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PAULINE.



*Of this book*

*Four hundred copies have been printed.*



# PAULINE;

A FRAGMENT OF A CONFESSION.

BY

ROBERT BROWNING.

A REPRINT OF THE ORIGINAL EDITION OF 1833.

EDITED

BY THOMAS J. WISE.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY RICHARD CLAY AND SONS.

1886.

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M. W.

CC



PREFATORY NOTE.



## PREFATORY NOTE.

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So long ago as 1833 was first published the little volume of which the present is a close page-for-page reprint. The poet was then in his twenty-first year, and *Pauline* was—as ‘all the world’ now knows—his maiden work. This fact alone would be a sufficient reason to adduce in justification of the production to-day of a ‘fac-simile’ reprint of it. But considering also that the little volume has now become so scarce that very few of the numerous collectors of Browning *Ana* can ever hope to possess a copy, the need for its reproduction is beyond question. Of course the poem is to be found in Mr. Browning’s collected Works (vol. i. pp. 1–41), where all who will may read it; but to myself, and doubtless to many of my fellow-members of the Browning Society, there is a sentiment attaching to the very form in which a book of this description first appeared which is entirely

wanting if the same work is perused in another dress ; and therefore, failing the original, we are only too glad of the opportunity of providing ourselves with a good likeness of it. It is in this sentiment that the true book-lover finds his pleasure, and not in the mere massing together of many volumes, simply because they are 'curious' or 'scarce,' as persons who are not collectors frequently suppose.

*Pauline* is a large old-fashioned duodecimo volume of three sheets, its pages measuring—when 'uncut'— $7\frac{3}{4} \times 4\frac{7}{8}$  inches. In all respects save the paper, which it has been found absolutely impossible to match exactly, the present reprint may be considered a very good and precise representation of it.

When inserting the poem in his collected Works, Mr. Browning recast entirely the whole of the punctuation, a change which rendered clear and simple several passages which had before seemed somewhat involved. The minute and careful manner in which this was done will be readily seen if a close comparison between the two versions be made, for the variations in the pointing number at least two or three in every line. Beyond the correction of one or two printers' errors, however,

the text was allowed to remain almost intact, only two fresh readings being introduced. The first of these is on page 30, where the asterisks are removed, and their place supplied by the following :—

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

The second change will be found on page 33, where the last line (“ Well I remember \* \* \* \*”) is quietly dropped.

It is from Mr. Browning’s own copy of the original edition of *Pauline* that this reprint has been executed, and I have to return to him my warmest thanks for his ready kindness in lending us the little book. In addition to this, the gratitude of every reader is due to him for his prompt and courteous consent to the volume being reproduced at all.

THOMAS J. WISE.



# PAULINE;

Λ

## FRAGMENT OF A CONFESSION.

Plus ne suis ce que j'ai été,  
Et ne le sçaurois jamais être.

MAROT.

LONDON:  
SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, CONDUIT STREET.  
1833.

LONDON :

IBOTSON AND PALMER, PRINTERS, SAVOY STREET, STRAND.

NON dubito, quin titulus libri nostri raritate suâ quamplurimos alliciat ad legendum: inter quos nonnulli obliquæ opinionis, mente languidi, multi etiam maligni, et in ingenium nostrum ingrati accedent, qui temerariâ suâ ignorantîâ, vix conspecto titulo clamabunt: Nos vetita docere, hæresium semina jacere: piis auribus offenculo, præclaris ingeniis scandalo esse: . . . . adeò conscientîæ suæ consulentes, ut nec Apollo, nec Musæ omnes, neque Angelus de cœlo me ab illorum execratione vindicare queant: quibus et ego nunc consulo, ne scripta nostra legant, nec intelligant, nec meminerint: nam noxia sunt, venenosa sunt: Acherontis ostium est in hoc libro, lapides loquitur, caveant, ne cerebrum illis excutiat. Vos autem, qui æquâ mente ad legendum venitis, si tantam prudentiæ discretionem adhibueritis, quantam in melle legendo apes, jam securi legite. Puto namque vos et utilitatis haud parùm et voluptatis plurimùm accepturos. Quod si qua repereritis, quæ vobis non placeant, mittite illa, nec utimini. NAM ET EGO VOBIS ILLA NON PROBO, SED NARRO. Cætera tamen propterea non respuite . . . . . Ideo, si quid liberius dictum sit, ignoscite adolescentiæ nostræ, qui minor quam adolescens hoc opus composui.—*H. Cor Agrippa, De Occult. Phil.*

*London, January, 1833.*

*V. A. XX.*



## PAULINE.

---

PAULINE, mine own, bend o'er me—thy soft breast  
Shall pant to mine—bend o'er me—thy sweet eyes,  
And loosened hair, and breathing lips, and arms  
Drawing me to thee—these build up a screen  
To shut me in with thee, and from all fear,  
So that I might unlock the sleepless brood  
Of fancies from my soul, their lurking place,  
Nor doubt that each would pass, ne'er to return

To one so watched, so loved, and so secured.  
But what can guard thee but thy naked love ?  
Ah, dearest ! whoso sucks a poisoned wound  
Envenoms his own veins,—thou art so good,  
So calm—if thou should'st wear a brow less light  
For some wild thought which, but for me, were kept  
From out thy soul, as from a sacred star.  
Yet till I have unlocked them it were vain  
To hope to sing ; some woe would light on me ;  
Nature would point at one, whose quivering lip  
Was bathed in her enchantments—whose brow burned  
Beneath the crown, to which her secrets knelt ;  
Who learned the spell which can call up the dead,  
And then departed, smiling like a fiend  
Who has deceived God. If such one should seek  
Again her altars, and stand robed and crowned  
Amid the faithful : sad confession first,

Remorse and pardon, and old claims renewed,  
Ere I can be—as I shall be no more.

