





PARLEYINGS WITH CERTAIN
PEOPLE OF IMPORTANCE
IN THEIR DAY

TO WIT

BERNARD DE MANDEVILLE, DANIEL BARTOLI,
CHRISTOPHER SMART, GEORGE BUBB DOD-
INGTON, FRANCIS FURINI, GERARD DE
LAIRESSE, AND CHARLES AVISON

*INTRODUCED BY A DIALOGUE BETWEEN APOLLO AND THE
FATES; CONCLUDED BY ANOTHER BETWEEN
JOHN FUST AND HIS FRIENDS*

BY

ROBERT BROWNING



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ROBERT BROWNING.

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IN MEMORIAM

J. MILSAND

OBIIT IV. SEPT. MDLXXXVI.

Absens absentem auditque videtque.





CONTENTS



	PAGE
AND THE FATES — A PROLOGUE	1
TH BERNARD DE MANDEVILLE	21
H DANIEL BARTOLI	37
H CHRISTOPHER SMART	55
H GEORGE BUBB DODINGTON	69
H FRANCIS FURINI	85
H GERARD DE LAIRESSE	113
TH CHARLES AVISON	135
D HIS FRIENDS — AN EPILOGUE	157



APOLLO AND THE FATES

A PROLOGUE

APOLLO AND THE FATES

in Mercurium, v. 559. Eumenides, vv. 693-4, 697-8. Alcestis, vv. 12, 33.)

APOLLO. (*From above.*)

Flame at my footfall, Parnassus ! Apollo,
Breaking ablaze on thy topmost peak,
Burns thence, down to the depths — dread hollow —
Haunt of the Dire Ones. Haste ! They wreak
Wrath on Admetus whose respite I seek.

THE FATES. (*Below. Darkness.*)

Dragonwise couched in the womb of our Mother,
Coiled at thy nourishing heart's core, Night !
Dominant Dreads, we, one by the other,
Deal to each mortal his dole of light
On earth — the upper, the glad, the bright.

CLOTHO.

Even so : thus from my loaded spindle
Plucking a pinch of the fleece, lo, " Birth "
Brays from my bronze lip : life I kindle :
Look, 't is a man ! go, measure on earth
The minute thy portion, whatever its worth !

LACHESIS.

Woe-purpled, weal-prankt, — if it speed, if it linger,
 Life's substance and show are determined by me,
 Who, meting out, mixing with sure thumb and finger, ears . . .
 Lead lock the due length: is all smoothness and gl
 All tangle and grief? Take the lot, my decree!

ATROPOS.

— Which I make an end of: the smooth as the tangle
 My shears cut asunder: each snap shrieks "One mo
 Mortal makes sport for us Moirai who dangled
 The puppet grotesquely till earth's solid floor
 Proved firm he fell through, lost in Nought as before."

CLOTHO.

I spin thee a thread. Live, Admetus! Produce him!

LACHESIS.

Go, — brave, wise, good, happy! Now chequer the th
 He is slaved for, yet loved by a god. I unloose him
 A goddess-sent plague. He has conquered, is wed,
 Men crown him, he stands at the height, —

ATROPOS.

He is . . .

APOLLO. (*Entering: Light.*)

“Dead?”

Oh, swart spinsters! So I surprise you
 Making and marring the fortunes of Man?
 Ddoling — no marvel, your enemy eyes you —
 Head by head bat-like, blots under the ban
 Daylight earth's blessing since time began!

THE FATES.

Back to thy blest earth, prying Apollo!
 Shaft upon shaft transpierce with thy beams
 Earth to the centre, — spare but this hollow
 Hewn out of Night's heart, where mystery seems
 Sewed from day's malice: wake earth from her dreams!

APOLLO.

Trones, 't is your dusk selves I startle from slumber:
 Day's god deposes you — queens Night-crowned!
 — Plying your trade in a world ye encumber,
 Fashioning Man's web of life — spun, wound,
 Left the length ye allot till a clip strews the ground!

Behold I bid truce to your doleful amusement —
 Annulled by a sunbeam!

THE FATES.

Boy, are not we peers?

APOLLO.

You with the spindle grant birth : whose inducement
 But yours — with the niggardly digits — endears
 To mankind chance and change, good and evil ? Your shears . . .

ATROPOS.

Ay, mine end the conflict : so much is no fable.
 We spin, draw to length, cut asunder : what then ?
 So it was, and so is, and so shall be : art able
 To alter life's law for ephemeral men ?

APOLLO.

Nor able nor willing. To threescore and ten
 Extend but the years of Admetus ! Disaster
 O'ertook me, and, banished by Zeus, I became
 A servant to one who forbore me though master :
 True lovers were we. Discontinue your game,
 Let him live whom I loved, then hate on, all the same !

THE FATES.

And what if we granted — law-flouter, use-trampler —
 His life at the suit of an upstart ? Judge, thou —
 Of joy were it fuller, of span because ampler ?
 For love's sake, not hate's, end Admetus — ay, now —
 Not a gray hair on head, nor a wrinkle on brow !

For, boy, 't is illusion : from thee comes a glimmer
 Transforming to beauty life blank at the best.
 Withdraw — and how looks life at worst, when to shimmer
 Succeeds the sure shade, and Man's lot frowns — confessed
 Where blackness chance-brightened ? Whereof shall attest

The truth this same mortal, the darling thou stylest,
 Whom love would advantage, — eke out, day by day,
 A life which 't is solely thyself reconcilest
 Thy friend to endure, — life with hope : take away
 Hope's gleam from Admetus, he spurns it. For, say —

What's infancy ? Ignorance, idleness, mischief :
 Youth ripens to arrogance, foolishness, greed :
 Age — impotence, churlishness, rancor : call *this* chief
 Of boons for thy loved one ? Much rather bid speed
 Our function, let live whom thou hatest indeed !

Persuade thee, bright boy-thing ! Our eld be instructive !

APOLLO.

And certes youth owns the experience of age.
 Ye hold then, grave seniors, my beams are productive
 — They solely — of good that's mere semblance, engage
 Man's eye — gilding evil, Man's true heritage ?

THE FATES.

So, even so ! From without, — at due distance

If viewed, — set a-sparkle, reflecting thy rays, —
 Life mimics the sun : but, withdraw such assistance,
 The counterfeit goes, the reality stays —
 An ice-ball disguised as a fire-orb.

APOLLO.

What craze

Possesses the fool then whose fancy conceits him
 As happy ?

THE FATES.

Man happy ?

APOLLO.

If otherwise — solve
 This doubt which besets me ! What friend ever greets him
 Except with “ Live long as the seasons revolve,”
 Not “ Death to thee straightway ” ? Your doctrines absolve

Such hailing from hatred : yet Man should know best.

He talks it, and glibly, as life were a load
 Man fain would be rid of : when put to the test,
 He whines “ Let it lie, leave me trudging the road
 That is rugged so far, but methinks . . . ”

THE FATES.

Ay, 't is owed

To that glamour of thine, he bethinks him "Once past
 The stony, some patch, nay, a smoothness of sward
 Awaits my tired foot: life turns easy at last" —
 Thy largess so lures him, he looks for reward
 Of the labor and sorrow.

APOLLO.

It seems, then — debarred

Of illusion — (I needs must acknowledge the plea)
 Man desponds and despairs. Yet, — still further to draw
 Due profit from counsel, — suppose there should be
 Some power in himself, some compensative law
 By virtue of which, independently . . .

THE FATES.

Faugh!

Strength hid in the weakling!

What bowl-shape hast there,
 Thus laughingly proffered? A gift to our shrine?
 Thanks — worsted in argument! Not so? Declare
 Its purpose!

APOLLO.

I proffer earth's product, not mine.
 Taste, try, and approve Man's invention of — WINE!

THE FATES.

We feeding suck honeycombs.

APOLLO.

Sustenance meagre !

Such fare breeds the fumes that show all things amiss.
 Quaff wine, — how the spirits rise nimble and eager,
 Unscale the dim eyes ! To Man's cup grant one kiss
 Of your lip, then allow — no enchantment like this !

CLOTHO.

Unhook wings, unhood brows ! Dost hearken ?

LACHESIS.

I listen :

I see — smell the food these fond mortals prefer
 To our feast, the bee's bounty !

ATROPOS.

The thing leaps ! But — glisten

Its best, I withstand it — unless all concur
 In adventure so novel.

APOLLO.

Ye drink ?

THE FATES.

We demur.

APOLLO.

Sweet Trine, be indulgent nor scout the contrivance

Of Man — Bacchus-prompted ! The juice, I uphold,
 Illuminates gloom without sunny connivance,
 Turns fear into hope and makes cowardice bold, —
 Touching all that is leadlike in life turns it gold !

THE FATES.

Faith foolish as false !

APOLLO.

But essay it, soft sisters !
 Then mock as ye may. Lift the chalice to lip !
 Good : thou next — and thou ! Seems the web, to you twisters
 Of life's yarn, so worthless ?

CLOTHO.

Who guessed that one sip
 Would impart such a lightness of limb ?

LACHESIS.

I could skip
 In a trice from the pied to the plain in my woof !
 What parts each from either ? A hair's breadth, no inch.
 Once learn the right method of stepping aloof,
 Though on black next foot falls, firm I fix it, nor flinch,
 — Such my trust white succeeds !

ATROPOS.

One could live — at a pinch !

APOLLO.

What, beldames? Earth's yield, by Man's skill, can effect
 Such a cure of sick sense that ye spy the relation
 Of evil to good? But drink deeper, correct
 Blear sight more convincingly still! Take your station
 Beside me, drain dregs! Now for edification!

Whose gift have ye gulped? Thank not me but my brother,
 Blithe Bacchus, our youngest of godships. 'T was he
 Found all boons to all men, by one god or other
 Already conceded, so judged there must be
 New guerdon to grace the new advent, you see!

Else how would a claim to Man's homage arise?
 The plan lay arranged of his mixed woe and weal,
 So disposed — such Zeus' will — with design to make wise
 The witless — that false things were mingled with real,
 Good with bad: such the lot whereto law set the seal.

Now, human of instinct — since Semele's son,
 Yet minded divinely — since fathered by Zeus,
 With nought Bacchus tampered, undid not things done,
 Owned wisdom anterior, would spare wont and use,
 Yet change — without shock to old rule — introduce.

Regard how your cavern from crag-tip to base
 Frowns sheer, height and depth adamantine, one death!

rouse with a beam the whole rampart, displace
 No splinter — yet see how my flambeau, beneath
 and above, bids this gem wink, that crystal unsheathe !

Withdraw beam — disclosure once more Night forbids you
 Of spangle and sparkle — Day's chance-gift, surmised
 rock's permanent birthright : my potency rids you
 No longer of darkness, yet light — recognized —
 proves darkness a mask : day lives on though disguised.

Bacchus by wine's aid avail so to fluster
 Your sense, that life's fact grows from adverse and thwart
 so helpful and kindly by means of a cluster —
 Mere hand-squeeze, earth's nature sublimed by Man's art —
 shall Bacchus claim thanks wherein Zeus has no part ?

Zeus — wisdom anterior ? No, maids, be admonished !
 If morn's touch at base worked such wonders, much more
 had noontide in absolute glory astonished
 Your den, filled a-top to o'erflowing. I pour
 so such mad confusion. 'Tis Man's to explore

up and down, inch by inch, with the taper his reason :
 No torch, it suffices — held deftly and straight.
 Yes, purblind at first, feel their way in due season,
 Accept good with bad, till unseemly debate
 turns concord — despair, acquiescence in fate.

Who works this but Zeus? Are not instinct and impulse,
 Not concept and incept his work through Man's soul
 On Man's sense? Just as wine ere it reach brain must bring
 pulse,
 Zeus' flash stings the mind that speeds body to goal,
 Bids pause at no part but press on, reach the whole.

For petty and poor is the part ye envisage
 When — (quaff away, cummers!) — ye view, last and first,
 As evil Man's earthly existence. Come! *Is* age,
Is infancy — manhood — so uninterspersed
 With good — some faint sprinkle?

CLOTHO.

I'd speak if I durst.

APOLLO.

Draughts dregward loose tongue-tie.

LACHESIS.

I'd see, did no web

Set eyes somehow winking.

APOLLO.

Drains-deep lies their purge

— True collyrium!

ATROPOS.

Words, surging at high-tide, soon ebb
 From starved ears.

APOLLO.

Drink but down to the source, they resurge.
 in hands! Yours and yours too! A dance or a dirge?

CHORUS.

ashed be our quarrel. Sourly and smilingly,
 Bare and gowned, bleached limbs and browned,
 five we a dance, three and one, reconcilingly,
 Thanks to the cup where dissension is drowned,
 defeat proves triumphant and slavery crowned.

fancy? What if the rose-streak of morning
 Pale and depart in a passion of tears?
 ice to have hoped is no matter for scorning!
 Love once — e'en love's disappointment endears!
 minute's success pays the failure of years.

anhood — the actual? Nay, praise the potential!
 (Bound upon bound, foot it around!)
 hat *is*? No, what *may* be — sing! that's Man's essential!
 (Ramp, tramp, stamp and compound
 ncy with fact — the lost secret is found!)

ge? Why, fear ends there: the contest concluded,
 Man *did* live his life, *did* escape from the fray:
 not scratchless but unscathed, he somehow eluded

Each blow fortune dealt him, and conquers to-day :
To-morrow — new chance and fresh strength, — might we say

Laud then Man's life — no defeat but a triumph !

[*Explosion from the earth's centre*]

CLOTHO.

Ha, loose hands !

LACHESIS.

I reel in a swoond.

ATROPOS.

Horror yawns under me, while from on high — humph !

Lightnings astound, thunders resound,
Vault-roof reverberates, groans the ground !

[*Silence*]

APOLLO.

I acknowledge.

THE FATES.

Hence, trickster ! Straight sobered are we !

The portent assures 't was our tongue spoke the truth,
Not thine. While the vapor encompassed us three

We conceived and bore knowledge — a bantling uncouth,
Old brains shudder back from : so — take it, rash youth !

Lick the lump into shape till a cry comes !

APOLLO.

I hear.

THE FATES.

Dumb music, dead eloquence! Say it, or sing!
 What was quickened in us and thee also?

APOLLO.

I fear.

THE FATES.

Half female, half male — go, ambiguous thing!
 While we speak — perchance sputter — pick up what we fling!

Known yet ignored, nor divined nor unguessed,
 Such is Man's law of life. Do we strive to declare
 What is ill, what is good in our spinning? Worst, best,
 Change hues of a sudden: now here and now there
 Flits the sign which decides: all about yet nowhere.

It is willed so, — that Man's life be lived, first to last,
 Up and down, through and through — not in portions, for-
 sooth,

To pick and to choose from. Our shuttles fly fast,
 Weave living, not life sole and whole: as age — youth,
 So death completes living, shows life in its truth.

Man learningly lives: till death helps him — no lore!

It is doom and must be. Dost submit?

APOLLO.

I assent —

Concede but Admetus ! So much if no more

Of my prayer grant as peace-pledge ! Be gracious, though,
blent,

Good and ill, love and hate streak your life-gift !

THE FATES.

Content !

Such boon we accord in due measure. Life's term

We lengthen should any be moved for love's sake
To forego life's fulfilment, renounce in the germ

Fruit mature — bliss or woe — either infinite. Take
Or leave thy friend's lot : on his head be the stake !

APOLLO.

On mine, griesly gammers ! Admetus, I know thee !

Thou prizest the right these unwittingly give
Thy subjects to rush, pay obedience they owe thee !

Importunate one with another they strive
For the glory to die that their king may survive.

Friends rush : and who first in all Pheræ appears

But thy father to serve as thy substitute ?

CLOTHO.

Bah!

APOLLO.

He wince? Then his mother, well stricken in years,
Advances her claim — or his wife —

LACHESIS.

Tra-la-la!

APOLLO.

But he spurns the exchange, rather dies!

ATROPOS.

Ha, ha, ha!

[*Apollo ascends. Darkness.*]

I

WITH BERNARD DE MANDEVILLE

WITH BERNARD DE MANDEVILLE.

I.

Ay, this same midnight, by this chair of mine,
Come and review thy counsels : art thou still
Staunch to their teaching ? — not as fools opine
Its purport might be, but as subtler skill
Could, through turbidity, the loaded line
Of logic casting, sound deep, deeper, till
It touched a quietude and reached a shrine
And recognized harmoniously combine
Evil with good, and hailed truth's triumph — thine,
Sage dead long since, Bernard de Mandeville !

II.

Only, 't is no fresh knowledge that I crave,
Fuller truth yet, new gainings from the grave ;
Here we alive must needs deal fairly, turn
To what account Man may Man's portion, learn
Man's proper play with truth in part, before
Entrusted with the whole. I ask no more
Than smiling witness that I do my best

With doubtful doctrine : afterwards the rest !
 So, silent face me while I think and speak !
 A full disclosure ? Such would outrage law.
 Law deals the same with soul and body : seek
 Full truth my soul may, when some babe, I saw
 A new-born weakling, starts up strong — not weak —
 Man every whit, absolved from earning awe,
 Pride, rapture, if the soul attains to wreak
 Its will on flesh, at last can thrust, lift, draw,
 As mind bids muscle — mind which long has striven,
 Painfully urging body's impotence
 To effort whereby — once law's barrier riven,
 Life's rule abolished — body might dispense
 With infancy's probation, straight be given
 — Not by foiled darings, fond attempts back-driven,
 Fine faults of growth, brave sins which saint when shriven —
 To stand full-statured in magnificence.

III.

No : as with body so deals law with soul
 That's stung to strength through weakness, strives for good
 Through evil, — earth its race-ground, heaven its goal,
 Presumably : so far I understood
 Thy teaching long ago. But what means this
 — Objected by a mouth which yesterday
 Was magisterial in antithesis
 To half the truths we hold, or trust we may,

Though tremblingly the while? "No sign" — groaned he —
 "No stirring of God's finger to denote
 He wills that right should have supremacy
 On earth, not wrong! How helpful could we quote
 But one poor instance when He interposed
 Promptly and surely and beyond mistake
 Between oppression and its victim, closed
 Accounts with sin for once, and bade us wake
 From our long dream that justice bears no sword,
 Or else forgets whereto its sharpness serves!
 So might we safely mock at what unnerves
 Faith now, be spared the sapping fear's increase
 That haply evil's strife with good shall cease
 Never on earth. Nay, after earth, comes peace
 Born out of life-long battle? Man's lip curves
 With scorn: there, also, what if justice swerves
 From dealing doom, sets free by no swift stroke
 Right fettered here by wrong, but leaves life's yoke —
 Death should loose man from — fresh laid, past release?"

IV.

Bernard de Mandeville, confute for me
 This parlous friend who captured or set free
 Thunderbolts at his pleasure, yet would draw
 Back, panic-stricken by some puny straw
 Thy gold-rimmed amber-headed cane had whisked
 Out of his pathway if the object risked

Encounter, 'scaped thy kick from buckled shoe !
 As when folks heard thee in old days pooh-pooh
 Addison's tye-wig preachment, grant this friend —
 (Whose groan I hear, with guffaugh at the end
 Disposing of mock-melancholy) — grant
 His bilious mood one potion, ministrant
 Of homely wisdom, healthy wit ! For, hear !
 “ With power and will, let preference appear
 By intervention ever and aye, help good
 When evil's mastery is understood
 In some plain outrage, and triumphant wrong
 Tramples weak right to nothingness : nay, long
 Ere such sad consummation bring despair
 To right's adherents, ah, what help it were
 If wrong lay strangled in the birth — each head
 Of the hatched monster promptly crushed, instead
 Of spared to gather venom ! We require
 No great experience that the inch-long worm,
 Free of our heel, would grow to vomit fire,
 And one day plague the world in dragon form.
 So should wrong merely peep abroad to meet
 Wrong's due quietus, leave our world's way safe
 For honest walking.”

v.

Sage, once more repeat
 Instruction ! 'T is a sore to soothe not chafe.

