41
Pippa Passes, Selections from	20
Poetics	342
Prospice	269
QUARREL, A Lovers'	94
RABBI BEN EZRA	244
Respectability	147
SAISIAZ, La	291
Saul	179
Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister	30
Speculative	343
Star, My	138
Statue, The, and the Bust	148
Summum Bonum	342
TOCCATA of Galuppi's, A	115
"Transcendentalism; A Poem in Twelve Books"	216
Two in the Campagna	210
Two Poets of Croisic, The Epilogue	322
Tyrannus, Instans	138
UP at a Villa — Down in the City	101
VOGLER, Abt	240
WANTING is — What?	337
Waring	32
Wife, Any, to Any Husband	125

INDEX TO FIRST LINES

	PAGE
A KING lived long ago	21
A simple ring with a single stone	343
Ah, did you once see Shelley plain	163
Ah, Love, but a day	224
All I can say is — I saw it!	278
All service ranks the same with God	20
All that I know	138
All the breath and the bloom of the year in the bag of one bee	342
“As like as a Hand to another Hand!”	231
At the midnight in the silence of the sleep-time	344
BEAUTIFUL Evelyn Hope is dead!	99
Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!	26
But do not let us quarrel any more	164
CLEON the poet (from the sprinkled isles	201
DARED and done: at last I stand upon the summit	292
Dear, had the world in its caprice	147
FEAR death? — to feel the fog in my throat	269
Fee, faw, fum! bubble and squeak!	197
First I salute this soil of the blessed, river and rock!	325
Flower — I never fancied, jewel — I profess you!	279
GIVE her but a least excuse to love me!	20
Good, to forgive	291
Grow old along with me!	244
Gr-r-r— there, go, my heart's abhorrence!	30
HAD I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare	101
Hamelin Town's in Brunswick	41
Heap cassia, sandal-buds, and stripes	12
“Heigho,” yawned one day King Francis	87
Here's the garden she walked across	58
How well I know what I mean to do	118
I AM poor brother Lippo, by your leave!	105
I could have painted pictures like that youth's	51
I leaned on the turf	227
I only knew one poet in my life	156

	PAGE
I said — Then, dearest, since 't is so	159
I sprang to the stirrup, and Joris, and he	49
I will be quiet and talk with you	226
I wonder do you feel to-day	210
If a stranger passed the tent of Hóseyñ, he cried "A churl's!"	331
If one could have that little head of hers	270
Is all our fire of shipwreck wood	224
It was roses, roses, all the way	162
 JUST for a handful of silver he left us	 53
 KARSHISH, the picker-up of learning's crumbs	 130
Kentish Sir Byng stood for his King	25
King Charles, and who'll do him right now?	26
 LET us begin and carry up this corpse	 212
 MORNING, evening, noon and night	 84
My first thought was, he lied in every word	141
My love, this is the bitterest, that thou	125
 NEVER the time and the place	 338
Nobly, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the Northwest died away	55
No, for I'll save it! Seven years since	271
 OF the million or two, more or less	 138
Oh, Galuppi, Baldassarò, this is very sad to find	115
Oh, good gigantic smile o' the brown old earth	231
Oh, Love — no, Love! All the noise below, Love	338
Oh, to be in England	54
Oh, what a dawn of day!	94
On the first of the Feast of Feasts	273
On the sea and at the Hogue, sixteen hundred ninety-two	279
Others may need new life in Heaven	343
Over-head the tree-tops meet	22
 SAID Abner, "At last thou art come! Ere I tell, ere thou speak	 179
See, as the prettiest graves will do in time	84
She should never have looked at me	39
"So say the foolish!" Say the foolish so, Love?	342
Still ailing, Wind? Wilt be appeased or no?	228
Stop, let me have the truth of that!	235
Stop playing, poet! May a brother speak?	216
[Supposed of Pamphylax the Antiochene	251
 THAT's my last Duchess painted on the wall	 27
The fancy I had to-day	276
The morn when first it thunders in March	171

	PAGE
" The Poet's age is sad : for why?	340
" The poets pour us wine — "	284
The swallow has set her six young on the rail	225
The year 's at the spring	20
There is nothing to remember in me	234
There 's a palace in Florence, the world knows well	148
There they are, my fifty men and women	218
This is a spray the Bird clung to	217
Thus the Mayne glideth	12
" Touch him ne'er so lightly, into song he broke	337
 VANITY, saith the preacher, vanity !	 55
 WANTING is — what?	 337
What a pretty tale you told me	322
What is he buzzing in my ears?	268
What 's become of Waring	32
Where the quiet-coloured end of evening smiles	92
Would that the structure brave, the manifold music I build	240
 You know, we French stormed Ratisbon	 28
Your ghost will walk, you lover of trees	195
You 're my friend	61

OCT 9 1905

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 003 085 890 6