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

Thou lovest me—the past is in its grave,  
Tho' its ghost haunts us—still this much is ours,

To cast away restraint, lest a worse thing  
Wait for us in the darkness. Thou lovest me,  
And thou art to receive not love, but faith,  
For which thou wilt be mine, and smile, and take  
All shapes, and shames, and veil without a fear  
That form which music follows like a slave ;  
And I look to thee, and I trust in thee,  
As in a Northern night one looks alway  
Unto the East for morn, and spring and joy.  
Thou seest then my aimless, hopeless state,  
And resting on some few old feelings, won  
Back by thy beauty, would'st that I essay  
The task, which was to me what now thou art :  
And why should I conceal one weakness more ?

Thou wilt remember one warm morn, when Winter  
Crept aged from the earth, and Spring's first breath

Blew soft from the moist hills—the 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 not a deep shame  
Lurked beneath smiles and careless words, which  
sought

To hide it—till they wandered and were mute ;  
As we stood listening on a sunny mound  
To the wind murmuring in the damp copse,  
Like heavy breathings of some hidden thing  
Betrayed by sleep—until the feeling rushed  
That I was low indeed, yet not so low  
As to endure the calmness of thine eyes ;  
And so I told thee all, while the cool breast

I leaned on altered not its quiet beating ;  
And long ere words, like a hurt bird's complaint,  
Bade me look up and be what I had been,  
I felt despair could never live by thee.  
Thou wilt remember :—thou art not more dear  
Than song was once to me ; and I ne'er sung  
But as one entering bright halls, where all  
Will rise and shout for him. Sure I must own  
That I am fallen—having chosen gifts  
Distinct from theirs—that I am sad—and fain  
Would give up all to be but where I was ;  
Not high as I had been, if faithful found—  
But low and weak, yet full of hope, and sure  
Of goodness as of life—that I would lose  
All this gay mastery of mind, to sit  
Once more with them, trusting in truth and love,  
And with an aim—not being what I am.

Oh, Pauline ! I am ruined ! who believed  
That tho' my soul had floated from its sphere  
Of wide dominion into the dim orb  
Of self—that it was strong and free as ever :—  
It has conformed itself to that dim orb,  
Reflecting all its shades and shapes, and now  
Must stay where it alone can be adored.  
I have felt this in dreams—in dreams in which  
I seemed the fate from which I fled ; I felt  
A strange delight in causing my decay ;  
I was a fiend, in darkness chained for ever  
Within some ocean-cave ; and ages rolled,  
Till thro' the cleft rock, like a moonbeam, came  
A white swan to remain with me ; and ages  
Rolled, yet I tired not of my first joy  
In gazing on the peace of its pure wings.  
And then I said, “ It is most fair to me,

“ Yet its soft wings must sure have suffered change  
“ From the thick darkness—sure its eyes are dim—  
“ Its silver pinions must be cramped and numbed  
“ With sleeping ages here ; it cannot leave me,  
“ For it would seem, in light, beside its kind,  
“ Withered—tho’ here to me most beautiful.”

And then I was a young witch, whose blue eyes,  
As she stood naked by the river springs,  
Drew down a god—I watched his radiant form  
Growing less radiant—and it gladdened me ;  
Till one morn, as he sat in the sunshine  
Upon my knees, singing to me of heaven,  
He turned to look at me, ere I could lose  
The grin with which I viewed his perishing.  
And he shrieked and departed, and sat long  
By his deserted throne—but sunk at last,  
Murmuring, as I kissed his lips and curled

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

Still I can lay my soul bare in its fall,

For all the wandering and all the weakness

Will be a saddest comment on the song.

And if, that done, I can be young again,

I will give up all gained as willingly

As one gives up a charm which shuts him out

From hope, or part, or care, in human kind.

As life wanes, all its cares, and strife, and toil,

Seem strangely valueless, while the old trees

Which grew by our youth's home—the waving

mass

Of climbing plants, heavy with bloom and dew—

The morning swallows with their songs like words,—

All these seem clear and only worth our thoughts.

So aught connected with my early life——

My rude songs or my wild imaginings,

How I look on them—most distinct amid  
The fever and the stir of after years !

I ne'er had ventured e'en to hope for this,  
Had not the glow I felt at HIS award,  
Assured me all was not extinct within.

HIM 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 ?

Sun-treader—life and light be thine for ever ;  
Thou art gone from us—years go by—and spring  
Gladdens, and the young earth is beautiful,

Shelley

Yet thy songs come not—other bards arise,  
But none like thee—they stand—thy majesties,  
Like mighty works which tell some Spirit there  
Hath sat regardless of neglect and scorn,  
Till, its long task completed, it hath risen  
And left us, never to return : and all  
Rush in to peer and praise when all in vain.  
The air seems bright with thy past presence yet,  
But thou art still for me, as thou hast been  
When I have stood with thee, as on a throne  
With all thy dim creations gathered round  
Like mountains,—and I felt of mould like them,  
And creatures of my own were mixed with them,  
Like things half-lived, catching and giving life.  
But thou art still for me, who have adored,  
Tho' single, panting but to hear thy name,  
Which I believed a spell to me alone,

Scarce deeming thou wert as a star to men—  
As one should worship long a sacred spring  
Scarce worth a moth's flitting, which long grasses  
    cross,  
And one small tree embowers droopingly,  
Joying to see some wandering insect won,  
To live in its few rushes—or some locust  
To pasture on its boughs—or some wild bird  
Stoop for its freshness from the trackless air,  
And then should find it but the fountain-head;  
Long lost, of some great river—washing towns  
And towers, and seeing old woods which will live  
But by its banks, untrod of human foot,  
Which, when the great sun sinks, lie quivering  
In light as some thing lieth half of life  
Before God's foot—waiting a wondrous change  
—Then girt with rocks which seek to turn or stay

Its course in vain, for it does ever spread  
Like a sea's arm as it goes rolling on,  
Being the pulse of some great country—so  
Wert thou to me—and art thou to the world.  
And I, perchance, half feel a strange regret,  
That I am not what I have been to thee :  
Like a girl one has loved long silently,  
In her first loveliness, in some retreat,  
When first emerged, all gaze and glow to view  
Her fresh eyes, and soft hair, and lips which bleed  
Like a mountain berry. Doubtless it is sweet  
To see her thus adored—but there have been  
Moments, when all the world was in his praise,  
Sweeter than all the pride of after hours.  
Yet, Sun-treader, all hail !—from my heart's heart  
I bid thee hail !—e'en in my wildest dreams,  
I am proud to feel I would have thrown up all

The wreathes of fame which seemed o'erhanging me,  
To have seen thee, for a moment, as thou art.