Ah, Fabulist, what luck, could I contrive
To coax from thee another "Grumbling Hive"!
My friend himself wrote fables short and sweet:
Ask him — "Suppose the Gardener of Man's ground
Plants for a purpose, side by side with good,
Evil — (and that He does so — look around!
What does the field show?) — were it understood
That purposely the noxious plant was found
Vexing the virtuous, poison close to food,
If, at first stealing-forth of life in stalk
And leaflet-promise, quick His spud should balk
Evil from budding foliage, bearing fruit?
Such timely treatment of the offending root
Might strike the simple as wise husbandry,
But swift sure extirpation scarce would suit
Shrewder observers. Seed once sown thrives: why
Frustrate its product, miss the quality
Which sower binds himself to count upon?
Had seed fulfilled the destined purpose, gone
Unhindered up to harvest — what know I
But proof were gained that every growth of good
Sprang consequent on evil's neighborhood?"
So said your shrewdness: true — so did not say
That other sort of theorists who held
Mere unintelligence prepared the way
For either seed's upsprouting: you repelled
Their notion that both kinds could sow themselves.

True ! but admit 't is understanding delves
 And drops each germ, what else but folly thwarts
 The doer's settled purpose ? Let the sage
 Concede a use to evil, though there starts
 Full many a burgeon thence, to disengage
 With thumb and finger lest it spoil the yield
 Too much of good's main tribute ! But our main
 Tough-tendoned mandrake-monster — purge the field
 Of him for once and all ? It follows plain
 Who set him there to grow beholds repealed
 His primal law : His ordinance proves vain :
 And what beseems a king who cannot reign,
 But to drop sceptre valid arm should wield ?

VI.

“ Still there 's a parable ” — retorts my friend —
 “ Shows agriculture with a difference !
 What of the crop and weeds which solely blend
 Because, once planted, none may pluck them thence ?
 The Gardener contrived thus ? Vain pretence !
 An enemy it was who unawares
 Ruined the wheat by interspersing tares.
 Where 's our desiderated forethought ? Where 's
 Knowledge, where power and will in evidence ?
 'T is Man's-play merely ! Craft foils rectitude,
 Malignity defeats beneficence.
 And grant, at very last of all, the feud

'Twixt good and evil ends, strange thoughts intrude
Though good be garnered safely, and good's foe
Bundled for burning. Thoughts steal: "Even so —
Why grant tares leave to thus o'er-top, o'ertower
Their field-mate, boast the stalk and flaunt the flower,
Triumph one sunny minute? Knowledge, power,
And will thus worked? Man's fancy makes the fault!
Man, with the narrow mind, must cram inside
His finite God's infinitude, — earth's vault
He bids comprise the heavenly far and wide,
Since Man may claim a right to understand
What passés understanding. So, succinct
And trimly set in order, to be scanned
And scrutinized, lo — the divine lies linked
Fast to the human, free to move as moves
Its proper match: awhile they keep the grooves,
Discreetly side by side together pace,
Till sudden comes a stumble incident
Likely enough to Man's weak-footed race,
And he discovers — wings in rudiment,
Such as he boasts, which full-grown, free-distent
Would lift him skyward, fail of flight while pent
Within humanity's restricted space.
Abjure each fond attempt to represent
The formless, the illimitable! Trace
No outline, try no hint of human face
Or form or hand!"

VII.

Friend, here 's a tracing meant

To help a guess at truth you never knew.

Bend but those eyes now, using mind's eye too,

And note — sufficient for all purposes —

The ground-plan — map you long have yearned for — yes,

Made out in markings — more what artist can? —

Goethe's Estate in Weimar, — just a plan!

A is the House, and *B* the Garden-gate,

And *C* the Grass-plot — you've the whole estate

Letter by letter, down to *Y* the Pond,

And *Z* the Pig-stye. Do you look beyond

The algebraic signs, and captious say

“Is *A* the House? But where's the Roof to *A*,

Where's Door, where's Window? Needs must House have
such!”

Ay, that were folly. Why so very much

More foolish than our mortal purblind way

Of seeking in the symbol no mere point

To guide our gaze through what were else inane,

But things — their solid selves? “Is, joint by joint,

Orion man-like, — as these dots explain

His constellation? Flesh composed of suns —

How can such be?” exclaim the simple ones.

Look through the sign to the thing signified —

Shown nowise, point by point at best descried,

Each an orb's topmost sparkle : all beside
 Its shine is shadow : turn the orb one jot —
 Up flies the new flash to reveal 't was not
 The whole sphere late flamboyant in your ken !

VIII.

“ What need of symbolizing ? Fitlier men
 Would take on tongue facts — few and faint and far,
 Still facts not fancies : quite enough they are,
 That Power, that Knowledge, and that Will, — add then
 Immensity, Eternity : these jar
 Nowise with our permitted thought and speech.
 Why human attributes ? ”

A myth may teach :

Only, who better would expound it thus
 Must be Euripides not Æschylus.

IX.

Boundingly up through Night's wall dense and dark,
 Embattled crags and clouds, out-broke the Sun
 Above the conscious earth, and one by one
 Her heights and depths absorbed to the last spark
 His fluid glory, from the far fine ridge
 Of mountain-granite which, transformed to gold,
 Laughed first the thanks back, to the vale's dusk fold
 On fold of vapor-swathing, like a bridge
 Shattered beneath some giant's stamp. Night wist

Her work done and betook herself in mist
 To marsh and hollow, there to bide her time
 Blindly in acquiescence. Everywhere
 Did earth acknowledge Sun's embrace sublime,
 Thrilling her to the heart of things : since there
 No ore ran liquid, no spar branched anew,
 No arrowy crystal gleamed, but straightway grew
 Glad through the inrush — glad nor more nor less
 Than, 'neath his gaze, forest and wilderness,
 Hill, dale, land, sea, the whole vast stretch and spread,
 The universal world of creatures bred
 By Sun's munificence, alike gave praise —
 All creatures but one only : gaze for gaze,
 Joyless and thankless, who — all scowling can —
 Protests against the innumerable praises? Man,
 Sullen and silent.

Stand thou forth then, state
 Thy wrong, thou sole aggrieved — disconsolate —
 While every beast, bird, reptile, insect, gay
 And glad acknowledges the bounteous day !

x.

Man speaks now : “ What avails Sun's earth-felt thrill
 To me ? Sun penetrates the ore, the plant —
 They feel and grow : perchance with subtler skill
 He interfuses fly, worm, brute, until
 Each favored object pays life's ministrant

By pressing, in obedience to his will,
Up to completion of the task prescribed,
So stands and stays a type. Myself imbibed
Such influence also, stood and stand complete —
The perfect Man, — head, body, hands and feet,
True to the pattern : but does that suffice ?
How of my superadded mind which needs
— Not to be, simply, but to do, and pleads
For — more than knowledge that by some device
Sun quickens matter : mind is nobly fain
To realize the marvel, make — for sense
As mind — the unseen visible, condense
— Myself — Sun's all-pervading influence
So as to serve the needs of mind, explain
What now perplexes. Let the oak increase
His corrugated strength on strength, the palm
Lift joint by joint her fan-fruit, ball and balm, —
Let the coiled serpent bask in bloated peace, —
The eagle, like some skyey derelict,
Drift in the blue, suspended, glorying, —
The lion lord it by the desert-spring, —
What know or care they of the power which pricked
Nothingness to perfection ? I, instead,
When all-developed still am found a thing
All-incomplete : for what though flesh had force
Transcending theirs — hands able to unring
The tightened snake's coil, eyes that could outcourse

The eagle's soaring, voice whereat the king
Of carnage couched discrowned? Mind seeks to see,
Touch, understand, by mind inside of me,
The outside mind — whose quickening I attain
To recognize — I only. All in vain
Would mind address itself to render plain
The nature of the essence. Drag what lurks
Behind the operation — that which works
Latently everywhere by outward proof —
Drag that mind forth to face mine? No! aloof
I solely crave that one of all the beams
Which do Sun's work in darkness, at my will
Should operate — myself for once have skill
To realize the energy which streams
Flooding the universe. Above, around,
Beneath — why mocks that mind my own thus found
Simply of service, when the world grows dark,
To half-surmise — were Sun's use understood,
I might demonstrate him supplying food,
Warmth, life, no less the while? To grant one spark
Myself may deal with — make it thaw my blood
And prompt my steps, were truer to the mark
Of mind's requirement than a half-surmise
That somehow secretly is operant
A power all matter feels, mind only tries
To comprehend! Once more — no idle vaunt
'Man comprehends the Sun's self!' Mysteries

At source why probe into? Enough: display,
 Make demonstrable, how, by night as day,
 Earth's centre and sky's outspan, all's informed
 Equally by Sun's efflux! — source from whence
 If just one spark I drew, full evidence
 Were mine of fire ineffably enthroned —
 Sun's self made palpable to Man!"

XI.

Thus moaned

Man till Prometheus helped him, — as we learn, —
 Offered an artifice whereby he drew
 Sun's rays into a focus, — plain and true,
 The very Sun in little: made fire burn
 And henceforth do Man service — glass-conglobed
 Though to a pin-point circle — all the same
 Comprising the Sun's self, but Sun disrobed
 Of that else-unconceived essential flame
 Borne by no naked sight. Shall mind's eye strive
 Achingly to companion as it may
 The supersubtle effluence, and contrive
 To follow beam and beam upon their way
 Hand-breadth by hand-breadth, till sense faint — confessed
 Frustrate, eluded by unknown unguessed
 Infinitude of action? Idle quest!
 Rather ask aid from optics. Sense, descry
 The spectrum — mind, infer immensity!

Little? In little, light, warmth, life are blessed —
Which, in the large, who sees to bless? Not I
More than yourself: so, good my friend, keep still
Trustful with — me? with thee, sage Mandeville!

II

WITH DANIEL BARTOLI

WITH DANIEL BARTOLI.*

I.

Don, the divinest women that have walked
Our world were scarce those saints of whom we talked.
My saint, for instance — worship if you will !
'T is pity poets need historians' skill :
What legendary's worth a chronicle ?

II.

Come, now ! A great lord once upon a time
Visited — oh a king, of kings the prime,
To sign a treaty such as never was :
For the king's minister had brought to pass
That this same duke — so style him — must engage
Two of his dukedoms as an heritage

* A learned and ingenious writer. “ Fu Gesuita e Storico della Compagnia di Gesù ; onde scrisse lunghissime storie, le quali sarebbero lette se non fossero ripiene traboccanti di tutte le superstizioni. . . Egli vi ha ficcati dentro tanti miracoloni, che diviene una noia insopportabile a chiunque voglia leggere quelle storie : e anche a me, non mi bastò l' animo di proseguire molto avanti. ” — ANGELO CERUTTI.

After his death to this exorbitant
 Craver of kingship. "Let who lacks go scant,
 Who owns much, give the more to!" Why rebuke?
 So bids the devil, so obeys the duke.

III.

Now, as it happened, at his sister's house
 — Duchess herself — indeed the very spouse
 Of the king's uncle, — while the deed of gift
 Whereby our duke should cut his rights adrift
 Was drawing, getting ripe to sign and seal —
 What does the frozen heart but uncongeal
 And, shaming his transcendent kin and kith,
 Whom do the duke's eyes make acquaintance with?
 A girl. "What, sister, may this wonder be?"
 "Nobody! Good as beautiful is she,
 With gifts that match her goodness, no faint flaw
 I' the white: she were the pearl you think you saw,
 But that she is — what corresponds to white?
 Some other stone, the true pearl's opposite,
 As cheap as pearls are costly. She's — now, guess
 Her parentage! Once — twice — thrice? Foiled, confess
 Drugs, duke, her father deals in — faugh, the scents! —
 Manna and senna — such medicaments
 For payment he compounds you. Stay — stay — stay!
 I'll have no rude speech wrong her! Whither away,
 The hot-head? Ah, the 'scape-grace! She deserves

Respect — compassion, rather! Right it serves
 My folly, trusting secrets to a fool!
 Already at it, is he? She keeps cool —
 Helped by her fan's spread. Well, our state atones
 For thus much license, and words break no bones!"
 (Hearts, though, sometimes.)

IV.

Next morn 't was "Reason, rate,
 Rave, sister, on till doomsday! Sure as fate,
 I wed that woman — what a woman is
 Now that I know, who never knew till this!"
 So swore the duke. "I wed her: once again —
 Rave, rate, and reason — spend your breath in vain!"

V.

At once was made a contract firm and fast,
 Published the banns were, only marriage, last,
 Required completion when the Church's rite
 Should bless and bid depart, make happy quite
 The coupled man and wife forevermore:
 Which rite was soon to follow. Just before —
 All things at all but end — the folk o' the bride
 Flocked to a summons. Pomp the duke defied:
 "Of ceremony — so much as empowers,
 Nought that exceeds, suits best a tie like ours —"
 He smiled — "all else were mere futility.

We vow, God hears us: God and you and I —
 Let the world keep at distance! This is why
 We choose the simplest forms that serve to bind
 Lover and lover of the human kind,
 No care of what degree — of kings or clowns —
 Come blood and breeding. Courtly smiles and frowns
 Miss of their mark, would idly soothe or strike
 My style and yours — in one style merged alike —
 God's man and woman merely. Long ago
 'T was rounded in my ears ' Duke, wherefore slow
 To use a privilege? Needs must one who reigns
 Pay reigning's due: since statecraft so ordains —
 Wed for the commonweal's sake! law prescribes
 One wife: but to submission license bribes
 Unruly nature: mistresses accept
 — Well, at discretion!' Prove I so inept
 A scholar, thus instructed? Dearest, be
 Wife and all mistresses in one to me,
 Now, henceforth, and forever!" So smiled he.

VI.

Good: but the minister, the crafty one,
 Got ear of what was doing — all but done —
 Not sooner, though, than the king's very self,
 Warned by the sister on how sheer a shelf
 Royalty's ship was like to split. "I bar
 The abomination! Mix with muck my star?

Shall earth behold prodigiously enorbed
An upstart marsh-born meteor sun-absorbed?
Nuptial me no such nuptials!" "Past dispute,
Majesty speaks with wisdom absolute,"
Admired the minister: "yet, all the same,
I would we may not — while we play his game,
The ducal meteor's — also lose our own,
The solar monarch's: we relieve your throne
Of an ungracious presence, like enough:
Balked of his project he departs in huff,
And so cuts short — dare I remind the king? —
Our not so unsuccessful bargaining.
The contract for eventual heritage
Happens to *pari passu* reach the stage
Attained by just this other contract, — each
Unfixed by signature though fast in speech.
Off goes the duke in dudgeon — off withal
Go with him his two dukedoms past recall.
You save a fool from tasting folly's fruit,
Obtain small thanks thereby, and lose to boot
Sagacity's reward. The jest is grim:
The man will mulct you — for amercing him?
Nay, for . . . permit a poor similitude!
A witless wight in some fantastic mood
Would drown himself: you plunge into the wave,
Pluck forth the undeserving: he, you save,
Pulls you clean under also for your pains.

Sire, little need that I should tax my brains
 To help your inspiration !” “ Let him sink !
 Always contriving ” — hints the royal wink —
 “ To keep ourselves dry while we claim his clothes.”

VII.

Next day, the appointed day for plighting troths
 At eve, — so little time to lose, you see,
 Before the Church should weld indissolubly
 Bond into bond, wed these who, side by side,
 Sit each by other, bold groom, blushing bride, —
 At the preliminary banquet, graced
 By all the lady’s kinsfolk come in haste
 To share her triumph, — lo, a thunderclap !
 “ Who importunes now ? ” “ Such is my mishap —
 In the king’s name ! No need that any stir
 Except this lady ! ” bids the minister :
 “ With her I claim a word apart, no more :
 For who gainsays — a guard is at the door.
 Hold, duke ! Submit you, lady, as I bow
 To him whose mouthpiece speaks his pleasure now !
 It well may happen I no whit arrest
 Your marriage : be it so, — we hope the best !
 By your leave, gentles ! Lady, pray you, hence !
 Duke, with my soul and body’s deference ! ”

VIII.

Doors shut, mouth opens and persuasion flows
Copiously forth. "What flesh shall dare oppose
The king's command? The matter in debate
— How plain it is! Yourself shall arbitrate,
Determine. Since the duke affects to rate
His prize in you beyond all goods of earth,
Accounts as nought old gains of rank and birth,
Ancestral obligation, recent fame,
(We know his feats) — nay, ventures to disclaim
Our will and pleasure almost — by report —
Waives in your favor dukeliness, in short, —
We — ('t is the king speaks) — who might forthwith stay
Such suicidal purpose, brush away
A bad example shame would else record, —
Lean to indulgence rather. At his word
We take the duke: allow him to complete
The cession of his dukedoms, leave our feet
Their footstool when his own head, safe in vault,
Sleeps sound. Nay, would the duke repair his fault
Handsomely, and our forfeited esteem
Recover, — what if wisely he redeem
The past, — in earnest of good faith, at once
Give us such jurisdiction for the nonce
As may suffice — prevent occasion slip —
And constitute our actual ownership?

Concede this — straightway be the marriage blessed
 By warrant of this paper! Things at rest,
 This paper duly signed, down drops the bar,
 To-morrow you become — from what you are,
 The druggist's daughter — not the duke's mere spouse,
 But the king's own adopted: heart and house
 Open to you — the idol of a court
 'Which heaven might copy' — sing our poet-sort.
 In this emergency, on you depends
 The issue: plead what bliss the king intends!
 Should the duke frown, should arguments and prayers,
 Nay, tears if need be, prove in vain, — who cares?
 We leave the duke to his obduracy,
 Companionless, — you, madam, follow me
 Without, where divers of the body-guard
 Wait signal to enforce the king's award
 Of strict seclusion: over you at least
 Vibratingly the sceptre threats increased
 Precipitation! How avert its crash?"

IX.

"Re-enter, sir! A hand that's calm, not rash,
 Averts it!" quietly the lady said.
 "Yourself shall witness."

At the table's head
 Where, mid the hushed guests, still the duke sat glued
 In blank bewilderment, his spouse pursued
 Her speech to end — syllabled quietude.

X.

Duke, I, your duchess of a day, could take
 The hand you proffered me for love's sole sake,
 Conscious my love matched yours ; as you, myself
 Would waive, when need were, all but love — from pelf
 To potency. What fortune brings about
 Haply in some far future, finds me out,
 Faces me on a sudden here and now.
 The better ! Read — if beating heart allow —
 Read this, and bid me rend to rags the shame !
 I and your conscience — hear and grant our claim !
 Never dare alienate God's gift you hold
 Simply in trust for Him ! Choose muck for gold ?
 Could you so stumble in your choice, cajoled
 By what I count my least of worthiness
 — The youth, the beauty, — you renounce them — yes,
 With all that's most too : love as well you lose,
 Slain by what slays in you the honor ! Choose !
 Dear — yet my husband — dare I love you yet ? ”

XI.

How the duke's wrath o'erboiled, — words, words, and yet
 More words, — I spare you such fool's fever-fret.
 They were not of one sort at all, one size,
 As souls go — he and she. 'Tis said, the eyes
 Of all the lookers-on let tears fall fast.

The minister was mollified at last :

“ Take a day, — two days even, ere through pride
You perish, — two days’ counsel — then decide ! ”

XII.

“ If I shall save his honor and my soul ?

Husband, — this one last time, — you tear the scroll ?
Farewell, duke ! Sir, I follow in your train ! ”

XIII.

So she went forth : they never met again,
The duke and she. The world paid compliment
(Is it worth noting ?) when, next day, she sent
Certain gifts back — “ jewelry fit to deck
Whom you call wife.” I know not round what neck
They took to sparkling, in good time — weeks thence.

XIV.