And if thou livest—if thou lovest, spirit !  
Remember me, who set this final seal  
To wandering thought—that one so pure as thou  
Could never die. Remember me, who flung  
All honor from my soul—yet paused and said,  
“ There is one spark of love remaining yet,  
“ For I have nought in common with him—shapes  
“ Which followed him avoid me, and foul forms  
“ Seek me, which ne'er could fasten on his mind ;  
“ And tho' I feel how low I am to him,  
“ Yet I aim not even to catch a tone  
“ Of all the harmonies which he called up,  
“ So one gleam still remains, altho' the last.”  
Remember me—who praise thee e'en with tears,

For never more shall I walk calm with thee ;  
Thy sweet imaginings are as an air,  
A melody, some wond'rous singer sings,  
Which, though it haunt men oft in the still eve,  
They dream not to essay ; yet it no less,  
But more is honored. I was thine in shame,  
And now when all thy proud renown is out,  
I am a watcher, whose eyes have grown dim  
With looking for some star—which breaks on him,  
Altered, and worn, and weak, and full of tears.

Autumn has come—like Spring returned to us,  
Won from her girlishness—like one returned  
A friend that was a lover—nor forgets  
The first warm love, but full of sober thoughts  
Of fading years ; whose soft mouth quivers yet  
With the old smile—but yet so changed and still !

And here am I the scoffer, who have probed  
Life's vanity, won by a word again  
Into my old life—for one little word  
Of this sweet friend, who lives in loving me,  
Lives strangely on my thoughts, and looks, and words,  
As fathoms down some nameless ocean thing  
Its silent course of quietness and joy.  
O dearest, if, indeed, I tell the past,  
May'st thou forget it as a sad sick dream ;  
Or if it linger—my lost soul too soon  
Sinks to itself, and whispers, we shall be  
But closer linked—two creatures whom the earth  
Bears singly—with strange feelings, unrevealed  
But to each other ; or two lonely things  
Created by some Power, whose reign is done,  
Having no part in God, or his bright world,  
I am to sing ; whilst ebbing day dies soft,

As a lean scholar dies, worn o'er his book,  
And in the heaven stars steal out one by one,  
As hunted men steal to their mountain watch.  
I must not think—lest this new impulse die  
In which I trust. I have no confidence,  
So I will sing on—fast as fancies come  
Rudely—the verse being as the mood it paints.

I strip my mind bare—whose first elements  
I shall unveil—not as they struggled forth  
In infancy, nor as they now exist,  
That I am grown above them, and can rule them,  
But in that middle stage, when they were full,  
Yet ere I had disposed them to my will;  
And then I shall show how these elements  
Produced my present state, and what it is.

I am made up of an intensest life,  
Of a most clear idea of consciousness  
Of self—distinct from all its qualities,  
From all affections, passions, feelings, powers;  
And thus far it exists, if tracked in all,  
But linked in me, to self-supremacy,  
Existing as a centre to all things,  
Most potent to create, and rule, and call  
Upon all things to minister to it;  
And to a principle of restlessness  
Which would be all, have, see, know, taste, feel, all—  
This is myself; and I should thus have been,  
Though gifted lower than the meanest soul.

And of my powers, one springs up to save  
From utter death a soul with such desires  
Confined to clay—which is the only one

Which marks me—an imagination which  
Has been an angel to me—coming not  
In fitful visions, but beside me ever,  
And never failing me; so tho' my mind  
Forgets not—not a shred of life forgets—  
Yet I can take a secret pride in calling  
The dark past up—to quell it regally.

A mind like this must dissipate itself,  
But I have always had one lode-star; now,  
As I look back, I see that I have wasted,  
Or progressed as I looked toward that star—  
A need, a trust, a yearning after God,  
A feeling I have analysed but late,  
But it existed, and was reconciled  
With a neglect of all I deemed his laws,  
Which yet, when seen in others, I abhorred.

I felt as one beloved, and so shut in  
From fear—and thence I date my trust in signs  
And omens—for I saw God every where ;  
And I can only lay it to the fruit  
Of a sad after-time that I could doubt  
Even his being—having always felt  
His presence—never acting from myself,  
Still trusting in a hand that leads me through  
All danger ; and this feeling still has fought  
Against my weakest reason and resolves.

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

These make myself—for I have sought in vain  
To trace how they were formed by circumstance,

For I still find them—turning my wild youth  
Where they alone displayed themselves, converting  
All objects to their use—now see their course!

They came to me in my first dawn of life,  
Which passed alone with wisest ancient books,  
All halo-girt with fancies of my own,  
And I myself went with the tale—a god,  
Wandering after beauty—or a giant,  
Standing vast in the sunset—an old hunter,  
Talking with gods—or a high-crested chief,  
Sailing with troops of friends to Tenedos;—  
I tell you, nought has ever been so clear  
As the place, the time, the fashion of those lives.  
I had not seen a work of lofty art,  
Nor woman's beauty, nor sweet nature's face,  
Yet, I say, never morn broke clear as those

On the dim clustered isles in the blue sea :  
The deep groves, and white temples, and wet caves —  
And nothing ever will surprise me now—  
Who stood beside the naked Swift-footed,  
Who bound my forehead with Proserpine's hair.