Of all which was a pleasant consequence,
So much and no more — that a fervid youth,
Big-hearted boy, — but ten years old, in truth, —
Laid this to heart and loved, as boyhood can,
The unduchessed lady : boy and lad grew man :
He loved as man perchance may : did meanwhile
Good soldier-service, managed to beguile
The years, no few, until he found a chance :
Then, as at trumpet-summons to advance,

Outbroke the love that stood at arms so long,
 Brooked no withstanding longer. They were wed.
 Whereon from camp and court alike he fled,
 Renounced the sun-king, dropped off into night,
 Lost evermore, a ruined satellite :
 And, oh, the exquisite deliciousness
 That lapped him in obscurity ! You guess
 Such joy is fugitive : she died full soon.
 He did his best to die — as sun, so moon
 Left him, turned dusk to darkness absolute.
 Failing of death — why, saintsship seemed to suit :
 Yes, your sort, Don ! He trembled on the verge
 Of monkhood : trick of cowl and taste of scourge
 He tried : then, kicked not at the pricks perverse,
 But took again, for better or for worse,
 The old way in the world, and, much the same
 Man o' the outside, fairly played life's game.

XV.

Now, Saint Scholastica, what time she fared
 In Paynimrie, behold, a lion glared
 Right in her path ! Her waist she promptly strips
 Of girdle, binds his teeth within his lips,
 And, leashed all lamblike, to the Soldan's court
 Leads him." Ay, many a legend of the sort
 Do you praiseworthily authenticate :
 Spare me the rest. This much of no debate

Admits : my lady flourished in grand days
 When to be duchess was to dance the hays
 Up, down, across the heaven amid its host :
 While to be hailed the sun's own self almost —
 So close the kinship — was — was —

Saint, for this.

Be yours the feet I stoop to — kneel and kiss !
 So human ? Then the mouth too, if you will !
 Thanks to no legend but a chronicle.

XVI.

One leans to like the duke, too : up we'll patch
 Some sort of saintship for him — not to match
 Hers — but man's best and woman's worst amount
 So nearly to the same thing, that we count
 In man a miracle of faithfulness
 If, while unfaithful somewhat, he lay stress
 On the main fact that love, when love indeed,
 Is wholly solely love from first to last —
 Truth — all the rest a lie. Too likely, fast
 Enough that necklace went to grace the throat
 — Let's say, of such a dancer as makes doat
 The senses when the soul is satisfied —
Trogalia, say the Greeks — a sweetmeat tried
 Approvingly by sated tongue and teeth,
 Once body's proper meal consigned beneath
 Such unconsidered munching.

XVII.

Fancy's flight

Makes me a listener when, some sleepless night,
 The duke reviewed his memories, and aghast
 Found that the Present intercepts the Past
 With such effect as when a cloud enwraps
 The moon and, moon-suffused, plays moon perhaps
 To who walks under, till comes, late or soon,
 A stumble : up he looks, and lo, the moon
 Calm, clear, convincingly herself once more !
 How could he 'scape the cloud that thrust between
 Him and effulgence ? Speak, fool — duke, I mean !

XVIII.

“ Who bade you come, brisk-marching bold she-shape,
 A terror with those black-balled worlds of eyes,
 That black hair bristling solid-built from nape
 To crown it coils about ? O dread surmise !
 Take, tread on, trample under past escape
 Your capture, spoil and trophy ! Do — devise
 Insults for one who, fallen once, ne'er shall rise !

“ Mock on, triumphant o'er the prostrate shame !
 Laugh ' Here lies he among the false to Love —
 Love's loyal liegeman once : the very same
 Who, scorning his weak fellows, towered above

Inconstancy : yet why his faith defame ?

Our eagle's victor was at least no dove,
No dwarfish knight picked up our giant's glove —

“ ‘ When, putting prowess to the proof, faith urged
Her champion to the challenge : had it chanced
That merely virtue, wisdom, beauty — merged
All in one woman — merely these advanced
Their claim to conquest, — hardly had he purged
His mind of memories, dearnesses enhanced
Rather than harmed by death, nor, disentranced,

“ ‘ Promptly had he abjured the old pretence
To prove his kind's superior — first to last
Display erect on his heart's eminence
An altar to the never-dying Past.
For such feat faith might boast fit play of fence
And easily disarm the iconoclast
Called virtue, wisdom, beauty : impudence

“ ‘ Fought in their stead, and how could faith but fall ?
There came a bold she-shape brisk-marching, bent
No inch of her imperious stature, tall
As some war-engine from whose top was sent
One shattering volley out of eye's black ball,
And prone lay faith's defender ! ’ Mockery spent
Malice discharged in full ? In that event,

“ My queenly impudence, I cover close,
I wrap me round with love of your black hair,
Black eyes, black every wicked inch of those
Limbs’ war-tower tallness : so much truth lives there
’Neath the dead heap of lies. And yet — who knows ?
What if such things are ? No less, such things were.
Then was the man your match whom now you dare

“ Treat as existent still. A second truth !
They held — this heap of lies you rightly scorn —
A man who had approved himself in youth
More than a match for — you ? for sea-foam-born
Venus herself : you conquer him forsooth ?
’T is me his ghost : he died since left and lorn,
As needs must Samson when his hair is shorn.

“ Some day, and soon, be sure himself will rise,
Called into life by her who long ago
Left his soul whiling time in flesh-disguise.
Ghosts tired of waiting can play tricks, you know !
Tread, trample me — such sport we ghosts devise,
Waiting the morn-star’s reappearance — though
You think we vanish scared by the cock’s crow.”

III

WITH CHRISTOPHER SMART

WITH CHRISTOPHER SMART

I.

It seems as if . . . or did the actual chance
Startle me and perplex? Let truth be said!
How might this happen? Dreaming, blindfold led
By visionary hand, did soul's advance
Precede my body's, gain inheritance
Of fact by fancy — so that when I read
At length with waking eyes your Song, instead
Of mere bewilderment, with me first glance
Was but full recognition that in trance
Or merely thought's adventure some old day
Of dim and done-with boyishness, or — well,
Why might it not have been, the miracle
Broke on me as I took my sober way
Through veritable regions of our earth
And made discovery, many a wondrous one?

II.

Anyhow, fact or fancy, such its birth:
I was exploring some huge house, had gone

Through room and room complacently, no dearth
 Anywhere of the signs of decent taste,
 Adequate culture : wealth had run to waste
 Nowise, nor penury was proved by stint :
 All showed the Golden Mean without a hint
 Of brave extravagance that breaks the rule.
 The master of the mansion was no fool
 Assuredly, no genius just as sure !
 Safe mediocrity had scorned the lure
 Of now too much and now too little cost,
 And satisfied me sight was never lost
 Of moderate design's accomplishment
 In calm completeness. On and on I went,
 With no more hope than fear of what came next,
 Till lo, I push a door, sudden uplift
 A hanging, enter, chance upon a shift
 Indeed of scene ! So — thus it is thou deck'st,
 High heaven, our low earth's brick-and-mortar work ?

III.

It was the Chapel. That a star, from murk
 Which hid, should flashingly emerge at last,
 Were small surprise : but from broad day I passed
 Into a presence that turned shine to shade.
 There fronted me the Rafael Mother-Maid,
 Never to whom knelt votarist in shrine
 By Nature's bounty helped, by Art's divine

More varied — beauty with magnificence —
Than this : from floor to roof one evidence
Of how far earth may rival heaven. No niche
Where glory was not prisoned to enrich
Man's gaze with gold and gems, no space but glowed
With color, gleamed with carving — hues which owed
Their outburst to a brush the painter fed
With rainbow-substance — rare shapes never wed
To actual flesh and blood, which, brain-born once,
Became the sculptor's dowry, Art's response
To earth's despair. And all seemed old yet new :
Youth, — in the marble's curve, the canvas' hue,
Apparent, — wanted not the crowning thrill
Of age the consecrator. Hands long still
Had worked here — could it be, what lent them skill
Retained a power to supervise, protect,
Enforce new lessons with the old, connect
Our life with theirs ? No merely modern touch
Told me that here the artist, doing much,
Elsewhere did more, perchance does better, lives —
So needs must learn.

IV.

Well, these provocatives
Having fulfilled their office, forth I went
Big with anticipation — well-nigh fear —
Of what next room and next for startled eyes

Might have in store, surprise beyond surprise.
 Next room and next and next — what followed here?
 Why, nothing! not one object to arrest
 My passage — everywhere too manifest
 The previous decent null and void of best
 And worst, mere ordinary right and fit,
 Calm commonplace which neither missed, nor hit
 Inch-high, inch-low, the placid mark proposed.

V.

Armed with this instance, have I diagnosed
 Your case, my Christopher? The man was sound
 And sane at starting: all at once the ground
 Gave way beneath his step, a certain smoke
 Curled up and caught him, or perhaps down broke
 A fireball wrapping flesh and spirit both
 In conflagration. Then — as heaven were loth
 To linger — let earth understand too well
 How heaven at need can operate — off fell
 The flame-robe, and the untransfigured man
 Resumed sobriety, — as he began,
 So did he end nor alter pace, not he!

VI.

Now, what I fain would know is — could it be
 That he — whoe'er he was that furnished forth
 The Chapel, making thus, from South to North,

Rafael touch Leighton, Michelagnolo
Join Watts, was found but once combining so
The elder and the younger, taking stand
On Art's supreme, — or that yourself who sang
A Song where flute-breath silvers trumpet-clang,
And stations you for once on either hand
With Milton and with Keats, empowered to claim
Affinity on just one point — (or blame
Or praise my judgment, thus it fronts you full) —
How came it you resume the void and null,
Subside to insignificance, — live, die
— Proved plainly two mere mortals who drew nigh
One moment — that, to Art's best hierarchy,
This, to the superhuman poet-pair?
What if, in one point only, then and there
The otherwise all-unapproachable
Allowed impingement? Does the sphere pretend
To span the cube's breadth, cover end to end'
The plane with its embrace? No, surely! Still,
Contact is contact, sphere's touch no whit less
Than cube's superimposure. Such success
Befell Smart only out of throngs between
Milton and Keats that donned the singing-dress —
Smart, solely of such songmen, pierced the screen
'Twixt thing and word, lit language straight from soul, —
Left no fine film-flake on the naked coal
Live from the censer — shapely or uncouth,

Fire-suffused through and through, one blaze of truth
 Undeadened by a lie, — (you have my mind) —
 For, think ! this blaze outleapt with black behind
 And blank before, when Hayley and the rest . . .
 But let the dead successors worst and best
 Bury their dead : with life be my concern —
 Yours with the fire-flame : what I fain would learn
 Is just — (suppose me haply ignorant
 Down to the common knowledgè, doctors vaunt)
 Just this — why only once the fire-flame was :
 No matter if the marvel came to pass
 The way folks judged — if power too long suppressed
 Broke loose and maddened, as the vulgar guessed,
 Or simply brain-disorder (doctors said),
 A turmoil of the particles disturbed,
 Brain's workaday performance in your head,
 Spurred spirit to wild action health had curbed,
 And so verse issued in a cataract
 Whence prose, before and after, unperturbed
 Was wont to wend its way. Concede the fact
 That here a poet was who always could —
 Never before did — never after would —
 Achieve the feat : how were such fact explained ?

VII.

Was it that when, by rarest chance, there fell
 Disguise from Nature, so that Truth remained

Naked, and whoso saw for once could tell
Us others of her majesty and might
In large, her lovelinesses infinite
In little, — straight you used the power wherewith
Sense, penetrating as through rind to pith
Each object, thoroughly revealed might view
And comprehend the old things thus made new,
So that while eye saw, soul to tongue could trust
Thing which struck word out, and once more adjust
Real vision to right language, till heaven's vault
Pompous with sunset, storm-stirred sea's assault
On the swilled rock-ridge, earth's embosomed brood
Of tree and flower and weed, with all the life
That flies or swims or crawls, in peace or strife,
Above, below, — each had its note and name
For Man to know by, — Man who, now — the same
As erst in Eden, needs that all he sees
Be named him ere he note by what degrees
Of strength and beauty to its end Design
Ever thus operates — (your thought and mine,
No matter for the many dissident) —
So did you sing your Song, so truth found vent
In words for once with you ?

VIII.

Then — back was furled
The robe thus thrown aside, and straight the world

Darkened into the old oft-catalogued
 Repository of things that sky, wave, land,
 Or show or hide, clear late, accretion-clogged
 Now, just as long ago, by tellings and
 Retellings to satiety, which strike
 Muffled upon the ear's drum. Very like
 None was so startled as yourself when friends
 Came, hailed your fast-returning wits: "Health mends
 Importantly, for — to be plain with you —
 This scribble on the wall was done — in lieu
 Of pen and paper — with — ha, ha! — your key
 Denting it on the wainscot! Do you see
 How wise our caution was? Thus much we stopped
 Of babble that had else grown print: and lopped
 From your trim bay-tree this unsightly bough —
 Smart's who translated Horace! Write us now" . . .
 Why, what Smart did write — never afterward
 One line to show that he, who paced the sward,
 Had reached the zenith from his madhouse cell.

IX.

Was it because you judged (I know full well
 You never had the fancy) — judged — as some —
 That who makes poetry must reproduce
 Thus ever and thus only, as they come,
 Each strength, each beauty, everywhere diffuse
 Throughout creation, so that eye and ear,

Seeing and hearing, straight shall recognize,
 At touch of just a trait, the strength appear, —
 Suggested by a line's lapse see arise
 All evident the beauty, — fresh surprise
 Startling at fresh achievement? “ So, indeed,
 Wallows the whale's bulk in the waste of brine,
 Nor otherwise its feather-tufts make fine
 Wild Virgin's Bower when stars faint off to seed ! ”
 (My prose — your poetry I dare not give,
 Purpling too much my mere gray argument.)
 — Was it because you judged — when fugitive
 Was glory found, and wholly gone and spent
 Such power of startling up deaf ear, blind eye,
 At truth's appearance, — that you humbly bent
 The head and, bidding vivid work good-by,
 Doffed lyric dress and trod the world once more
 A drab-clothed decent proseman as before ?
 Strengths, beauties, by one word's flash thus laid bare
 — That was effectual service : made aware
 Of strengths and beauties, Man but hears the text,
 Awaits your teaching. Nature? What comes next ?
 Why all the strength and beauty ? — to be shown
 Thus in one word's flash, thenceforth let alone
 By Man who needs must deal with aught that 's known
 Never so lately and so little? Friend,
 First give us knowledge, then appoint its use !
 Strength, beauty are the means : ignore their end ?

As well you stopped at proving how profuse
Stones, sticks, nay stubble lie to left and right
Ready to help the builder, — careless quite
If he should take, or leave the same to strew
Earth idly, — as by word's flash bring in view
Strength, beauty, then bid who beholds the same
Go on beholding. Why gains unemployed?
Nature was made to be by Man enjoyed
First; followed duly by enjoyment's fruit,
Instruction — haply leaving joy behind:
And you, the instructor, would you slack pursuit
Of the main prize, as poet help mankind
Just to enjoy, there leave them? Play the fool,
Abjuring a superior privilege?
Please simply when your function is to rule —
By thought incite to deed? From edge to edge
Of earth's round, strength and beauty everywhere
Pullulate — and must you particularize
All, each and every apparition? Spare
Yourself and us the trouble! Ears and eyes
Want so much strength and beauty, and no less
Nor more, to learn life's lesson by. Oh, yes —
The other method's favored in our day!
The end ere the beginning: as you may
Master the heavens before you study earth,
Make you familiar with the meteor's birth
Ere you descend to scrutinize the rose!

I say, o'erstep no least one of the rows
That lead man from the bottom where he plants
Foot first of all, to life's last ladder-top :
Arrived there, vain enough will seem the vaunts
Of those who say — " We scale the skies, then drop
To earth — to find, how all things there are loth
To answer heavenly law : we understand
The meteor's course, and lo, the rose's growth —
How other than should be by law's command ! "
Would not you tell such — " Friends, beware lest fume
Offuscate sense : learn earth first ere presume
To teach heaven legislation. Law must be
Active in earth or nowhere : earth you see, —
Or there or not at all, Will, Power and Love
Admit discovery, — as below, above
Seek next law's confirmation ! But reverse
The order, where 's the wonder things grow worse
Than, by the law your fancy formulates,
They should be ? Cease from anger at the fates
Which thwart themselves so madly. Live and learn,
Not first learn and then live, is our concern.

IV

WITH GEORGE BUBB DODINGTON

WITH GEORGE BUBB DODINGTON

I.

Ah, George Bubb Dodington Lord Melcombe, — no,
Yours was the wrong way! — always understand,
Supposing that permissibly you planned
How statesmanship — your trade — in outward show
Might figure as inspired by simple zeal
For serving country, king and commonweal,
(Though service tire to death the body, tease
The soul from out an o'ertasked patriot-drudge)
And yet should prove zeal's outward show agrees
In all respects — right reason being judge —
With inward care that, while the statesman spends
Body and soul thus freely for the sake
Of public good, his private welfare take
No harm by such devotedness. Intends
Scripture aught else — let captious folk enquire —
Which teaches “ Laborers deserve their hire,
And who neglects his household bears the bell
Away of sinning from an infidel ”?
Wiselier would fools that carp bestow a thought

How birds build nests ; at outside, roughly wrought,
Twig knots with twig, loam plasters up each chink,
Leaving the inmate rudely lodged — you think?
Peep but inside ! That specious rude-and-rough
Covers a domicile where downy fluff
Embeds the ease-deserving architect,
Who toiled and moiled not merely to effect
'Twixt sprig and spray a stop-gap in the teeth
Of wind and weather, guard what swung beneath
From upset only, but contrived himself
A snug interior, warm and soft and sleek.
Of what material? Oh, for that, you seek
How nature prompts each volatile ! Thus — pelf
Smoothens the human mudlark's lodging, power
Demands some hardier wrappage to embrace
Robuster heart-beats : rock, not tree nor tower,
Contents the building eagle : rook shoves close
To brother rook on branch, while crow morose
Apart keeps balance perched on topmost bough.
No sort of bird but suits his taste somehow :
Nay, Darwin tells of such as love the bower —
His bower-birds opportunely yield us yet
The lacking instance when at loss to get
A feathered parallel to what we find
The secret motor of some mighty mind
That worked such wonders — all for vanity !
Worked them to haply figure in the eye

Of intimates as first of — doers' kind?
 Actors', that work in earnest sportively,
 Paid by a sourish smile. How says the Sage?
 Birds born to strut prepare a platform-stage
 With sparkling stones and speckled shells, all sorts
 Of slimy rubbish, odds and ends and orts,
 Whereon to pose and posture and engage
 The priceless female simper.

II.

I have gone
 Thus into detail, George Bubb Dodington,
 Lest, when I take you presently to task
 For the wrong way of working, you should ask
 "What fool conjectures that profession means
 Performance? that who goes behind the scenes
 Finds, — acting over, — still the soot-stuff screens
 Othello's visage, still the self-same cloak's
 Bugle-bright-blackness half reveals half chokes
 Hamlet's emotion, as ten minutes since?
 No, each resumes his garb, stands — Moor or prince —
 Decently draped: just so with statesmanship!
 All outside show, in short, is sham — why wince?
 Concede me — while our parley lasts! You trip
 Afterwards — lay but this to heart! (there lurks
 Somewhere in all of us a lump which irks
 Somewhat the spriteliest-scheming brain that's bent

On brave adventure, would but heart consent !)
 — Here trip you, that — your aim allowed as right —
 Your means thereto were wrong. Come, we, this night,
 Profess one purpose, hold one principle,
 Are at odds only as to — not the will
 But way of winning solace for ourselves
 — No matter if the ore for which zeal delves
 Be gold or coprolite, while zeal's pretence
 Is — we do good to men at — whose expense
 But ours? who tire the body, tease the soul,
 Simply that, running, we may reach fame's goal
 And wreath at last our brows with bay — the State's
 Disinterested slaves, nay — please the Fates —
 Saviors and nothing less : such lot has been !
 Statesmanship triumphs pedestalled, serene, —
 O happy consummation ! — brought about
 By managing with skill the rabble-rout
 For which we labor (never mind the name —
 People or populace, for praise or blame)
 Making them understand — their heaven, their hell,
 Their every hope and fear is ours as well.
 Man's cause — what other can we have at heart ?
 Whence follows that the necessary part
 High o'er Man's head we play, — and freelier breathe
 Just that the multitude which gasps beneath
 May reach the level where unstifled stand
 Ourselves at vantage to put forth a hand,

Assist the prostrate public. 'Tis by right
 Merely of such pretence, we reach the height
 Where storms abound, to brave — nay, court their stress,
 Though all too well aware — of pomp the less,
 Of peace the more ! But who are we, to spurn
 For peace' sake, duty's pointing ? Up, then — earn
 Albeit no prize we may but martyrdom !
 Now, such fit height to launch salvation from,
 How get and gain ? Since help must needs be craved
 By would-be saviors of the else-unsaved,
 How coax them to co-operate, lend lift,
 Kneel down and let us mount ?