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

Then came a pause, and long restraint chained  
down

My soul, till it was changed. I lost myself,  
And were it not that I so loathe that time,  
I could recall how first I learned to turn  
My mind against itself; and the effects,  
In deeds for which remorse were vain, as for  
The wanderings of delirious dream; yet thence  
Came cunning, envy, falsehood, which so long  
Have spotted me—at length I was restored,  
Yet long the influence remained; and nought  
But the still life I led, apart from all,  
Which left my soul to seek its old delights,  
Could e'er have brought me thus far back to peace.  
As peace returned, I sought out some pursuit:  
And song rose—no new impulse—but the one  
With which all others best could be combined.  
My life has not been that of those whose heaven  
Was lampless, save where poesy shone out;

But as a clime, where glittering mountain-tops,  
And glancing sea, and forests steeped in light,  
Give back reflected the far-flashing sun ;  
For music, (which is earnest of a heaven,  
Seeing we know emotions strange by it,  
Not else to be revealed,) is as a voice,  
A low voice calling Fancy, as a friend,  
To the green woods in the gay summer time.  
And she fills all the way with dancing shapes,  
Which have made painters pale ; and they go on  
While stars look at them, and winds call to them,  
As they leave life's path for the twilight world,  
Where the dead gather. This was not at first,  
For I scarce knew what I would do. I had  
No wish to paint, no yearning—but I sang.

And first I sang, as I in dream have seen,

Music wait on a lyrist for some thought,  
Yet singing to herself until it came.  
I turned to those old times and scenes, where all  
That's beautiful had birth for me, and made  
Rude verses on them all; and then I paused—  
I had done nothing, so I sought to know  
What mind had yet achieved. No fear was mine  
As I gazed on the works of mighty bards,  
In the first joy at finding my own thoughts  
Recorded, and my powers exemplified,  
And feeling their aspirings were my own.  
And then I first explored passion and mind;  
And I began afresh; I rather sought  
To rival what I wondered at, than form  
Creations of my own; so much was light  
Lent back by others, yet much was my own.

I paused again—a change was coming on,  
I was no more a boy—the past was breaking  
Before the coming, and like fever worked.  
I first thought on myself—and here my powers  
Burst out. I dreamed not of restraint, but gazed  
On all things: schemes and systems went and came,  
And I was proud (being vainest of the weak),  
In wandering o'er them, to seek out some one  
To be my own; as one should wander o'er  
The white way for a star.

\* \* \* \*

On one, whom praise of mine would not offend,  
Who was as calm as beauty—being such  
Unto mankind as thou to me, Pauline,  
Believing in them, and devoting all  
His soul's strength to their winning back to peace;  
Who sent forth hopes and longings for their sake,

Clothed in all passion's melodies, which first  
Caught me, and set me, as to a sweet task,  
To gather every breathing of his songs.  
And woven with them there were words, which seemed  
A key to a new world ; the muttering  
Of angels, of some thing unguessed by man.  
How my heart beat, as I went on, and found  
Much there ! I felt my own mind had conceived,  
But there living and burning ; soon the whole  
Of his conceptions dawned on me ; their praise  
Is in the tongues of men ; men's brows are high  
When his name means a triumph and a pride ;  
So my weak hands may well forbear to dim  
What then seemed my bright fate : I threw myself  
To meet it. I was vowed to liberty,  
Men were to be as gods, and earth as heaven.  
And I—ah ! what a life was mine to be,

My whole soul rose to meet it. Now, Pauline,  
I shall go mad, if I recall that time.

\* \* \* \*

\*  
/

O let me look back, e'er I leave for ever  
The time, which was an hour, that one waits  
For a fair girl, that comes a withered hag.  
And I was lonely,—far from woods and fields,  
And amid dullest sights, who should be loose  
As a stag—yet I was full of joy—who lived  
With Plato—and who had the key to life.  
And I had dimly shaped my first attempt,  
And many a thought did I build up on thought,  
As the wild bee hangs cell to cell—in vain;  
For I must still go on : my mind rests not.

'Twas in my plan to look on real life,  
Which was all new to me ; my theories

Were firm, so I left them, to look upon  
Men, and their cares, and hopes, and fears, and joys ;  
And, as I pondered on them all, I sought  
How best life's end might be attained—an end  
Comprising every joy. I deeply mused.

And suddenly, without heart-wreck, I awoke  
As from a dream—I said, 'twas beautiful,  
Yet but a dream ; and so adieu to it.  
As some world-wanderer sees in a far meadow  
Strange towers, and walled gardens, thick with trees,  
Where singing goes on, and delicious mirth,  
And laughing fairy creatures peeping over,  
And on the morrow, when he comes to live  
For ever by those springs, and trees, fruit-flushed  
And fairy bowers—all his search is vain.  
Well I remember \* \* \* \*

First went my hopes of perfecting mankind,  
And faith in them—then freedom in itself,  
And virtue in itself—and then my motives' ends,  
And powers and loves; and human love went last.  
I felt this no decay, because new powers  
Rose as old feelings left—wit, mockery,  
And happiness; for I had oft been sad,  
Mistrusting my resolves: but now I cast  
Hope joyously away—I laughed and said,  
“No more of this”—I must not think; at length  
I look'd again to see how all went on.

My powers were greater—as some temple seemed  
My soul, where nought is changed, and incense rolls  
Around the altar—only God is gone,  
And some dark spirit sitteth in his seat!  
So I passed through the temple; and to me

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

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

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

And I said, "Are ye strong—let fancy bear me

"Far from the past."—And I was borne away

As Arab birds float sleeping in the wind,

O'er deserts, towers, and forests, I being calm;

And I said, "I have nursed up energies,

"They will prey on me." And a band knelt low,

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

"A way for thee—in thine appointed life

"O look on us!" And I said, "Ye will worship

"Me; but my heart must worship too." They shouted,

"Thyself—thou art our king!" So I stood there

Smiling \* \* \* \* \*

And buoyant and rejoicing was the spirit

With which I looked out how to end my days;  
I felt once more myself—my powers were mine;  
I found that youth or health so lifted me,  
That, spite of all life's vanity, no grief  
Came nigh me—I must ever be light-hearted;  
And that this feeling was the only veil  
Betwixt me and despair: so if age came,  
I should be as a wreck linked to a soul  
Yet fluttering, or mind-broken, and aware  
Of my decay. So a long summer morn  
Found me; and e'er noon came, I had resolved  
No age should come on me, ere youth's hopes went,  
For I would wear myself out—like that morn  
Which wasted not a sunbeam—every joy  
I would make mine, and die; and thus I sought  
To chain my spirit down, which I had fed  
With thoughts of fame. I said, the troubled life

Of genius seen so bright when working forth  
Some trusted end, seems sad, when all in vain—  
Most sad, when men have parted with all joy  
For their wild fancy's sake, which waited first,  
As an obedient spirit, when delight  
Came not with her alone, but alters soon,  
Coming darkened, seldom, hasting to depart,  
Leaving a heavy darkness and warm tears.

But I shall never lose her ; she will live  
Brighter for such seclusion—I but catch  
A hue, a glance of what I sing, so pain  
Is linked with pleasure, for I ne'er may tell  
The radiant sights which dazzle me ; but now  
They shall be all my own, and let them fade  
Untold—others shall rise as fair, as fast.  
And when all's done, the few dim gleams transferred,—

(For a new thought sprung up—that it were well  
To leave all shadowy hopes, and weave such lays  
As would encircle me with praise and love ;  
So I should not die utterly—I should bring  
One branch from the gold forest, like the knight  
Of old tales, witnessing I had been there,)—

And when all's done, how vain seems e'en success,  
And all the influence poets have o'er men !

'Tis a fine thing that one, weak as myself,

Should sit in his lone room, knowing the words .

He utters in his solitude shall move

Men like a swift wind—that tho' he be forgotten,

Fair eyes shall glisten when his beauteous dreams

Of love come true in happier frames than his.

Ay, the still night brought thoughts like these, but

morn

Came, and the mockery again laughed out

At hollow praises, and smiles, almost sneers ;  
And my soul's idol seemed to whisper me  
To dwell with him and his unhonoured name—  
And I well knew my spirit, that would be  
First in the struggle, and again would make  
All bow to it ; and I would sink again.

\* \* \* \* \*

And then know that this curse will come on us,  
To see our idols perish—we may wither,  
Nor marvel—we are clay ; but our low fate  
Should not extend them, whom trustingly  
We sent before into Time's yawning gulf,  
To face what e'er may lurk in darkness there—  
To see the painters' glory pass, and feel  
Sweet music move us not as once, or worst,  
To see decaying wits ere the frail body  
Decays. Nought makes me trust in love so really,

As the delight of the contented lowness  
With which I gaze on souls I'd keep for ever  
In beauty—I'd be sad to equal them ;  
I'd feed their fame e'en from my heart's best blood,  
Withering unseen, that they might flourish still.

\* \* \* \* \*

Pauline, my sweet friend, thou dost not forget  
How this mood swayed me, when thou first wert mine,  
When I had set myself to live this life,  
Defying all opinion. Ere thou camest  
I was most happy, sweet, for old delights  
Had come like birds again ; music, my life,  
I nourished more than ever, and old lore  
Loved for itself, and all it shows—the king  
Treading the purple calmly to his death,  
—While round him, like the clouds of eve, all dusk,  
The giant shades of fate, silently flitting,

Pile the dim outline of the coming doom,  
—And him sitting alone in blood, while friends  
Are hunting far in the sunshine ; and the boy,  
With his white breast and brow and clustering curls  
Streaked with his mother's blood, and striving hard  
To tell his story ere his reason goes.  
And when I loved thee, as I've loved so oft,  
Thou lovedst me, and I wondered, and looked in  
My heart to find some feeling like such love,  
Believing I was still what I had been ;  
And soon I found all faith had gone from me,  
And the late glow of life—changing like clouds,  
'Twas not the morn-blush widening into day,  
But evening, coloured by the dying sun  
While darkness is quick hastening :—I will tell  
My state as though 'twere none of mine—despair  
Cannot come near me—thus it is with me.

Souls alter not, and mine must progress still ;  
And this I knew not when I flung away  
My youth's chief aims. I ne'er supposed the loss  
Of what few I retained ; for no resource  
Awaits me—now behold the change of all.  
I cannot chain my soul, it will not rest  
In its clay prison ; this most narrow sphere—  
It has strange powers, and feelings, and desires,  
Which I cannot account for, nor explain,  
But which I stifle not, being bound to trust  
All feelings equally—to hear all sides :  
Yet I cannot indulge them, and they live,  
Referring to some state or life unknown. . . .

My selfishness is satiated not,  
It wears me like a flame ; my hunger for  
All pleasure, howsoe'er minute, is pain ;

I envy—how I envy him whose mind  
Turns with its energies to some one end !  
To elevate a sect, or a pursuit,  
However mean—so my still baffled hopes  
Seek out abstractions ; I would have but one  
Delight on earth, so it were wholly mine ;  
One rapture all my soul could fill—and this  
Wild feeling places me in dream afar,  
In some wide country, where the eye can see  
No end to the far hills and dales bestrewn  
With shining towers and dwellings. I grow mad  
Well-nigh, to know not one abode but holds  
Some pleasure—for my soul could grasp them all,  
But must remain with this vile form. I look  
With hope to age at last, which quenching much,  
May let me concentrate the sparks it spares.

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

And thus I know this earth is not my sphere,  
For I cannot so narrow me, but that

I still exceed it ; in their elements  
My love would pass my reason—but since here  
Love must receive its objects from this earth,  
While reason will be chainless, the few truths  
Caught from its wanderings have sufficed to quell  
All love below ;—then what must be that love  
Which, with the object it demands, would quell  
Reason, tho' it soared with the seraphim ?  
No—what I feel may pass all human love,  
Yet fall far short of what my love should be ;  
And yet I seem more warped in this than aught  
For here myself stands out more hideously.  
I can forget myself in friendship, fame,  
Or liberty, or love of mighty souls.