III.

You say “ Make shift
 By sham — the harsh word : preach and teach, persuade
 Somehow the Public — not despising aid
 Of salutary artifice — we seek
 Solely their good : our strength would raise the weak,
 Our cultivated knowledge supplement
 Their rudeness, rawness : why to us were lent
 Ability except to come in use ?
 Who loves his kind must by all means induce
 That kind to let that love play freely, press
 In Man's behalf to full performance ! ”

IV.

Yes—

Yes, George, we know! — whereat they hear, believe,
 And bend the knee, and on the neck receive
 Who fawned and cringed to purpose? Not so, George!
 Try simple falsehood on shrewd folks who forge
 Lies of superior fashion day by day
 And hour by hour? With craftsmen versed as they
 What chance of competition when the tools
 Only a novice wields? Are knaves such fools?
 Disinterested patriot, spare your tongue
 The tones thrice-silvery, cheek save smiles it flung
 Pearl-like profuse to swine — a herd, whereof
 No unit needs be taught, his neighbor's trough
 Scarce holds for who but grunts and whines the husks
 Due to a wrinkled snout that shows sharp tusks.
 No animal — much less our lordly Man —
 Obeys its like: with strength all rule began,
 The stoutest awes the pasture. Soon succeeds
 Discrimination, — nicer power Man needs
 To rule him than is bred of bone and thew:
 Intelligence must move strength's self. This too
 Lasts but its time: the multitude at length
 Looks inside for intelligence and strength
 And finds them here and there to pick and choose:
 "All at your service, mine, see!" Ay, but who's

My George, at this late day, to make his boast
“In strength, intelligence, I rule the roast,
Beat, all and some, the ungraced who crowd your ranks?”
“Oh, but I love, would lead you, gain your thanks
By unexampled yearning for Man’s sake —
Passion that solely waits your help to take
Effect in action!” George, which one of us
But holds with his own heart communion thus:
“I am, if not of men the first and best,
Still — to receive enjoyment — properest:
Which since by force I cannot, nor by wit
Most likely — craft must serve in place of it.
Flatter, cajole! If so I bring within
My net the gains which wit and force should win,
What hinders?” ’T is a trick we know of old:
Try, George, some other of tricks manifold!
The multitude means mass and mixture — right!
Are mixtures simple, pray, or composite?
Dive into Man, your medley: see the waste!
Sloth-stifled genius, energy disgraced
By ignorance, high aims with sorry skill,
Will without means and means in want of will
— Sure we might fish, from out the mothers’ sons
That welter thus, a dozen Dodingtons!
Why call up Dodington, and none beside,
To take his seat upon our backs and ride
As statesman conquering and to conquer? Well,

The last expedient, which must needs excel
 Those old ones — this it is, — at any rate
 To-day's conception thus I formulate :
 As simple force has been replaced, just so
 Must simple wit be : men have got to know
 Such wit as what you boast is nowise held
 The wonder once it was, but, paralleled
 Too plentifully, counts not, — puts to shame
 Modest possessors like yourself who claim,
 By virtue of it merely, power and place
 — Which means the sweets of office. Since our race
 Teems with the like of you, some special gift,
 Your very own, must coax our hands to lift,
 And backs to bear you : is it just and right
 To privilege your nature ?

v.

“ State things quite
 Other than so ” — make answer ! “ I pretend
 No such community with men. Perpend
 My key to domination ! Who would use
 Man for his pleasure needs must introduce
 The element that awes Man. Once for all,
 His nature owns a Supernatural
 In fact as well as phrase — which found must be
 — Where, in this doubting age ? Old mystery
 Has served its turn — seen through and sent adrift

To nothingness : new wizard-craft makes shift
Nowadays shorn of help by robe and book, —
Otherwise, elsewhere, for success must look
Than chalked-ring, incantation-gibberish.
Somebody comes to conjure : that 's he ? Pish !
He 's like the roomful of rapt gazers, — there 's
No sort of difference in the garb he wears
From ordinary dressing, — gesture, speech,
Department, just like those of all and each
That eye their master of the minute. Stay !
What of the something — call it how you may —
Uncanny in the — quack ? That 's easy said !
Notice how the Professor turns no head
And yet takes cognizance of who accepts,
Denies, is puzzled as to the adept's
Supremacy, yields up or lies in wait
To trap the trickster ! Doubtless, out of date
Are dealings with the devil : yet, the stir
Of mouth, its smile half smug half sinister,
Mock-modest boldness masked in diffidence, —
What if the man have — who knows how or whence ? —
Confederate potency unguessed by us —
Prove no such cheat as he pretends ?

VI.

Ay, thus

Had but my George played statesmanship's new card

That carries all! "Since we" — avers the Bard —
 "All of us have one human heart" — as good
 As say — by all of us is understood
 Right and wrong, true and false — in rough, at least,
 We own a common conscience. God, man, beast —
 How should we qualify the statesman-shape
 I fancy standing with our world agape?
 Disguise, flee, fight against with tooth and nail
 The outrageous designation! "Quack" men quail
 Before? You see, a little year ago
 They heard him thunder at the thing which, lo,
 To-day he vaunts for unscathed, while what erst
 Heaven-high he lauded, lies hell-low, accursed!
 And yet where's change? Who, awe-struck, cares to point
 Critical finger at a dubious joint
 In armor, true *æs triplex*, breast and back
 Binding about, defiant of attack,
 An imperturbability that's — well,
 Or innocence or impudence — how tell
 One from the other? Could ourselves broach lies,
 Yet brave mankind with those unaltered eyes,
 Those lips that keep the quietude of truth?
 Dare we attempt the like? What quick uncouth
 Disturbance of thy smug economy,
 O coward visage! Straight would all descry
 Back on the man's brow the boy's blush once more!
 No: he goes deeper — could our sense explore —

Finds conscience beneath conscience such as ours.
Genius is not so rare, — prodigious powers —
Well, others boast such, — but a power like this
Mendacious intrepidity — *quid vis?*
Besides, imposture plays another game,
Admits of no diversion from its aim
Of captivating hearts, sets zeal aflame
In every shape at every turn, — nowhere
Allows subsidence into ash. By stress
Of what does guile succeed but earnestness,
Earnest word, look and gesture? Touched with aught
But earnestness, the levity were fraught
With ruin to guile's film-work. Grave is guile;
Here no act wants its qualifying smile,
Its covert pleasantry to neutralize
The outward ardor. Can our chief despise
Even while most he seems to adulate?
As who should say "What though it be my fate
To deal with fools? Among the crowd must lurk
Some few with faculty to judge my work
Spite of its way which suits, they understand,
The crass majority: — the Sacred Band,
No duping them forsooth!" So tells a touch
Of subintelligent nod and wink —
Turning foes friends. Coarse flattery moves the gorge:
Mine were the mode to awe the many, George!
They guess you half despise them while most bent

On demonstrating that your sole intent
Strives for their service. Sneer at them? Yourself
'T is you disparage, — tricksy as an elf,
Scorning what most you strain to bring to pass,
Laughingly careless, — triply cased in brass, —
While pushing strenuous to the end in view.
What follows? Why, you formulate within
The vulgar headpiece this conception: "Win
A master-mind to serve us needs we must,
One who, from motives we but take on trust,
Acts strangelier — haply wiselier than we know —
Stronglier, for certain. Did he say 'I throw
Aside my good for yours, in all I do
Care nothing for myself and all for you' —
We should both understand and disbelieve:
Said he 'Your good I laugh at in my sleeve,
My own it is I solely labor at,
Pretending yours the while' — that, even that,
We, understanding well, give credence to,
And so will none of it. But here 't is through
Our recognition of his service, wage
Well earned by work, he mounts to such a stage
Above competitors as all save Bubb
Would agonize to keep. Yet — here 's the rub —
So slightly does he hold by our esteem
Which solely fixed him fast there, that we seem
Mocked every minute to our face, by gibe

And jest — scorn insuppressive : what ascribe
 The rashness to? Our pay and praise to boot —
 Do these avail him to tread underfoot
 Something inside us all and each, that stands
 Somehow instead of somewhat which commands
 ‘ Lie not ’? Folks fear to jeopardize their soul,
 Stumble at times, walk straight upon the whole, —
 That’s nature’s simple instinct : what may be
 The portent here, the influence such as we
 Are strangers to ? ” —

VII.

Exact the thing I call
 Man’s despot, just the Supernatural
 Which, George, was wholly out of — far beyond
 Your theory and practice. You had conned
 But to reject the precept “ To succeed
 In gratifying selfishness and greed,
 Asseverate such qualities exist
 Nowise within yourself! then make acquist
 By all means, with no sort of fear! ” Alack,
 That well-worn lie is obsolete! Fall back
 On still a working pretext — “ Hearth and Home,
 The Altar, love of England, hate of Rome ” —
 That’s serviceable lying — that perchance
 Had screened you decently : but ’ware advance
 By one step more in perspicacity

Of these our dupes ! At length they get to see
As through the earlier, this the latter plea —
And find the greed and selfishness at source !
Ventum est ad triarios : last resource
Should be to what but — exquisite disguise
Disguise-abjuring, truth that looks like lies,
Frankness so sure to meet with unbelief ?
Say — you hold in contempt — not them in chief —
But first and foremost your own self ! No use
In men but to make sport for you, induce
The puppets now to dance, now stand stock-still,
Now knock their heads together, at your will
For will's sake only — while each plays his part
Submissive : why ? through terror at the heart :
“ Can it be — this bold man, whose hand we saw
Openly pull the wires, obeys some law
Quite above Man's — nay, God's ? ” On face fall they.
This was the secret missed, again I say,
Out of your power to grasp conception of,
Much less employ to purpose. Hence the scoff
That greets your very name : folks see but one
Fool more, as well as knave, in Dodington.

V

WITH FRANCIS FURINI

WITH FRANCIS FURINI

I.

Nay, *that*, Furini, never I at least
Mean to believe! What man you were I know,
While you walked Tuscan earth, a painter-priest,
Something about two hundred years ago.
Priest — you did duty punctual as the sun
That rose and set above Saint Sano's church,
Blessing Mugello: of your flock not one
But showed a whiter fleece because of smirch,
Your kind hands wiped it clear from: were they poor?
Bounty broke bread apace, — did marriage lag
For just the want of moneys that ensure
Fit hearth-and-home provision? — straight your bag
Unplumped itself, — reached hearts by way of palms
Goodwill's shake had but tickled. All about
Mugello valley, felt some parish qualms
At worship offered in bare walls without
The comfort of a picture? — prompt such need
Our painter would supply, and throngs to see
Witnessed that goodness — no unholy greed

Of gain — had coaxed from Don Furini — he
 Whom princes might in vain implore to toil
 For worldly profit — such a masterpiece.
 Brief — priest, you poured profuse God's wine and oil
 Praiseworthy, I know : shall praising cease
 When, priestly vesture put aside, mere man,
 You stand for judgment? Rather — what acclaim
 — “ Good son, good brother, friend in whom we scan
 No fault nor flaw ” — salutes Furini's name,
 The loving as the liberal ! Enough :
 Only to ope a lily, though for sake
 Of setting free its scent, disturbs the rough
 Loose gold about its anther. I shall take
 No blame in one more blazon, last of all —
 Good painter were you : if in very deed
 I styled you great — what modern art dares call
 My word in question? Let who will take heed
 Of what he seeks and misses in your brain
 To balance that precision of the brush
 Your hand could ply so deftly : all in vain
 Strives poet's power for outlet when the push
 Is lost upon a barred and bolted gate
 Of painter's impotency. Angelo —
 Thine were alike the head and hand, by fate
 Doubly endowed ! Who boasts head only — woe
 To hand's presumption should brush emulate
 Fancy's free passage by the pen, and show

Thought wrecked and ruined where the inexpert
 Foolhardy fingers half grasped, half let go
 Film-wings the poet's pen arrests unhurt !
 No — painter such as that miraculous
 Michael, who deems you ? But the ample gift
 Of gracing walls else blank of this our house
 Of life with imagery, one bright drift
 Poured forth by pencil, — man and woman mere,
 Glorified till half owned for gods, — the dear
 Fleshly perfection of the human shape, —
 This was apportioned you whereby to praise
 Heaven and bless earth. Who clumsily essays,
 By slighting painter's craft, to prove the ape
 Of poet's pen-creation, just betrays
 Twofold ineptitude.

II.

By such sure ways
 Do I return, Furini, to my first
 And central confidence — that he I proved
 Good priest, good man, good painter, and rehearsed
 Praise upon praise to show — not simply loved
 For virtue, but for wisdom honored too
 Needs must Furini be, — it follows — who
 Shall undertake to breed in me belief
 That, on his death-bed, weakness played the thief
 With wisdom, folly ousted reason quite ?

List to the chronicler ! With main and might —
So fame runs — did the poor soul beg his friends
To buy and burn his hand-work, make amends
For having reproduced therein — (Ah, me !
Sighs fame — that 's friend Filippo) — nudity !
Yes, I assure you : he would paint — not men
Merely — a pardonable fault — but when
He had to deal with — Oh, not mother Eve
Alone, permissibly in Paradise
Naked and unashamed, — but dared achieve
Dreadful distinction, at soul-safety's price,
By also painting women — (why the need ?)
Just as God made them : there, you have the truth !
Yes, rosed from top to toe in flush of youth,
One foot upon the moss-fringe, would some Nymph
Try, with its venturous fellow, if the lymph
Were chillier than the slab-stepped fountain-edge ;
The while a-heap her garments on its ledge
Of boulder lay within hand's easy reach,
— No one least kid-skin cast around her ! Speech
Shrinks from enumerating case and case
Of — were it but Diana at the chase,
With tunic tucked discreetly hunting-high !
No, some Queen Venus set our necks awry,
Turned faces from the painter's all-too-frank
Triumph of flesh ! For — whom had he to thank
— This self-appointed nature-student ? Whence

Picked he up practice? By what evidence
 Did he unhandsomely become adept
 In simulating bodies? How except
 By actual sight of such? Himself confessed
 The enormity: quoth Philip "When I pressed
 The painter to acknowledge his abuse
 Of artistry else potent — what excuse
 Made the infatuated man? I give
 His very words: 'Did you but know, as I,
 — O scruple-splitting sickly-sensitive
 Mild-moral-monger, what the agony
 Of Art is ere Art satisfy herself
 In imitating Nature — (Man, poor elf,
 Striving to match the finger-mark of Him
 The immeasurably matchless) — gay or grim,
 Pray, would your smile be? Leave mere fools to tax
 Art's high-strung brain's intentness as so lax
 That, in its mid-throe, idle fancy sees
 The moment for admittance!' Pleadings these —
 Specious, I grant." So adds, and seems to wince
 Somewhat, our censor — but shall truth convince
 Blockheads like Baldinucci?

III.

I resume

My incredulity: your other kind
 Of soul, Furini, never was so blind,

Even by death-mist, as to grope in gloom
For cheer beside a bonfire piled to turn
Ashes and dust all that your noble life
Did homage to life's Lord by, — bid them burn
— These Baldinucci blockheads — pictures rife
With record, in each rendered loveliness,
That one appreciative creature's debt
Of thanks to the Creator, more or less,
Was paid according as heart's-will had met
Hand's-power in Art's endeavor to express
Heaven's most consummate of achievements, bless
Earth by a semblance of the seal God set
On woman his supremest work. I trust
Rather, Furini, dying breath had vent
In some fine fervor of thanksgiving just
For this — that soul and body's power you spent —
Agonized to adumbrate, trace in dust
That marvel which we dream the firmament
Copies in star-device when fancies stray
Outlining, orb by orb, Andromeda —
God's best of beauteous and magnificent
Revealed to earth — the naked female form.
Nay, I mistake not : wrath that's but lukewarm
Would boil indeed were such a critic styled
Himself an artist : artist ! Ossa piled
Topping Olympus — the absurd which crowns
The extravagant — whereat one laughs, not frowns.

Paints he? One bids the poor pretender take
His sorry self, a trouble and disgrace,
From out the sacred presence, void the place
Artists claim only. What — not merely wake
Our pity that suppressed concupiscence —
A satyr masked as matron — makes pretence
To the coarse blue-fly's instinct — can perceive
No better reason why she should exist —
— God's lily-limbed and blush-rose-bosomed Eve —
Than as a hot-bed for the sensualist
To fly-blow with his fancies, make pure stuff
Breed him back filth — this were not crime enough?
But further — fly to style itself — nay, more —
To steal among the sacred ones, crouch down
Though but to where their garments sweep the floor —
— Still catching some faint sparkle from the crown
Crowning transcendent Michael, Leonard,
Rafael, — to sit beside the feet of such,
Unspurned because unnoticed, then reward
Their toleration — mercy overmuch —
By stealing from the throne-step to the fools
Curious outside the gateway, all-agape
To learn by what procedure, in the schools
Of Art, a merest man in outward shape
May learn to be Correggio! Old and young,
These learners got their lesson: Art was just
A safety-screen — (Art, which Correggio's tongue

Calls "Virtue") — for a skulking vice: mere lust
 Inspired the artist when his Night and Morn
 Slept and awoke in marble on that edge
 Of heaven above our awe-struck earth: lust-born
 His Eve low bending took the privilege
 Of life from what our eyes saw — God's own palm
 That put the flame forth — to the love and thanks
 Of all creation save this recreant!

IV.

Calm

Our phrase, Furini! Not the artist-ranks
 Claim riddance of an interloper: no —
 This Baldinucci did but grunt and sniff
 Outside Art's pale — ay, grubbed, where pine-trees grow,
 For pignuts only.

V.

You the Sacred! If

Indeed on you has been bestowed the dower
 Of Art in fulness, graced with head and hand,
 Head — to look up not downwards, hand — of power
 To make head's gain the portion of a world
 Where else the uninstructed ones too sure
 Would take all outside beauty — film that's furled
 About a star — for the star's self, endure
 No guidance to the central glory, — nay,

(Sadder) might apprehend the film was fog,
Or (worst) wish all but vapor well away,
And sky's pure product thickened from earth's bog —
Since so, nor seldom, have your worthiest failed
To trust their own soul's insight — why? except
For warning that the head of the adept
May too much prize the hand, work unassailed
By scruple of the better sense that finds
An orb within each halo, bids gross flesh
Free the fine spirit-pattern, nor enmesh
More than is meet a marvel, custom blinds
Only the vulgar eye to. Little fear
That you, the foremost of Art's fellowship
Will oft — will ever so offend! But — hip
And thigh — smite the Philistine! *You* — slunk here —
Connived at, by too easy tolerance,
Not to scrape palette simply or squeeze brush,
But dub your very self an Artist? Tush —
You, of the daubings, is it, dare advance
This doctrine that the Artist-mind must needs
Own to affinity with yours — confess
Provocative acquaintance, more or less,
With each impurely-peevisish worm that breeds
Inside your brain's receptacle?

VI.

Enough.