\* \* \* \*

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

And I myself have furnished its first prey.  
All my sad weaknesses, this wavering will,  
This selfishness, this still decaying frame . . .  
But I must never grieve while I can pass  
Far from such thoughts—as now—Andromeda!  
And she is with me—years roll, I shall change,  
But change can touch her not—so beautiful  
With her dark eyes, earnest and still, and hair  
Lifted and spread by the salt-sweeping breeze;  
And one red-beam, all the storm leaves in heaven,  
Resting upon her eyes and face and hair,  
As she awaits the snake on the wet beach,  
By the dark rock, and the white wave just breaking  
At her feet; quite naked and alone,—a thing  
You doubt not, nor fear for, secure that God  
Will come in thunder from the stars to save her.  
Let it pass—I will call another change.

I will be gifted with a wond'rous soul,  
Yet sunk by error to men's sympathy,  
And in the wane of life ; yet only so  
As to call up their fears, and there shall come  
A time requiring youth's best energies ;  
And strait I fling age, sorrow, sickness off,  
And I rise triumphing over my decay.

\* \* \* \*

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

\* \* \* \*

There's some vile juggle with my reason here—  
I feel I but explain to my own loss  
These impulses—they live no less the same.

Liberty ! what though I despair—my blood  
 Rose not at a slave's name prouder than now,  
 And sympathy obscured by sophistries.  
 Why have not I sought refuge in myself,  
 But for the woes I saw and could not stay—  
 And love !—do I not love thee, my Pauline ?

\* \* \* \*

I cherish prejudice, lest I be left  
 Utterly loveless—witness this belief  
 In poets, tho' sad change has come there too ;  
 No more I leave myself to follow them :  
 Unconsciously I measure me by them.  
 Let me forget it ; and I cherish most  
 My love of England—how her name—a word  
 Of her's in a strange tongue makes my heart beat ! . .

\* \* \* \*

Pauline, I could do any thing—not now—

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

\* \* \* \*

These are wild fancies, but I feel, sweet friend,  
As one breathing his weakness to the ear  
Of pitying angel—dear as a winter flower;  
A slight flower growing alone, and offering  
Its frail cup of three leaves to the cold sun,  
Yet joyous and confiding, like the triumph

Of a child—and why am I not worthy thee ?

\* \* \* \*

I can live all the life of plants, and gaze  
Drowsily on the bees that flit and play,  
Or bare my breast for sunbeams which will kill,  
Or open in the night of sounds, to look  
For the dim stars ; I can mount with the bird,  
Leaping airily his pyramid of leaves  
And twisted boughs of some tall mountain tree,  
Or rise cheerfully springing to the heavens—  
Or like a fish breathe in the morning air  
In the misty sun-warm water—or with flowers  
And trees can smile in light at the sinking sun,  
Just as the storm comes—as a girl would look  
On a departing lover—most serene.

Pauline, come with me—see how I could build

A home for us, out of the world; in thought—  
I am inspired—come with me, Pauline!

Night, and one single ridge of narrow path  
Between the sullen river and the woods  
Waving and muttering—for the moonless night  
Has shaped them into images of life,  
Like the upraising of the giant-ghosts,  
Looking on earth to know how their sons fare.  
Thou art so close by me, the roughest swell  
Of wind in the tree-tops hides not the panting  
Of thy soft breasts; no—we will pass to morning—  
Morning—the rocks, and vallies, and old woods.  
How the sun brightens in the mist, and here,—  
Half in the air, like creatures of the place,  
Trusting the element—living on high boughs  
That swing in the wind—look at the golden spray,

Flung from the foam-sheet of the cataract,  
Amid the broken rocks—shall we stay here  
With the wild hawks?—no, ere the hot noon come  
Dive we down—safe;—see this our new retreat  
Walled in with a sloped mound of matted shrubs,  
Dark, tangled, old and green—still sloping down  
To a small pool whose waters lie asleep  
Amid the trailing boughs turned water-plants  
And tall trees over-arch to keep us in,  
Breaking the sunbeams into emerald shafts,  
And in the dreamy water one small group  
Of two or three strange trees are got together,  
Wondering at all around—as strange beasts herd  
Together far from their own land—all wildness—  
No turf nor moss, for boughs and plants pave all,  
And tongues of bank go shelving in the waters,  
Where the pale-throated snake reclines his head,

And old grey stones lie making eddies there ;  
The wild mice cross them dry-shod—deeper in—  
Shut thy soft eyes—now look—still deeper in :  
This is the very heart of the woods—all round,  
Mountain-like, heaped above us ; yet even here  
One pond of water gleams—far off the river  
Sweeps like a sea, barred out from land ; but one—  
One thin clear sheet has over-leaped and wound  
Into this silent depth, which gained, it lies  
Still, as but let by sufferance ; the trees bend  
O'er it as wild men watch a sleeping girl,  
And thro' their roots long creeping plants stretch out  
Their twined hair, steeped and sparkling ; farther on,  
Tall rushes and thick flag-knots have combined  
To narrow it ; so, at length, a silver thread  
It winds, all noiselessly, thro' the deep wood,  
Till thro' a cleft way, thro' the moss and stone,

It joins its parent-river with a shout.

Up for the glowing day—leave the old woods :

See, they part, like a ruined arch, the sky !

Nothing but sky appears, so close the root

And grass of the hill-top level with the air—

Blue sunny air, where a great cloud floats, laden

With light, like a dead whale that white birds pick,

Floating away in the sun in some north sea.

Air, air—fresh life-blood—thin and searching air—

The clear, dear breath of God, that loveth us :

Where small birds reel and winds take their delight

Water is beautiful, but not like air.

See, where the solid azure waters lie,

Made as of thickened air, and down below,

The fern-ranks, like a forest spread themselves,

As tho' each pore could feel the element ;

Where the quick glancing serpent winds his way—

Float with me there, Pauline, but not like air.