Who owns "I dare not look on diadems
 Without an itch to pick out, purloin gems
 Others contentedly leave sparkling" — gruff
 Answers the guard of the regalia: "Why —
 Consciously kleptomaniac — thrust yourself
 Where your illicit craving after pelf
 Is tempted most — in the King's treasury?
 Go elsewhere! Sort with thieves, if thus you feel —
 When folks clean-handed simply recognize
 Treasure whereof the mere sight satisfies —
 But straight your fingers are on itch to steal!
 Hence with you!"

Pray, Furini!

VII.

"Bounteous God,

Deviser and dispenser of all gifts
 To soul through sense, — in Art the soul uplifts
 Man's best of thanks! What but Thy measuring-rod
 Meted forth heaven and earth? more intimate,
 Thy very hands were busied with the task
 Of making, in this human shape, a mask —
 A match for that divine. Shall love abate
 Man's wonder? Nowise! True — true — all too true —

No gift but, in the very plenitude
 Of its perfection, goes maimed, misconstrued
 By wickedness or weakness : still, some few
 Have grace to see Thy purpose, strength to mar
 Thy work by no admixture of their own,
 — Linn truth not falsehood, bid us love alone
 The type untampered with, the naked star ! ”

VIII.

And, prayer done, painter — what if you should preach ?
 Not as of old when playing pulpiteer
 To simple-witted country folk, but here
 In actual London try your powers of speech
 On us the cultured, therefore sceptical —
 What would you ? For, suppose he has his word
 In faith's behalf, no matter how absurd,
 This painter-theologian ? One and all
 We lend an ear — nay, Science takes thereto —
 Encourages the meanest who has racked
 Nature until he gains from her some fact,
 To state what truth is from his point of view,
 Mere pin-point though it be : since many such
 Conduce to make a whole, she bids our friend
 Come forward unabashed and haply lend
 His little life-experience to our much
 Of modern knowledge. Since she so insists,
 Up stands Furini.

IX.

“ Evolutionists !

At truth I glimpse from depths, you glance from heights,
 Our stations for discovery opposites, —
 How should ensue agreement ? I explain :
 'T is the tip-top of things to which you strain
 Your vision, until atoms, protoplasm,
 And what and whence and how may be the spasm
 Which sets all going, stop you : down perforce
 Needs must your observation take its course,
 Since there 's no moving upwards : link by link
 You drop to where the atoms somehow think,
 Feel, know themselves to be : the world 's begun,
 Such as we recognize it. Have you done
 Descending ? Here 's ourself, — Man, known to-day,
 Duly evolved at last, — so far, you say,
 The sum and seal of being's progress. Good !
 Thus much at least is clearly understood —
 Of power does Man possess no particle :
 Of knowledge — just so much as shows that still
 It ends in ignorance on every side :
 But righteousness — ah, Man is deified
 Thereby, for compensation ! Make survey
 Of Man's surroundings, try creation — nay,
 Try emulation of the minimized
 Minuteness fancy may conceive ! Surprised

Reason becomes by two defeats for one —
Not only power at each phenomenon
Baffled, but knowledge also in default —
Asking what *is* minuteness — yonder vault
Speckled with suns, or this the millionth — thing,
How shall I call? — that on some insect's wing
Helps to make out in dyes the mimic star?
Weak, ignorant, accordingly we are:
What then? The worse for Nature! Where began
Righteousness, moral sense except in Man?
True, he makes nothing, understands no whit:
Had the initiator-spasm seen fit
Thus doubly to endow him, none the worse
And much the better were the universe.
What does Man see or feel or apprehend
Here, there, and everywhere, but faults to mend,
Omissions to supply, — one wide disease
Of things that are, which Man at once would ease
Had will but power and knowledge? failing both —
Things must take will for deed — Man, nowise loth,
Accepts pre-eminency: mere blind force —
Mere knowledge undirected in its course
By any care for what is made or marred
In either's operation — *these* award
The crown to? Rather let it deck thy brows,
Man, whom alone a righteousness endows
Would cure the wide world's ailing! Who disputes

Thy claim thereto? Had Spasm more attributes
Than power and knowledge in its gift, before
Man came to pass? The higher that we soar,
The less of moral sense like Man's we find:
No sign of such before, — what comes behind,
Who guesses? But until there crown our sight
The quite new — not the old mere infinite
Of changings, — some fresh kind of sun and moon, —
Then, not before, shall I expect a boon
Of intuition just as strange, which turns
Evil to good, and wrong to right, unlearns
All Man's experience learned since Man was he.
Accept in Man, advanced to this degree,
The Prime Mind, therefore! neither wise nor strong —
Whose fault? but were he both, then right, not wrong
As now, throughout the world were paramount
According to his will, — which I account
The qualifying faculty. He stands
Confessed supreme — the monarch whose commands
Could he enforce, how bettered were the world!
He's at the height this moment — to be hurled
Next moment to the bottom by rebound
Of his own peal of laughter. All around
Ignorance wraps him, — whence and how and why
Things are, — yet cloud breaks and lets blink the sky
Just overhead, not elsewhere! What assures
His optics that the very blue which lures

Comes not of black outside it, doubly dense?
 Ignorance overwraps his moral sense,
 Winds him about, relaxing, as it wraps,
 So much and no more than lets through perhaps
 The murmured knowledge — ‘Ignorance exists.’

X.

“ I at the bottom, Evolutionists,
 Advise beginning, rather. I profess
 To know just one fact — my self-consciousness, —
 ’Twixt ignorance and ignorance enisled, —
 Knowledge : before me was my Cause — that ’s styled
 God : after, in due course succeeds the rest, —
 All that my knowledge comprehends — at best —
 At worst, conceives about in mild despair.
 Light needs must touch on either darkness : where?
 Knowledge so far impinges on the Cause
 Before me, that I know — by certain laws
 Wholly unknown, whate’er I apprehend
 Within, without me, had its rise : thus blend
 I, and all things perceived, in one Effect.
 How far can knowledge any ray project
 On what comes after me — the universe?
 Well, my attempt to make the cloud disperse
 Begins — not from above but underneath :
 I climb, you soar, — who soars soon loses breath
 And sinks, who climbs keeps one foot firm on fact

Ere hazarding the next step : soul's first act
(Call consciousness the soul — some name we need)
Getting itself aware, through stuff decreed
Thereto (so call the body) — who has stept
So far, there let him stand, become adept
In body ere he shift his station thence
One single hair's breadth. Do I make pretence
To teach, myself unskilled in learning? Lo,
My life's work! Let my pictures prove I know
Somewhat of what this fleshly frame of ours
Or is or should be, how the soul empowers
The body to reveal its every mood
Of love and hate, pour forth its plenitude
Of passion. If my hand attained to give
Thus permanence to truth else fugitive,
Did not I also fix each fleeting grace
Of form and feature — save the beauteous face —
Arrest decay in transitory might
Of bone and muscle — cause the world to bless
Forever each transcendent nakedness
Of man and woman? Were such feats achieved
By sloth, or strenuous labor unrelieved,
— Yet lavished vainly? Ask that underground
(So may I speak) of all on surface found
Of flesh-perfection! Depths on depths to probe
Of all-inventive artifice, disrobe
Marvel at hiding under marvel, pluck

Veil after veil from Nature — were the luck
Ours to surprise the secret men so name,
That still eludes the searcher — all the same,
Repays his search with still fresh proof — ‘ Externe,
Not inmost, is the Cause, fool! Look and learn!’
Thus teach my hundred pictures: firm and fast
There did I plant my first foot. And the next?
Nowhere! ’T was put forth and withdrawn, perplexed
At touch of what seemed stable and proved stuff
Such as the colored clouds are: plain enough
There lay the outside universe: try Man —
My most immediate! and the dip began
From safe and solid into that profound
Of ignorance I tell you surges round
My rock-spit of self-knowledge. Well and ill,
Evil and good irreconcilable
Above, beneath, about my every side, —
How did this wild confusion far and wide
Tally with my experience when my stamp —
So far from stirring — struck out, each a lamp,
Spark after spark of truth from where I stood —
Pedestalled triumph? Evil there was good,
Want was the promise of supply, defect
Ensured completion, — where and when and how?
Leave that to the first Cause! Enough that now,
Here where I stand, this moment’s me and mine,
Shows me what is, permits me to divine

What shall be. Wherefore? Nay, how otherwise?
Look at my pictures! What so glorifies
The body that the permeating soul
Finds there no particle elude control
Direct, or fail of duty, — most obscure
When most subservient? Did that Cause ensure
The soul such raptures as its fancy stings
Body to furnish when, uplift by wings
Of passion, here and now, it leaves the earth,
Loses itself above, where bliss has birth —
(Heaven, be the phrase) — did that same Cause contrive
Such solace for the body, soul must dive
At drop of fancy's pinion, condescend
To bury both alike on earth, our friend
And fellow, where minutely exquisite
Low lie the pleasures, now and here — no herb
But hides its marvel, peace no doubts perturb
In each small mystery of insect life —
— Shall the soul's Cause thus gift the soul, yet strife
Continue still of fears with hopes, — for why?
What if the Cause, whereof we now descry
So far the wonder-working, lack at last
Will, power, benevolence — a protoplast,
No consummator, sealing up the sum
Of all things, — past and present and to come
Perfection? No, I have no doubt at all!
There's my amount of knowledge — great or small,

Sufficient for my needs: for see! advance
 Its light now on that depth of ignorance
 I shrank before from — yonder where the world
 Lies wreck-strewn, — evil towering, prone good — hurled
 From pride of place, on every side. For me
 (Patience, beseech you!) knowledge can but be
 Of good by knowledge of good's opposite —
 Evil, — since, to distinguish wrong from right,
 Both must be known in each extreme, beside —
 (Or what means knowledge — to aspire or bide
 Content with half-attaining? Hardly so!)
 Made to know on, know ever, I must know
 All to be known at any halting-stage
 Of my soul's progress, such as earth, where wage
 War, just for soul's instruction, pain with joy,
 Folly with wisdom, all that works annoy
 With all that quiets and contents, — in brief,
 Good strives with evil.

Now then for relief,
 Friends, of your patience kindly curbed so long.
 'What?' snarl you; 'is the fool's conceit thus strong —
 Must the whole outside world in soul and sense
 Suffer, that he grow sage at its expense?'
 By no means! 'T is by merest touch of toe
 I try — not trench on — ignorance, just know —
 And so keep steady footing: how you fare,
 Caught in the whirlpool — that's the Cause's care,

Strong, wise, good, — this I know at any rate
In my own self, — but how may operate
With you — strength, wisdom, goodness — no least blink
Of knowledge breaks the darkness round me. Think!
Could I see plain, be somehow certified
All was illusion, — evil far and wide
Was good disguised, — why, out with one huge wipe
Goes knowledge from me. Type needs antitype:
As night needs day, as shine needs shade, so good
Needs evil: how were pity understood
Unless by pain? Make evident that pain
Permissibly masks pleasure — you abstain
From outstretch of the finger-tip that saves
A drowning fly. Who proffers help of hand
To weak Andromeda exposed on strand
At mercy of the monster? Were all true,
Help were not wanting: ‘But ’t is false,’ cry you,
‘Mere fancy-work of paint and brush!’ No less,
Were mine the skill, the magic, to impress
Beholders with a confidence they saw
Life, — veritable flesh and blood in awe
Of just as true a sea-beast, — would they stare
Simply as now, or cry out, curse and swear,
Or call the gods to help, or catch up stick
And stone, according as their hearts were quick
Or sluggish? Well, some old artificer
Could do as much, — at least, so books aver, —

Able to make-believe, while I, poor wight,
 Make-fancy, nothing more. Though wrong were right,
 Could we but know — still wrong must needs seem wrong
 To do right's service, prove men weak or strong,
 Choosers of evil-or of good. 'No such
 Illusion possible!' Ah, friends, you touch
 Just here my solid standing-place amid
 The wash and welter, whence all doubts are bid
 Back to the ledge they break against in foam,
 Futility: my soul, and my soul's home
 This body, — how each operates on each,
 And how things outside, fact or feigning, teach
 What good is and what evil, — just the same,
 Be feigning or be fact the teacher, — blame
 Diffidence nowise if, from this I judge
 My point of vantage, not an inch I budge.
 All — for myself — seems ordered wise and well
 Inside it, — what reigns outside, who can tell?
 Contrariwise, who needs be told 'The space
 Which yields thee knowledge, — do its bounds embrace
 Well-willing and wise-working, each at height?
 Enough: beyond thee lies the infinite —
 Back to thy circumscription!'

Back indeed!

Ending where I began — thus: retrocede,
 Who will, — what comes first, take first, I advise!
 Acquaint you with the body ere your eyes

Look upward : this Andromeda of mine —
 Gaze on the beauty, Art hangs out for sign
 There 's finer entertainment underneath.
 Learn how they ministrates to life and death —
 Those incommensurably marvellous
 Contrivances which furnish forth the house
 Where soul has sway ! Though Master keep aloof,
 Signs of His presence multiply from roof
 To basement of the building. Look around,
 Learn thoroughly, — no fear that you confound
 Master with message ! He 's away, no doubt,
 But what if, all at once, you come upon
 A startling proof — not that the Master gone
 Was present lately — but that something — whence
 Light comes — has pushed Him into residence ?
 Was such the symbol's meaning, — old, uncouth —
 That circle of the serpent, tail in mouth ?
 Only by looking low, ere looking high,
 Comes penetration of the mystery.'

XI.

Thanks ! After sermonizing, psalmody !
 Now praise with pencil, Painter ! Fools attain
 Your fame, forsooth, because its power inclines
 To livelier colors, more attractive lines
 Than suit some orthodox sad sickly saint
 — Gray male emaciation, haply streaked

Carmine by scourgings — or they want, far worse —
Some self-scathed woman, framed to bless not curse
Nature that loved the form whereon hate wreaked
The wrongs you see. No, rather paint some full
Benignancy, the first and foremost boon
Of youth, health, strength, — show beauty's May, ere June
Undo the bud's blush, leave a rose to cull
— No poppy, neither! yet less perfect-pure,
Divinely-precious with life's dew besprent.
Show saintliness that 's simply innocent
Of guessing sinnership exists to cure
All in good time! In time let age advance
And teach that knowledge helps — not ignorance —
The healing of the nations. Let my spark
Quicken your tinder! Burn with — Joan of Arc!
Not at the end, nor midway when there grew
The brave delusions, when rare fancies flew
Before the eyes, and in the ears of her
Strange voices woke imperiously astir:
No, — paint the peasant girl all peasant-like,
Spirit and flesh — the hour about to strike
When this should be transfigured, that inflamed,
By heart's admonishing "Thy country shamed,
Thy king shut out of all his realm except
One sorry corner!" and to life forth leapt
The indubitable lightning "Can there be
Country and king's salvation — all through me?"

Memorize that burst's moment, Francis! Tush —
 None of the nonsense-writing! Fitlier brush
 Shall clear off fancy's film-work and let show
 Not what the foolish feign but the wise know —
 Ask Sainte-Beuve else! — or better, Quicherat,
 The downright-digger into truth that's — Bah,
 Bettered by fiction? Well, of fact thus much
 Concerns you, that "of prudishness no touch
 From first to last defaced the maid; anon,
 Camp-use compelling" — what says D'Alençon
 Her fast friend? — "though I saw while she undressed
 How fair she was — especially her breast —
 Never had I a wild thought!" — as indeed
 I nowise doubt. Much less would she take heed —
 When eve came, and the lake, the hills around
 Were all one solitude and silence, — found
 Barrièred impenetrably safe about, —
 Take heed of interloping eyes shut out,
 But quietly permit the air imbibe
 Her naked beauty till . . . but hear the scribe!
*Now as she fain would bathe, one even-tide,
 God's maid, this Joan, from the pool's edge she spied
 The fair blue bird clowns call the Fisher-king:
 And "'Las, sighed she, my Liege is such a thing
 As thou, lord but of one poor lonely place
 Out of his whole wide France: were mine the grace
 To set my Dauphin free as thou, blue bird!"*

Properly Martin-fisher — that 's the word,
Not yours nor mine: folks said the rustic oath
In common use with her was — “By my troth?”
No, — “By my Martin”! Paint this! Only, turn
Her face away — that face about to burn
Into an angel's when the time is ripe!
That task 's beyond you. Finished, Francis? Wipe
Pencil, scrape palette, and retire content!
“*Omnia non omnibus*” — no harm is meant!

VI

WITH GERARD DE LAIRESSE

WITH GERARD DE LAIRESSE

I.

Ah, but — because you were struck blind, could bless
Your sense no longer with the actual view
Of man and woman, those fair forms you drew
In happier days so duteously and true, —
Must I account my Gerard de Lairesse
All sorrow-smitten? He was hindered too
— Was this no hardship? — from producing, plain
To us who still have eyes, the pageantry
Which passed and passed before his busy brain
And, captured on his canvas, showed our sky
Traversed by flying shapes, earth stocked with brood
Of monsters, — centaurs bestial, satyrs lewd, —
Not without much Olympian glory, shapes
Of god and goddess in their gay escapes
From the severe serene: or haply paced
The antique ways, god-counselled, nymph-embraced,
Some early human kingly personage.
Such wonders of the teeming poet's-age
Were still to be: nay, these indeed began —

Are not the pictures extant? — till the ban
 Of blindness struck both palette from his thumb
 And pencil from his finger.

II.

Blind — not dumb,

Else, Gerard, were my inmost bowels stirred
 With pity beyond pity: no, the word
 Was left upon your unmolested lips:
 Your mouth unsealed, despite of eyes' eclipse
 'Talked all brain's yearning into birth. I lack
 Somehow the heart to wish your practice back
 Which boasted hand's achievement in a score
 Of veritable pictures, less or more,
 Still to be seen: myself have seen them, — moved
 To pay due homage to the man I loved
 Because of that prodigious book he wrote
 On Artistry's Ideal, by taking note,
 Making acquaintance with his artist-work.
 So my youth's piety obtained success
 Of all-too dubious sort: for, though it irk
 To tell the issue, few or none would guess
 From extant lines and colors, De Laresse,
 Your faculty, although each deftly-grouped
 And aptly-ordered figure-piece was judged
 Worthy a prince's purchase in its day.
 Bearded experience bears not to be duped

Like boyish fancy: 't was a boy that budged
No foot's breadth from your visioned steps away
The while that memorable "Walk" he trudged
In your companionship, — the Book must say
Where, when and whither, — "Walk," come what come may,
No measurer of steps on this our globe
Shall ever match for marvels. Faustus' robe,
And Fortunatus' cap were gifts of price:
But — oh, your piece of sober sound advice
That artists should descry abundant worth
In trivial commonplace, nor groan at dearth
If fortune bade the painter's craft be plied
In vulgar town and country! Why despond
Because hemmed round by Dutch canals? Beyond
The ugly actual, lo, on every side
Imagination's limitless domain
Displayed a wealth of wondrous sounds and sights
Ripe to be realized by poet's brain
Acting on painter's brush! "Ye doubt? Poor wights,
What if I set example, go before,
While you come after, and we both explore
Holland turned Dreamland, taking care to note
Objects whereto my pupils may devote
Attention with advantage?"

III.

So commenced

That "Walk" amid true wonders — none to you,
 But huge to us ignobly common-sensed,
 Purblind, while plain could proper optics view
 In that old sepulchre by lightning split,
 Whereof the lid bore carven, — any dolt
 Imagines why, — Jove's very thunderbolt :
 You who could straight perceive, by glance at it,
 This tomb must needs be Phaeton's ! In a trice,
 Confirming that conjecture, close on hand,
 Behold, half out, half in the ploughed-up sand,
 A chariot-wheel explained its bolt-device :
 What other than the Chariot of the Sun
 Ever let drop the like ? Consult the tome * —
 I bid inglorious tarriers-at-home —
 For greater still surprise the while that "Walk"
 Went on and on, to end as it begun,
 Chokefull of chances, changes, every one
 No whit less wondrous. What was there to balk
 Us, who had eyes, from seeing ? You with none
 Missed not a marvel : wherefore ? Let us talk.

* *The Art of Painting, etc.*, by Gerard de Lairese ; translated by J. F. Fritsch. 1778.

IV.

Say am I right? Your sealed sense moved your mind,
Free from obstruction, to compassionate
Art's power left powerless, and supply the blind
With fancies worth all facts denied by fate.
Mind could invent things, add to — take away,
At pleasure, leave out trifles mean and base
Which vex the sight that cannot say them nay
But, where mind plays the master, have no place.
And bent on banishing was mind, be sure,
All except beauty from its mustered tribe
Of objects apparitional which lure
Painter to show and poet to describe —
That imagery of the antique song
Truer than truth's self. Fancy's rainbow-birth
Conceived mid clouds in Greece, could glance along
Your passage o'er Dutch veritable earth,
As with ourselves, who see, familiar throng
About our pacings men and women worth
Nowise a glance — so poets apprehend —
Since nought avails portraying them in verse :
While painters turn upon the heel, intend
To spare their work the critic's ready curse
Due to the daily and undignified.

v.

I who myself contentedly abide
Awake, nor want the wings of dream, — who tramp
Earth's common surface, rough, smooth, dry or damp,
— I understand alternatives, no less
Conceive your soul's leap, Gerard de Lairesse!
How were it could I mingle false with true,
Boast, with the sights I see, your vision too?
Advantage would it prove or detriment
If I saw double? Could I gaze intent
On Dryope plucking the blossoms red,
As you, whereat her lote-tree writhed and bled,
Yet lose no gain, no hard fast wide-awake
Having and holding nature for the sake
Of nature only — nymph and lote-tree thus
Gained by the loss of fruit not fabulous,
Apple of English homesteads, where I see
Nor seek more than crisp buds a struggling bee
Uncrumples, caught by sweet he clammers through?
Truly, a moot point: make it plain to me,
Who, bee-like, sate sense with the simply true,
Nor seek to heighten that sufficiency
By help of feignings proper to the page —
Earth's surface-blank whereon the elder age
Put color, poetizing — poured rich life
On what were else a dead ground — nothingness —

Until the solitary world grew rife
 With Joves and Junos, nymphs and satyrs. Yes,
 The reason was, fancy composed the strife
 'Twixt sense and soul : for sense, my De Lairese,
 Cannot content itself with outward things,
 Mere beauty : soul must needs know whence there springs —
 How, when and why — what sense but loves, nor lists
 To know at all.

VI.

Not one of man's acquists
 Ought he resignedly to lose, methinks :
 So, I want me out which was it of the links
 Snapt first, from out the chain which used to bind
 Our earth to heaven, and yet for you, since blind,
 Subsisted still efficient and intact ?
 Oh, we can fancy too ! but somehow fact
 Has got to — say, not so much push aside
 Fancy, as to declare its place supplied
 By fact unseen but no less fact the same,
 Which mind bids sense accept. Is mind to blame,
 Or sense, — does that usurp, this abdicate ?
 First of all, as you "walked" — were it too late
 For us to walk, if so we willed ? Confess
 We have the sober feet still, De Lairese !
 Why not the freakish brain too, that must needs
 Supplement nature — not see flowers and weeds

Simply as such, but link with each and all
 The ultimate perfection — what we call
 Rightly enough the human shape divine?
 The rose? No rose unless it disentwine
 From Venus' wreath the while she bends to kiss
 Her deathly love? Plain retrogression, this!

VII.

No, no: we poets go not back at all:
 What you did we could do — from great to small
 Sinking assuredly: if this world last
 One moment longer when Man finds its Past
 Exceed its Present — blame the Protoplast!
 If we no longer see as you of old,
 'T is we see deeper. Progress for the bold!
 You saw the body, 't is the soul we see.
 Try now! Bear witness while you walk with me,
 I see as you: if we loose arms, stop pace,
 'T is that you stand still, I conclude the race
 Without your company. Come, walk once more
 The "Walk": if I to-day as you of yore
 See just like you the blind — then sight shall cry
 — The whole long day quite gone through — victory!

VIII.

Thunders on thunders, doubling and redoubling
 Doom o'er the mountain, while a sharp white fire

Now shone, now sheared its rusty herbage, troubling
Hardly the fir-boles, now discharged its ire
Full where some pine-tree's solitary spire
Crashed down, defiant to the last: till — lo,
The motive of the malice! — all aglow,
Circled with flame there yawned a sudden rift
I' the rock-face, and I saw a form erect
Front and defy the outrage, while — as checked,
Chidden, beside him dauntless in the drift —
Cowered a heaped creature, wing and wing outspread
In deprecation o'er the crouching head
Still hungry for the feast foregone awhile.
O thou, of scorn's unconquerable smile,
Was it when this — Jove's feathered fury — slipped
Gore-glutted from the heart's core whence he ripped —
This eagle-hound — neither reproach nor prayer —
Baffled, in one more fierce attempt to tear
Fate's secret from thy safeguard, — was it then
That all these thunders rent earth, ruined air
To reach thee, pay thy patronage of men?
He thundered, — to withdraw, as beast to lair,
Before the triumph on thy pallid brow.
Gather the night again about thee now,
Hate on, love ever! Morn is breaking there —
The granite ridge pricks through the mist, turns gold
As wrong turns right. O laughters manifold
Of ocean's ripple at dull earth's despair!

IX.

But morning's laugh sets all the crags alight
Above the baffled tempest: tree and tree
Stir themselves from the stupor of the night,
And every strangled branch resumes its right
To breathe, shakes loose dark's clinging dregs, waves free
In dripping glory. Prone the runnels plunge,
While earth, distent with moisture like a sponge,
Smokes up, and leaves each plant its gem to see,
Each grass-blade's glory-glitter. Had I known
The torrent now turned river? — masterful
Making its rush o'er tumbled ravage — stone
And stub which barred the froths and foams: no bull!
Ever broke bounds in formidable sport
More overwhelmingly, till lo, the spasm
Sets him to dare that last mad leap: report
Who may — his fortunes in the deathly chasm
That swallows him in silence! Rather turn
Whither, upon the upland, pedestalled
Into the broad day-splendor, whom discern
These eyes but thee, supreme one, rightly called
Moon-maid in heaven above and, here below,
Earth's huntress-queen? I note the garb succinct
Saving from smirch that purity of snow
From breast to knee — snow's self with just the tinct
Of the apple-blossom's heart-blush. Ah, the bow

Slack-strung her fingers grasp, where, ivory-linked
Horn curving blends with horn, a moonlike pair
Which mimic the brow's crescent sparkling so —
As if a star's live restless fragment winked
Proud yet repugnant, captive in such hair !
What hope along the hillside, what far bliss
Lets the crisp hair-plaits fall so low they kiss
Those lucid shoulders ? Must a morn so blithe
Needs have its sorrow when the twang and hiss
Tell that from out thy sheaf one shaft makes writhe
Its victim, thou unerring Artemis ?
Why did the chamois stand so fair a mark
Arrested by the novel shape he dreamed
Was bred of liquid marble in the dark
Depths of the mountain's womb that ever teemed
With novel births of wonder ? Not one spark
Of pity in that steel-gray glance which gleamed
At the poor hoof's protesting as it stamped
Idly the granite ? Let me glide unseen
From thy proud presence : well may'st thou be queen
Of all those strange and sudden deaths which damped
So oft Love's torch and Hymen's taper lit
For happy marriage till the maidens paled
And perished on the temple-step, assailed
By — what except to envy must man's wit
Impute that sure implacable release
Of life from warmth and joy ? But death means peace.

x.

Noon is the conqueror, — not a spray, nor leaf,
Nor herb, nor blossom but has rendered up
Its morning dew : the valley seemed one cup
Of cloud-smoke, but the vapor's reign was brief,
Sun-smitten, see, it hangs — the filmy haze —
Gray-garmenting the herbless mountain-side,
To soothe the day's sharp glare : while far and wide
Above unclouded burns the sky, one blaze
With fierce immitigable blue, no bird
Ventures to spot by passage. E'en of peaks
Which still presume there, plain each pale point speaks
In wan transparency of waste incurred
By over-daring : far from me be such !
Deep in the hollow, rather, where combine
Tree, shrub and briar to roof with shade and cool
The remnant of some lily-strangled pool,
Edged round with mossy fringing soft and fine.
Smooth lie the bottom slabs, and overhead
Watch elder, bramble, rose, and service-tree
And one beneficent rich barberry
Jewelled all over with fruit-pendants red.
What have I seen ! O Satyr, well I know
How sad thy case, and what a world of woe
Was hid by the brown visage furry-framed
Only for mirth : who otherwise could think —

Marking thy mouth gape still on laughter's brink,
Thine eyes a-swim with merriment unnamed
But haply guessed at by their furtive wink?
And all the while a heart was panting sick
Behind that shaggy bulwark of thy breast —
Passion it was that made those breath-bursts thick
I took for mirth subsiding into rest.
So, it was Lyda — she of all the train
Of forest-thridding nymphs, — 't was only she
Turned from thy rustic homage in disdain,
Saw but that poor uncouth outside of thee,
*And, from her circling sisters, mocked a pain
Echo had pitied — whom Pan loved in vain —
For she was wishful to partake thy glee,
Mimic thy mirth — who loved her not again,
Savage for Lyda's sake. She crouches there —
Thy cruel beauty, slumberously laid
Supine on heaped-up beast-skins, unaware
Thy steps have traced her to the briery glade,
Thy greedy hands disclose the cradling lair,
Thy hot eyes reach and revel on the maid !

XI.

Now, what should this be for? The sun's decline
Seems as he lingered lest he lose some act
Dread and decisive, some prodigious fact
Like thunder from the safe sky's sapphirine

About to alter earth's conditions, packed
With fate for nature's self that waits, aware
What mischief unsuspected in the air
Menaces momentarily a cataract.
Therefore it is that yonder space extends
Untrenched upon by any vagrant tree,
Shrub, weed well-nigh; they keep their bounds, leave free
The platform for what actors? Foes or friends,
Here come they trooping silent: heaven suspends
Purpose the while they range themselves, I see!
Bent on a battle, two vast powers agree
This present and no after-contest ends
One or the other's grasp at rule in reach
Over the race of man — host fronting host,
As statue statue fronts — wrath-molten each,
Solidified by hate, — earth halved almost,
To close once more in chaos. Yet two shapes
Show prominent, each from the universe
Of minions round about him, that disperse
Like cloud-obstruction when a bolt escapes.
Who flames first? Macedonian is it thou?
Ay, and who fronts thee, King Darius, drapes
His form with purple, fillet-folds his brow.

XII.

What, then the long day dies at last? Abrupt
The sun that seemed, in stooping, sure to melt

Our mountain-ridge, is mastered: black the belt
Of westward crags, his gold could not corrupt,
Barriers again the valley, lets the flow
Of lavish glory waste itself away
— Whither? For new climes, fresh eyes breaks the day!
Night was not to be baffled. If the glow
Were all that's gone from us! Did clouds, afloat
So filmily but now, discard no rose,
Sombre throughout the fleeciness that grows
A sullen uniformity. I note
Rather displeasure, — in the overspread
Change from the swim of gold to one pale lead
Oppressive to malevolence, — than late
Those amorous yearnings when the aggregate
Of cloudlets pressed that each and all might sate
Its passion and partake in relics red
Of day's bequeathment: now, a frown instead
Estranges, and affrights who needs must fare
On and on till his journey ends: but where?
Caucasus? Lost now in the night. Away
And far enough lies that Arcadia.
The human heroes tread the world's dark way
No longer. Yet I dimly see almost —
Yes, for my last adventure! 'T is a ghost.
So drops away the beauty! There he stands
Voiceless, scarce strives with deprecating hands. . . .

XIII.

Enough! Stop further fooling, De Laisse!
 My fault, not yours! Some fitter way express
 Heart's satisfaction that the Past indeed
 Is past, gives way before Life's best and last,
 The all-including Future! What were life
 Did soul stand still therein, forego her strife
 Through the ambiguous Present to the goal
 Of some all-reconciling Future? Soul,
 Nothing has been which shall not bettered be
 Hereafter, — leave the root, by law's decree
 Whence springs the ultimate and perfect tree!
 Busy thee with unearthing root? Nay, climb —
 Quit trunk, branch, leaf and flower — reach, rest sublime
 Where fruitage ripens in the blaze of day!
 O'erlook, despise, forget, throw flower away,
 Intent on progress? No whit more than stop
 Ascent therewith to dally, screen the top
 Sufficiency of yield by interposed
 Twistwork bold foot gets free from. Wherefore glozed
 The poets — “ Dream afresh old godlike shapes,
 Recapture ancient fable that escapes,
 Push back reality, repeople earth
 With vanished falseness, recognize no worth
 In fact new-born unless 't is rendered back
 Pallid by fancy, as the western rack

Of fading cloud bequeaths the lake some gleam
Of its gone glory !”

XIV.

Let things be — not seem,
I counsel rather, — do, and nowise dream !
Earth’s young significance is all to learn :
The dead Greek lore lies buried in the urn
Where who seeks fire finds ashes. Ghost, forsooth !
What was the best Greece babbled of as truth ?
“ A shade, a wretched nothing, — sad, thin, drear,
Cold, dark, it holds on to the lost loves here,
If hand have haply sprinkled o’er the dead
Three charitable dust-heaps, made mouth red
One moment by the sip of sacrifice :
Just so much comfort thaws the stubborn ice
Slow-thickening upward till it choke at length
The last faint flutter craving — not for strength,
Not beauty, not the riches and the rule
O’er men that made life life indeed.” Sad school
Was Hades ! Gladly, — might the dead but slink
To life back, — to the dregs once more would drink
Each interloper, drain the humblest cup
Fate mixes for humanity.

XV.

Cheer up, —

Be death with me, as with Achilles erst,
 Of Man's calamities the last and worst :
 Take it so ! By proved potency that still
 Makes perfect, be assured, come what come will,
 What once lives never dies — what here attains
 To a beginning, has no end, still gains
 And never loses aught : when, where, and how —
 Lies in Law's lap. What 's death then ? Even now
 With so much knowledge is it hard to bear
 Brief interposing ignorance ? Is care
 For a creation found at fault just there —
 There where the heart breaks bond and outruns time,
 To reach not follow what shall be ?

XVI.

Here 's rhyme

Such as one makes now, — say, when Spring repeats
 That miracle the Greek Bard sadly greets :
 “ Spring for the tree and herb — no Spring for us ! ”
 Let Spring come : why, a man salutes her thus :

Dance, yellows and whites and reds, —
 Lead your gay orgy, leaves, stalks, heads
 Astir with the wind in the tulip-beds !

There 's sunshine ; scarcely a wind at all
Disturbs starved grass and daisies small
On a certain mound by a churchyard wall.

Daisies and grass be my heart's bedfellows
On the mound wind spares and sunshine mellows :
Dance you, reds and whites and yellows !

VII

WITH CHARLES AVISON

WITH CHARLES AVISON

I.

How strange!— but, first of all, the little fact
Which led my fancy forth. This bitter morn
Showed me no object in the stretch forlorn
Of garden-ground beneath my window, backed
By yon worn wall wherefrom the creeper, tacked
To clothe its brickwork, hangs now, rent and racked
By five months' cruel winter, — showed no torn
And tattered ravage worse for eyes to see
Than just one ugly space of clearance, left
Bare even of the bones which used to be
Warm wrappage, safe embracement: this one cleft —
— O what a life and beauty filled it up
Startlingly, when methought the rude clay cup
Ran over with poured bright wine! 'T was a bird
Breast-deep there, tugging at his prize, deterred
No whit by the fast-falling snow-flake: gain
Such prize my blackcap must by might and main —
The cloth-shred, still a-flutter from its nail
That fixed a spray once. Now, what told the tale

To thee, — no townsman but born orchard-thief, —
 That here — surpassing moss-tuft, beard from sheaf
 Of sun-scorched barley, horsehairs long and stout,
 All proper country-pillage — here, no doubt,
 Was just the scrap to steal should line thy nest
 Superbly? Off he flew, his bill possessed
 The booty sure to set his wife's each wing
 Greenly a-quiver. How they climb and cling,
 Hang parrot-wise to bough, these blackcaps! Strange
 Seemed to a city-dweller that the finch
 Should stray so far to forage : at a pinch,
 Was not the fine wool's self within his range
 — Filchings on every fence? But no : the need
 Was of this rag of manufacture, spoiled
 By art, and yet by nature near unsoiled,
 New-suited to what scheming finch would breed
 In comfort, this uncomfortable March.

II.

Yet — by the first pink blossom on the larch! —
 This was scarce stranger than that memory, —
 In want of what should cheer the stay-at-home,
 My soul, — must straight clap pinion, well-nigh roam
 A century back, nor once close plume, descry
 The appropriate rag to plunder, till she pounced —
 Pray, on what relic of a brain long still?
 What old-world work proved forage for the bill

Of memory the far-flyer? "March" announced,
I verily believe, the dead and gone
Name of a music-maker: one of such
In England as did little or did much,
But, doing, had their day once. Avison!
Singly and solely for an air of thine,
Bold-stepping "March," foot stept to ere my hand
Could stretch an octave, I o'erlooked the band
Of majesties familiar, to decline
On thee — not too conspicuous on the list
Of worthies who by help of pipe or wire
Expressed in sound rough rage or soft desire —
Thou, whileom of Newcastle organist!

III.

So much could one — well, thinnish air effect!
Am I ungrateful? for, your March, styled "Grand,"
Did veritably seem to grow, expand,
And greaten up to title as, unchecked,
Dream-marchers marched, kept marching, slow and sure,
In time, to tune, unchangeably the same,
From nowhere into nowhere, — out they came,
Onward they passed, and in they went. No lure
Of novel modulation pricked the flat
Forthright persisting melody, — no hint
That discord, sound asleep beneath the flint,
Struck — might spring spark-like, claim due tit-for-tat,

Quenched in a concord. No! Yet, such the might
 Of quietude's immutability,
 That somehow coldness gathered warmth, well-nigh
 Quickened — which could not be! — grew burning-bright
 With fife-shriek, cymbal-clash and trumpet-blare,
 To drum-accentuation: pacing turned
 Striding, and striding grew gigantic, spurned
 At last the narrow space 'twixt earth and air,
 So shook me back into my sober self.

IV.

And where woke I? The March had set me down
 There whence I plucked the measure, as his brown
 Frayed flannel-bit my blackcap. Great John Relfe,
 Master of mine, learned, redoubtable,
 It little needed thy consummate skill
 To fitly figure such a bass! The key
 Was — should not memory play me false — well, C.
 Ay, with the Greater Third, in Triple Time,
 Three crotchets to a bar: no change, I grant,
 Except from Tonic down to Dominant.
 And yet — and yet — if I could put in rhyme
 The manner of that marching! — which had stopped
 — I wonder, where? — but that my weak self dropped
 From out the ranks, to rub eyes disentranced
 And feel that, after all the way advanced,
 Back must I foot it, I and my compeers,

Only to reach, across a hundred years,
 The band'sman Avison whose little book
 And large tune thus had led me the long way
 (As late a rag my blackcap) from to-day
 And to-day's music-manufacture, — Brahms,
 Wagner, Dvorak, Liszt, — to where — trumpets, shawms,
 Show yourselves joyful! — Handel reigns — supreme?
 By no means! Buononcini's work is theme
 For fit laudation of the impartial few :
 (We stand in England, mind you!) Fashion too
 Favors Geminiani — of those choice
 Concertos: nor there wants a certain voice
 Raised in thy favor likewise, famed Pepusch
 Dear to our great-grandfathers! In a bush
 Of Doctor's wig, they prized thee timing beats
 While Greenway trilled "Alexis." Such were feats
 Of music in thy day — dispute who list —
 Avison, of Newcastle organist!

v.