Down the hill—stop—a clump of trees, see, set  
On a heap of rocks, which look o'er the far plains,  
And envious climbing shrubs would mount to rest,  
And peer from their spread boughs. There they  
    wave, looking

At the muleteers, who whistle as they go  
To the merry chime of their morning bells, and all  
The little smoking cots, and fields, and banks,  
And copses, bright in the sun; my spirit wanders.  
Hedge-rows for me—still, living, hedge-rows, where  
The bushes close, and clasp above, and keep  
Thought in—I am concentrated—I feel;—  
But my soul saddens when it looks beyond;  
I cannot be immortal, nor taste all.

O God! where does this tend—these struggling aims!\*

\* Je crains bien que mon pauvre ami ne soit pas toujours parfaitement compris dans ce qui reste à lire de cet étrange

What would I have ? what is this "sleep," which  
seems

To bound all ? can there be a "waking" point

fragment—mais il est moins propre que tout autre à éclaircir ce qui de sa nature ne peut jamais être que songe et confusion. D'ailleurs je ne sais trop si en cherchant à mieux coordonner certaines parties l'on ne courrait pas le risque de nuire au seul mérite auquel une production si singulière peut prétendre—celui de donner une idée assez précise du genre qu'elle n'a fait que'ébaucher.—Ce début sans prétention, ce remuement des passions qui va d'abord en accroissant et puis s'appaise par degrés, ces élans de l'ame, ce retour soudain sur soi-même.—Et par dessus tout, la tournure d'esprit toute particulière de mon ami rendent les changemens presque impossibles. Les raisons qu'il fait valoir ailleurs, et d'autres encore plus puissantes, ont fait trouver grâce à mes yeux pour cet écrit qu' autrement je lui eusse conseillé de jeter au feu— Je n'en crois pas moins au grand principe de toute composition —à ce principe de Shakspeare, de Raffaëlle, de Beethoven, d'où il suit que la concentration des idées est dûe bien plus à leur conception, qu'à leur mise en execution . . . j'ai tout lieu de craindre que la première de ces qualités ne soit encore

Of crowning life ? The soul would never rule—  
 It would be first in all things—it would have  
 Its utmost pleasure filled,—but that complete  
 Commanding for commanding sickens it.  
 The last point that I can trace is, rest beneath  
 Some better essence than itself—in weakness ;  
 This is “myself”—not what I think should be,  
 And what is that I hunger for but God ?

étrangère à mon ami—et je doute fort qu’un redoublement de travail lui fasse acquérir la seconde. Le mieux serait de bruler ceci ; mais que faire ?

Je crois que dans ce qui suit il fait allusion à un certain examen qu’il fit autrefois de l’âme ou plutôt de son âme, pour découvrir la suite des objets auxquels il lui serait possible d’attendre, et dont chacun une fois obtenu devait former une espèce de plateau d’où l’on pouvait apercevoir d’autres buts, d’autres projets, d’autres jouissances qui, à leur tour, devaient être surmontés. Il en résultait que l’oubli et le sommeil devaient tout terminer. Cette idée que je ne saisis pas parfaitement lui est peut-être aussi intelligible qu’à moi.

PAULINE.

My God, my God ! let me for once look on thee  
As tho' nought else existed : we alone.

And as creation crumbles, my soul's spark  
Expands till I can say, " Even from myself  
" I need thee, and I feel thee, and I love thee ;  
" I do not plead my rapture in thy works  
" For love of thee—or that I feel as one  
" Who cannot die—but there is that in me  
" Which turns to thee, which loves, or which should  
love."

Why have I girt myself with this hell-dress ?  
Why have I laboured to put out my life ?  
Is it not in my nature to adore,  
And e'en for all my reason do I not  
Feel him, and thank him, and pray to him ?—*Now*.  
Can I forego the trust that he loves me ?

Do I not feel a love which only ONE . . . . .  
O thou pale form, so dimly seen, deep-eyed,  
I have denied thee calmly—do I not  
Pant when I read of thy consummate deeds,  
And burn to see thy calm, pure truths out-flash  
The brightest gleams of earth's philosophy?  
Do I not shake to hear aught question thee? . . . . .

If I am erring save me, madden me,  
Take from me powers, and pleasures—let me die  
Ages, so I see thee: I am knit round  
As with a charm, by sin and lust and pride,  
Yet tho' my wandering dreams have seen all shapes  
Of strange delight, oft have I stood by thee—  
Have I been keeping lonely watch with thee,  
In the damp night by weeping Olivet,  
Or leaning on thy bosom, proudly less—

Or dying with thee on the lonely cross—  
Or witnessing thy bursting from the tomb!

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

And now, my Pauline, I am thine for ever!  
I feel the spirit which has buoyed me up  
Deserting me: and old shades gathering on;  
Yet while its last light waits, I would say much,  
And chiefly, I am glad that I have said  
That love which I have ever felt for thee,  
But seldom told; our hearts so beat together,  
That speech is mockery, but when dark hours come;

And I feel sad; and thou, sweet, deem'st it strange;  
A sorrow moves me, thou canst not remove.  
Look on this lay I dedicate to thee,  
Which thro' thee I began, and which I end,  
Collecting the last gleams to strive to tell  
That I am thine, and more than ever now—  
That I am sinking fast—yet tho' I sink,  
No less I feel that thou hast brought me bliss,  
And that I still may hope to win it back.  
Thou know'st, dear friend, I could not think all calm,  
For wild dreams followed me, and bore me off,  
And all was indistinct. Ere one was caught  
Another glanced: so dazzled by my wealth,  
Knowing not which to leave nor which to choose,  
For all my thoughts so floated, nought was fixed—  
And then thou said'st a perfect bard was one  
Who shadowed out the stages of all life,

And so thou badest me tell this my first stage;—  
'Tis done: and even now I feel all dim the shift  
Of thought. These are my last thoughts; I discern  
Faintly immortal life, and truth, and good.