And here 's your music all alive once more —
 As once it was alive, at least: just so
 The figured worthies of a waxwork-show
 Attest — such people, years and years ago,
 Looked thus when outside death had life below,
 — Could say "We are now" not "We were of yore,"
 — "Feel how our pulses leap!" and not "Explore —

Explain why quietude has settled o'er
 Surface once all-awork!" Ay, such a "Suite"
 Roused heart to rapture, such a "Fugue" would catch
 Soul heavenwards up, when time was: why attach
 Blame to exhausted faultlessness, no match
 For fresh achievement? Feat once — ever feat!
 How can completion grow still more complete?
 Hear Avison! He tenders evidence
 That music in his day as much absorbed
 Heart and soul then as Wagner's music now,
 Perfect from centre to circumference —
 Orbed to the full can be but fully orbéd:
 And yet — and yet — whence comes it that "O Thou" —
 Sighed by the soul at eve to Hesperus —
 Will not again take wing and fly away
 (Since fatal Wagner fixed it fast for us)
 In some unmodulated minor? Nay,
 Even by Handel's help!

VI.

I state it thus:

There is no truer truth obtainable
 By Man than comes of music. "Soul" — (accept
 A word which vaguely names what no adept
 In word-use fits and fixes so that still
 Thing shall not slip word's fetter and remain
 Innominate as first, yet, free again,

Is no less recognized the absolute
Fact underlying that same other fact
Concerning which no cavil can dispute
Our nomenclature when we call it "Mind" —
Something not Matter) — "Soul," who seeks shall find
Distinct beneath that something. You exact
An illustrative image? This may suit.

VII.

We see a work : the worker works behind,
Invisible himself. Suppose his act
Be to o'erarch a gulf : he digs, transports,
Shapes and, through enginery — all sizes, sorts,
Lays stone by stone until a floor compact
Proves our bridged causeway. So works Mind — by stress
Of faculty, with loose facts, more or less,
Builds up our solid knowledge : all the same,
Underneath rolls what Mind may hide not tame,
An element which works beyond our guess,
Soul, the unsounded sea — whose lift of surge,
Spite of all superstructure, lets emerge,
In flower and foam, Feeling from out the deeps
Mind arrogates no mastery upon —
Distinct indisputably. Has there gone
To dig up, drag forth, render smooth from rough
Mind's flooring, — operosity enough?
Still the successive labor of each inch,

Who lists may learn : from the last turn of winch
That let the polished slab-stone find its place,
To the first prod of pickaxe at the base
Of the unquarried mountain, — what was all
Mind's varied process except natural,
Nay, easy even, to descry, describe,
After our fashion ? “ So worked Mind : its tribe
Of senses ministrant above, below,
Far, near, or now or haply long ago
Brought to pass knowledge.” But Soul's sea, — drawn whence,
Fed how, forced whither, — by what evidence
Of ebb and flow, that's felt beneath the tread,
Soul has its course 'neath Mind's work overhead, —
Who tells of, tracks to source the founts of Soul ?
Yet wherefore heaving sway and restless roll
This side and that, except to emulate
Stability above ? To match and mate
Feeling with knowledge, — make as manifest
Soul's work as Mind's work, turbulence as rest,
Hates, loves, joys, woes, hopes, fears, that rise and sink
Ceaselessly, passion's transient flit and wink,
A ripple's tinting or a spume-sheet's spread
Whitening the wave, — to strike all this life dead,
Run mercury into a mould like lead,
And henceforth have the plain result to show —
How we Feel, hard and fast as what we Know —
This were the prize and is the puzzle ! — which

Music essays to solve : and here 's the hitch
That balks her of full triumph else to boast.

VIII.

All Arts endeavor this, and she the most
Attains thereto, yet fails of touching : why ?
Does Mind get Knowledge from Art's ministry ?
What 's known once is known ever : Arts arrange,
Dissociate, re-distribute, interchange
Part with part, lengthen, broaden, high or deep
Construct their bravest, — still such pains produce
Change, not creation : simply what lay loose
At first lies firmly after, what design
Was faintly traced in hesitating line
Once on a time, grows firmly resolute
Henceforth and evermore. Now, could we shoot
Liquidity into a mould, — some way
Arrest Soul's evanescent moods, and keep
Unalterably still the forms that leap
To life for once by help of Art ! — which yearns
To save its capture : Poetry discerns,
Painting is 'ware of passion's rise and fall,
Bursting, subsidence, intermixture — all
A-seethe within the gulf. Each Art a-strain
Would stay the apparition, — nor in vain :
The Poet's word-mesh, Painter's sure and swift
Color-and-line-throw — proud the prize they lift !

Thus felt Man and thus looked Man, — passions caught
I' the midway swim of sea, — not much, if aught,
Of nether-brooding loves, hates, hopes and fears,
Enwombed past Art's disclosure. Fleet the years,
And still the Poet's page holds Helena
At gaze from topmost Troy — “ But where are they,
My brothers, in the armament I name
Hero by hero? Can it be that shame
For their lost sister holds them from the war? ”
— Knowing not they already slept afar
Each of them in his own dear native land.
Still on the Painter's fresco, from the hand
Of God takes Eve the life-spark whereunto
She trembles up from nothingness. Outdo
Both of them, Music! Dredging deeper yet,
Drag into day, — by sound, thy master-net, —
The abysmal bottom-growth, ambiguous thing
Unbroken of a branch, palpitating
With limbs' play and life's semblance! There it lies,
Marvel and mystery, of mysteries
And marvels, most to love and laud thee for!
Save it from chance and change we most abhor!
Give momentary feeling permanence,
So that thy capture hold, a century hence,
Truth's very heart of truth as, safe to-day,
The Painter's Eve the Poet's Helena
Still rapturously bend, afar still throw

The wistful gaze ! Thanks, Homer, Angelo !
Could Music rescue thus from Soul's profound,
Give feeling immortality by sound,
Then, were she queenliest of Arts ! Alas —
As well expect the rainbow not to pass !
“ Praise ‘ Radaminta ’ — love attains therein
To perfect utterance ! Pity — what shall win
Thy secret like ‘ Rinaldo ’ ? ” — so men said :
Once all was perfume — now, the flower is dead —
They spied tints, sparks have left the spar ! Love, hate,
Joy, fear, survive, — alike importunate
As ever to go walk the world again,
Nor ghost-like pant for outlet all in vain
Till Music loose them, fit each filmily
With form enough to know and name it by
For any recognizer sure of ken
And sharp of ear, no grosser denizen
Of earth than needs be. Nor to such appeal
Is Music long obdurate : off they steal —
How gently, dawn-doomed phantoms ! back come they
Full-blooded with new crimson of broad day —
Passion made palpable once more. Ye look
Your last on Handel ? Gaze your first on Gluck !
Why wistful search, O waning ones, the chart
Of stars for you while Haydn, while Mozart
Occupies heaven ? These also, fanned to fire,
Flamboyant wholly, — so perfections tire, —

Whiten to wanness, till . . . let others note
The ever-new invasion !

IX.

I devote

Rather my modicum of parts to use
What power may yet avail to re-infuse
(In fancy, please you !) sleep that looks like death
With momentary liveliness, lend breath
To make the torpor half inhale. O Relfe,
An all-unworthy pupil, from the shelf
Of thy laboratory, dares unstop
Bottle, ope box, extract thence pinch and drop
Of dusts and dews a many thou didst shrine
Each in its right receptacle, assign
To each its proper office, letter large
Label and label, then with solemn charge,
Reviewing learnedly the list complete
Of chemical reactives, from thy feet
Push down the same to me, attent below,
Power in abundance : armed wherewith I go
To play the enlivener. Bring good antique stuff !
Was it alight once ? Still lives spark enough
For breath to quicken, run the smouldering ash
Red right-through. What, "stone-dead" were fools so rash
As style my Avison, because he lacked
Modern appliance, spread out phrase unracked

By modulations fit to make each hair
 Stiffen upon his wig? See there — and there!
 I sprinkle my reactives, pitch broadcast
 Discords and resolutions, turn aghast
 Melody's easy-going, jostle law
 With license, modulate (no Bach in awe)
 Change enharmonically (Hudl to thank)
 And lo, upstart the flamelets, — what was blank
 Turns scarlet, purple, crimson! Straightway scanned
 By eyes that like new lustre — Love once more
 Yearns through the Largo, Hatred as before
 Rages in the Rubato : e'en thy March
 My Avison, which, sooth to say — (ne'er arch
 Eyebrows in anger!) — timed, in Georgian years
 The step precise of British Grenadiers
 To such a nicety, — if score I crowd,
 If rhythm I break, if beats I vary, — tap
 At bar's off-starting turns true thunder-clap,
 Ever the pace augmented till — what's here?
 Titanic striding toward Olympus!

x.

Fear

No such irreverent innovation! Still
 Glide on, go rolling, water-like, at will —
 Nay, were thy melody in monotone,
 The due three-parts dispensed with!

XI.

This alone

Comes of my tiresome talking : Music's throne
 Seats somebody whom somebody unseats,
 And whom in turn — by who knows what new feats
 Of strength — shall somebody as sure push down,
 Consign him dispossessed of sceptre, crown,
 And orb imperial — whereto ? Never dream
 That what once lived shall ever die ! They seem
 Dead — do they ? lapsed things lost in limbo ? Bring
 Our life to kindle theirs, and straight each king
 Starts, you shall see, stands up, from head to foot
 No inch that is not Purcell ! Wherefore ? (Suit
 Measure to subject, first — no marching on
 Yet in thy bold C major, Avison,
 As suited step a minute since : no : wait —
 Into the minor key first modulate —
 Gently with A, now — in the Lesser Third !)

XII.

Of all the lamentable debts incurred
 By Man through buying knowledge, this were worst :
 That he should find his last gain prove his first
 Was futile — merely nescience absolute,
 Not knowledge in the bud which holds a fruit
 Haply undreamed of in the soul's Spring-tide,

Pursed in the petals Summer opens wide,
 And Autumn, withering, rounds to perfect ripe, —
 Not this, — but ignorance, a blur to wipe
 From human records, late it graced so much.
 “Truth — this attainment? Ah, but such and such
 Beliefs of yore seemed inexpugnable
 When we attained them! E'en as they, so will
 This their successor have the due morn, noon,
 Evening and night — just as an old-world tune
 Wears out and drops away, until who hears
 Smilingly questions — ‘This it was brought tears
 Once to all eyes, — this roused heart’s rapture once?’
 So will it be with truth that, for the nonce,
 Styles itself truth perennial: ’ware its wile!
 Knowledge turns nescience, — foremost on the file,
 Simply proves first of our delusions.”

XIII.

Now —

Blare it forth, bold C major! Lift thy brow,
 Man, the immortal, that wast never fooled
 With gifts no gifts at all, nor ridiculed —
 Man knowing — he who nothing knew! As Hope,
 Fear, Joy, and Grief, — though ampler stretch and scope
 They seek and find in novel rhythm, fresh phrase, —
 Were equally existent in far days
 Of Music’s dim beginning — even so,

Truth was at full within thee long ago,
 Alive as now it takes what latest shape
 May startle thee by strangeness. Truths escape
 Time's insufficient garniture : they fade,
 They fall — those sheathings now grown sere, whose aid
 Was infinite to truth they wrapped, saved fine
 And free through March frost : May dews crystalline
 Nourish truth merely, — does June boast the fruit
 As — not new vesture merely but, to boot,
 Novel creation ? Soon shall fade and fall
 Myth after myth — the husk-like lies I call
 New truth's corolla-safeguard : Autumn comes,
 So much the better !

XIV.

Therefore — bang the drums,
 Blow the trumps, Avison ! March-motive ? that's
 Truth which endures resetting. Sharps and flats,
 Lavish at need, shall dance athwart thy score
 When ophicleide and bombardon's uproar
 Mate the approaching trample, even now
 Big in the distance — or my ears deceive —
 Of federated England, fitly weave
 March-music for the Future !

XV.

Or suppose

Back, and not forward, transformation goes?
 Once more some sable-stoled procession — say,
 From Little-ease to Tyburn wends its way,
 Out of the dungeon to the gallows-tree
 Where heading, hacking, hanging is to be
 Of half-a-dozen recusants — this day
 Three hundred years ago! How duly drones
 Elizabethan plain-song — dim antique
 Grown clarion-clear the while I humbly wreak
 A classic vengeance on thy March! It moans —
 Larges and Longs and Breves displacing quite
 Crotchet-and-quaver pertness — brushing bars
 Aside and filling vacant sky with stars
 Hidden till now that day returns to night.

XVI.

Nor night nor day: one purpose move us both,
 Be thy mood mine! As thou wast minded, Man's
 The cause our music champions: I were loth
 To think we cheered our troop to Preston Pans
 Ignobly: back to times of England's best!
 Parliament stands for privilege — life and limb
 Guards Hollis, Haselrig, Strode, Hampden, Pym,
 The famous Five. There's rumor of arrest.

Bring up the Train Bands, Southwark ! They protest :
 Shall we not all join chorus ? Hark the hymn,
 — Rough, rude, robustious — homely heart a-throb,
 Harsh voice a-hallo, as beseems the mob !
 How good is noise ! what 's silence but despair
 Of making sound match gladness never there ?
 Give me some great glad "subject," glorious Bach,
 Where cannon-roar not organ-peal we lack !
 Join in, give voice robustious rude and rough, —
 Avison helps — so heart lend noise enough !

Fife, trump, drum, sound ! and singers then
 Marching say "Pym, the man of men !"
 Up, heads, your proudest — out, throats, your loudest —
 "Somerset's Pym !"

Strafford from the block, Eliot from the den,
 Foes, friends, shout "Pym, our citizen !"
 Wail, the foes he quelled, — hail, the friends he held,
 "Tavistock's Pym !"

Hearts prompt heads, hands that ply the pen
 Teach babes unborn the where and when
 — Tyrants, he braved them, — patriots, he saved them —
 "Westminster's Pym !"

FUST AND HIS FRIENDS

AN EPILOGUE

FUST AND HIS FRIENDS

(Inside the House of Fust, Mayence, 1457.)

FIRST FRIEND.

Up, up, up — next step of the staircase
Lands us, lo, at the chamber of dread !

SECOND FRIEND.

Locked and barred ?

THIRD FRIEND.

Door open — the rare case !

FOURTH FRIEND.

Ay, there he leans — lost wretch !

FIFTH FRIEND.

His head

Sunk on his desk 'twixt his arms outspread !

SIXTH FRIEND.

Hallo, — wake, man, ere God thunderstrike Mayence
— Mulet for thy sake who art Satan's, John Fust !

Satan installed here, God's rule in abeyance,
 Mayence some morning may crumble to dust.
 Answer our questions thou shalt and thou must!

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Softly and fairly! Wherefore a-gloom?
 Greet us, thy gossipry, cousin and sib!
 Raise the forlorn brow, Fust! Make room —
 Let daylight through arms which, enfolding thee, crib
 From those clenched lids the comfort of sunshine!

FIRST FRIEND.

So glib

Thy tongue slides to "comfort" already? Not mine!
 Behoves us deal roundly: the wretch is distraught
 — Too well I guess wherefore! Behoves a Divine
 — Such as I, by grace, boast me — to threaten one caught
 In the enemy's toils, — setting "comfort" at nought.

SECOND FRIEND.

Nay, Brother, so hasty? I heard — nor long since —
 Of a certain Black Art'sman who, — helplessly bound
 By rash pact with Satan, — through paying — why mince
 The matter? — fit price to the Church, — safe and sound
 Full a year after death in his grave-clothes was found.

Whereas 't is notorious the Fiend claims his due
 During lifetime, — comes clawing, with talons aflame,

The soul from the flesh-rags left smoking and blue :

So it happed with John Faust ; lest John Fust fare the
same, —

Look up, I adjure thee by God's holy name !

For neighbors and friends — no foul hell-brood flock we !

Saith Solomon " Words of the wise are as goads : "

Ours prick but to startle from torpor, set free

Soul and sense from death's drowse !

FIRST FRIEND.

And soul, wakened, unloads

Much sin by confession : no mere palinodes !

— " I was youthful and wanton, am old yet no sage :

When angry I cursed, struck and slew : did I want ?

Right and left did I rob : though no war I dared wage

With the Church (God forbid!) — harm her least minis-
trant —

Still I outraged all else. Now that strength is grown scant,

I am probity's self " — no such bleatings as these !

But avowal of guilt so enormous, it balks

Tongue's telling. Yet penitence prompt may appease

God's wrath at thy bond with the Devil who stalks

— Strides hither to strangle thee !

FUST.

Childhood so talks. —

Not rare wit nor ripe age — ye boast them, my neighbors! —

Should lay such a charge on your townsman, this Fust
 Who, known for a life spent in pleasures and labors
 If freakish yet venial, could scarce be induced
 To traffic with fiends.

FIRST FRIEND.

So, my words have unloosed

A plie from those pale lips corrugate but now?

FUST.

Lost count me, yet not as ye lean to surmise.

FIRST FRIEND.

To surmise? to establish! Unbury that brow!

Look up, that thy judge may read clear in thine eyes!

SECOND FRIEND.

By your leave, Brother Barnabite! Mine to advise!

— Who arraign thee, John Fust! What was bruted erewhile
 Now bellows through Mayence. All cry — thou hast trucked
 Salvation away for lust's solace! Thy smile
 Takes its hue from hell's smoulder!

FUST.

Too certain! I sucked
— Got drunk at the nipple of sense.

SECOND FRIEND.

Thou hast ducked —

Art drowned there, say rather! Faugh — fleshly disport!
How else but by help of Sir Belial didst win
That Venus-like lady, no drudge of thy sort
Could lure to become his accomplice in sin?
Folks nicknamed her Helen of Troy!

FIRST FRIEND.

Best begin

At the very beginning. Thy father, — all knew,
A mere goldsmith . . .

FUST.

Who knew him, perchance may know this —
He dying left much gold and jewels no few:
Whom these help to court with, but seldom shall miss
The love of a leman: true witchcraft, I wis!

FIRST FRIEND.

Dost flout me? 'T is said, in debauchery's guild
Admitted prime guttler and guzzler — O swine! —

To honor thy headship, those tosspots so swilled
 That out of their table there sprouted a vine
 Whence each claimed a cluster, awaiting thy sign

To out knife, off mouthful : when — who could suppose
 Such malice in magic ? — each sot woke and found
 Cold steel but an inch from the neighbor's red nose
 He took for a grape-bunch !

FUST.

Does that so astound
 Sagacity such as ye boast, — who surround

Your mate with eyes staring, hairs standing erect
 At his magical feats ? Are good burghers unversed
 In the humors of topping ? Full oft, I suspect,
 Ye, counting your fingers, call thumbkin their first,
 And reckon a groat every guilder disbursed.

What marvel if wags, while the skinker fast brimmed
 Their glass with rare tipples' enticement, should gloat
 — Befeoled and befuddled — through optics drink-dimmed —
 On this draught and that, till each found in his throat
 Our Rhenish smack rightly as Raphal ? For, note —

They fancied — their fuddling deceived them so grossly —
 That liquor sprang out of the table itself

Through gimlet-holes drilled there, — nor noticed how closely
 The skinker kept plying my guests, from the shelf
 O'er their heads, with the potable madness. No elf

Had need to persuade them a vine rose unbrageous,
 Fruit-bearing, thirst-quenching! Enough! I confess
 To many such fool-pranks, but none so outrageous
 That Satan was called in to help me : excess
 I own to, I grieve at — no more and no less.

SECOND FRIEND.

Strange honors were heaped on thee — medal for breast,
 Chain for neck, sword for thigh : not a lord of the land
 But acknowledged thee peer ! What ambition possessed
 A goldsmith by trade, with craft's grime on his hand,
 To seek such associates ?

FUST.

Spare taunts ! Understand —

I submit me ! Of vanities under the sun,
 Pride seized me at last as concupiscence first,
 Crapulosity ever : true Fiends, everyone,
 Haled this way and that my poor soul : thus amerced —
 Forgive and forget me !

FIRST FRIEND.