And why thou must be mine is, that e'en now,  
In the dim hush of night—that I have done—

With fears and sad forebodings: I look thro'

And say, "E'en at the last I have her still,

"With her delicious eyes as clear as heaven,

"When rain in a quick shower has beat down mist,

"And clouds float white in the sun like broods of  
swans."

How the blood lies upon her cheek, all spread

As thinned by kisses; only in her lips-

It wells and pulses like a living thing,

And her neck looks, like marble misted o'er

With love-breath, a dear thing to kiss and love,

Standing beneath me—looking out to me,  
As I might kill her and be loved for it.

Love me—love me, Pauline, love nought but me ;  
Leave me not. All these words are wild and weak,  
Believe them not, Pauline. I stooped so low  
But to behold thee purer by my side,  
To show thou art my breath—my life—a last  
Resource—an extreme want : never believe  
Aught better could so look to thee, nor seek  
Again the world of good thoughts left for me.  
There were bright troops of undiscovered suns,  
Each equal in their radiant course. There were  
Clusters of far fair isles, which ocean kept  
For his own joy, and his waves broke on them  
Without a choice. And there was a dim crowd  
Of visions, each a part of the dim whole.

And a star left his peers and came with peace  
Upon a storm, and all eyes pined for him.  
And one isle harboured a sea-beaten ship,  
And the crew wandered in its bowers, and plucked  
Its fruits, and gave up all their hopes for home.  
And one dream came to a pale poet's sleep,  
And he said, "I am singled out by God,  
"No sin must touch me." I am very weak,  
But what I would express is,—Leave me not,  
Still sit by me—with beating breast, and hair  
Loosened—watching earnest by my side,  
Turning my books, or kissing me when I  
Look up—like summer wind. Be still to me  
A key to music's mystery, when mind fails,  
A reason, a solution and a clue.  
You see I have thrown off my prescribed rules :  
I hope in myself—and hope, and pant, and love—

You'll find me better—know me more than when  
You loved me as I was. Smile not; I have  
Much yet to gladden you—to dawn on you.

No more of the past—I'll look within no more—  
I have too trusted to my own wild wants—  
Too trusted to myself—to intuition.  
Draining the wine alone in the still night,  
And seeing how—as gathering films arose,  
As by an inspiration life seemed bare  
And grinning in its vanity, and ends  
Hard to be dreamed of, stared at me as fixed,  
And others suddenly became all foul,  
As a fair witch turned an old hag at night.  
No more of this—we will go hand in hand,  
I will go with thee, even as a child,  
Looking no further than thy sweet commands.

And thou hast chosen where this life shall be—  
The land which gave me thee shall be our home,  
Where nature lies all wild amid her lakes  
And snow-swathed mountains, and vast pines all  
    girt  
With ropes of snow—where nature lies all bare,  
Suffering none to view her but a race  
Most stunted and deformed—like the mute dwarfs  
Which wait upon a naked Indian queen.  
And there (the time being when the heavens are  
    thick  
With storms) I'll sit with thee while thou dost  
    sing  
Thy native songs, gay as a desert bird  
Who crieth as he flies for perfect joy,  
Or telling me old stories of dead knights.  
Or I will read old lays to thee—how she,

The fair pale sister, went to her chill grave  
With power to love, and to be loved, and live.  
Or we will go together, like twin gods  
Of the infernal world, with scented lamp  
Over the dead—to call and to awake—  
Over the unshaped images which lie  
Within my mind's cave—only leaving all  
That tells of the past doubts. So when spring  
comes,  
And sunshine comes again like an old smile,  
And the fresh waters, and awakened birds,  
And budding woods await us—I shall be  
Prepared, and we will go and think again,  
And all old loves shall come to us—but changed  
As some sweet thought which harsh words veiled  
before ;  
Feeling God loves us, and that all that errs,

Is a strange dream which death will dissipate ;  
And then when I am firm we'll seek again  
My own land, and again I will approach  
My old designs, and calmly look on all  
The works of my past weakness, as one views  
Some scene where danger met him long before.  
Ah ! that such pleasant life should be but dreamed !

But whate'er come of it—and tho' it fade,  
And tho' ere the cold morning all be gone  
As it will be ;—tho' music wait for me,  
And fair eyes and bright wine, laughing like sin,  
Which steals back softly on a soul half saved ;  
And I be first to deny all, and despise  
This verse, and these intents which seem so fair ;  
Still this is all my own, this moment's pride,  
No less I make an end in perfect joy.

E'en in my brightest time, a lurking fear  
Possessed me. I well knew my weak resolves,  
I felt the witchery that makes mind sleep  
Over its treasures—as one half afraid  
To make his riches definite—but now  
These feelings shall not utterly be lost,  
I shall not know again that nameless care,  
Lest leaving all undone in youth, some new  
And undreamed end reveal itself too late :  
For this song shall remain to tell for ever,  
That when I lost all hope of such a change,  
Suddenly Beauty rose on me again.  
No less I make an end in perfect joy,  
For I, having thus again been visited,  
Shall doubt not many another bliss awaits,  
And tho' this weak soul sink, and darkness come,  
Some little word shall light it up again.

And I shall see all clearer and love better ;  
I shall again go o'er the tracts of thought,  
As one who has a right ; and I shall live  
With poets—calmer—purer still each time,  
And beauteous shapes will come to me again,  
And unknown secrets will be trusted me,  
Which were not mine when wavering—but now  
I shall be priest and lover, as of old.

Sun-treader, I believe in God, and truth,  
And love ; and as one just escaped from death  
Would bind himself in bands of friends to feel  
He lives indeed—so, I would lean on thee ;  
Thou must be ever with me—most in gloom  
When such shall come—but chiefly when I die,  
For I seem dying, as one going in the dark  
To fight a giant—and live thou for ever,

And be to all what thou hast been to me—  
All in whom this wakes pleasant thoughts of me,  
Know my last state is happy—free from doubt,  
Or touch of fear. Love me and wish me well!

RICHMOND,  
*October 22, 1832.*



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