Had flesh sinned the worst,

Yet help were in counsel: the Church could absolve:
 But say not men truly thou barredst escape
 By signing and sealing . . .

SECOND FRIEND.

On me must devolve
 The task of extracting . . .

FIRST FRIEND.

Shall Barnabites ape
 Us Dominican experts?

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Nay, Masters, — agape

When Hell yawns for a soul, 't is myself claim the task
 Of extracting, by just one plain question, God's truth!
 Where's Peter Genesheim thy partner? I ask
 Why, cloistered up still in thy room, the pale youth
 Slaves tongue-tied — thy trade brooks no tattling forsooth!

No less he, thy *famulus*, suffers entrapping,
 Succumbs to good fellowship: barrel a-broach
 Runs freely nor needs any subsequent tapping:
 Quoth Peter "That room, none but I dare approach,
 Holds secrets will help me to ride in my coach."

He prattles, we profit: in brief, he assures
 Thou hast taught him to speak so that all men may hear
 — Each alike, wide world over, Jews, Pagans, Turks, Moors,
 The same as we Christians — speech heard far and near
 At one and the same magic moment!

FUST.

That 's clear!

Said he — how?

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Is it like he was licensed to learn?
 Who doubts but thou dost this by aid of the Fiend?
 Is it so? So it is, for thou smilest! Go, burn
 To ashes, since such proves thy portion, unscreened
 By bell, book and candle! Yet lately I weened
 Balm yet was in Gilead, — some healing in store
 For the friend of my bosom. Men said thou wast sunk
 In a sudden despondency: not, as before,
 Fust gallant and gay with his pottle and punk,
 But sober, sad, sick as one yesterday drunk!

FUST.

Spare Fust, then, thus contrite! — who, youthful and healthy,
 Equipped for life's struggle with culture of mind,
 Sound flesh and sane soul in coherence, born wealthy,
 Nay, wise — how he wasted endowment designed
 For the glory of God and the good of mankind!

That much were misused such occasions of grace

Ye well may upbraid him, who bows to the rod.

But this should bid anger to pity give place —

He has turned from the wrong, in the right path to plod,
Makes amends to mankind and craves pardon of God.

Yea, friends, even now from my lips the “*Heureka* —

Soul saved!” was nigh bursting — unduly elate!

Have I brought Man advantage, or hatched — so to speak — a

Strange serpent, no cygnet? ’T is this I debate
Within me. Forbear, and leave Fust to his fate!

FIRST FRIEND.

So abject, late lofty? Methinks I spy respite.

Make clean breast, discover what mysteries hide
In thy room there!

SECOND FRIEND.

Ay, out with them! Do Satan despite!

Remember what caused his undoing was pride!

FIRST FRIEND.

Dumb devil! Remains one resource to be tried!

SECOND FRIEND.

Exorcise!

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Nay, first — is there any remembers

In substance that potent "*Ne pulvis*" — a psalm
 Whereof some live spark haply lurks mid the embers
 Which choke in my brain. Talk of "Gilead and balm" ?
 I mind me, sung half through, this gave such a qualm

To Asmodeus inside of a Hussite, that, queasy,
 He broke forth in brimstone with curses. I'm strong
 In — at least the commencement: the rest should go easy,
 Friends helping. "*Ne pulvis et ignis*" . . .

SIXTH FRIEND.

All wrong!

FIFTH FRIEND.

I've conned till I captured the whole.

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Get along!

"*Ne pulvis et cinis superbe te geras,*
Nam fulmina" . . .

SIXTH FRIEND.

Fiddlestick! Ppeace, dolts and dorrs!
 Thus runs it "*Ne Numinis fulmina feras*" —
 Then "*Hominis perfidi justa sunt sors*
Fulmen et grando et horrida mors."

SEVENTH FRIEND.

You blunder. "*Irati ne.*" . . .

SIXTH FRIEND.

Mind your own business !

FIFTH FRIEND.

I do not so badly, who gained the monk's leave
To study an hour his choice parchment. A dizziness
May well have surprised me. No Christian dares thieve,
Or I scarce had returned him his treasure. These cleave :

“ *Nos pulvis et cinis, trementes, gementes,
Venimus* ” — some such word — “ *ad te, Domine !
Da lumen, juvamen, ut sancta sequentes
Cor . . . corda* ” . . . Plague take it !

SEVENTH FRIEND.

— “ *erecta sint spe :* ”

Right text, ringing rhyme, and ripe Latin for me !

SIXTH FRIEND.

A Canon's self wrote it me fair : I was tempted
To part with the sheepskin.

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Didst grasp and let go
Such a godsend, thou Judas ? My purse had been emptied
Ere part with the prize !

FUST.

Do I dream? Say ye so?

Clouds break, then! Move, world! I have gained my "*Pou
sto*"!

I am saved: Archimedes, salute me!

OMNES.

Assistance!

Help, Angels! He summons . . . Aroint thee! — by name,
His familiar!

FUST.

Approach!

OMNES.

Devil, keep thy due distance!

FUST.

Be tranquillized, townsmen! The knowledge ye claim
Behold, I prepare to impart. Praise or blame, —

Your blessing or banning, whatever betide me,
At last I accept. The slow travail of years,
The long-teeming brain's birth — applaud me, deride me, —
At last claims revelation. Wait!

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Wait till appears
Uncaged Archimedes cooped-up there?

SECOND FRIEND.

Who fears?

Here 's have at thee!

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Correctly now! "*Pulvis et cinis*" . . .

FUST.

The verse ye so value, it happens I hold
In my memory safe from *initium* to *finis*.

Word for word, I produce you the whole, plain enrolled,
Black letters, white paper — no scribe's red and gold!

OMNES.

Aroint thee!

FUST.

I go and return. (*He enters the inner room.*)

FIRST FRIEND.

Ay, 't is "*ibis*"

No doubt: but as boldly "*redibis*" — who 'll say?
I rather conjecture "*in Orco peribis!*"

SEVENTH FRIEND.

Come, neighbors!

SIXTH FRIEND.

I'm with you! Show courage and stay
Hell's outbreak? Sirs, cowardice here wins the day!

FIFTH FRIEND.

What luck had that student of Bamberg who ventured
To peep in the cell where a wizard of note
Was busy in getting some black deed debentured
By Satan? In dog's guise there sprang at his throat
A flame-breathing fury. Fust favors, I note,

An ugly huge lurcher!

SEVENTH FRIEND.

If I placed reliance
As thou, on the beads thou art telling so fast,
I'd risk just a peep through the keyhole.

SIXTH FRIEND.

Appliance
Of ear might be safer. Five minutes are past.

OMNES.

Saints, save us! The door is thrown open at last!

FUST (*re-enters, the door closing behind him*).

As I promised, behold I perform! Apprehend you

The object I offer is poison or pest?

Receive without harm from the hand I extend you

A gift that shall set every scruple at rest!

Shrink back from mere paper-strips? Try them and test!

Still hesitate? Myk, was it thou who lamentedst

Thy five wits clean failed thee to render aright

A poem read once and no more? — who repentedst

Vile pelf had induced thee to banish from sight

The characters none but our clerics indite?

Take and keep!

FIRST FRIEND.

Blessed Mary and all Saints about her!

SECOND FRIEND.

What imps deal so deftly, — five minutes suffice

To play thus the penman?

THIRD FRIEND.

By Thomas the Doubter,

Five minutes, no more!

FOURTH FRIEND.

Out on arts that entice

Such scribes to do homage!

FIFTH FRIEND.

Stay! Once — and now twice —

Yea, a third time, my sharp eye completes the inspection
Of line after line, the whole series, and finds
Each letter join each — not a fault for detection!

Such upstrokes, such downstrokes, such strokes of all kinds
In the criss-cross, all perfect!

SIXTH FRIEND.

There's nobody minds

His quill-craft with more of a conscience, o'erscratches
A sheepskin more nimbly and surely with ink,
Than Paul the Sub-Prior: here's paper that matches
His parchment with letter on letter, no link
Overleapt — underlost!

SEVENTH FRIEND.

No erasure, I think —

No blot, I am certain!

FUST.

Accept the new treasure!

SIXTH FRIEND.

I remembered full half!

SEVENTH FRIEND.

But who other than I
(Bear witness, bystanders!) when he broke the measure
Repaired fault with "*fulmen*"?

FUST.

Put bickerings by!
Here's for thee — thee — and thee, too: at need a supply

(distributing Proofs)

For Mayence, though seventy times seven should muster!
How now? All so feeble of faith that no face
Which fronts me but whitens — or yellows, were juster?
Speak out lest I summon my Spirits!

OMNES.

Grace — grace!
Call none of thy — helpmates! We'll answer apace!

My paper — and mine — and mine also — they vary
In nowise — agree in each tittle and jot!
Fust, how — why was this?

FUST.

Shall such "Cur" miss a "quare"?

Within, there! Throw doors wide! Behold who complot
To abolish the scribe's work — blur, blunder and blot!

(The doors open, and the Press is discovered in operation.)

Brave full-bodied birth of this brain that conceived thee
In splendor and music, — sustained the slow drag
Of the days stretched to years dim with doubt, — yet believed
thee,

Had faith in thy first leap of life! Pulse might flag —
— Mine fluttered how faintly! — Arch-moment might lag

Its longest — I bided, made light of endurance,
Held hard by the hope of an advent which — dreamed,
Is done now: night yields to the dawn's reassurance:
I have thee — I hold thee — my fancy that seemed,
My fact that proves palpable! Ay, Sirs, I schemed

Completion that's fact: see this Engine — be witness
Yourselves of its working! Nay, handle my Types!
Each block bears a Letter: in order and fitness
I range them. Turn, Peter, the winch! See, it gripes
What's under! Let loose — draw! In regular stripes

Lies plain, at one pressure, your poem — touched, tinted,
 Turned out to perfection! The sheet, late a blank,
 Filled — ready for reading, — not written but PRINTED!

Omniscient omnipotent God, Thee I thank,
 Thee ever, Thee only! — Thy creature that shrank

From no task Thou, Creator, imposedst! Creation
 Revealed me no object, from insect to Man,
 But bore Thy hand's impress: earth glowed with salvation:
 "Hast sinned? Be thou saved, Fust! Continue my plan,
 Who spake and earth was: with my word things began.

"As sound so went forth, to the sight be extended
 Word's mission henceforward! The task I assign,
 Embrace — thy allegiance to evil is ended!

Have cheer, soul impregnate with purpose! Combine
 Soul and body, give birth to my concept — called thine!

"Far and wide, North and South, East and West, have
 dominion

O'er thought, winged wonder, O Word! Traverse world
 In sun-flash and sphere-song! Each beat of thy pinion
 Bursts night, beckons day: once Truth's banner unfurled,
 Where's Falsehood? Sun-smitten, to nothingness hurled!"

More humbly — so, friends, did my fault find redemption.
 I sinned, soul-entailed by the tether of sense:

My captor reigned master : I plead no exemption
 From Satan's award to his servant : defence
 From the fiery and final assault would be — whence ?

By making — as man might — to truth restitution !
 Truth is God : trample lies and lies' father, God's foe !
 Fix fact fast : truths change by an hour's revolution :
 What deed's very doer, unaided, can show
 How 't was done a year — month — week — day — minute ago ?

At best, he relates it — another reports it —
 A third — nay, a thousandth records it : and still
 Narration, tradition, no step but distorts it,
 As down from truth's height it goes sliding until
 At the low level lie-mark it stops — whence no skill

Of the scribe, intervening too tardily, rescues
 — Once fallen — lost fact from lie's fate there. What scribe
 — Eyes horny with poring, hands crippled with desk-use,
 Brains fretted by fancies — the volatile tribe
 That tease weary watchers — can boast that no bribe

Shuts eye and frees hand and remits brain from toiling ?
 Truth gained — can we stay, at whatever the stage,
 Truth a-slide, — save her snow from its ultimate soiling
 In mire, — by some process, stamp promptly on page
 Fact spoiled by pen's plodding, make truth heritage

Not merely of clerics but poured out, full measure,
 On clowns — every mortal endowed with a mind?
 Read, gentle and simple! Let labor win leisure
 At last to bid truth do all duty assigned,
 Not pause at the noble but pass to the hind!

How bring to effect such swift sure simultaneous
 Unlimited multiplication? How spread
 By an arm-sweep a hand-throw — no helping extraneous —
 Truth broadcast o'er Europe? "The goldsmith" I said
 "Graves limning on gold: why not letters on lead?"

So, Tuscan artificer, grudge not thy pardon
 To me who played false, made a furtive descent,
 Found the sly secret work-shop, — thy genius kept guard on
 Too slackly for once, — and surprised thee low-bent
 O'er thy labor — some chalice thy tool would indent

With a certain free scroll-work framed round by a border
 Of foliage and fruitage: no scratching so fine,
 No shading so shy but, in ordered disorder,
 Each flourish came clear, — unbewildered by shine,
 On the gold, irretrievably right, lay each line.

How judge if thy hand worked thy will? By reviewing,
 Revising again and again, piece by piece,
 Tool's performance, — this way, as I watched. 'T was thro'
 glueing

A paper-like film-stuff — thin, smooth, void of crease,
On each cut of the graver : press hard ! at release,

No mark on the plate but the paper showed double :

His work might proceed : as he judged — space or speck
Up he filled, forth he flung — was relieved thus from trouble
Lest wrong — once — were right never more : what could
check

Advancement, completion ? Thus lay at my beck —

At my call — triumph likewise ! “ For ” cried I “ what hinders

That graving turns Printing ? Stamp one word — not one
But fifty such, phœnix-like, spring from death’s cinders, —

Since death is word’s doom, clerics hide from the sun
As some churl closets up this rare chalice.” Go, run

Thy race now, Fust’s child ! High, O Printing, and holy

Thy mission ! These types, see, I chop and I change
Till the words, every letter, a pageful, not slowly

Yet surely lies fixed : last of all, I arrange
A paper beneath, stamp it, loosen it !

FIRST FRIEND.

Strange !

SECOND FRIEND.

How simple exceedingly !

FUST.

Bustle, my Schœfer!
Set type,— quick, Genesheim! Turn screw now!

THIRD FRIEND.

Just that!

FOURTH FRIEND.

And no such vast miracle!

FUST.

“Plough with my heifer,
Ye find out my riddle,” quoth Samson, and pat
He speaks to the purpose. Grapes squeezed in the vat

Yield to sight and to taste what is simple — a liquid
Mere urchins may sip: but give time, let ferment —

You've wine, manhood's master! Well, “*rectius si quid
Novistis impertite!*” Wait the event,

Then weigh the result! But, whate'er Thy intent,

O Thou, the one force in the whole variation

Of visible nature, — at work — do I doubt? —

From Thy first to our last, in perpetual creation —

A film hides us from Thee — 'twixt inside and out,

A film, on this earth where Thou bringest about

New marvels, new forms of the glorious, the gracious,

We bow to, we bless for: no star bursts heaven's dome

But Thy finger impels it, no weed peeps audacious
 Earth's clay-floor from out, but Thy finger makes room
 For one world's-want the more in Thy Cosmos : presume

Shall Man, Microcosmos, to claim the conception
 Of grandeur, of beauty, in thought, word or deed ?
 I toiled, but Thy light on my dubiosest step shone :
 If I reach the glad goal, is it I who succeed
 Who stumbled at starting tripped up by a reed,

Or Thou? Knowledge only and absolute, glory
 As utter be Thine who concedest a spark
 Of Thy spheric perfection to earth's transitory
 Existences! Nothing that lives, but Thy mark
 Gives law to — life's light : what is doomed to the dark?

Where's ignorance? Answer, creation! What height,
 What depth has escaped Thy commandment — to Know?
 What birth in the ore-bed but answers aright
 Thy sting at its heart which impels — bids "E'en so,
 Not otherwise move or be motionless, — grow,

"Decline, disappear!" Is the plant in default
 How to bud, when to branch forth? The bird and the beast
 — Do they doubt if their safety be found in assault
 Or escape? Worm or fly, of what atoms the least
 But follows light's guidance, — will famish, not feast?

In such various degree, fly and worm, ore and plant,
 All know, none is ignorant : round each, a wall
 Encloses the portion, or ample or scant,
 Of Knowledge : beyond which one hair's breadth, for all
 Lies blank — not so much as a blackness — a pall

Some sense unimagined must penetrate : plain
 Is only old license to stand, walk or sit,
 Move so far and so wide in the narrow domain
 Allotted each nature for life's use : past it
 How immensity spreads does he guess ? Not a whit.

Does he care ? Just as little. Without ? No, within
 Concerns him : he Knows. Man Ignores -- thanks to Thee
 Who madest him know, but — in knowing — begin
 To know still new vastness of knowledge must be
 Outside him — to enter, to traverse, in fee

Have and hold ! “ Oh, Man's ignorance ! ” hear the fool whine !
 How were it, for better or worse, didst thou grunt
 Contented with sapience — the lot of the swine
 Who knows he was born for just truffles to hunt ? —
 Monks' Paradise — “ *Semper sint res uti sunt !* ”

No, Man's the prerogative — knowledge once gained —
 To ignore, — find new knowledge to press for, to swerve
 In pursuit of, no, not for a moment : attained —

Why, onward through ignorance! Dare and deserve!
As still to its asymptote speedeth the curve,

So approximates Man — Thee, who, reachable not,
Hast formed him to yearningly follow Thy whole
Sole and single omniscience!

Such, friends, is my lot:

I am back with the world: one more step to the goal
Thanks for reaching I render — Fust's help to Man's soul!

Mere mechanical help? So the hand gives a toss
To the falcon, — aloft once, spread pinions and fly,
Beat air far and wide, up and down and across!

My Press strains a-tremble: whose masterful eye
Will be first, in new regions, new truth to descry?

Give chase, soul! Be sure each new capture consigned
To my Types will go forth to the world, like God's bread
— Miraculous food not for body but mind,

Truth's manna! How say you? Put case that, instead
Of old leasing and lies, we superiorly fed

These Heretics, Hussites . . .

FIRST FRIEND.

First answer my query!

If saved, art thou happy?

FUST.

I was and I am.

FIRST FRIEND.

Thy visage confirms it : how comes, then, that — weary
 And woe-begone late — was it show, was it sham? —
 We found thee sunk thiswise ?

SECOND FRIEND.

— In need of the dram

From the flask which a provident neighbor might carry !

FUST.

Ah, friends, the fresh triumph soon flickers, fast fades !
 I hailed Word's dispersion : could heartleaps but tarry !
 Through me does Print furnish Truth wings ? The same aids
 Cause Falsehood to range just as widely. What raids

On a region undreamed of does Printing enable
 Truth's foe to effect ! Printed leasing and lies
 May speed to the world's farthest corner — gross fable
 No less than pure fact — to impede, neutralize,
 Abolish God's gift and Man's gain !

FIRST FRIEND.

Dost surmise

What struck me at first blush? Our Beghards, Waldenses,
 Jeronimites, Hussites — does one show his head,
 Spout heresy now? Not a priest in his senses
 Deigns answer mere speech, but piles fagots instead,
 Refines as by fire, and, him silenced, all 's said.

Whereas if in future I pen an opuscle
 Defying retort, as of old when rash tongues
 Were easy to tame, — straight some knave of the Huss-School
 Prints answer forsooth! Stop invisible lungs?
 The barrel of blasphemy broached once, who bungs?

SECOND FRIEND.

Does my sermon, next Easter, meet fitting acceptance?
 Each captious disputative boy has his quirk
 “*An cuique credendum sit?*” Well, the Church kept “*ans*”
 In order till Fust set his engine at work!
 What trash will come flying from Jew, Moor, and Turk
 When, goosequill, thy reign o'er the world is abolished!
 Goose — ominous name! With a goose woe began:
 Quoth Huss — which means “goose” in his idiom unpolished —
 “Ye burn now a Goose: there succeeds me a Swan
 Ye shall find quench your fire!”

FUST.

I foresee such a man.

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